

## Foreword

# ON THE ENTANGLED PATHS OF URBAN RESISTANCE, URBAN PLANNING AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

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Resistance, planning and conservation may seem like parallel or combating universes – while resistance almost always entails actions against the state institutions, planning and conservation practices function typically with and within them. These seemingly disengaged modalities of social and political processes came together as the focus of the 8th Annual AESOP Young Academics Conference, titled “Cities that Talks” that took place in Gothenburg, Sweden in 2014. The conference theme and an impressive array of case studies reflect the recent surge of urban resistance movements in Europe and elsewhere in the world. They also reflect a substantial level of interest among young academic scholars who, as a generation of young people, are themselves faced with social and political upheavals—including, but not limited to, the current impacts of neoliberal restructuring and austerity policies that percolate through the society today.

Despite the varying degrees of success, the widespread resistance movements in the world in recent years are unmistakably remarkable. From Arab Spring and the Occupy Wall Street Movement to the indignados demonstrations in Greece, Portugal, and Spain, urban resistance movements have mobilised public discussion and debates concerning economic inequality, authoritarianism and austerity policies. However, while these resistance movements may involve new tactics and technologies, urban movements are hardly new to cities and regions. Five centuries ago, the Castilian cities revolted against the royal authority of Carlos V in an act of urban resistance that challenged the feudal order in search of a modern state (Castells, 1983). The Paris Commune of 1871 inspired other labour uprisings in Moscow, Budapest, and St. Petersburg (ibid.). In the mid-nineteenth century, the modernisation of cities throughout Europe gave rise to the heritage conservation movements (Hammami, 2015), although in this case, it was the cultural elites (e.g., artists, archaeologists, architects) in several cities that mobilised the public and politicians to protect the material cultures, especially the medieval architecture and art that represented the experiences of the ruling and upper-middle classes.

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As discussed in the Cities that Talk Conference, urban resistance are often seen as challenges to city planning and heritage conservation. As challenges to the predominant modes of practice, resistance movements have also played an important role historically in shaping the discourses and practice of city planning and heritage conservation. In the United States, the revolts against Urban Renewal in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in the introduction and requirement of participatory process into planning, specifically the Model Cities Program, as well as catalysing the historic preservation movement. Generations of planners and designers have since worked to democratise the planning process, and a body of knowledge has emerged since then that addresses the social complexity of planning practices, including that of advocacy planning and community development. Similarly, American environmental movements in the 1960s have led to the legislations of Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act, among others, that serve as legal basis for environmental planning.

In Europe, similar revolts resulted in new urban policy discourses with a specific focus on social inclusion. For example, the development plans to modernise the Swedish working class district of Haga and the Danish former military barracks district of Christiania have been inspired by, but also given rise to, various forms of resistances against urban rationalism and neoliberal development not only in these countries but also throughout Northern Europe. The urban riots in the suburb of Lyon resulted in an 'anti-ghetto' urban policy in France. A series of urban riots against marginalisation and cultural assimilation was instrumental in facilitating the change (Mucchielli, 2009). In the former "Eastern Bloc," the diverse post-Soviet protests against bureaucracy and centralised governments promoted new planning ideals based on civil society representations and public-private partnerships. The recent protests in Istanbul against the re-construction of the Ottoman military barracks in Gezi Park came with calls for new urban governance in Turkey with civil society organisations as a new partner.

Similar processes can also be found in Asia. In Hong Kong, public housing was arguably introduced in response to social unrest and fear of communist organising in the 1950s (Smart, 2006). In Japan, public protests against air and water pollutions have resulted in the introduction of public participation in the 1960s (Nishimura, 1999). In Taiwan, mobilisation by heritage activists against demolition of historic landmarks have led to legal protection of heritage sites and the emergence of local identities as part of a nation-building movement beginning in the 1990s. In Palestine, the restoration and renovation of several historic buildings across the West Bank by local activists have prompted the Palestinian Authorities to not only prioritise heritage in their "national" policies for development and endorse a new conservation law in 1996 (postponed by the Israeli government since then) but also to use heritage as a tool to fight Israeli occupation (Hammami, 2012).

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These examples not only show that urban resistance have promoted changes in planning and urban policies but also demonstrate how resistance, planning and conservation have had an entangled history that goes back to the founding of these disciplines in modern history. The emergence of modern urban planning as a profession (at least in the West), in short, came as a resistance against the political institution in the 19th century that fail to address issues of overcrowding, sanitation, and epidemics. A similar observation can also be made with regard to the emergence of heritage conservation as a profession itself. The latter in the European context came in response to the large-scale destruction of, among others, medieval cities and the governments' ambitions then to build modern cities with "advanced" forms of urban morphologies and infrastructures.

As professions developed and as discourses and practices became institutionalised over time, the narrative of resistance and entanglement seemed to have gotten lost, at least until the emergence of a recent body of literature that began to explore new relationships in these entanglements. Within planning, the discourse of insurgency and insurgent planning has been important in foregrounding the role and practices of subaltern groups in resisting the predominant urban governance. With insurgent citizenship, and insurgent urbanism as its spatial mode, Holston (1998) calls for a rethinking of the social in planning, as rooted in the heterogeneity of lived experience, contrary to the formalised, reductionist state institution. Other planning scholars have since used insurgency to conceptualise spatial and social practices of marginalised groups against, or outside of, the official planning regime. In particular, Miraftab (2009, p. 33) describes insurgent planning as a set of counter-hegemonic practices by marginalised groups. In other words, the subaltern groups are engaged in a sort of planning practice albeit not formally recognised by the state.

However, in characterising insurgent planning as counter-hegemonic, the discourse of insurgent planning seems to have sustained the dichotomy between formal and informal, legal and illegal, planning and resistance. It is in this context that Perera's (2009) analysis is helpful. He argues that insurgent acts are often entangled with formalised systems, rendering the absolute distinction in spatial terms often futile or impossible (Perera, 2009). In the edited volume *Cities for Citizens*, Douglass and Friedmann (1998) also examined the intersection of civil society actions and planning that include cases of "counter-planning" as engaged by subaltern groups such as those engaged in environmental politics in Los Angeles (Keil, 1998). They argue that these civil society actions represent claims and struggles "not to overturn the state, nor to replace it, but to transform the state in ways that will serve all of its citizens, and especially the less powerful" (Douglass & Friedmann, 1998, p. 2).

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The entanglement of institutionalized planning and everyday resistance is on vivid display particularly in the cityscapes of Asia. In a case study of markets in the port city of Kaohsiung, Taiwan, anthropologist Ching-Wen Hsu (2013) examines the informal organisation of activities by illegal vendors that co-exist with the operation of the formal market. In *Insurgent Public Space* (Hou, ed., 2010), a number of authors examine similar forms of placemaking by communities and social groups that occur often at the border of the regulatory domain. In his earlier work on local environmental movements in Taiwan, Hou (2001) looks at how local activists simultaneously engaged in acts of protests and organised resistance as well as alternative planning processes and engagement in the institutional process. The combination of actions constitutes a hybrid form of resistance and planning that was far more effective than either type of actions alone.

The emerging field of critical heritage studies (CHS) has also focused on such entanglement and have promoted new debates questioning the traditional approaches that seek to conserve the past for the future as well as other recent ones that seek to use the past in, and for, the present (Smith, 2012; Harrison, 2012). These debates recognise the growing role of popular activism against the assimilation of the public and the States' imaginary common of the past that formed a basis for nation building in many countries. Harvey (2001) uncovers a historic process of 'heritageisation' that has begun in the West and was exported to the former colonies of several Western States (Lowenthal, 1985). For him, the process is "not only driven by certain narratives about nationalism and Romantic ideals, but also a specific theme about the legitimacy and dominant place in national cultures of the European social and political elite" (Smith, 2006, p. 22). Smith (2006) sees this process as an 'authorised heritage discourse' that has gained a partial global reach through UNESCO's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972) and its designation of 'outstanding universal values' (Hammami, 2012).

Protests against the authoritative power of this heritage discourse have erupted across the globe, supported by the international calls for social inclusion of minorities. Specifically, the 1972 World Heritage Convention has been heavily criticised for being "Eurocentric, restrictive and excluding" (Bennett, 2004). Among others the Japanese government rejected the convention due to its focus on "specific monuments, landscapes, and sites that represent universal values, rather than linking them with the domestic cultural manifestations that inform people's identities" (Londres Fonseca, 2002, p. 9). Such critiques encouraged more contextually situated initiatives, including the Burra Charter (1981) and UNESCO's report 'Our Creative Diversity' (1995). Together with other initiatives, they have resulted in the recognition of the culture of non-monumental societies (e.g. Bedouins, tribal communities, Roma people), and introduced to the "global heritage discourse" new terminologies, including 'rights', 'diversity', 'communities' and 'pluralism'. This has

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eventually resulted in the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) (Smith, 2006).

Certainly, professional heritage practices, at least in the Western societies, have increasingly opened up to new views, interest, interpretations and representations. However, the ambitions of modern states to sustain homogenised forms of cultural representation are likely to hinder their other parallel attempts to acknowledge peoples' rights to plural pasts. Graham et al (2007) call for pluralising the past and its representation in the public. This can be read along Žižek's (1997, p. 42) description of today's plurality as "a reverse process to the 'nationalisation of the ethnic' and a beginning of the 'ethnicisation of the national'". Other scholars within CHS also call for new ways of dealing with the past and its representation beyond the conventional divides between culture and nature, public and private, universal and local, official and unofficial, collective and personal (Harrison, 2012) so that "potential" heritages that fall outside the desired narrative of value do not in the process become cleansed, destroyed, or neglected.

On the entanglement between resistance and heritage conservation, protests against the implementation of large-scale development projects in the historic city area of Haga, located in Gothenburg, Sweden, generated in the 70s new political interest in the past as a resource for development. After 40 years of postponing a development plan in Gårda, a working class neighbourhood in Gothenburg, the protesters succeeded in 2014 to promote new political interest in the past, and led to the renovation of southern Gårda instead of destruction. In his article "conservation under occupation", Hammami (2012) analyses the informal local initiatives to renovate the Historic City of Nablus during the intensive Israeli military incursions in the city in 2002 and how these initiatives were supported by the local governments as an effective strategy of resistance to the occupation. The Palestinian National Authorities began in that period to see the political instrumentality of heritage as resistance. In 2012, they succeeded to include the 'Birthplace of Jesus: Church of the Nativity and the Pilgrimage Route' to the World Heritage Sites List, and in 2014 they also succeeded to include the Cultural Landscape of Southern Jerusalem, Battir, to the World Heritage in Danger List.

These historic and continued entanglements between urban resistance, city planning and heritage conservation can serve as a point of departure for further examining the implications of recent urban resistance movements for transforming the social and institutional practices of city making and a wider politics of the city. Rather than treating resistance simply as a form of disruption, what can we learn from the recent acts of urban resistance in terms of their tactics and strategies and implications for planning and conservation? What discourses and values are at the heart of these movements that can inform and inspire planning actions? What can the recent movements tell us about the roles of diverse

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actors in the process of social and political change? How can planning and conservation practices enable and/or engage in a meaningful contestation of social values and political discourses? How can professional practices of planning and conservation go beyond institutional frameworks and regulatory practices to incorporate social and political actions?

This inaugural volume of *plaNext* features articles selected from the 8th annual AESOP Young Academics Conference that explored urban resistance in a wide range of contexts, ranging from everyday insurgencies to urban social movements (Caruso, et al., 2014). The first pair of articles addresses the intersection of urban resistance and planning knowledge and practice. In “The Shape of Knowledge Redistribution with Planning Cultures,” Christian Peer discusses a major urban redevelopment project in Vienna and how citizens look for alternative ways to challenge the development plan in the face of limited participation. These included designing homepages, social media and networking, and forming a civic organisation. In “An Anatomy of Hope,” Fredrik Torisson engages in a philosophical and theoretical discussion of the notion and politics of hope as a concept that is simultaneously critical and propositional. It further discusses the limitations and potentials of the principles of hope in contemporary spatial practices.

The second set of articles address the focus of public space and public life that has emerged as a central theme in many of the recent movements. Specifically, the critique and ideological challenge against a diminishing public realm has served as a basis for the resistance movements. In “Safety and Antagonistic Notions of Public Life,” Lina Snodgrass developed a conceptual framework to examine the institutionalised notion of safety and practices governing the public life in the context of urban planning in Sweden. In “Re-designing Commons in Italy,” Michele Vianello examines commons as an alternative institution for resource management and democratic decision-making. Specifically, the article examines the development of the concept of commons in the Italian context in both academic research and the social use of the term, and points to directions for further exploration in terms of how the concept of commons can be operationalised in the legal and institutional domain.

The final article provides a critical examination of the politics of resistance. In “Brazilian Uprising,” Rafael Gonçalves de Almeida and Matheus da Silveira Grandi take a macro perspective on the politics of identity and space in the recent mass movements in Brazil, specifically how the processes of spatial diffusion and dispersion reflects a new politics of identity which can also result in the reproduction of dominant power relations.

These selected articles are by no means representative of a broad spectrum of papers and cases presented at the conferences or enacted around the world. Nevertheless, they offer a snapshot into the issues and questions that have aroused the interest of a new generation of



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scholars whose work may well shape the discourses and practices of planning and conservation in the decades to come. Their contributions to this volume, *Cities that Talk*, invite us to critically rethink the voices, dialogues, and debates in cities today and seek to make new theoretical and political sense of the contemporary phenomena of urban resistance. It is in the way that we may find resistance, planning, and conservation not only entangled but hopefully also enriched.

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