

## Introduction

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**Electronic version**

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ejas/11188>

DOI: 10.4000/ejas.11188

ISSN: 1991-9336

**Publisher**

European Association for American Studies

**Electronic reference**

Aneta Dybska and Sandrine Baudry, "Introduction", *European journal of American studies* [Online], 10-3 | 2015, document 1.1, Online since 31 December 2015, connection on 08 July 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejas/11188> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.11188>

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# Introduction

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- <sup>1</sup> In 1968 the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre defined the right to the city as a right to “urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete *usage* of these moments and places, etc.”<sup>1</sup> His idea caught on in the Western countries and, in recent years, has been widely used as a critical tool by American urban scholars. The study of urban dwellers’ access to space and greenery, as well as the uses these urban resources are put to, reveals the existing discrepancies between the American values of justice and equality on the one hand and day-to-day realities of urban life on the other. Since claims and demands for a more equitable living environment materialize in public spaces in the form of territorial conflicts, knowing who uses public space and how it is used can inform us on a multitude of aspects of contemporary American society. Among them are the relations between citizens and institutions in the making of an urban public, as well as the relations among citizens themselves.

Contemporary scholars of the right to the city have elaborated on Lefebvre’s at times vague formulations and abstractions on the right to the city. Indeed, Mark Purcell argues that “Lefebvre’s urban politics of the inhabitant would not lead necessarily to any particular outcomes,” in that the indeterminate character of the right to the city makes it unclear who will be empowered, and to what degree. Purcell argues that Lefebvre’s conception of the inhabitant is limited to the working class, thus reducing the right to the city to anticapitalist resistance, whereas it is clear that such divisions as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation also are a ground for spatial exclusion and inequality.<sup>2</sup> For example, Eugene J. McCann underlines the necessity of accounting for racial inequalities when applying Lefebvre’s concept to North American cities.<sup>3</sup> McCann reminds us that rights are not inherently positive, so that it is not enough to advocate for the right to the city; it is important to ask whose needs are being met, and to keep in mind that urban space will become more democratic through inhabitant participation only if we recognize the complexity and diversity of urban needs.<sup>4</sup>

In the capitalist city operating as a “growth machine”<sup>5</sup> and driven by the incentive to accumulate capital with the privatization of land and real estate development, conflict emerges over the exchange value and the use value of land by the broad urban public. Since commodification of urban spaces breeds social exclusion and surveillance, it is also thought to threaten the political and social needs of urban citizens. A functional public sphere is the cornerstone of the civil society, whose inherent nature is to “limit[] the power of state, but also contribute[] to the development of common political debate and cultural exchange, which informs and influences collective decisions, allowing for the negative and positive meanings of freedom simultaneously to develop.”<sup>6</sup> Public spaces such as parks, squares, playgrounds have their antecedent in the *agora* of the Greek *polis* and serve to facilitate participation in egalitarian and democratic processes.<sup>7</sup> Functional public spaces are *spaces for representation* where, as Mitchell explains, diverse urban groups such as immigrants, veterans, the homeless, the queer youth of color, and urban gardeners can legitimately constitute themselves as political subjects within urban and national polity.<sup>8</sup> It is in the public space that the otherwise invisible groups can draw attention to social, economic, and environmental injustice as mapped onto exclusionary urban geographies: displacement of low-income tenants, privatization of parks and playgrounds, as well as discriminatory access to work, education, transportation, food, and health care.

In its political dimension, the right to the city is contingent upon the existence of public spaces. Functional public spaces (the commons) constitute the foundation of urban democracy since they ensure the exercise of political freedoms by diverse urban actors. Geographer Don Mitchell makes a powerful claim in defense of the right to appropriate urban space: “in a society where *all* property is private, those who own none (or whose interests are not otherwise protected by a right to access private property) simply cannot *be*, because they would have no place to *be*.”<sup>9</sup> The presence of the homeless in the public space is not voluntary, he insists. Unlike property owning individuals who voluntarily create a public outside of the private realm, the homeless pose a challenge to such a political order: their presence in public space is involuntary and permanent, and thus strikes at the political core of modern societies, that is, the division into the private/public realm on which the democratic system is built.<sup>10</sup> To fall back on urban planner Ali Madanipour’s definition:

Public space is a place of simultaneity, a site for display and performance, a test of reality, an exploration of difference and identity, an arena for recognition, in which representation of difference can lead to an awareness of the self and others, and to an examination of the relationship between particular and general, personal and impersonal. It is a place where many-sided truths co-exist and tolerance of different opinions is practiced.<sup>11</sup>

- 5 In recent decades, the right to the city has become the idiom of collective resistance against the sanitization of public spaces and their transformation into sites of socio-cultural exclusion and privilege. Cultural, economic, and ideological frictions play themselves out territorially, and space, rather than being a backdrop against which urban denizens articulate their demands, becomes an inseparable element of socio-cultural struggle. Thus public space can be looked at through the prism of inclusion and exclusion along the lines of gender, race, sexuality, religion, or home ownership. American city leaders and planners realized early on that public realm was indispensable for the citizens’ practice of their democratic right. For example, in 1872 New York City’s Union Square was planned by the authorities as an official place where

the spirit of democracy would thrive precisely because it was designated as a meeting place, a public forum, a site of exchange of ideas and debate, an arena where conflicts would be fought out.<sup>12</sup> A century after its design, Union Square Park shared the lot of many municipal parks that deteriorated during the 1970s fiscal crisis. Since the mid-1980s Union Square Park has undergone revitalization and gained new life with the opening of a farmers market as an anchor for commercial activity in the area.<sup>13</sup> Today it is a subway hub with heavy pedestrian traffic and thousands of visitors. As in numerous other places in New York City, areas adjacent to the park were rezoned and opened to high-rise mixed-use construction. This was done at the cost of displacing old-time lower-class residents from affordable housing which was demolished to make room for corporate offices and upscale apartments. Now that the park's open plaza and playgrounds have been gradually revitalized, local advocacy groups make sure that the commercial and consumer functions of the square (e.g. an upscale restaurant, shops and entertainment) do not override the park's civic function as an official site of oppositional political rallies and demonstrations, community events, and festivities.<sup>14</sup> Such reinscription of public spaces into sites of order, respectability, and safety stands at odds with the original design and intended function of Union Square as a site of encounter and exchange of ideas, of officially sanctioned disorder, where spontaneous political protest and discontent could be articulated.<sup>15</sup>

The right to the city activism and debates revolve, in a large part, around participation in political processes that shape the city. A group's autonomy should be measured in terms of its ability to voice concerns and demands in the public, gain political recognition via visibility and exposure, and thus actively participate in the production of law and social space.<sup>16</sup> Whether used as a political philosophy of change or as an analytical tool, the right to the city perspective shows that the hegemonic discourses of the municipal governments and the nation-state have always generated competing claims to space and space production. It can be an effective measure to countervail the emergent socio-spatial injustices, cultural hierarchies of the state, and profit-oriented public space management. For Edward Soja, the right to the city is coterminous with "seeking spatial justice," "democracy and citizen's rights" both at the level of the city and the metropolitan region.<sup>17</sup> As Peter Marcuse explains, the right to the city is a "moral claim, founded on fundamental principles of justice." It is not a single right but a set of manifold rights subsumed under the status of urban citizenship<sup>18</sup>—a right to quality education, health care, affordable and decent housing, a right to clean air, water, and sanitation, healthy food, public services, public space, and political representation. At its root, the right to the city activism sets out to transform the extant power relations in the capitalist city by building a new urban order premised on equality, self determination, as well as justice: economic, racial, immigrant, and environmental.

In the post-World War II period both North American and European cities, communist and capitalist alike, were overwhelmingly controlled by centralized state bureaucracies—a model that precluded the agency of urban citizens in the making of their own living and working environment. Lefebvre's notion of *autogestion* (self-management), articulated in the atmosphere of the student revolt in 1960s France, aims at a radical reordering of power relations within the capitalist city whereby urban dwellers would be empowered to participate in local-level politics. Operating within the terrain of the civil society, *autogestion* "calls the State into question as a

constraining force erected above society as a whole. . . . [and] tends to reorganize the State as a function of its development, which is to say it tends to engender the State's withering away."<sup>19</sup> With this shift towards "prioritizing the social needs that are formulated, controlled, and managed by those who have a stake in them," Lefebvre predicts the democratization of urban processes and a move towards a more just urban order.<sup>20</sup> When implemented in the realm of urban planning and management, self-management stands for direct democratic processes that entail "efficacious contestation" in the place of hierarchical, state-controlled government, as well as "effective development" in place of the logic of accumulation and commodification. Finally, "born and reborn at the heart of contradictory society," the concept of *autogestion* "coincides with that of freedom," concludes Lefebvre.<sup>21</sup>

While in urban studies Lefebvre is credited for articulating an early version of the right to the city, his writings were preceded by the Port Huron Statement (PHS), a 1962 manifesto of American activist movement Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which insisted on participatory democracy as a legitimate alternative to the ailing, "apathetic democratic system," that is, representative democracy. Written by Tom Hayden, the PHS expressed the radical youth's disenchantment with both the American Cold War policy and the quality of social life at home: racism, poverty, state authoritarianism and paternalism, the "depersonalization" of individuals, and the suppression of their "unrealized potential for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity." The SDS activists voiced hope in "a democracy of individual participation" as a countermeasure to the widening chasm between the nation-state's professed ideals and lived reality. The Port Huron Statement re-centered the individual, claiming that direct engagement in politics would "provide outlets for the expression of personal grievance and aspiration . . . [much as] illuminate choices and facilitate the attainment of goals" (PHS).<sup>22</sup> Those demands would resonate a few years later in Lefebvre's notion of *autogestion*, validating urban citizens as agents of social change.

Although the concerns raised by the right to the city idea have mostly been tackled by such radical geographers as David Harvey and Don Mitchell, or planners such as Peter Marcuse,<sup>23</sup> researchers in American Studies are starting to pay attention to matters of urban inequality through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's concept.<sup>24</sup> This special issue brings together contributions by scholars from France, the Netherlands, and Poland ranging from fieldwork among contemporary right-to-the-city activist groups through archival research on 19th-century mobilizations to the analysis of artistic and literary renditions of urban inequalities. These diverse methodological and theoretical approaches provide a multiscalar look at conflicts around urban territories on the local, regional, national, and global scale, and remind us that right-to-the-city struggles existed well before the term itself was coined in the 1960s. They also show that the right to the American city is not limited to resisting the production and control of public space by corporate and state capital, but that it includes Italian Americans, African Americans and other minorities' struggle for representation and control over their urban environment.

The first three papers of the issue, written by Aneta Dybska, Kamil Rusłowicz and Ruud Jansens, investigate urban discourses in the making in American and European contexts, through historical, political, and literary approaches respectively. Bénédicte Deschamps' and Justyna Wierzchowska's contributions that follow look at

the role in the space of the city. Both read the claims for representation made by the culturally marginalized in the past and the name of the homeless today through the lenses of history and cultural studies. Finally, Guillaume Marche, Florian Opillard, and Aurélie Godet use field work and case studies to analyze how competing claims to housing and public space lead contemporary urban dwellers to organize at the grassroots to fight displacement.

Ameta Dybska adopts the right to the city perspective to discuss the federal War on Poverty programs and Black Power agenda in the 1960s, with attention to their respective advocacy of community governance as a means of countering ineffective models of bureaucratic urban management and eradicating socio-spatial injustices. Both initiatives were filled with well-meaning idealism grounded in such democratic ideals as civic participation, fair chances, equal opportunities, and equal access to public goods for all urban actors. The War on Poverty's concern with political empowerment through citizen participation was a public policy measure bent on the poor's cultural mainstreaming, notes Dybska. Yet, as the ideological goals of the War on Poverty unfolded in the atmosphere of urban rebellion, demand for community control became the rallying cry of Black Power organizations. They saw neighborhood-level empowerment as a panacea to racial discrimination, oppression, and second-class citizenship. Although grassroots activism among ghettoized Blacks grew out of the political ferment of the students' movement, it was fused with the ideology of black nationalism. Black Power organizations such as the Black Panther Party linked community control to emancipatory politics. They hoped to wield control over black neighborhoods as scattered outposts of a racial nation that, once strong and unified, would successfully integrate into the pluralistic American society.

Both War on Poverty and Black Panther Party survival programs yielded palpable results: they gave African Americans a sense of agency and energized large numbers of black youth to join an unprecedented tide of self-organizing and self-help activities. If both initiatives encouraged a form of *autogestion* at the community-level, they inevitably undermined the credibility of centralized state institutions. As effective and transformative as the experience of self-management must have been for African Americans, it nonetheless, "engender[ed] the State's withering away,"<sup>25</sup> as predicted by Lefebvre, Dybska concludes.

In a similar vein, Kamil Rusłowicz analyses Polish writer Mariusz Sieniewicz's 2003 novel *Czwarte niebo* [*Fourth Heaven*]. Drawing on theories of space developed by David Harvey, Edward Soja, and Michel de Certeau, he investigates the social potential for the right-to-the-city activism in the material space of communist urban planning. The fictional district of Zatorze, in the north-eastern city of Olsztyn, Poland, is a former industrial community whose material environment was designed around a factory. Due to the collapse of the state-controlled economy followed by deindustrialization, Zatorze is suspended in the physical space of Fordism, yet unyielding to the neoliberal strategy of flexible accumulation.<sup>26</sup> It is a clear instance of social and spatial inequalities, "a waste product"<sup>27</sup> that emerges along with the region's economic growth. Rusłowicz adopts a multiscalar approach to show how the old time Zatorze residents enact their local identities through resistance to global capital and neocolonial dominance by forces beyond their control, be it economic or ideological. This defensiveness precludes the community's openness to change.<sup>28</sup> Making use of the panoptic, disciplining function of the communist-era architecture embodied in high-density apartment

blocks, neighbors resort to individual spatial tactics and the visual surveillance of everyday street-level social interactions. Rusłowicz argues that through “the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress,”<sup>29</sup> the social relations forged by the Concept-City of authoritarian planning have outlived communism and, like the panopticon, continue to regulate spatial practices at Zatorze. The ample social capital accumulated in the past does not translate into neighborhood activism or incentives for a creative grassroots makeover of the district. This kind of capital incapacitates rather than stimulates action, conserves the social *status quo* rather than overcomes inertia.

If, politically speaking, the right to the city takes its origin in the idea of participatory democracy and civic responsibility, then Zatorze can serve as a cautionary tale for other post-socialist cities transitioning to neoliberal capitalism. The old timers in Zatorze have a sense of entitlement to urban space but it is a far cry from Lefebvre’s notion of *autogestion*.

Ruud Jansens’ contribution to this volume, “Segregation or Assimilation: Dutch Government Research on Ethnic Minorities in Dutch Cities and its American Frames of Reference,” shifts the discussion of the right to the city to the realm of policy making and representation. Jansens shows that, ironically, the Dutch government’s commitment to increasing urban equality in the 1980s introduced into public discourse and national consciousness the concept of ethnic conflict, which led to minority groups’ misrepresentation and stigmatization. Jansens reveals that the state-level Minorities Policy geared towards greater social justice, in fact, produced a chasm within the Dutch society along the lines of ethnicity and citizenship. By carrying out a detailed study of governmental statistical reports released between the early 1980s and the mid-2000s, he traces the discursive evolution of the term “ethnic minority” as applied to immigrants and refugees on a par with second-generation Dutch citizens born of a foreign parent, this classification being soon superseded by the division into “autochtonen” (ethnic Dutch) and “allochtonen” (immigrants). The latter reveals that concern with the assimilation of “ethnic others” into the dominant culture gradually became the key concern of Dutch policy makers, with the stigmatization of the “allochtonen” as a by-product. By the early 2000s, it was not an uncommon belief that, if left to their own devices, non-assimilating immigrants would soon become a spatially segregated and culturally alien underclass, a threat to social order and a serious economic problem. Jansens’ study pinpoints the flaws in the application of classical 1920s theories of American urban sociology to the study of ethnicity and immigration in the Netherlands today. Impressed by Robert Park’s urban ecology, Jansens contends, Dutch statisticians and planners drew on the Chicago School scholarship in a selective manner and completely overlooked the contemporary revisions of those early theories, which challenged the assimilationist model and endorsed cultural diversity as constitutive of urban life. The Dutch officials’ discussions evoked the conflictual nature of ethnic relations but ignored the systemic explanations as root causes of the immigrants’ cultural nonconformity. Neither did they foreground the ethnic Dutch majority’s racial prejudice and discrimination as possible factors leading to social inequality.

Jansens’ detailed study shifts in the discourse about immigrants shows that Dutch state policies, which initially aimed at achieving greater socio-spatial justice, diminished the “ethnic others” right to the city. He therefore demonstrates that



understanding the mutual constitution of power, knowledge, and social policy is a necessary first step to guaranteeing that right.

The “ethnic other” is also at the center of Bénédicte Deschamps’ article, but with an emphasis on strategies of representation, rather than state policy. “‘The cornerstone is laid’: Italian American Memorial Building in New York City and Immigrants’ Right to the City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” examines the strategies used by early Italian Americans to apply their right to the city. During that time of massive Eastern and Southern European immigration, Italians and other new arrivals were perceived by Americans as undesirable invaders, physically and culturally too different to hope for integration. The urban neighborhoods in which these immigrants settled were similarly stigmatized as being filthy, loud, and unfit for living. Underlining the relationship between urban space and social identity, Deschamps explains how Italian Americans sought to assert their place in American society. They extended “their walking geography” by stepping out of the Little Italies and into the middle-class neighborhoods where they made their presence visible by erecting monuments and gathering for inaugurations. She insists on the pivotal role of the Italian American elite, in particular Carlo Barsotti, director of the newspaper *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*, in advocating for these monuments to be built and negotiating strategic locations with the city authorities so that the statues of Italian heroes would be seen by as many New Yorkers as possible. Barsotti set out to expand the visibility and prestige of Italian Americans by “forcing Italian historical heritage on Americans, and giving Italians an excuse to occupy new areas of the city.” The goal was not only to claim a right to the city but also a place in the American collectivity, as well as to foster unity among Italian Americans themselves by forging a common ethnic identity. Yet, these efforts generated dissent, in particular from other ethnic groups which competed with Italian Americans for representation in public space; even within the Italian community, the allocation of funds to statues rather than community infrastructure was contested.

What links Deschamps’ analysis with Justyna Wierzychowska’s contribution are the uses of monuments in forging and negotiating collective identities. At different points in the history of New York, artistic and political interventions used public memorials to bring to focus and validate the life experiences of the otherwise underrepresented social groups: the immigrants, the homeless, and more recently war veterans. Space in the city is not an “indifferent medium,” Lefebvre insisted<sup>30</sup> but an effect of power—a site of controversy and debate over who has the right to political representation and recognition. Public monuments function to: symbolically integrate minority group heroes into the nation-building narratives; leave a lasting mark of those groups’ cultural heritage on the fabric of the city; as much as articulate, in spatial terms, their aspirations of equal membership in the American body politic.

Wierzychowska’s paper deals with Polish-born artist Krzysztof Wodiczko’s public art installations in Union Square Park, New York. Sited in a traditional protest area where voices of dissent have been freely expressed, *The Homeless Projection* (1986) and *Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection* (2012) offer a temporarily and fleeting subversion of the meanings evoked by public monuments. Casting images of the homeless and war veterans’ video testimonies onto three-dimensional statues, Wodiczko prompts a critical revision of American national narratives. Otherwise commemorating the nation’s past glories through such heroes as George Washington,



Abraham Lincoln, and Marquis de Lafayette, the public monuments used in Wodiczko's work double up as screens against which alternative visions of the past and the present are projected. Those moments of reinscription are possible as long as the viewers become involved in the act of witnessing human suffering, deprivation, loss and grief, and social injustice. Wodiczko's installations challenge the unitary vision of America as a nation-state and the alleged continuities between the founding principles of the Republic and its ideologies today, as embodied in the monumental statues of great national heroes. Wierzchowska argues that the projected images expose urban citizens to the traumas of others, thereby opening up space for a critical reassessment of meanings sedimented in the nation's self-narratives. Unlike *The Homeless Projection* which took the shape of a proposal only, the *War Veteran Projection* was executed outdoors. It invited the urban citizens passing through Union Square Park to engage in a participatory mode of interaction whereby the viewing subjects act as prosumers,<sup>31</sup> to use Henry Jenkins' term, that is, as both consumers and producers of cultural and ideological meanings. The "embodied" experience of otherness, made possible by the existence of the public realm, lends itself to a psychoanalytic reading. Since public memorials usually commemorate a historical figure or an event, they serve to legitimate the hegemonic narratives of American national origins and collective unity. Wodiczko's artistic interventions bring to the surface the repressed, traumatic aspects of national myth-making and symbolism. The grand and monumental statues of the nation's political and military leaders are what Wierzchowska calls "aesthetic anesthetics"—they serve to maintain the totalizing narratives that disguise the contradictions built into the continuous reproduction of national identities. It is not coincidental, she contends.

While planting statues of Italians in public spaces and projecting images on statues of American national heroes are cases of artistic appropriation that contest blatant inequalities built into the production and control of space by capital, Aurélie Godet's paper titled "'Meet de Boys on the Battlefield': Festive Parades and the Struggle to Reclaim Public Spaces in Post-Katrina New Orleans" straddles two key themes of the right to the city activism, namely, the appropriation of public spaces and anti-gentrification struggles. Godet also tackles the forging of collective identities through the use of public space, this time through mobile, short-term festive occupation. The article discusses three case studies of the post-Katrina carnival culture in New Orleans as a strategy of claiming urban space following the massive displacements caused by the hurricane and its aftermath. The natural disaster was used by the municipal government as an opportunity for urban renewal projects and gentrification of working-class neighborhoods. Through the lens of Abdou Maliq Simone's conceptualization of people as infrastructure, Godet examines the ways in which a marginalized population draws on festive practices to politicize urban space in "the parading capital of the United States." Since the 18th century processional rituals rooted in African and Caribbean traditions have served to embody cultural prestige and political power, and to turn New Orleans streets into lived spaces, but, according to Godet, after Katrina, music and parades came to be used with more intensity as tools to achieve the right to the city. Through three case studies—a funeral procession in 2007, a Mardi Gras Indian St. Joseph's Night Procession, and the Krewe of Eris Parade in 2012—she underlines "the enduring power of ritualised collective effervescence" to negotiate a local identity, as well as foster economic activity by attracting tourists. The analysis of these parades raises the question of the residents' ability to control the

urban space they inhabit when faced with increases in permit fees for public processions, a troubled relationship with the police, and internal discord about how subversive carnival krewes should be. Beyond the festivities, post-Katrina parades in New Orleans emphasize the role of people in re-injecting meaning into places damaged by a natural disaster, as well as the potential of the disenfranchised to induce debate about conflicts around access to public space despite limited access to formal political power.

The contributions by Guillaume Marche and Florian Opillard, like Godet, rely on field work, but they examine the geographies of gentrification in San Francisco, a highly gentrified city with a long history of grassroots activism, where social justice advocates have been fighting neoliberal models of urban governance and the commodification of land and housing.

Guillaume Marche's paper focuses on how community greening can arguably work for the advantage of either side of displacement, showing that advocacy for the right to the city does not necessarily lead to greater equality. Indeed, even when land is scarce and real estate value increases, green public spaces such as community gardens attract individuals who represent what Richard Florida has dubbed the "creative class." Not only do they drive the gentrification process but they do so with municipal support. On the other hand, residents involved in the community greening project tend to be more attached to their neighborhood and determined to fight displacement. In order to try and disentangle the apparent contradictions in the role of community gardens in gentrification and tenant displacement, Marche takes a close look at the organizational structures and motivations of three groups of gardeners through field work: a couple in a low-income neighborhood whose project soon garnered support from local residents, a single gardener in an already-gentrified neighborhood whose residents seek to beautify their surroundings, and a top-down greening initiative on the premises of a housing project. Marche's comparative analysis reveals that the relationship between community gardening and gentrification greatly depends on the type of decision-making processes and the degree of community engagement. This paper brings out one of the paradoxes inherent in the application of the right to the city, namely, the claiming of that right by residents who want to beautify urban space through community greening, yet simultaneously deny it to the disempowered, so that it eventually becomes a tool of displacement.

Florian Opillard's research, in turn, deals with San Francisco tenant associations organizing to resist the commodification of housing and the subsequent displacement of residents caused by hypergentrification due to the influx of tech industry workers during the "tech boom 2.0." The paper explores strategies of resistance to tenant evictions in a "boiling political activism milieu" by studying the group styles of two activist collectivities, Eviction Free San Francisco and the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project, as well as their "repertoires of contention," a concept developed by Charles Tilly. Tenant eviction has gone up since the first tech boom in the late 1990s as a result of the landlords' overuse of the 1985 Ellis Act, which allows them to get out of the rental market and remodel their buildings to sell them as individual luxury condos. Activist groups are targeting the speculation process—which involves the displacement of tenants—through whistle-blowing strategies such as collection of data and creation of maps, or the "public shaming" of speculators by releasing their names. Opillard discusses the impact of the San Francisco Anti-Displacement Coalition,

to which the discussed activist groups belong, especially through the proposal and successful passing of legislation to disincentivize the flipping of property and ensure financial aid to displaced tenants. He also suggests the need for a change of scale in the study of gentrification processes and resistance, from the city to the urban region, which requires “a major change in the analysis of embedded patterns of racial and class segregation.”

The contributions in this special issue highlight how critical inquiry into the relationship between the socio-spatial processes and urban governance on the one hand and capitalist economies on the other helps shed light on the contingent nature of the city. This critical approach can be applied to the various methodological and theoretical frameworks developed by scholars in American Studies in order to explain contemporary as well as historical urban phenomena of space production and struggles for equality and representation in the city. Although the concept itself was born in France in the 1960s, the right to the city as an analytical tool or a form of urban activism can be used in understanding cities in other times and places, provided it is extended beyond the scope of working-class struggles central to Lefebvre’s work, to include categories of urban actors and processes of exclusion specific to each studied context.

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## NOTES

1. Henri Lefebvre, “The Right to the City” in *Writings on Cities*, eds. and trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000 [1968]), 179.
2. If Lefebvre were writing today, he would surely have taken into account the increasing racial diversity of European cities.
3. Eugene J. McCann, “Race, Protest, and Public Space: Contextualizing Lefebvre in the US city,” *Antipode* 31, no. 2 (1999): 163-184.
4. Mark Purcell, “Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant,” *GeoJournal* 58, no. 2 (2002): 99-108.
5. Harvey Molotch, “The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place” in *Cities and Society*, ed. Nancy Kleniewski (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 17-27.
6. Ali Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City* (London: Routledge, 2003), 207.
7. Some urban scholars point to the exclusive nature of political life in the Greek Polis. See, for example, Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1989 [1961]), 135; Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 132.
8. Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 129.
9. *Ibid.*, 34.
10. *Ibid.*, 128-134. See Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 128-134. As a case study Mitchell uses the early 1990s struggle of the homeless to reside in People’s Park in Berkeley, California.
11. Madanipour, *Public and Private Spaces of the City*, 206
12. Union Square became a public park in the 1830s and only in 1872 was redesigned by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux specifically as a meeting place.

13. For a few decades now, four times a week Unions Square has held the Union Square Greenmarket that sells regional farm produce, foodstuffs, and flowers. Lower Manhattan's largest market, as the *New Republic* contributor Corby Kummer put it perceptively, is "about more than buying food"—it's about striking up conversations, exchanging information, feeling part of a community and actively contributing to it. Along with subways and buses, a public food market is one of the only places left for people of different economic classes to encounter one another, and even ... strike up a conversation." See Corby Kummer, "How to Create the Perfect Public Food Market," *New Republic*, September 21, 2015, accessed September 23, 2015, <http://www.newrepublic.com/article/122670/how-create-perfect-public-food-market>.
14. See "Union Square," *The New York Preservation Archive Project*, 2014, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.nypap.org/content/union-square>; and "Union Square Park," *NYC Parks*, accessed September 20, 2015, <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/union-square-park>.
15. We are relying on Don Mitchell's analysis concerning the struggle over People's Park in Berkeley which, he argues, reveals a tension between two opposing visions of public space in general: order vs. disorder, entertainment vs. political protest, and control vs. freedom of interaction. See Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 128-129.
16. Mitchell, *The Right to the City*, 29.
17. Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 7, 96.
18. Peter Marcuse, "Whose Rights to What City" in *Cities for People Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*, eds. Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse, and Margit Mayer (London: Routledge, 2012), 35.
19. Henri Lefebvre, "Theoretical Problems of Autogestion" in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, eds. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 146-147. See also Aneta Dybska's contribution to this volume, "Where the War on Poverty and Black Power Meet: A Right to the City Perspective on American Urban Politics in the 1960s."
20. *Ibid.*, 148.
21. *Ibid.*, 149.
22. Tom Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society, 1962," *msu.edu*, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst306/documents/huron.html>.
23. For a detailed discussion of critical urban theory see Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse, and Margit Mayer, "Cities for People, Not for Profit: An Introduction" in *Cities for People Not for Profit*, 1-10.
24. As evidenced for instance by the success of the 2014 Paris conference, "The Right to the City in an Era of Austerity (1973-2014): Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future of Urban Democracy in the United States and Great Britain."
25. Henri Lefebvre, "Theoretical Problems of Autogestion," 147.
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