

# Call for papers

## Urban Struggles in Mediterranean Cities:

### The Right to the City and the Common Space

Abstracts Submission Deadline: January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018



### International UnConference

Athens, School of Architecture,

National Technical University of Athens

May 31<sup>th</sup> – June 3<sup>th</sup>, 2018

<https://urbanstruggles.net/>

## Call For Papers: Urban Struggles in Mediterranean Cities

In the late 60's, Henri Lefebvre published his influential piece the "The Right To The City" for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Marx's "Capital", just before the revolutionary outbreaks in Paris, Prague, the rest of Europe and the US. "The Right To The City" became a cornerstone in radical thinking, thus, in urban social movements.

One of its basic theses is that:

*The city is a projection of society on the ground that is, not only on the actual site, but at a specific level, perceived and conceived by thought, (...) the city is the place of confrontations and of (conflictual) relations (...), the city is the 'site of desire' and site of revolutions (Lefebvre 1996[1968]: 109)<sup>1</sup>.*

In recent years, the discussion on "The Right To The City" has been enriched with the notion of the urban commons, which evokes territories governed by a group of people, the commoners, and a social relationship that underpins that governance. Commons do not exist *per se* but they are constructed in times of social struggles constituted through social process of commoning. Discussion on urban commons is articulated with the so-called new enclosures and revolves mainly around critical geographers' approaches that focus on the "accumulation by dispossession" and conceptualize commons as a new version of the "right to the city". Significantly, during the current urban struggles and revolts, the rebels do not just claim the urban space from the sovereign power, but they occupy and tend to transform it into an emancipatory common space. Through praxis of "relocation" and "reinscription", they produce hybrid spaces and collectively reinvent a culture of coexistence. Moreover, they try to challenge the neoliberal metropolitan time, as well as seeking to negotiate and going beyond cultural, class, gender, racial, religious and political identities, privileges and temporalities. Consequently, during rebel times the protestors are transformed into an unpredictable and misfitted multitude that produces unique and porous common spaces, spaces in movement and threshold spaces. On the other hand, neoliberal urban policies tend to appropriate and distort the common space through several methods like forced evictions, gentrification and touristification processes, creative city rhetorics and city branding policies that seek to improve the cities' competitiveness. Thus, the discourse on "the right to the city" and on "common space" has to be reconsidered, as the latter is becoming the hybrid arena of cultural, political and social urban conflicts.

This international (un)conference attempts to elaborate a postcolonial, decolonial and intersectional methodological framework that examines the right to the city and emerging common spaces focusing on the cities of Northern and Southern Mediterranean. These cities are figured as exemplary places for neoliberal urban policies while simultaneously they constitute the epicenter of urban riots and revolts. Characteristic examples are, *inter alia*, the December 2008 uprising in Athens, the Arab Spring in 2011, the Indignados movement in Spanish and Greek squares in 2011, the Gezi uprising in Istanbul in 2013, the Balkan protests in 2013-2014 and the ongoing migrants struggles across Mediterranean cities. At the same time, several social struggles for and through urban commons have emerged across the Mediterranean cities such as: housing projects, communal gardens, self-organized health centers, self-organized theaters, social kindergartens, social groceries, squats-social centers, collective kitchens, give-away bazaars, barter structures, community time banks, DIY offline networks and neighborhood assemblies constitute an emerging and fruitful urban common spaces.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lefebvre, H. (1996[1968]). *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Certainly, the above social structures and mobilizations do not form a single and homogeneous category; each of them has its own unique causes, motives, characteristics and consequences, as well as particular internal conflicts, contrasts and contradictions. In this view, the crucial questions of the gathering are the following:

1. How are the modes of communication, the characteristics and the identities of participants challenged, modified and troubled?
2. How was the processes of setting up common spaces were grounded on the multitude of gestures of solidarity, the emotional, communicative and aesthetic interactions, through which the bipolar contrasts of native-migrant, legal-illegal, young-old, worker-unemployed, male-female, lgbtiq-straight, religious-atheist and slum dwellers-middle class were sought to be overcome?

In doing so, this conference will seek to examine the intermediate and hybrid social relations and modes of communication in rebel spaces.

## Objectives

50 years after the first publication of the “Right To The City” and 5 years after the Arab Spring and the Indignados movement, the explicit goal and ambition of this (un)conference is to elaborate an in-depth comparative study on urban social movements in Mediterranean cities.

In this direction, we welcome proposals including among others:

- a) Dialectic, decolonial and intersectional perspectives on the right to the city and the common space;
- b) Comparative studies on gender, class, racial, religious and cultural dimensions of urban social movements in Mediterranean cities;
- c) Counter-hegemonic approaches that focus on the contemporary socioeconomic, political, regionalist and migrant crises in the different sites of the Mediterranean region.

## Submission Procedure

We welcome proposals for various kinds of interventions, including, but not limited to:

1. presentations of formal academic papers (there will be plenty of time for feedback and discussion)
2. roundtables (short talks – open discussions)
3. workshops: case-studies open to questions (sharing practical knowledge, working through a particular idea or problem, teaching a methodology, approach, or framework)
4. artistic interventions (installations; exhibitions or screenings of visual work - film, photography, etc.)

Interested contributors are invited to submit before January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a presentation proposal of maximum 400 words. Abstracts should include: title, type of proposal (paper, workshop, artistic intervention), keywords, name of the author(s), name of the presenter, affiliation and full contact details

(please fill the submission form, link). Authors will be notified by February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018, about the status of their proposals.

There are **no fees**. The organizing crew will especially cater for those unemployed or in precarious working conditions who wish to participate at the unconference; accommodation will be secured in houses of participants in the centre of Athens and money will be gathered during the conference to ease the costs of travelling.

And edited volume of contributions will be launched after the unconference.

## Important Dates

Abstracts Submission Deadline: January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Notification of Acceptance: February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Conference: Athens, May 31<sup>th</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018

## Inquiries

Inquiries may be directed to:

[rttcommons@gmail.com](mailto:rttcommons@gmail.com)

<https://urbanstruggles.net/>

## Organizing Crew

### **Alexandri Georgia**

Postdoctoral researcher  
Autonomous University of Madrid (Spain)

### **Avlona Natalia-Rozalia**

PhD Researcher  
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

### **Begüm Özden Fırat**

Assoc. Prof.  
Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Turkey)

**Belal Salma**

Master Researcher  
German University in Cairo (Egypt)

**Carastathis Anna**

Ph.D., Independent Researcher  
Feminist Researchers Against Borders - Athens (Greece)

**Dadusc Deanna**

Lecturer  
University of Brighton (UK)

**Fraeser Nina**

PhD Candidate  
HafenCity University Hamburg (Germany)

**Genç Firat**

Lecturer  
Istanbul Bilgi University (Turkey)

**Georgakopoulos Christos**

PhD Candidate  
National Technical University of Athens (Greece)

**Geronta Antigoni**

PhD Candidate  
Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya (Spain)

**Hatziprokopiou Panos**

Ass. Professor Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece)

**Katsinas Philipp**

Dr. Geography  
King's College London (UK)

**Kouroumichaki Evangelia**

Master Researcher  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain)

**Koutrolikou Penny**

Assist. Professor  
National Technical University of Athens (Greece)

**Leontidou Lila**

Professor  
University of Peloponesus (Greece)

**Penpecioglu Mehmet**

Dr. Urban Planner

**Petrakos Kostas**

PhD Candidate

National Technical University of Athens (Greece)

**Petropoulou Christy**

Assist. Professor

University of the Aegean (Greece)

**Ploumidi Eleni**

PhD Candidate

National Technical University of Athens (Greece)

**Spathopoulou Aila**

PhD Candidate

King's College University London (UK)

**Travlou Penny**

Lecturer

University of Edinburgh (UK)

**Tsavdaroglou Haris**

Postdoctoral researcher

University of Thessaly (Greece)

**Tsilimpounidi Myrto**

Marie Curie Fellow

Institute of Sociology (Slovakia)

**Yalçintan Murat Cemal**

Professor

Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Turkey)

**Yardımcı Sibel**

Professor

Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Turkey)