Public space, housing affairs, and the dialectics of lived space
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Abstract

This paper is structured into two parts. The first part is dedicated to conceptually frame "Relational Public Space and Emerging City Publics", whereas the second part deals with "Silences and absences from public space research": This part will deal with three case studies: Vienna, Barcelona and Berlin. The Vienna case will help to exemplify theoretical and conceptual considerations, whereas the main empirical study revolves around the Barcelona case. The Berlin case will help to translate again back from empirical findings to conceptual critique. As follows, I am planning to offer some key arguments why to combine housing activism and research, with public space activism and research. In the conclusions "Resistance combined", I will elaborate on the core hypothesis that a dialectical bridging of segmented fields in the scrutiny of urbanization processes is needed because of constant classificatory struggles and as an act to promote inclusive urban research.

Relational Public Space and Emerging City Publics (Vienna case)

"If space in general, can with difficult reductions be conceptualized as an abstract three-dimensional continuum, or a material substance, public urban space clearly cannot".

(Lehtovuori 2010, 16f)

There is something particular about public space. That is, public space can have a morphology, but public space is always as well a set of social relations and social (inter)actions in the city. This way, public space research urges scholars to go beyond imagining space as a shell or a container or an urban morphology (Tornaghi and Knierbein 2015). Once scholars start theorizing public life and public space, they will need to address theories of space. A commonly used reference paving the way for such type of theorizations is the scientific work of Henri Lefebvre (2009 (1991)) on the social production of space. Other scholars have approached theorizations of space through its social relations as well (Knierbein 2015, 44): In urban studies since roughly the 1960s, public space has been widely conceived as the realm of people's emerging needs and of society's pressing claims (Whyte, 1968; Jacobs, 1992/1961; Low and Smith, 2006; Madanipour, 2003 and 2010; Mitchell, 2003; Watson, 2006, and others). Many of these contributions have implicitly used public space as merely an entry point into urban studies; few have explicitly coined the public space as 'a relational web' of persons, places and connections (cf. Lofland, 2007 (1998), p. 51) or as a 'condition for and symbol of human relations' (Tonkiss, 2005, p. 2, referring to Simmel). Relational approaches to the production of space (Lefebvre, 2009b), particularly questions regarding the resulting epistemology of space, have rarely been explicitly linked

to public space debates, except by Lehtovuori (2010). In times of urban globalization/global urbanization, public space can be considered a key sphere of understanding the everyday social relations.

When analyzing public space in its political dimensions, a first analytical entry point are the emergent turnovers in society, when people take to the streets (Hou and Knierbein 2017). But the political also mediates through changes in everyday life and ordinary routines, however, to detect these changes we need to take a closer look on more soft and silent ruptures and transitions in public life. Yet understanding the ordinary dimension of public space also links to the social dimension of spaces of public life, which is very often not so much thought in connection with the aforementioned political uprisings. But if you have a look at where these political uprisings take place, these spaces have very often been places that have had an important everyday use before. Understanding public space means also – metaphorically speaking – to fish in reality and to dive into complexity. 'Fishing in reality' is about going to the streets and having a look at how street life unfolds and how the politics of the street is performed. It is an invitation to actively overcome academia as an ivory tower and to leave the seminar room to learn from public life. Diving into complexity means to acknowledge that there are at least twenty disciplines dealing with public space, and no discipline can take intellectual ownership of doing research on public space. At the same time, this complexity is a key feature of public space research as we can combine different bodies of (scientific and non-scientific) knowledge and also dig into the niches between segmented fields of knowledge.

However, alongside the many potentials that public space research offers there are some traditional pitfalls and dilemmas that need to be addressed: First of all, public space is a local terrain, where global complexity becomes empirically palpable, but also theoretically conceivable. This points to an issue about the spatial scales and scaling of everyday relations, and all the shades of grey in between (local, urban/rural, regional, national, transnational and global scales and relations). Doing public space research, one might find very local counter strategies and responses that can be empirically analyzed, but can also be turned into theoretical abstractions. And not so many researchers have seen that potential, because public space research used to be predominantly micro-scale research. But we have the possibility with public space to connect findings from micro-scale research with the meso-scale of the city and the macro-scale of economic globalization. Especially the lived-space-dimension of public space research is where we can scale analytical and interpretative endeavors between the very concrete minutiae of everyday life and the most abstract notion of spatial transitions and social relations.

Public space is as well where material claims are expressed (see Figure

1): At the Vienna New Main Train Station *(Wien Hauptbahnhof) Train of Hope*, of group of volunteers in refugee-aid, self-organized during the arrival of many of the refugees in autumn 2015. *Train of Hope* was a self-organized collective and later became an NGO which started to work together upon the arrival of many refugees in the Main Station of Vienna. They self-organized to provide for instance shelter and food in the Main Station, thus addressing basic human and material needs and using the public spaces of the train station for their embodied act of a politics of care. Refugee-aid in Vienna's Western Station was organized by Caritas, a humanitarian-aid NGO in a top-down fashion.

Figure 1: Train of Hope – a self-organized NGO provides arriving refugees with food, temporary shelter and other services to cater for their material human needs. Photo by Christopher Glanzl.

The Train of Hope in contrast was actually a newly emerging urban movement, not yet a NGO, constituted by a radical horizontal organization. Everyone who wanted to work, could help. And especially many former refugees, many former migrants, and also just other people like tourists, neighbors, students, teachers, etc. would be able to participate and to offer support. At the same time, *Train of Hope* was a political movement as well as they issued state critique from the first moment onwards. They said: Usually we would expect the state to handle this and to provide humanitarian aid, and it is because the state is not fulfilling its duties that we step in to do what is structurally needed to receive and support the incoming refugees at Wien Hauptbahnhof (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017).

Capitalist critics might coin this approach as a sort of an outsourcing

of social work and humanitarian work to civil society (Kaika 2017). That is one critique, but on the other side this argument might tend to overshadow histories of place and particular urban cultures: Receiving refugees and displaced populations has already quite a tradition in Vienna and the region as the Viennese population has repeatedly offered solidarity and humanitarian aid as well as shelter, home and a place to stay since the end of World War II.

More or less every twelve years, groups of refugees arrived from Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, etc. due to war, crisis or wider political changes in the region. Also, the Austrian-Hungarian border was the most porous point of the Iron Curtain and this situation mainly facilitated the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. Many Viennese and those from the region are already used to embodied practices of solidarity with refugees, and it is sometimes part of their own family history.

This was a key aspect that the movement was able to address through their horizontal organization and open access policy. Conceptually, the *Train of Hope* case allows us to draw a conceptual line for relational public space in connection to emerging city publics: Relational public space emerges not just for vulnerable groups, but with them, enacted by them and *through* their everyday action (Knierbein and Gabauer 2017).Also, the relation between public space and housing research gets clear, once one follows the different steps of how *Train of Hope* and further humanitarian players and activists try to bring refugees step-by-step from shelter (i.e.habitating in public space) towards emergency shelters (i.e. housing in reused empty office buildings, activation of vacant housing stop to be turned into temporary spaces for living), towards refugee housing (i.e. more institutionalized housing offers particularly for refugees, albeit often in the urban peripheries) towards decent schemes of finding a proper home (often more decentral and with a higher degree allowing for self-organization). This action is provided from public space, yet draws attention to all this often precarious forms of finding a home for refugees.

The Vienna case has just helped to exemplify a practiced relational public space, and has helped to translate from abstract theory to concrete urban contexts of relational praxis of different social actors. Simultaneously, in the fields of architecture and planning, a current relational turn can be witnessed which can be characterized by five aspects:

- Transdisciplinary approaches to city making where e.g. public researchers or city servants collaborate (on equal grounds) with NGOs and voluntary organizations to develop public space (relations)
- Context-specific and place-sensitive approaches fostering people-centered urban development tactics
- Social space (analysis) based conceptions of public space as

approaches to conceptually recover the lived spaces in the city
- Shift of focus to emphasize rather 'inclusion through action' (performative) then 'participation through discourse' (communicative)
- Alternative development paths of planning and urban design activities beyond traditional capitalist modes of territorial urban restructuring (post-growth, etc.)

Silences and Absences from Public Space and Housing Research (Barcelona)

After this conceptual introduction, supported by the case of relational public space in Vienna during the refugee crisis in 2015, the Barcelona case will serve as main empirical case to discuss my conceptual search, whereas the Berlin case study helps to bridge back again from empirical findings towards conceptual reflection. In terms of methodology, Vienna and Berlin research link back to my own previous research (Knierbein 2010, Knierbein and Gabauer 2017) in both cities whereas the Barcelona case rests on empirical material that has been published by the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (Platform for Mortgage Affected People, PAH Online 2013, 2017) and by Melissa Garcia-Lamarca (2017a, 2017b) which I have used to draw deep linkages between current urban praxis and experience and conceptual advancements in the fields of housing-public space dialectics.

The Barcelona case: It is important to acknowledge that already on 15th May 2011 hundreds of people gathered in protest in Puerta del Sol, one of the central squares in Madrid. These so-called 15-M or indignados protests spread around Spain afterwards. First it was a general political uprising against the state and corruption. At the same time, the impact of the global real estate crisis in 2008 had hit Spain intensively, and the social impacts were getting publicly visible, thus fueling new and continuing waves of protest in public space in the course of the Indignados Movement. The main point of the protestors, however, was that there were no prospects for young people in Spain due to high youth unemployment rates and pessimist further forecasts. Later onwards, the Puerta del Sol was cleared and the protests spread to the neighborhood level in a more dispersed fashion (Kränzle 2017), e.g. in the Campo de Cebada in Madrid (see figure 2). That is, the general place-based social movement started to decentralize and people would just try to work with neighbors in their own-microcosm.

There were different housing movements in Spain already before the 15-M-Movement, but in the course of the indignados protests, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) came into being. PAH was the movement that started saying that there is an emergency in the housing sector in Spain (PAH 2013, Colau and Alemany 2014, Garcia-Lamarca 2017a and 2017b, PAH 2017): There is a crisis about how people had received risky loans from banks for buying their own

Figure 2: Campo de Cebada, Madrid, Insights into urban civil society self-organization through 15-M movements in Spain. Photo by Eva Maria Mitterwieser

house or flat, resulting in an increasing number of cases to mortgaged lives and related evictions, that are acts of displacement from people's homes due to indebtedness. And this is due to the fact that the banking sector has been offering credits very similar to the US and Britain, where people were not able to pay back because for example they lost their jobs due to recession. These were very high-risk credits for real estate investments. That means that the banks did not make sure that the client who had taken the credit was able to pay it back for sure. The work of the PAH was very much about housing. PAH activists were reintroducing a human rights perspective into the perspectives of the housing sector in Spain. What is very fascinating is their PR and research work as activist collective: They have, for instance, a very good home page. They have organized their own empirical research, for example a book called *Mortgaged lives* (Colau and Alemany, 2014), and this has been published by two of the main activist of the PAH movement, Ada Colau, and Adrià Alemany, the former has in the meantime started office as the New Mayor of Barcelona.

The PAH is a housing rights movement – a very interesting case because they were bringing issues from the private realm of the household to public space: They were addressing problems that people who were evicted or who couldn't pay back their loan were facing (first on an intimate and private level). Between 2007 and 2011, there were approximately 350.000 foreclosures and out of these, there were 160.000 household evictions all over Spain. This is a mass phenomenon of social marginalization in contemporary Europe, as both the former

poorer classes and parts of the urban middle classes face precarious living conditions now. Usually if one is in that situation of having lost your job, first of all, most people feel ashamed of that. And if one then loses the own house, one is even more ashamed - and the society and the banking sector will make people think it is all their fault. That is, how the PAH has analyzed, how it works. So what they were saying to the people was "look, it is not your fault, it is a structural problem. And you need to come with us, and we meet to form a counter public (in public space constituted by social relations) and we discuss and we show that it is not a private, but a structural problem" (Colau and Alemany 2014). So they took these private fates out of the households and brought them to public space in order to discuss and to see that others are affected as well thus creating a place of solidarity. And once they started doing this it became visible that so many people had been affected. Those who had been affected were not just those who had anyway been living at the edge of poverty and precarious living conditions, but also a lot of former middle class families – or households – that were not actually thinking that at any time in their live they would end up in poverty. So it was a big shock for many parts of the affected population. And what the PAH also did was to really do their own research, to develop their own very strong policy recommendations, and to develop their own tactics of occupations. They also issued fundamental critique. On the one hand, they took people out of the private households into public spaces to join and discuss, but they also said that merely deliberating in public spaces is a problem, because what needs to be done involves much more bodily practices of action, e.g. de-privatization through occupation. Following their critique, the *asamblea pública* (public assembly) does not interfere into the capitalist and neoliberal modes of production, whereas embodied protest in bank buildings or on evicted properties was showing better results to issue claims of the PAH in a much more impactful way.

And this is something that is not new. Embodied forms of protests in and through public spaces have a long history: Well-known are the forms of the cases of the Fiat Torino plant in Italy and similar occupations of industrial plants in the United States at the beginning of the former century as well - the early occupation of factories can be understood as an embodied critique of the capitalist system through the disruption of the industrial workflow. The question here is: What is the difference between factory workers protesting outside of the gates of a factory and factory workers blocking a factory? What difference does it make where and how the protest takes place? If you talk about occupation and protest, which form is more effective for the workers to reach their political goal or claim, or to change what they think does not work well in their favor? - Blocking the factory inside occurs to be more impactful, as the employers cannot continue with the production

during the time of the occupation. Another reason is, that if workers had been protesting outside of the factory premises, the factory owner was able to replace them in order to continue with production, because the factory is empty and the employer can just hire new workers and send them to continue the work. This is an analysis of the early proletarian struggles for improving the living conditions for industrial workers around the 1930s and later. The PAH actually transferred these insights to contemporary times in which the Spanish society got increasingly affected by financial speculation and speculative urbanisms, as key phenomena of 21st century capitalist urbanization. Their tactic was to block bank buildings of those banks that had issued risky credits or to prevent evictions.

Transferring this initial debate on bridging issues of housing and public space, and the sort of dis-appropriation of the dwelling unit by means of foreclosures and evictions by state-market coalitions, just being in the public space in the asambleas to deliberate does not carry any material impact to the eviction practices, but it might impact on changing the political discourse. Whereas re-housing, as PAH activists call the occupation of vacant buildings where people had been evicted before, has a material impact, as it blocks both the dwelling as a financial asset (as the bank will find difficulties to sell it when people are living inside) and it provides an alternative space for those who have lost their house. The PAH even took this argument further as they unraveled that these 'assets' had been saved from banks running risk of going bankrupt by tax payer's money. PAH members argued that something that has been saved by public tax, should be given back to the public institutions and transformed into social housing, rather than remaining in the private property of the bank which would try to sell it at a higher price on an exclusive private market as soon as possible. If this is paid with tax money, the assets that belong to the bank - like flats that the people have been evicted from - they should be re-housed because they are collective property. That way the PAH successfully intervened and newly oriented public discourse on private and public home ownership in times of flexible capitalism and speculative urbanization. They deconstructed traditional or institutionalized arguments about that this is now an asset and it belongs to a proprietor by shifting the focus back from housings' exchange value to its use value.

It is interesting, for example, in the wake of 2007, 2008, for many of the national state government and their consultants it must have been already clear that there was a problem with the financial banking sector, particularly in the field of real estate mortgages. It was not in 2008, when the international financial crisis started with the crash of the real estate sector in the US, but institutionalized, financial and political actors must have been aware of the potential pitfalls of risky

loan programs before. What you could see here - that most of the credits that had been given to families who were evicted later were given in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 (see figure 3).
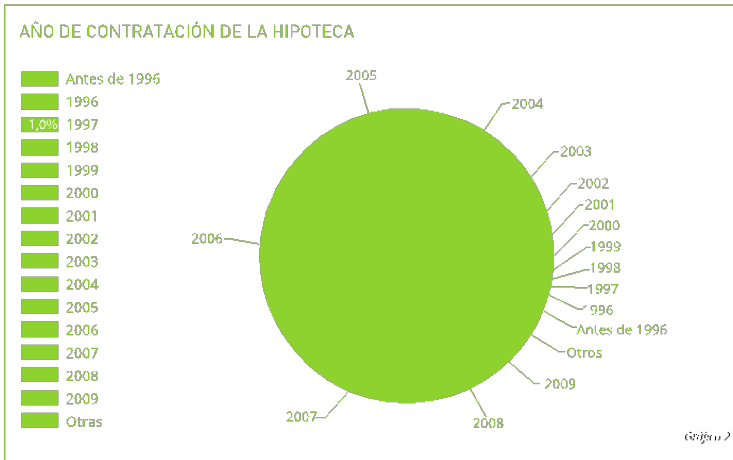

Figure 3: Year when the mortgage was realized. Source: PAH Online 2013, 101
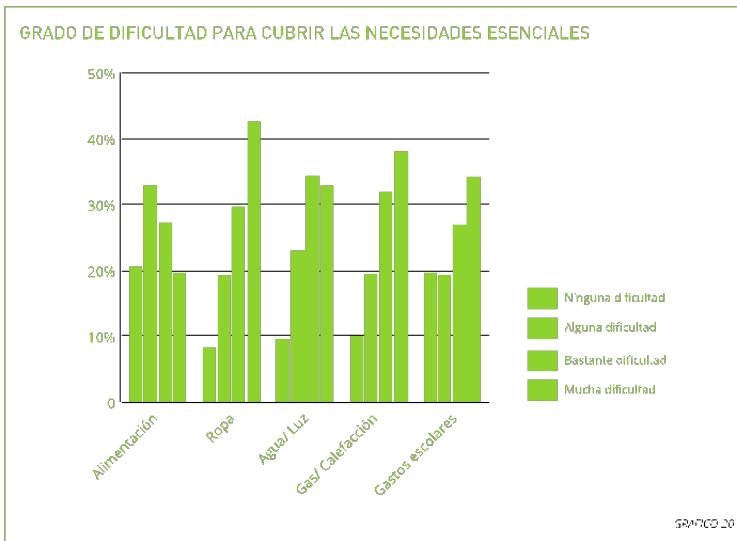

Figure 4: Degree of difficulty to cover the essential needs. Alimentación = Nutrition; Ropa = Clothes; Agua/Luz = Water/Electricity; Gas/ Calefacción = Gas/ Heating; Gastos Escolares = School spendings; ninguna difficultad = no difficulty; alguna dificultad= some difficulty; bastante dificultad = a lot of difficulty; mucha difficultad = severe difficulty. Source: PAH Online 2013, 113.

It is like, two thirds of all the dangerous mortgages that had been given to people who had later been evicted in Spain, were initiated during these three years. During these years when it was already more or less visible that the crisis was soon to approach, the banks were selling these risky loans off in haste. This was the first point of the PAH activist urban research. They did as well research on which banks were mostly selling these bad credits. And you see – especially BBVA, Bankia, Santander – they had the most shares of these bad credits (cf. PAH Online 2013, 101). So, if you still want to have a house with a loan, rather choose one of the banks that were not so much involved, those at the bottom of the table. The PAH covered empirical research, that was lacking before to undermine their argument that the Spanish housing and eviction crises was actually a by-product of global flexible capitalism and of neoliberalization of housing policies in Spain, and thus first and foremost a structural problem.

 Then another table showing to what extent former households and families face difficulties after having faced foreclosure and/or evictions: the first column is about alimentation, the second about clothing, the third about to pay your light and energy bills in the household, the fourth to pay the heating and the fifth column asks whether people can manage to pay simple needs for their children at school, meaning the amount of money you need to send the kids to school and to let them participate in the class life. And the first of these smaller columns, the left one, means "not so much affected" and the last one means "very affected". You can see here – ok, for food, people were affected at medium-range. They were not completely heavily affected, they could still buy some food. But if you go, for example, to buy clothing, this is the section that ranges in categories "very affected" and "most affected". This means that people were really finding it hard to buy new clothing. People found it very hard as well to pay the electricity bills and to pay heating, and also to pay what their children would need in order to go to school. So the PAH activist scholars really tried to find out to what extent people, families and households had been affected by foreclosures and evictions.

And these results, on a societal level, are alarming. The PAH was later analyzing which types of households were there. As mentioned before, you see the housing and eviction crisis in Spain was really massive – it was not just a marginalized group that was facing further marginalization, but these were many people from different social strata. And out of these, most of the households evicted were families or single-parents with two, three or more children (PAH Online 2013). These numbers are not just about individual fates, but they tell us about the fates of families and more vulnerable people who are very depended on other people, like children and elderly people. So the irresponsible loan offering practices of bank managers and related lack of political

regulation produced massive negative social and political impacts, a social and political crisis. Melissa García-Lamarca (2017a, 2017b) cites some of the activists saying that «they have robbed rights and housing from us, so we recover it; they've evicted us so we rehouse (personal communication November 5, 2013)» (García-Lamarcia 2017, 51).

Another activist states that «if the political authorities think they are in their right and we elect them to represent us, and they don't represent us, they don't do what they need to do, well then we have to do it! You know, make ourselves heard. I think it [obra social] is good, because if they evict you from your house, you are a person, you have not committed any crime. (…) And there are people responsible for this situation, (…) so they need to pay for this, because they auction off your house and who takes it? The bank, public entities. You have a family, you are a human being, you have a right. The constitution says that everyone has a right to housing, to a dignified salary, and they have to apply it. But they don't, they do things for themselves. I would go to all the places that need to be occupied, because there is no right to what they do.» (García-Lamarca 2017, 52, based on personal communication with activists, 11 June 2014) .

And García-Lamarca also draws distinctions between 15M and the PAH, both movements active in public spaces throughout Spain: «The 15M was a sort of 'liquid implosion' without clear and defined lines of action, whereas the PAH required specific and direct action to solve urgent social needs, like blocking an eviction (…). In other words, the PAH pointed to immediate material acts in the context of ongoing (and some would say endless) deliberating in 15M plaza assemblies and can be considered as an outlet to move from plazas to other urban spaces where urgent housing problems were unfolding» (García-Lamarca 2017, 47).

The case of the PAH in Spain very much empirically tackles dialectical relations between public space and housing activism and research. After the decades of housing activism (e.g. protests against gentrification) in the 70's and the 80's especially in Northern Europe, as well as in other countries, there has been a tendency in the last twenty years to shift focus from planning attention from private to public spaces in the city. Also, municipalities have very much focused on shifting the attention from housing policies towards public space policies (Knierbein 2010). There is a focus on public space which however reduces mainstream urban struggles to discursive deliberations around participation, besides a whole set of activist practices still working in the field of housing, albeit more marginalized. For the case of the PAH in Spain, García-Lamarca (2017a, 2017b) emphasizes that it is important to get visibility, and to bring private issues out of the private households to detect and publicly dissect structural problems of urbanization, while simultaneously there is a need to have activism back in the private

realm of housing in order to disrupt the exclusionary mechanisms of real-estate speculation and respective marked-friendly regulations, and to overcome its inherent pitfalls.

But what the PAH managed to initiate was not just about a rational struggle. It was as much about affective relations because many of these people have been affected as regards their routinized everyday life patterns. For them facing a foreclosure and/or eviction has become a fight for existence, as Garcia-Lamarca (2017, 48) depicts: «Interviews and participating in assemblies revealed how mortgage problems instilled deep-seated feelings of guilt, fear, and shame, family and health problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, or in some cases even suicide attempts. Upon coming to the PAH, many interviewees spoke about feeling relief and hope, and over half spoke specifically of how they no longer felt alone once they began their struggle with the PAH to solve their situation.» Especially, because at the moment when so many households lost their homes, social housing schemes in Spain were literally non-existent any more. That is why the PAH started to develop policies to reintroduce an emphasis on the need to provide social housing on the urban political agenda. But if you just have more homeless people on the street without having any buffer where they can go – this is another problematic layer of already very problematic lines of segregation and dispossession.

To sum up: the PAH disrupts and reconfigures dominant notions of the public and the public sphere, it brings housing problems experienced by thousands of people in Spain from the individualized private realm of the home to the public sphere through collective assemblies and actions. Housing is de-privatized and becomes a form of common or public space, the occupying of vacant houses challenges and reconfigures what can be considered as private or public property by putting it to a social use, and occupation in this sense can be considered as an embodied spatial practice to constitute public and common goods.

Ada Colau, one of the founding mothers of the PAH later became the new mayor of Barcelona after the last municipal elections. Indeed, she managed to establish trust among people *because* she was provoking social and political change on the ground, in favor of human rights and social benefits. And in favor of not just symbolic statements, but of material impacts, providing people, families and households with what they needed most in times of austerity, crisis and irresponsible banking practices and related state regulation.

What does this Barcelona case study tell us? Urban dwellers face situations of crisis, austerity urbanism and related financialization of housing policies, accompanied by mortgage burdens and missing labor income. Many of these seemingly private problems remain behind the private curtain of shame and guilt. And there is an initial articulation in

public space as a geography of the public sphere (Low and Smith 2006) that facilitates an exchange between those affected by the housing crisis and those offering support. The PAH has been able to formulate a structural state and market critique – because the state was heavily involved, and they have really addressed the municipalities by claiming that the state has instruments and potential to re-regulate these structural and spatial deficits, and that state institutions had to urgently redirect their course of action catering not for capital, but first and foremost for people. The PAH as well went into the law level of policy: They had lawyers on board and these formulated recommendations for Spanish municipalities telling them how they should change regulatory frameworks on the urban scale. PAH, in this sense, was active in proposing different types of combined research, activism and policy recommendation at the interface of public space and housing issues. A structural state and market critique may emerge from the civil society successive formation of critical counter publics that constitute at the threshold of segmented policy, activism and research fields.

Classificatory Struggles and Inclusive Urban Research (Berlin)

For this third part of the paper, the case of Berlin will be used to offer some reflections on contemporary classificatory struggles and to propose paths to provide more inclusive urban research approaches. That way, this case study serves to move from empirical evidence back to reflexive conceptual work in urban studies. In Berlin since the 1990's, public space has been turned into a key territory of capitalist restructuring (Knierbein 2010): After 1989 the two parts of the Eastern and Western political hemisphere growing together once again with its key hot spot being Berlin. In terms of urban governance arrangements, the city state and the municipalities pertaining to the communal area of Berlin underwent significant institutional transformations, for instance because the municipalities were merged together, and thus Berlin was facing patterns of deep administrative restructuring at the institutional level, and a bit of chaos as well. Particularly during the 1990s and early 2000s, companies came to use public spaces and they just filled plenty of demands for new and changed uses of public space. The Senate of Berlin and the municipalities of the central districts reported that they witnessed a new quantity and quality of public space special use demands, and that they were both lacking criteria and staff to deal with this new wealth of uses in public space regulation.

In times of change and restructuring capital searches for new territorial niches previously protected by regulation (Helbrecht 1994). That has happened in the turn from the Fordist to a postFordist city since the 1970s and it is happening now again. Prisons, hospitals, schools – all these formerly public infrastructures had been protected by public regulation – as well as public spaces. With the crisis of

the Fordist mode of production and regulation and the turn towards neoliberal urban policies, these public infrastructures (public space being one of them) came very much into the focus of private interest who promoted deregulation and a maximization of benefits. Because those common goods and public infrastructures, that had been protected before through public regulation, usually offer a good deal of profit maximization once it is deregulated and successively privatized. So public space in Berlin became an explorative and exemplary playground for private companies exploring new market niches and new postFordist consumer markets.

There was one initiative at the banks of the river Spree called Mediaspree. This was concentrating on the legally binding land use plan and related projects and permission practices foreseen regarding Spree banks between Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg, around the so-called O2-Arena. This is a part of the project of commodification of the Spree bank. Protest occurred against the rising rents in the nearby areas and against the general privatization of the river banks and river area which touches on Berlin's long history of struggles against gentrification which has become a central feature of urban design and urban development very much criticized in urban studies over the past decades (Madanipour 2014, 144f). Gentrification, as Madanipour (2014, 145) outlines, is "the replacement of one socio-economic group with a wealthier one, a process which tends to take place when investment is made in urban areas without a parallel investment in support of the low-income groups, whereby the coexistence of people with widely different forms of access to resources may not be available for the weaker groups." This is at the heart of critique issued by right to the city movements fighting against issues of gentrification. Although urban scholarship has pointed to the negative and segregative impacts of urban gentrification since a couple of decades (cf. Madanipour 2014 for an overview), social disparities in cities around the world have been increasing and gentrification has become one of the most structural drivers of capitalist urbanization.

In Berlin in 2008, protestors against gentrification used slogans like "Sinking Media Spree. Spree bank privatized, rents increased. We have had enough. Our houses, our river, our city". This can be understood not just as a critique as regards the housing policy field, a critique that is again issued in public space (-activists protested from boats on the river Spree which received quite some media attention-), but has turned from housing towards a more general critique of privatization and commodification in postFordist Berlin. This protest and critique needs to be contextualized with increasing urban inequality which has been detected in cities and regions of the global South already some decades ago and is now also more and more witnessed in cities and regions of the global North. Since at least the restructuring of

the 1980's, if you have a look at poverty reports of Europe – or social equality reports – the tendency is, that in cities there is increasing urban polarization in terms of social inequality. You can have a look at the GINI coefficient of different cities to get a more detailed picture: In Berlin, the GINI-coefficient was at 0,26 in 1996 whereas this increased to 0,30 until 2003 which is an indicator for growing income inequality. Since that the GINI-coefficient ranges annually between 0,29 and 0,30 (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2017).

During times of increased social income inequality, on the planning level, professionals started to talk about 'target groups' to design public spaces, thus marking a shift away from talking about general 'city publics' or 'specific urban publics and cultural milieus' towards selective 'publics'. This empirical example helps to review our conceptual tools in urban studies, planning and design. To do so, I will make use of a recent account of Imogen Tyler and a historic account of Pierre Bourdieu to use the Berlin case in order to establish a critique of conceptual tools.

Imogen Tyler, a British cultural sociologist, published a paper on "Classificatory struggles. Class, culture and inequality in neoliberal times", in which she states that "inequality is the problem that the concept of class describes" (Tyler 2015, 1). Tyler issues of plea for the reintroduction and reconsideration of the potentials of class analysis in urban studies. She elaborates that there has been a lot of critique – e.g. by German sociologist Ulrich Beck from the 1990's onwards -, that 'class' would not serve as a concept sharp enough to grasp what is happening in society as regards an increasing evidence for individualization patterns. This critique marked a shift towards studying social milieus and more individualized social (action) patterns in contemporary urban societies. But Tyler adds a distinct layer to class analysis from a cultural sociology perspective. Her conceptual refinement and renewed analysis of urban inequality by using class analysis is very useful, for instance, to add explanatory dimensions to the symbolic and material dimensions of the Barcelona and Berlin cases. As gentrification is one of the core catalysts of capitalist urbanization in cities around the globe, what we can see more generally is an increasing precariousness, poverty and inequality in many cities worldwide. On the European scale, a growing imbalance between pay increases and productivity increases has been detected, resulting from a decline of labor's share of added value (Madanipour et. al. 2014).

The difference between 'city publics' and 'target groups' can be addressed by moving from Tyler's findings to the writings of Bourdieu. Issues of the introduction of consumerist language into planning can be reflected on in terms of public space research: Those who are considered as being affluent users of public space are in planning terms very often prioritized over those who are unable or unwilling to

consume. And these types of consumerist ethics that Tyler has been criticizing, are reflected in language shifts in urban development trends: Now very often planners involved in public space or housing development and design talk much about 'target groups', and 'planning sensitive to target groups and specific user milieu'. For example, in urban design schemes for new housing districts, often the argument is that a symbolic place-branding needs to take place via public space programming, in order to have a certain target group to move in here and to enhance the selling prices.

In these cases, what happens is a migration of business economics, marketing and PR terminology into the field of planning, which however, remains utterly vague and generally poorly reflected, if at all. When planners and architects talk about city publics they refer to the idea of all the people living in the city independent of their status. My critique on the new terminology of 'target groups' or 'specific milieu' is that if one talk about target groups, this comprises a look only at a certain segment of potential consumerism in an urban society characterized by social and economic difference, and different positions as regards potential and willingness to consume. Especially in the planning field, scholars have to critically take into consideration, contest and overcome such segmentations, as reducing general urban publics to population segments is to be blinkered by certain urban comfort zones, most of them characterized by being affluent. The implications of this lingual shift is reflected by what Bourdieu (1984) has addressed when emphasizing that the fate of groups is bound up with the words that designate them.

And this is a critique towards our own academic work, because urban researchers, urban designers and urban planners –among others- shape these words basically. In sociology, in planning, in geography, scholars come up with categories for urban groups, dwellers and populations. But they often do not follow up on what these categories do if they are translated e.g. from fields such as business economics to the realms of practical planning and policy implementation. This is a call for deepening care in how we frame different groups in society and how we frame groups in public spaces. These conceptual classificatory struggles have taken place in fields of urban planning, urban design and architecture for the last twenty to thirty years already, particularly accompanying the continuous commodification and privatization of collective assets and common goods, and the overall painting of public space as ideal spots in which a consumerist ethics can colonize use-value based everyday life patterns.

This planning jargon just reflects these commodification strategies and the rhetoric and discourses around this commodification, but leaves doubts as regards planners' own positionality as reflexive agents of change: What is the exchange value and what is the use value of this

public space? Should not the multiple use values be given priority, rather than using public space to sell off adjacent dwelling units? How can it be used, and what is the political, cultural and social dimension of this public space? Not just the juridical and the economic dimension of it, but the very human, lived space dimension that contribute to a (relatively) peaceful coexistence in the contemporary cities, like Vienna, Barcelona and Berlin. From these questions unfolding around urban gentrification, urban inequality and urban planning language in public space, transfers can be established to grasp the field of housing similarly: Not to conceive of housing as an asset in exchange, or a commodity, but first and foremost start with housing as part of urban welfare provision and to recall a right that has been granted to people to provide access to homes for all socio-economic groups. Turning from public space and social housing as fragmented fields to a combined dialectical focus on *lived space* might enable a more decent way to analyse classificatory struggles affecting everyday life.

To sum up: In Berlin, we have seen postFordist modes of urban restructuring with a focus on the commodification of lived spaces in the city, while empirically tackling the issues of increasing urban inequality. On a conceptual level, we need to check our categories in planning, designing and researching public spaces. And there is an issue of relational or social turn that we all so much embrace in doing summer schools on public spaces and other alternative and explorative teaching formats. My point is that these transdisciplinary approaches of place making might run risk of fueling these new commodification strategies of turning public spaces into selected consumption spheres for affluent consumers through performative planning techniques overtly sensitive to target group needs (place making), instead of resisting and re-conceptualizing the need to consider wider terminology, i.e. city publics, to conceive of planning for lived space as a more inclusive practice. Urban scholars are a part of these ongoing ambiguities: Even if scholars are very conscious about capitalist development, very often place-making is just one of the instruments to pacify the civic unrest that has now come out in these increasing social inequalities in our cities. In order to provide opportunities for conceiving planning and urban design within a pluralist democracy, consensus-based conceptions of city publics based on communicative planning might flatten minority voices (participation through discourse), which can be balanced through working with a new balance of consent and dissent to more actively develop lived space qualitatively (inclusion through action). This can be achieved through a more horizontal and open source based organization of research, planning and design endeavors collaborating with NGOs and activists on equal grounds. In order to avoid pitfalls of gentrification in capitalist planning schemes, context-specific and place sensitive approaches

fostering an inclusive and people-centered approach towards urban development tactics seems beneficial. In order to conceptuall recover the lived spaces in the city and thus dialectically bridge housing and public space research, a relational space conception, based on a social space analysis is considered as useful, integrating a reflection of classificatory struggles and the fate of group that is designated with the words that characterize them. With a reconnection of lived space analysis in combination with a critique of structural patterns of global urbanization/urban globalization, alternative development paths beyond traditional capitalist modes of restructuring can be envisioned, that include a consideration of urban inequality as being the problem that the concept of class describes. A renewed cultural-sociological account to class analysis might pave a way to more radically point to the many pitfalls and dispossessions that the current neoliberal policy model of urban development repeatedly produces.

Conclusion: City unsilenced, resistance combined

It has been one of the core hypotheses of this article to show the need for further developing dialectical research approaches between housing and public space, in the fields of activism, research and policy recommendation.

By combining a conceptual reflection with empirical evidence about relational space in Vienna, I have pointed to key features of relational production of space. It has been the paper's core starting point that one cannot box public space in Euclidian terms alone, as its main characteristics and features will be lost if researchers, planners and designers do not include its embodied, embedded and contextualized dimension as a lived space. This insight from public space research applies for housing as well. It's not mainly about the buildings and locations where to allocate the dwellers, but the lives and living conditions of urban dwellers. And how they can afford to make a living according to the opportunities and resources they are offered and offer in return.

By using an empirical case study from Barcelona, this paper has shown the politics of housing as lived space re-established through the activist occupations and legal work of the *Plataforma de Afectados* por la Hipoteca. The activists here have combined public space and housing activism, and have turned issues that had been considered as private fates into structural conflicts (from the particular to the universal).

A second aspect has been the reconnection of public space and housing research in order to overcome silences and absences and issue a public critique: While doing public space research, one would not necessarily get the knowledge of the lowly paid workers or the urban-subalterns (marginalized groups) who tend to spend bits and pieces of their spare free-time within the households, or in transit. At the same

time in the households everything seems very private, and if you are facing foreclosure or eviction, many people have sentiments of guilt as the system and discourse renders them as incapable of performing within the neoliberal way of living. The PAH has managed to transform the privatized narrative of guilt and shame into a public critique. They have actually formed a critical counter public and that was the key importance here - to get the structural conflict named and identified as such. Then they went into policy action besides blocking and re-housing houses and bank buildings. They combined traditional categories and tactics of activism and occupations with policy work as injections into the political landscape to disrupt the capitalist accumulation regime. That was very successful and very important, both for individual fates, as well as on a more structural political level: As we have seen, Ada Colau has become the new mayor of Barcelona, where she is heavily rethinking the use values of lived spaces and re-considering housing as a lived space in public planning and design regulation.

In Berlin, the paper has explored the political economy shifts of housing and public space politics since the introduction of postFordist urban restructuring strategies accompanied by neoliberal urban policies. Changes in the political economy of public space are one key analytical entry dimension of capitalist restructuring, but of course changes in the housing sector are key dimension to grasp more structural transitions as well. And they are both interrelated. Academia and the disciplines in which urban professionals are trained lamentably often contribute to these processes through a non-cautious application of concepts and terminology particularly from the field of business economics, marketing and branding.

From a viewpoint particularly of feminist critique, what is silent and absent in public space – for example underrepresented groups, minorities, those who do not have a strong voice – can firstly be found and analyzed with a look into private households. All the nannies, for example, the migrant nannies, the sewage workers, etc. Basically, most un(der)paid workers, but also unemployed or evicted people might not necessarily have an interest to be visible in public space because their status is not so clear, and they fear public space as highly institutionalized space pertaining to a capitalist rationale and regulation of the modern state which they are lacking the resources to access (Bayat 2010). Then vice versa, what remains in the homes and households seemingly understood as a private problem, can be brought into critical reflection and discussion into public space and can be articulated as a structural problem, rather as a private fate. And radical dialectics means that exclusions, discriminations and absences do not only happen out there in the world the researchers seek to understand, but they happen in first instance already through our own practice and in our own academic everyday life. That means,

the way we reshape or shape, rethink or think, reorganize or organize existing bodies of knowledge or frame new perspectives. Researchers as well need to constantly strive for making their research and its impacts more inclusive.

Dialectical approaches combining public space research and housing research in international urban studies can offer a valuable opportunity to tackle silences, absences and losses through a combined attempt and new focus. Resistance combined, in this sense, means to combine research, action and policy of these spaces much more impactful, as this can help new forms of urban resistance emerge, to defend human rights for decent housing and freedom of speech. It is also a statement against neoliberal urban policies generating hyper-gentrification which gets very visible through urban phenomena of increasing precariousness and dispossession, visible through a manifest increase in homelessness and poor living conditions in contemporary cities. This is also a statement against massive evictions and socially insensitive acts of displacement, further marginalization of already affected vulnerable groups and the role of a state loyal to the market, rather than to the demos. Combining housing and public space research-activism can support the public articulation of critique especially in favor of human rights and against structural conditions that increasingly limit the everyday life of urban dwellers both in the centers and peripheries, in housing units as well as in public space. Dialectical ways of enquiry need to be (re)established in order to analyze the absences and silences from public space in private space and the relations between them (and vice versa). A precondition for this type of research is a basic understanding of urban space as lived space.

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