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Abstract

This article responds to both on-going urban practices and strands of urban theory by arguing for a (re-)turn to the everyday as a means of thinking about antagonism and political possibility. We examine how the everyday might be conceived politically and wonder what it is about the current conjuncture that is fuelling the reimagining of the political possibility of the urban. We develop the category of *urban everyday politics* to capture the politicised everyday practices observable in our towns and cities: collective, organised and strategic practices that articulate a political antagonism embedded in, but breaking with, urban everyday life through altering socio-spatial relations. While we make no empirical claims about the current impact of this form of politics, we assert the political potential of viewing the everyday as a source, stake and site of dissensus in current urban conditions. Politicising the urban everyday offers, we conclude, a strategy for transformative politics, one in which the state recedes from view, micro-political action is transcended and democratic possibilities lie in the transformation of the urban here and now.

Keywords: politics, urban, city, everyday, activism, social movements

Introduction

In this article we look across on-going urban practices to identify and conceptualise a form of politics concerned with the everyday. From the cycling activism of Critical Mass through social centres and squats to foodsharing cooperatives - despite their obvious differences, we think that such practices share the objective of achieving new social and spatial relations through direct intervention in the urban here and now and not some wished for future period. Politicizations of the urban everyday seem to be becoming a more visible form of political action, even if their effects remain ambivalent. We emphasise the political import of these often-overlooked practices and how thoroughly they are bound-up with the urban. In the main, we make our arguments in relation to the urban places we are most familiar with – towns and cities in the global north.

The urban practices mentioned here, such as squatting, are often closely interlinked with other forms of politics like social movements, but they entail a different art of being political, one which we think is indelibly urban. To apprehend these practices as a way of being political, we develop the category of *urban everyday politics*: collective, organised and strategic practices that articulate a political antagonism embedded in, but breaking with, urban everyday life through altering - however temporarily - time and place specific social relations. These practices can, we assert, realize differential spaces (Lefebvre, 1991), where market and state forces organising spatial production are countered. Hence, the paper offers a view of contemporary urban politics that differs in crucial ways from the conventional understanding of politics centred on the state (as friend or enemy). Urban everyday politics is characterised by a de-centring of, even disregard for, the state and a concern for self-governing spatial practices lodged in but chaffing against the urban everyday.

That the everyday is crucial, if in ambivalent ways, to urbanisation, capitalism and emancipatory politics is, of course, far from novel. It was a concern in the earlier work of Manuel Castells (1982) and was fundamental to the thinking of Henri Lefebvre (1991; 2002) and the Situationists (Grey, 1974; Debord, 1989; Vaneigem, 1983), as well as many of the political and social movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Magnusson, 2011: 1). Lefebvre in particular emphasised the contradictions of everyday life, portraying it as a site of uneven commodification but also political possibility (Lefebvre, 1974; cf Kipfer, 2002). Our intention here is not to draw comparisons to the past but to throw light on the current (re)-turn to the everyday.

We look afresh at practices common in some form to most cities, bringing various strands of urban studies literature into conversation with each other to do so. Our illustrative examples of urban everyday politics may be familiar and some have long traditions.¹ Our point is not that we can detect a new form of politics per se, but that in the current context of global urbanisation, the novelty and potential lie in how these practices politicise the urban condition. The aim of this intervention is, then, to more fully consider the political conditions and possibilities of these urban practices. Following Rossi (2013; 2017), we argue that the everyday has become ever more important in contemporary capitalism (Rossi, 2013: 1068). Commodification of the everyday has intensified as the reach of marketing and valorization strategies of both state and business agencies increases (Kohn, 2016). The production and consumption of everyday experiences and encounters – often made possible through prior acts of dispossession – is now a vital part of urban capitalist accumulation (Harvey 2004). Everydayness is not only alienating² but increasingly activated in order to raise the exchange value of urban spaces (Rossi, 2017; Ronneberger, 2008). But this uneven process is neither uniform with regard to its spatial articulations and effects nor uncontested.

Mayer (2013, 10-11) convincingly points out that this process affects social groups in very particular ways because “they occupy very different strategic positions within the post-industrial neoliberal city”. She differentiates between movements or social groupings which align to a certain degree with creative city policies and “urban outcasts” who are

¹ For example, cooperatives, currently on the rise in urban areas, were widespread in the late 19th and early 20th century Europe and America (see e.g. Kohn, 2003).

² In his introduction to the second edition of the first part of the critique of the everyday life Henri Lefebvre stated that it was his intention to develop a critique of everyday life to attend to the problem of alienation under capitalism (Lefebvre, 1975 [1961]). The problem of alienation was one source of the 1968 revolts and the new social movements.

targeted by repressive and dispossessing governance strategies. "This schism", Mayer (2013, 7) contends, "between the 'alienated'/culturally discontented and the 'dispossessed'/ excluded", has reshaped the contours of urban politics. Hence, while we see that people do reject the ways urban life is transformed and curated, we should not expect an *apriori* common ground between them. Nonetheless, we think a politicisation of everyday practices generates possibility. Through the refusal to participate in packaged urban lifestyles and the creation of counter-spaces where a different from of everyday life is preserved, the potential emerges for differential spaces where divides between social groups can be bridged. Following Patel (2010), Rossi (2013, 1072) calls this the "living politics of the city", where processes of urbanization meet everyday resistances including different segments of the urban population. Thus our point is that by looking at these practices and processes as a category of politics (as urban everyday politics) we can better discern their political significance.

Our arguments are primarily conceptual, but, as we conclude, they have political and strategic import. So, in making the case for adding urban everyday politics to our conceptual repertoire of political action, we also consider the transformative potential of this form of politics.

The article proceeds in the following steps. The following section locates our arguments in the current debate on urban politics, stressing the political potential of the urban itself. Section three details some prominent everyday practices in towns and cities, focusing mainly on the global north. We offer a set of generic types of intervention and then consider the relation and distinction between everyday practices and politics, drawing on the work of Oliver Marchart (2011) to identify the minimal conditions of the political act.

This leads us into a discussion of the everyday in the urban studies literature, focusing on the Lefebvrian strand of urban theory. The penultimate section summarises the case for seeing urban everyday politics as a category of political action. We conclude by considering the political and strategic implications of our argument.

An *Urban* Politics

Scholars have noted the emergence of forms of contestatory politics that do not rest on extra-ordinary acts (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010) yet remain faithful to an alternative and transformative political agenda (Daskalaki, 2017). It is our understanding that the spectrum of political possibility has changed in urban areas over the course of recent decades. We will argue that urban everyday politics are practices articulating and realising these limits and opportunities. Though their impacts may be unclear, they have become visible enough to capture the attention of scholars and activists alike. Our interest lies in those practices whereby the political horizon remains within the immediacy and ordinariness of the urban everyday and the primary aim is self-government. To be clear, in doing this, we are not arguing against other forms of urban politics, such as social movements or political parties, nor musing that they may be in decline.

The relation between the urban and politics is far from straightforward. In the ongoing debate on the potential of political action in towns and cities, scholars such as Swyngedouw (2007, 2009) and MacLeod (2011) have convincingly argued that politics as a function of management (of social and individual demands) is increasingly taking precedence over politics as a stage for contests (between ideas, ideologies and interests). This strand of literature has been crucial in that it has shifted the focus *onto* irruptions in

the status quo, the staging of political difference, and *away* from the more conventional understandings of urban politics centred on institutions of the state and market (e.g. urban regimes, urban growth coalitions). However, at the same time the helpfulness of the “post-political city” notion underpinning this work has been questioned on the grounds that it offers a narrow, even prescriptive, view of politics curiously disengaged from the ‘urban’ and urbanization processes (cf. Davidson and Iveson, 2015a; Nicholls and Uitermark, 2017; Beveridge and Koch, 2017a; Beveridge and Koch, 2017b).

To better locate contemporary forms of urban politics we think it necessary to adopt a less “specifically ontologised view of the political” (Barnett 2012, 677) and follow a more explorative approach, one which engages more substantively with the urban itself. For instance, Rodgers *et al.* (2014) have asked *where* is urban politics and many others have investigated the *forms* of politics emergent from urban settings (e.g. Mitchell *et al.*, 2015; McFarlane, 2016; Phelps, 2015) now that the “classical connection between urbanism and polis is [...] occluded” (Madden, 2012: 779). Very diverse empirical objects and concerns have been apparent in this research: social movements (Boudreau *et al.*, 2009), planning (Nicholls and Uitermarks, 2016), the politicization of immigrants (Nicholls, 2016), political theories of urbanism (Magnusson, 2011) and the spatial categories and terms that guide our analyses (Wachsmuth, 2014; Angelo, 2017). Despite the diversity, what emerges from these works is the general sense that the study of urban politics must move beyond the conventional framework of the political that “suggests that the problem of sovereignty is central” (Magnusson, 2014: 1570) and consider the urban as being, in a variety of ways, constitutive of politics.

Seeing politics in the everyday things we do, Magnusson (2014: 1571) views the urban political as consisting of "complicated patterns of government and selfgovernment, a multiplicity of authorities in different registers". Here, the nation state and sovereignty do not lie at the core of explanations of politics. Rather, politics is inseparable from and constitutive of the urban everyday. Hence, we see urban politics as on-going, diverse, widespread and entwined with patterns and processes of urbanization, which generate difference (Nicholls 2004) and throw out a range of (unequal) struggles constitutive of the urban terrain itself (cf. Enright and Rossi 2018).

This line of argument has some similarities with Julie-Anne Boudreau's (2017) conception of an urban logic of political action, whereby the "here and now" (ibid. 16), and not the state, is the prime shaper of a "global urban politics", which occurs through "networked, fluid and mobile spaces" (Boudreau, 2017: 16). Indeed, Boudreau (2017) makes a claim for a profound shift in how we should study urban politics. Her argument is that because of planetary urbanization, our experience, affects and logics of action are increasingly shaped and conditioned by the urban situations we live in. There is, she asserts, "a specifically urban way of acting politically" (ibid., 13). Urbanity changes the perception and the political possibilities of individuals (ibid., 171). So for her, the urban is not a specific spatiality in a hierarchy of spatial levels but a particular social, economic and political form. Hence, it can be said that there are distinctly urban conditions of being political and distinctly urban ways of acting politically. An urban logic of political action, Boudreau states (2017, 16), involves specific conceptions of space, time and rationality. It is, we could argue, a *decentred* way of being political. Decentred in two regards. First, it is not bounded by a state-logic of the political with a clear centre of authority, a hierarchy of power attached to it and defined boundaries between spheres of individual and collective actions. Second, the spatiality of urban political activities cannot be

delineated in advance nor even during the act itself because actions are always related to other spatialities and assembled human and non-human collectivities.

To summarise, our view of urban politics is one characterised by unequal struggle, resting on the contingency of the urban itself (cf. Roy 2016: 810), a terrain of multiple and contradictory spatial practices and processes politicising and depoliticising urban relations (Beveridge and Koch 2017a; cf. Enright and Rossi 2018, 14). It is a perspective which, following Boudreau (2017) and Magnusson (2011; 2014; 2018), sees the urban grounds of politics as non-sovereign, as much about self-government as government and centred on the immediacy of the here and now. It is view of politics in which the urban is always in some ways not just the setting or medium (cf. Davidson and Martin 2013) but the very stake of struggles (Beveridge and Koch 2017b). We think that certain urban conditions are productive of a range of political antagonisms and we ultimately aim to identify those that play out in struggles for self-government of the urban everyday.

Everyday practices of urban politics

It is possible in most urban areas to find prominent examples of at least some of the following: Critical Mass (Strüver, 2015), social centres (Yates, 2015), urban explorers (Garrett, 2013), dumpster divers (Vinegar *et al.*, 2016), community gardens (Crossan *et al.*, 2016), alternative currencies and economic systems (Gritzas and Kavoulakos, 2016; Calvo and Morales, 2014; Gibson-Graham, 2008), co-housing (Tummers, 2015), squatting (Vaseduvan, 2017), 'empty spaces' movements (Parés *et al.*, 2017; Iveson, 2013), 'space hijacking' (Gilchrist and Ravenscroft, 2013) and, increasingly in conditions of austerity, parallel institutions providing e.g. food, clothing, health treatment to poor and

marginalized communities (Arampatzi, 2016; Daskalaki, 2017; Stavrides, 2014; Kousis and Paschou, 2017). While there is a strong sense that such practices are on the rise, urban scholars have struggled to conceptualise such practices, to draw out links between them and develop terms to describe them (Iveson, 2013: 941).

In his contribution to the debate, Iveson (2013, 942) thinks about them mainly in terms of space and the staging of claims to rights to govern the city and this leads him to be doubtful about their political potential. The appropriation and alternative use of urban space does not, he rightly argues, lead to “the birth of a new city” (Iveson, 2013: 942). For real change to occur, participants must develop shared purpose across their diversity - political subjectivisation focused on contesting the authority to produce urban space is required (Iveson (2013: 942). We agree with Iveson here in the sense that transformative urban politics requires an existential challenge to the forces shaping spatial production and not just a focus on claiming spaces. In other words, the forms of political action we are interested in do confront contradictions and antagonism that are operative in urbanization. And they do so by articulating these conflicts through spatial interventions, through the realization of differential spaces, where the homogenising forces of state and market (abstract space) are countered (Lefebvre, 1991, 358). Where we depart from Iveson, who frames his argument about political potential mainly in spatial terms, is that we detect an urban logic of political action underpinning these practices, one less concerned with claiming space to claim rights than with politicising urban practices in the here and now. The difference does, then, lie in our assertion that the everyday is a source, stake and site of struggle.

Three generic types of intervention

Rather than thinking primarily in terms of spatial practices, we need to consider how the urban, the everyday and politics are brought together in these practices. The following sections will do this by conceptually grounding an *urban everyday politics*. However, prior to this we think in more descriptive terms. Clearly, practices have to be considered as situated in time and space, but three generic types of intervention³ aimed at self-government and differential space can be detected in the examples mentioned thus far:

- (re)shaping urban space (temporarily/permanently; small- or large-scale) through collective activities residing in the everyday, e.g. Critical Mass, empty space projects, space-hijacking
- using or appropriating urban space or resources for everyday needs, e.g. squatting, seizures of electricity or water.
- establishing alternative urban systems of the everyday, e.g. social centres, time banks, foodsharing, parallel institutions.

Clearly, space remains fundamental in this classification but as part of the everyday plane, which can be seen as the object of the politicisation of forces shaping the everyday.

Hence interventions are pre-figurative in that they embody the social relations they seek to enact in the urban everyday and/or performative in that they generate the antagonism that mobilises their practices in the urban everyday. A prominent example of *(re)shaping urban space through collective activities residing in the everyday* is Critical Mass.

Established in 1992 in San Francisco, USA, Critical Mass has established itself in cities

³ The three generic forms of intervention do not exclude each other and thus examples may often involve more than one form of intervention, e.g. Critical Mass might be seen as involving all three forms.

worldwide. Once a month, usually the last Friday, with no more organisation than a meeting place, cyclists meet and travel the city, typically with no clear route, blocking normal flows of automobile traffic, attempting to usurp the order of the road. Critical Mass is an emblematic example of those urban practices, which have so befuddled researchers (Furness, 2007: 300). Is it a social movement, if so why is it so loosely organised and what are its aims and towards whom is it protesting? Given that it does not engage directly with political institutions, can it even be seen as political? Or, in other terms, what is the political effect of this practice? And how effective is it? Certainly Critical Mass activists do not present themselves as participants in political demonstrations, but there are political objectives in their "celebration of the everyday"⁴ (Strüver, 2015: 40). There is obvious symbolism in riding through cities on bikes and disputing the subordinate position of cycling in relation to driving. Critical Mass, to greater and less extents, performs an ecological and human/ social alternative to the individualised car-dominated city, as well as safer and self-organising spaces for cyclists on the roads. It does this in embodied action, changing - albeit temporarily - hierarchies of particular urban spaces. It is politics as lived alternative to the normal everyday and not simply as claims to space or more rights (Carlsson, 2002: 81 cited in: Strüver, 2015: 40).

Perhaps the most obvious and widespread example of *using or appropriating urban space for everyday needs* is squatting, illegally occupying uninhabited buildings or land. Squatting is easier to recognise as a form of political practice, even if it is not always conceptualised in terms of the urban everyday. Squatting does not rest on making claims to the state and waiting for a response – it achieves its objectives in the immediacy of the act of squatting. It links an everyday need (shelter, dwelling) and inequality (in

⁴ Authors' translation of German 'Zelebrieren des Alltäglichen'.

housing), breaking the law and wider socio-political relations. In an idealised form (and appreciating the variation in context and contingencies of actions) it may be seen as short-circuiting the formal institutions of politics and law to not only realise an everyday need but to assert alternatives to the institution of private property. Going further, Vasudevan (2015a) argues that squatting can potentially embody an alternative form of self-governing urbanity, what he terms the 'autonomous city'. His (Vasudevan, 2015c) study of squatting in Berlin details the changing everyday practices of occupation of urban space that constitute squatting, showing their centrality to varying and wider urban struggles from the 1960s onwards, e.g. most recently, against gentrification.

Squatting, and the range of practices often centred on a squat, are commonly related to or indeed deeply embedded in processes of *establishing alternative urban systems of the everyday*. Importantly, however, the squat is firmly anchored in space and provides alternative social relations only according to its own location and purpose. Urban systems of the everyday are by their nature more encompassing, entailing practices which are not rooted but circulate through urban space. A good example would be the various attempts to establish alternative urban food systems, captured in practices such as dumpster diving (or totting, skipping,) recovering disposed of goods such as food, and the more systematic notions of Freeganism or Foodsharing, attempts to avoid the norms of capitalist economy (buying and wasting food), through improvisation and the generation of alternative forms of food organisation. These interventions may also include 'free-cycling', and can be generally seen as co-operatives and networks through which people can find and give goods as diverse as sofas or bikes. Such practices are, of course, often (but not always) driven by economic necessity, to secure the everyday need for food and basic goods (Vinegar *et al.*, 2014; Arampatzi, 2017). Not surprisingly they

have been spreading as a reaction to austerity urbanism in Europe as in North America and they demonstrate how new alliances can be formed and maintained across different segments of the population (Di Felicianantonio, 2017). Arampatzi (2017) reports in great detail on how spatial practices to “re-appropriate certain areas of the neighborhood from exclusion and repressive tactics” led to increasing support from residents and other community organisations. These practices grounded in the everyday facilitated a “politics of solidarity” which not only acknowledges differences but “locates the strength of cooperation and solidarity among the multiple responses that can emerge to the same issue” (Arampatzi, 2017, 53). In relation to the “schism” identified by Mayer (2013, 7) mentioned above, we see the establishment of alternative urban systems of the everyday, especially as a reaction to austerity policies, as a spatial grounded practice that has the potential to bridge the divide between middle-class movements and the urban precariat.

The political character of these interventions

The three generic types outlined capture a range of ways of intervening *politically* in the urban everyday. They disrupt the practices of abstract space through practices of differential space. They are political because they are antagonistic towards the way current processes of urbanisation unfold in the everyday and they cannot be reduced to minor acts of everyday life. Of course, it is ultimately difficult to draw a line that clearly delineates between practices as everyday acts and practices politicising the urban everyday. The two might be mutually constitutive, each shaping the possibility for the other as the foundational work of Scott (1985), but also more recent contributions by Halvorsen (2015) and Boudreau (2009, 2017), have shown. More generally, the post-colonial literature has been crucial in providing a sense of the political import of urban everyday situations (e.g. Simone, 2005; Bayat, 2010; Roy, 2016). The work of Yates (2015)

on social centres is useful in providing a general path here. He argues that certain practices are important for the identity and coherence of social groups, but remain everyday life acts/ practices, until they begin to politicise the status quo (cf. Bayat, 2010).

Still, the question remains – can we identify the political quality that distinguishes everyday political interventions from everyday acts? Oliver Marchart's (2011; 2010) idea of minimal conditions of politics offers a very grounded way of thinking about this question. He argues that our concepts of political action and progressive change have been warped by "the ideas of either the nostalgic defenders of revolutionism or the romantic proponents of micropolitical subversion" (Marchart 2011, 971). This has left us unable to adequately account for those who act politically but who do not want or cannot act as "minor" individual subversives or as "major" insurrectionists against the state.

Consequently, Marchart (2011, 972) states we should focus on minimal conditions of political action, rather than questions of scale, intensity or the unconditionality of the action. For him, we can talk of politics when we witness *collectivity* (acting together), *strategy* (self-conscious activity in contexts of constraints), *conflictuality* (confronting complicated obstacles and antagonisms) and *organisation* (Marchart, 2011, 972). It does not matter "how big the collective, how effective the strategy, how intense the conflict, and how good (or bad) the organization" (Marchart, 2011, 972) is, politics can be seen to occur when these minimal conditions are apparent. Thus, though there is a large terrain between grand and micro politics, and the politics of the urban everyday does not aim to bridge it, the practices involved in the interventions described above share these minimal conditions.

We have been careful not to make any empirical claims about the transformative potential of such interventions, even if we follow Iveson in thinking that they seem to be growing in prominence. The purpose of the following section is to consider the political potential of the everyday. While this is a more conceptual venture, it has strategic implications for thinking about transformative urban politics.

(Re)turning to the everyday

Alongside the scramble to find the right terms to describe what is happening in our cities, urban theorists have been asserting the fundamental importance of the everyday plane to both decipher the political possibilities of the urban and achieve progressive political change. The current turn to the everyday is, of course, a *return*. As Lefebvre argued in his critique of the everyday, the prime object of the Marxist project was the transformation of everyday life through total revolutionary praxis (Lefebvre, 1975: 42-43; see also Roberts, 2006: 102; Kipfer, 2002; Goonewardena, 2008). This still provides a common ground for most contemporary critical urban theorists (Dikeç and Swyngedouw, 2017: 9). However, there is disagreement in theory and practice as to how the “metamorphosis of the everyday” can be reached (Lefebvre, 1975: 45). The transformative potential of everyday practices cannot be taken for granted and many of our contemporary challenges (climate change, inequality, commodification of resources) are systemic and global. So, what is the emancipatory purchase of the everyday? Is there something particularly political residing in the everyday?

Correctly, some scholars stress caution in addressing these questions. The emancipatory potential of the everyday plane is ambivalent. Commitments to capitalist practices and social hierarchies are established in and often made invisible through social relations that

are commonly understood as daily or as part of everyday life (Kipfer, 2002: 129-133). A focus on the everyday might obscure from view both the structural forces that shape hierarchical power relations and the stringent frameworks and settings of the daily routines most urbanites follow. Davies (2013) cogently reminds us not to forget systemic issues when studying quotidian routines and performative practices: "To co-opt a familiar idiom, to be excessively preoccupied with everyday life risks not seeing the chasms for the cracks" (ibid., 509).

Lefebvre's work provides the most convincing means of thinking about the everyday in political terms. Following him, we can understand the everyday not in the sense of daily or ordinary life but rather as a distinct space of routines apart from specialized activities (i.e. work, politics, etc.) that is produced and governed by processes of urbanization and modernization. The production of everyday life, the shaping of the smallest aspects of daily life, is crucial for the reproduction of capitalism because it is in the sphere of the everyday that desires are formed, contradictions of capitalism are resolved and normalisation takes place (Lefebvre, 1975: 42). The everyday is where social reality is made self-evident and inevitable - "that's how it is, there is nothing to change" (Kipfer, 2008: 199). From this perspective, "the everyday is the very soil on which the great architecture of politics and society rise up" (Lefebvre, 1976: 89).

But it is also in the plane of the everyday where political possibilities to break with the everydayness of urban life emerge and where ordinary, mundane frustrations and aspirations can be related to political and economic projects (Roberts, 2006). Lefebvre, as well as the Situationists, thought that the latent political possibility of the everyday could be shown in interventions, what Lefebvre called "moments" and the Situationists

understood in more spatial and agential terms as constructed 'situations' (Roberts, 2006: 80-81; Lefebvre, 1974; Debord, 1989). These everyday spaces and moments of happiness, communality and even frustration cannot be denied and can be turned against the sphere of value production that is responsible for the creation of the everydayness of urban daily life in the first place. Everyday life is thus streaked by contradictory tensions because it is here that the ordered and unordered, dominated and unruly sectors of life, abstract space and the possibility for differential space meet. "It serves not only as an arena for the operation of large historical forces—capitalism, the state, the bureaucracy, and so on—but also as a space of innovation, improvisation, change, and resistance" (Prakash, 2008: 12).

When we relate these understandings of the everyday to political practices and to urbanization we might see the everyday as the site of political struggles as well as a way to think differently about urban politics (McFarlane and Silver, 2017; Brenner and Schmid, 2015). Everyday practices not only articulate a critique of daily urban life but they disrupt an urban everyday structured by capitalist imperatives (Arampatzi, 2017).

What we can take from this (re)turn to the everyday is that to assert an urban everyday politics is not to "elevate" everyday issues to the "proper" political sphere or to absorb the everyday into political life but to question the viability of the everyday, the hierarchies that permeate it and the boundaries between the everyday and other spheres as such. From this perspective the everyday is not only the stage but also the object of political struggle. It is in the everyday that the viability of political projects is determined and finally sustained (Lefebvre 1975: 52-53).

The extent to which people become political subjects of the urban everyday is one shaped by contemporary capitalism, the production of space and the inherent contingency and politics of urban everyday life. Seen from such a perspective, political subjectivisation (why focus on remaking everyday surroundings and doing it yourself?) like that associated with diverse practices, such as squatting or Critical Mass, is not necessarily bound up with challenging and acquiring political sovereignty. Urban everyday politics might then have little to do with performing a political identity ("being activist") but rather trying to change the conditions of daily life ("doing activism") (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Bobel, 2007; cf. Bang, 2009).

Urban everyday politics

Taking stock of the preceding sections, we can now offer a conceptual case for what we think is an important and as yet often unseen form or category of political action. Urban everyday politics are the strategic, collective, conflictual and organised practices that are shaped by and re-shape the urban. They can politicise the spatial and temporal (re)production of the urban, understood as a process operating at different scales. Urban everyday politics contests and re-appropriates processes of urbanisation in a variety of practices and by doing so can create differential spaces out of abstract spaces, realise the transformative potential of the urban and "produce a different form of life" (Brenner and Schmid, 2015, 177; Lefebvre, 1991).

A similar argument has been made by Boudreau *et al.* (2009, 340), who call attention "to the impact of urbanity on the emergence of other forms of political action...In an urban world, we suggest, protest action is very close to everyday life." They (ibid) note that these political acts are rarely the most visible or dramatic but are embedded within everyday practices. Bayat (2010) also makes the observation that urban daily life in the

Middle East, hidden from formal politics, often generates conditions for mobilization that defer sovereignty claims and challenge the 'natural' or 'self-evident order' of the city.

The point being made here is that we should not allow ourselves to always be distracted by thoughts of "grand politics" (Marchart, 2011: 970). Rather, we should be more attentive to everyday practices that are politicising the urban and are politicised by the urban context at the same time (Yates, 2015). Hence, what we can learn from the examples discussed and diverse literature addressed above is that "[...] to recover the emplacements that are the condition of possibility for democracy itself" in cities (Magnusson, 2015: 30), everyday life plays a crucial role because processes of urbanisation and the contradictions they produce crystalize in the spatial and temporal routines of the urban experience (Lefebvre, 1991; 2002).

The conceptual shift to the everyday can be seen to serve three distinct purposes. First, the everyday serves as the stage where practices, bodies, ideas and collectives are assembled and related to urbanisation. Phenomenologically, the urban and the political meet in the everyday. Second, the everyday and the regulatory authority of capitalist and state organisation of space are interdependent because the abstract logic of spatial organisation is never complete and is always dependent on the everyday practices sustaining them (Brenner and Schmid, 2015, 177). Abstract space always entails the possibility of differential space. This potential can be activated within and through the everyday. Hence, latent political authority and conditions of possibility reside in the urban everyday. Third, everyday life is the locus where hegemony has to be enacted. It is therefore in the everyday plane that hegemonic formations can be revealed, criticized and ultimately challenged by counter-hegemonic projects (Kipfer, 2002).

On these grounds, urban everyday politics has potentially far-reaching implications for our still in many ways state-centred conceptions of the political (Magnusson, 2011). It can foreground antagonistic practices aiming to establish some form of alternative everyday against and beyond the everyday reach of capitalist urbanization (cf. Holloway, 2010a). It is a form of politics that aims not to seize state power but to escape the reach of those “who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents and interest from them” (Scott, 1985, xvi; cf. Huke et al., 2015).

Although the form, extent and impact of urban everyday political practices varies across urban contexts, the moves away from a state-centred politics entailed in urban everyday politics might be considered along the following dimensions. *Spatially*: not centred on the institutions of the state (as friend or enemy) but emergent in multiple urban locations. *Temporally*: not shaped by the procedures of state bureaucracy and political decision-making but entwined with the rhythms of everyday life. *Practices*: not concerned with “politicking”, lobbying and demonstrating against the state, but apparent in the practices of everyday life, the creation of new spaces of action and processes of individual and collective reproduction. *Aims*: neither concerned with revolution nor reform nor the (re)organisation of political decision making, but rather the transformation of urban everyday life in its immediacy.

The transformative potential of the urban everyday

To close, we detail the transformative potential of the urban everyday. As noted above, restraint is required in doing so. Lefebvre (1991) made clear that we should not underestimate the political ambiguities of the everyday. A politics of everyday resistance can be congruent to an austerity urbanism unless it confronts this agenda (Rosol, 2012). Actually existing uneven urbanization may be reproduced through practices residing in

the urban everyday, for example in middle class responses to a crisis mainly experienced by lower income or marginalized groups (McClintock, 2018). Furthermore, responses to austerity themselves can be appropriated as new forms of cultural place-making totally in line with creative city policies (Mayer 2013).

Nevertheless, viewing the urban everyday as a source, stake and site of politics expands the conception of the political, spatially and temporally, as well as in terms of practices and aims. Our argument here has been for *urban everyday politics* to be added to the repertoire of forms of political action, alongside, for instance, political 'events' or irruptions, social movements and formal politics. Ultimately, we have suggested that the everyday can be more than a set of political issues and field of social antagonisms - it can become a horizon of politics in an urbanised society. We have, then, presented a very *urban* understanding of politics and addressed the conceptual implications this has. But urban everyday politics is also suggestive of a range of political strategies which urbanites might pursue:

- *Urban self-government and decentralised democracy.* We have contended that the everyday plane may be one productive means through which urban struggles can be waged. Attempts at self-government in the urban everyday might be crucial to understanding how and with what effect urbanites can redefine democracy by challenging how urban spaces are lived and perceived. Neither micro-level nor grand politics, everyday politics may contest practices of the urban everyday and/ or reimagine and rework these practices. A concern for these everyday forms of political practices has normative purchase: these practices can provide the alternatives both intellectually and practically. Focusing on the urban everyday, urbanites might establish forms of local self-government and political authority at one remove,

entirely disconnected from or even toe-to-toe with formal institutions of urban governance (cf. Magnusson, 2011). To facilitate this, we might explore the practical potential of the many concepts providing coordinates for local self-government (as process or institution) within a broader context of multiple political authorities, e.g. the urban commonwealth (Kohn, 2016), autogestion (Lefebvre, 2001; Brenner, 2001), autonomous geographies and communities (Pickerill and Chatterton, 2006; Böhm et al., 2010), reimagined municipalities (Magnusson, 2015), libertarian municipalism and popular assemblies (Bookchin, 2015). One of the most prominent and perhaps most interesting current examples in this regard is *En Comú* in Barcelona. En Comú is a radical left platform encompassing different social movements and political organizations (Davies 2017). In 2015 En Comú won the local elections and continues to hold the mayoral office in Barcelona. The pursuit of self-government is apparent in their very different vision of what a (municipal) state is and its anchorage in the urban everyday in terms of issues and forms of organization. This type of resistance goes beyond a binary understanding of the state-society relation. Rather it attempts to pluralize the form of political authority existing in cities.

- *Decentring the state - the urban as a horizon of political struggle*. Magnusson (2011, 7) states that the urban is constituted through self-organizing activities, which are always contingent upon a "multiplicity of political authorities in different registers and at different scales". Similarly, Brenner and Schmid (2015, 178) argue the "urban is a collective project", generated through struggle, experimentation and negotiation. Crucial to its possibility, the urban is diffuse, never complete, offering "an open horizon in relation to which concrete struggles over the urban are waged" (ibid). Ultimately, we concur with Boudreau (2017) and Magnusson (2011) that we need to explore how productive an urban ontology of the political can be: first, to assume

that there is no sovereign centre to political authority and, second, to think of local self-government as genuinely linked to urban space, understood, for example, as a “commonwealth” (Kohn, 2016). The idea or vision of self-government is not only related to binding collective decision-making but it also entails a re-imagining of the urban as practices and ideology. In arguing this, we do not forget that urban struggles are never unidirectional and are always ambivalent in terms of their scope and inclusiveness. But what we can learn from current anti-austerity struggles throughout Europe and the U.S. is that the urban everyday as a source, site and stake helps to overcome divides between different social groupings. Exactly because these struggles are organized within the urban everyday (and not within an interest group setting with specific space-time parameters) and towards the urban everyday (and not towards established institutions of urban governance) they remain accessible for usually detached or excluded parts of urban society.

- *Beyond reform and revolution: transformative change in the urban everyday.* As a political strategy, urban everyday politics might be seen as an attempt to erode, rather than escape, tame or smash, capitalism (Olin Wright, 2015; Holloway, 2010a; Zibechi, 2012) as it intrudes on current forms of urbanism. The means of erosion are the politicisation and transformation of everyday practices. Intervening in the everyday is, we have argued, essential to contest contemporary capitalism. Everyday practices realize differential space (Lefebvre, 1991): urban public space which is open for appropriation, which privileges use over exchange value and hence alternative ways of being thereby articulating the contradictions inherent to capitalist urbanization. Holloway (2010b, 915), drawing on Marx, has repeatedly made a similar point in relation to the struggle against labour (not directed against a larger authority but the quest for self-determination of life activities beyond capitalism) as opposed to

the struggle of labour (usually organized around unions and political parties and directed towards the state).

To conclude, we have developed a concept of urban everyday politics to capture the common thread linking diverse urban practices in our towns and cities. What this form of politics exhibits, despite the differences between practices, is the (re)location of politics in and focus upon the everyday urban experience. We have argued that a politics in this register offers one –amongst other - means of achieving political change. It is one that does not turn on translating extra-ordinary politics into a transformation of urban everyday life. Instead, the political act is the immediate transformation of the everyday.

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