

STUDYING OF URBAN MOVEMENTS THROUGH THE PARADIGMS OF POPULAR GEOPOLITICS AND ANTI-GEOPOLITICS

Petar Kurečić

University North, Koprivnica, Trg Žarka Dolinara 1, Croatia

petar.kurecic@unin.hr

ABSTRACT

The paper studies urban movements, as a type of social movements. These phenomena are studied through the perspectives of critical geopolitics' two sub disciplines: popular geopolitics and anti-geopolitics. Urban movements represent a type of social movements devoted mostly to the resistance of urban population towards changing of the cities under the influence of neoliberalism i.e. capital and private interests. Urban movements that were studied were mostly the ones resisting the privatization of public space as an expression of neoliberalisation of the cities, which has been going on for the last three decades in the West, and for about two decades in the former socialist countries and various emerging economies, such as P. R. China. Studying of urban movements has a tradition of a little more than quarter of a century, since critical geopolitics as a geopolitical perspective exists. It is mostly tied with the geopolitics of resistance i.e. anti-geopolitics that is an expression of challenges to the cultural, political, moral and economic dominance of the elites in various societies. Social movements represent the ties that bind the individuals involved in resistance, hence they articulate individual actions into comprehensive, socially visible and tangible actions that attract and keep the attention of the society as well as the authorities. In the era of social media, social movements have much more diverse ways of transmitting messages and coordinating actions. The main conclusion is that we live in the era of social movements (and therefore urban movements as well), in which social media have become a very important means of the social movements' actions.

Keywords: social movements, urban movements, social media, popular geopolitics, anti-geopolitics, the Internet age.

1 INTRODUCTION

The paper studies some of the current developments connected with social movements from a critical stance, such as urban movements that are struggling against neoliberal capitalism and globalization¹ as an agent of mainly neoliberal capitalism, as well as the studying of these

¹ Globalization is leading to the formation of a transnational global capitalism. The world may not be fully transnational, but is heading in that direction as transnational production networks, a transnational capitalist

phenomena in critical geopolitics' two sub disciplines, popular geopolitics and anti-geopolitics. Urban movements represent a type of social movements devoted mostly to the resistance of urban population towards changing of the cities under the influence of neoliberalism i.e. capital and private interests. Studying of urban movements has a tradition in little more than quarter of a century, since critical geopolitics as a geopolitical perspective exists. It is mostly tied with the geopolitics of resistance i.e. anti-geopolitics that is an expression of challenges to the cultural, political, moral and economic dominance of the elites in the societies². In the era of social media, social movements have much more diverse ways of transmitting messages and coordinating actions. Social media have been studied as a social phenomenon almost as long as they exist and not only in geopolitics. In the current era of new media and especially social media, social movements have much more diverse ways of transmitting their messages and coordinating their actions. Nevertheless, studying of the influence of social media on urban movements is a relatively new trend in popular geopolitics. This relative newness and not so widespread research (still) of the social media's influence on social movements was the main driver behind research that is briefly presented in this paper.

2 THE OVERVIEW OF MAIN TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Critical geopolitics³ is a subfield of human geography, claims Kuus, emphasizing that "a critical inquiry into the spatiality of world affairs must be central to the study of politics. All analyses of international affairs make geographical assumptions, whether acknowledged or not. Critical geopolitics seeks to make these assumptions visible so as to submit them to analytical scrutiny" (Kuus, 2010: 683). Critical geopolitics therefore studies the geographical determinants and factors that influence global and international politics. It has been mostly focused on the documents, speeches and papers commonly referred to as "texts", studying their narrative and linguistic features, thereby analyzing discourses. Critical geopolitics studies and explains the actions through which the intellectuals of statecraft give geographical and spatial features to international politics, representing the "world" marked by the certain types of places

class, and transnational state co-exist, and are increasingly taking over a previously more national world (Robinson, 2004).

Globalisation creates new forms of transnational class relations across borders and new forms of class cleavages globally and within countries, regions, cities and local communities, in ways quite distinct from the old national class structures and international class conflicts and alliances. (Robinson, 2005: 6)

The concept of transnational capitalist class originated was discussed by neo-Marxist scholars like Kees van der Pijl, Leslie Sklair, Robert Cox, Barry Gill, David Harvey, William Robinson and Jerry Harris.

The process of globalization is to an important degree commanded by transnational capitalist class (Robinson, Harris, 2000)

Harvey (2005) points out: "What we are left with is a transnational capitalist class, and a thoroughly liberal, anti-political, and state-centric version of civil society where politics in this realm is reduced to economic competition among competing elites, both "internal" and "external"."

Robinson, discussing the concept of hegemony, points out to "transnational social forces not necessarily tied to any one nation-state behind contests over hegemony and other global political dynamics." (Robinson, 2005: 3).

² Despite the changes in the world connected with globalization, information and the Internet age, this thesis is still valid: „Geopolitics is here to stay anyway, as illustrated both by its constant circulation in media and politics, and by the booming academic industry in appending new qualifiers to geopolitics, which has seen the emergence of, among others, subaltern, feminist, actor-network, everyday, emotional, embodied, and bio-geopolitics." (Ingram, A. in Ciuta, 2011: 224)

³ The term critical geopolitics was first coined by Simon Dalby (1990) in his analysis of the representational strategies of the Committee on Present Danger (a conservative foreign policy interest group) in the 1970s and 1980s. By the late 1990s, after numerous articles and several further books, critical geopolitics was a clearly discernible and rapidly growing strand within political geography (Kuus, 2010: 686).

("locations"), which are tied to a certain identity. Critical geopolitics is therefore connected with the studying of new spatial relations and the processes of capitalist accumulation, which it criticizes with its scientific apparatus. It is also highly critical of geopolitics of neoliberalism⁴.

Popular geopolitics is a part of critical geopolitics, which studies popular, circulating representations of geopolitical problematics. It studies various cultural products as well as their producers and audiences, it offers insights into a range of locations and agents of geopolitics outside the realm of the state: popular magazines, newspaper reporters, cartoonists, film directors, and social activists of various kinds (Kuus, 2010: 693). One part of this inquiry into popular culture and everyday life is the work on resistance geopolitics or anti-geopolitics.

Popular geopolitics is a form of geopolitical discourse. It has recognized that geopolitics is something that occurs every day outside of the academic and policymaking discourse (and not just in them!). This recognition has been central to the development of critical geopolitics.

Popular geopolitics has generally been focused on media and popular culture artifacts. This has led to a popular geopolitics that has been focused on the elite visions of media moguls, movie directors, and lower-level yet still relatively empowered media functionaries like writers and reporters (Dalby, 2008; Dittmer, 2005; Mc Farlane and Hay, 2003) (in: Dittmer, Gray, 2010: 1664)⁵.

Anti-geopolitics can be defined as: "an ambiguous political and cultural force within civil society that articulates forms of counter-hegemonic struggle." (Routledge, 2006: 234). By civil society, Routledge means those institutions that are not part of either material production in the economy or the formal sphere of the state. By counter-hegemonic, he means: resistances that challenge the material and cultural power of dominant geopolitical interests or states and their elites (2006: 234; in: Kuus, 2010: 694). The challenges to the military, political, economic and cultural dominance of the elites in societies from "below" (the subaltern groups) are not new developments. These challenges are various forms of resistance that are articulated, and can be termed as "anti-geopolitics". Anti-geopolitics can take myriad forms, from the oppositional discourses of dissident intellectuals to the strategies and tactics of *social movements* (although the former may frequently be speaking on behalf of the latter). While anti-geopolitical practices are usually located within the political boundaries of the state, with the state frequently being the principal opponent, this is not to suggest that anti-geopolitics is necessarily localized. For example, with the intensity of the processes of globalization, *social movements* are increasingly operating across regional, national, and international scales, integrating resistance into global strategies, as they challenge elite international institutions and global structures of domination (Routledge, 2003: 236-237). From Routledge's mentioning of the forms that anti-geopolitics

⁴ Local strategies-aimed particularly at securing mobile (public and private) investment-have become more prominent and more pervasive not because they provide the 'answer', but because they represent a common tactical response to political-economic disorder at the global scale. They are in fact about selling the local to the global. This commodification of place... must be understood in terms not of 'the local' itself, but of relations between places. These relations are increasingly being constituted on a neoliberal basis. In order to explain this new spatial disorder, then, it is necessary to consider the geopolitics of neo-liberalism, an ideology which we characterize here as a creature of the crisis. As the leverage of nation states has waned, and as new global-local relations have been constituted, there does indeed seem to have been something of a geopolitical realignment. For some, this implies a spatial reconstitution of state power. (Peck et al, 1994: 318)

⁵ While space was carved out under the term "popular geopolitics" to note the ways in which geopolitical discourse suffused everyday life, early writings in critical geopolitics focused on the formal and practical forms of geopolitical discourse, with popular geopolitics seen as the "legitimizing" form of discourse that brought popular acquiescence to policies of militarism in democratic states. Popular geopolitics has continued in this mold for the past decade; tracing the ways in which popular media reinforce elite discourses (Dittmer, Gray, 2010: 1665).

can take, we can see that he mentions social movements⁶ here twice. The intellectuals with a developed sense of awareness about the inevitability of resistance are important since they provide intellectual perspectives and help people to see things in a different way that is not formed by the common prejudices and mainstream media sponsored by the state or private capital, the importance of social movements for the development of anti-geopolitics is even greater.

Studying of the social movements from the perspectives of Marxist geopolitics is not viable hence attempts to suffix geopolitics to Marxism, are not so successful, mainly because of two reasons: one explicit, the other much less so, both essential, yet fundamentally incompatible. The first reason, Colás and Pozo argue, is applied analysis. With a Marxist geopolitics we can understand better ‘the capitalist valorization of territory and . . . its international repercussions’. Naturally, such an argument rests on the claim that Marxist geopolitics is a new thing. In turn, this claim requires not only carving out a niche within the empirical domain covered by Marxist theory, but also specifying the distinct parameters of geopolitics which make this new-found compatibility possible and desirable. Clandestine, although it dazzles at the very top of the manifesto, the second reason for the coming of Marxist geopolitics is that geopolitics in general is no longer a theoretical pariah, having been sanitized, deodorized and purified from the dirt and messiness of ‘the corridors of power or popular commentary’ (Ciuta, 2011: 221-222).

The recognition of social movements’ importance is not a recent development. It has been present in social sciences for decades. However, as Harvey (1996) pointed out: “In face of the neoliberal challenge, social movements can either remain place-based and ignore the potential contradictions inherent in transnational coalitions; or treat the contradictions as a nexus for creating a more transcendent and universal politics, combining social and environmental justice, that transcends the narrow solidarities and particular affinities shaped in particular places.”

The neoliberal (counter)revolution of the Reagan–Thatcher era had strong repercussions at the urban scale, opening the way for an unprecedented deregulation of housing markets and generally for an irreversible shift to the entrepreneurialization of local government and the privatization and commodification of urban public space (Smith, 1996; Mitchell, 1997; MacLeod, 2002). Urban neoliberalism more specifically is to be viewed as the translation of the logic of free market capitalism into the urban domain of socio-spatial relations (Rossi, Vanolo, 2015: 847).

The counter offensive by capital and state actors, including the emasculation of progressive local and city governments and assault on trade union power (especially in the USA and UK), allied to the flight of capital away from the industrial cities of the north to low wage locations elsewhere, represented a response to an upsurge in class politics. Neoliberalism then represents a new round of attempts to control labour in and beyond the workplace, fusing with aspects of

⁶ Social movements articulate anti-geopolitics on a number of interrelated realms within society, including the economic, cultural, political and environmental. In the economic realm, social movements articulate conflicts over access to productive natural resources such as forest and water that are under threat of exploitation by states and transnational corporations. In the cultural realm, social movements’ identities and solidarities are formed, around issues of class, kinship, neighborhood, and the social networks of everyday life. In the political realm, social movements challenge the state-centered character of the political process, articulating critiques of neoliberal development ideology and of the role of the state. In the environmental realm, social movements are involved in struggles to protect local ecological niches – e.g. forests, rivers, and ocean shorelines – from the threats to their environmental integrity through such processes as deforestation and pollution. Many of these social movements are also multidimensional, simultaneously addressing, for example, issues of poverty, ecology, gender, and culture (Routledge, 2003: 240-241).

social conservatism to attack the gains made by women, gay and minority ethnic groups in the 1960s and 1970s (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism's power to "press upon" stems from its institutional arrangement and hegemonic discourses backed by the United States' military might (Harvey 2003; Peet 2007). But the presence of power that "presses upon" does not negate the possibility of subaltern counter-politics. In fact, the presence of power that presses upon also gives rise to productive power, or the power to resist and transform (Foucault 1979). The power of those adversely affected by neoliberalism is dependent on their alliances, relations, networks and counterhegemonic discourses (Waqar, 2012: 1063).

Nilsen suggests that a new theory of social movements⁷ are necessary, since established social movement theories have limitations – on the one hand, the various ways in which these theories operate with a deeply reductive conceptualization of social movements as a particular institutional level of an essentially fixed political order, separate and different from everyday resistance, political parties, trade unions, and revolutionary transformations; and on the other hand such theories have limited capacity to say anything of strategic substance about the struggles of the day (2015: 2). Social movements can be seen as being simultaneously constituted by and constitutive of praxis, and thus as being situated at the very heart of the making and unmaking of the structures and processes that underpin *both* social order *and* social change. Social movements should be understood according to the way how they play a role in shaping and reshaping the current form of given institutional fields and political economies, and taking seriously the basic intention that animates social movements, that is, the intention of moving, of becoming more than what they currently are (2015: 4-5).

Social movements represent the ties that bind individuals involved in the resistance hence they articulate individual actions into comprehensive, socially visible and tangible actions that tie and keep the attention of the society as well as authorities. In the current era of new media and especially social media, social movements have much more diverse ways of transmitting their messages and coordinating their actions, exactly through the widespread use of social media.

The "resistance to accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2003)⁸ has been picked up by "new" social movements concerned with issues such as land and minority rights (Hickey and Bracking 2005). In this period, socially ameliorative interventions were aimed at providing a certain degree of collective consumption and at upgrading the living spaces of the disadvantaged. Meanwhile, the terrain of profitable activities was expanded with the help of policies and plans. Citizens and interest groups have become stakeholders in this increasingly

⁷ *Social movements from above* are defined, above all, by the ability of dominant groups to draw on a set of specific power resources in their attempts to shape the social world in specific ways – a directive role in economic organization, a privileged ability to act in and through the institutions of the state, and a capacity to mold everyday routines and common sense. (...)

Social movements from below grow out of people's experience of a concrete lifeworld that is somehow problematic in relation to their needs and capacities and from their attempts to combine, organize and mobilize in order to do something about this. In other words, social movements from below are dynamic entities that contain a contingent potential for expansive development from circumscribed to more encompassing forms of activism (Nilsen, 2015: 5-6).

⁸ In the late 1980s, David Harvey was the first social scientist to clearly identify the rise of a neoliberal art of governing cities, through his conceptualization of the entrepreneurialization of urban governance in US cities over the 1980s, even though at that time he did not explicitly use the term neoliberalism (Rossi, Vanolo, 2015: 846).

As Harvey had explained, politico-economic elites across the world were urged to connect cities and regional spaces to economic, political, and cultural relations of global reach. (...) The 'new urban politics' becomes thereby a crucial terrain of investigation with reference primarily to Anglo-American cities and metropolitan areas but also to cities in other contexts of advanced and emerging capitalism (Rossi, Vanolo, 2015: 847).

fragmented and participatory governance system. Concomitantly, social mobilizations became part of an organized and formalized negotiation process (Eraydin, Tok-Kasan, 2014: 114).

The racial issue in capital accumulation should not be overlooked at any time⁹. Even today, it is quite clear, hence in multiracial societies, the population of European origin (“whites”) always have much better social status and more wealth than the population of Asian or especially African origin. Latino population in the North America, as well as Amerindian and Mestizo population in the Latin America share the similar fate.

The roots of urban movements primarily can be found in high discrepancies of wealth distribution, besides the more obvious reasons, such as: gentrification and privatization of former public space; privatization of natural resources and natural monopolies (for example: water supply).

3 DISCUSSION

It is a striking historical fact that at the various apices of US global ambition over the last century, powerful discourses emerged to the effect that the world is devoid of geographical hierarchies and that it should be seen instead as a plain of equal opportunity for all. (...) All in the world were supposedly equal in this beautiful vision, perpetrated by powerful ruling class men who sat at the top of a global hierarchy and who clearly had an interest in seeing no privilege. Today the language of a US-led neo-liberal globalization revisits this fantasy; its favourite slogan tells us that globalization provides a level playing field. But it is precisely the self-serving trick of neo-liberalism to assume that such a flat world is already here, hierarchy is gone, equality rules¹⁰ (Smith, 2005: 893).

The neoliberal dogma about equality among people and the flat world¹¹ represents a fantasy, a composition of “realities” based on the false premises. Therefore, the conclusions cannot be anything but false. The only thing that is becoming more equal is the range of social inequality i.e. social stratification in the societies of the majority of the world’s countries, both developed and underdeveloped. At the same time, the differences in the level of economic development between the developed and the least developed countries (LDCs) are increasing, leaving the emerging economies as the only examples of shrinking differences between the developed countries and the non-developed countries. However, this faster, sometimes in purely economic terms, incredible economic development of the emerging economies comes at a very high price: rising social inequality, rising crime rates, increased resource extraction, increased dependence on resource imports (especially oil, in most of the emerging economies – P.R. of China and India are the best examples) and a rapid pollution and destruction of the environment (P.R. China probably stands out as the perfect example).

⁹ The racial wealth gap is one of myriad economic realities that reflect these disparities. In the USA, the median wealth of white households is 20 times that of black households and 18 times that of Latino households (Kochhar, Fry and Taylor 2011). These economic geographies are produced through state violences that support enslavement, colonization, and incarceration, and the racism enshrined in agendas like homesteading, housing policy, urban renewal, and suburbanization that have devoured communities of color while facilitating capital accumulation for privileged white Americans. (Inwood, Bonds, 2013: 517)

Additionally, the mobilization of neoliberal projects rests on racialized and sexualized discourses (eg. welfare mothers, criminalization of race). (Ibid, 517-518)

¹⁰ From Latour’s actor network theory to Paul Virilio’s “‘death of geography,”’ from Castells’ network society to Jean Beaudrillard’s “‘end of geography,”’ leftists and ex-leftists have variously refracted visions of a flat playing field (Smith, 2005: 895).

¹¹ Probably one of the best examples of this dogma is a book by T. Friedman, *The World is Flat*.

Recognition of neoliberalism's geographies of poverty, inequality, and violence as intertwined across a multiplicity of sites (Hart 2008; Springer 2008) impels us to view its geographies of protest, resistance, and contestation in the same light (Springer, 2011: 553).

Because the changes associated with neoliberal policies often had negative distributional impacts on the working class, the poor, the small-business sector, and the environment, diverse forms of resistance and contestation have emerged. Leitner et al (2007) suggest that contestations of neoliberalism fall under four basic types: engagement, opposition, alternative knowledge production, and disengagement (Hess, 2011: 1058).

There are ample evidence from around the world that the state aims to pacify opponents, concurrently performing authoritarian and entrepreneurial state interventions, connected with neoliberal urban management¹².

Social movements of the present day world are definitely thriving because of the two main processes. The first is the neo-liberally inspired internationalization (which the ideologists of globalization refer to as "globalization") that increases social inequality in both rich and poor states, concurrently increasing inequalities between the developed and non-developed states, increasing the number of least-developed states, and therefore turning whole regions into the "zones of compression" (Cohen, 2008) i.e. social and environmental destruction (Central Africa is the worst example). The second process is the revolution in information technologies that has invented "new media" and then made them available to significant parts of the world population (in developed states, the percentage of Internet users well surpasses 50%). Internet and its tools have become ubiquitous. Social media (especially Facebook and Twitter, as well as YouTube) have changed the possibilities of social movements.

Social movements typically grow from "cramped spaces", situations that are constricted by the impossibilities of the existing world with a way out barely imaginable. But precisely because they are cramped, these spaces act as incubators or greenhouses for creativity and innovation. Social movements that grow from these spaces might form around antagonistic demands (more money, better housing, and withdrawal of the police) but they also produce their own problematics. By this we mean they throw up concepts, ideas, desires that don't "make sense" within existing society and so call forth new worlds (The Free Association, 2007)¹³.

Castells is one of the authors who has recognized the new possibilities of social movements' actions through the use of social media. In his book, titled *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age* (2012) he recognizes the importance of Internet and social media for the development of social movements. Castells has identified over a 100 different social movements that have thrived in 2009-2012 period, in various parts of the world, in democracies and developed states (various movements in European states, Occupy Wall Street Movement etc.), as well as in the autocratic regimes of the developing world (for instance, the Arabian Spring movements, protests in Russia against Putin). All these movements used social media as a means of coordinating their actions and announcing their messages to their

¹² Any sense of collective agency has disappeared with the collapse of trade union membership, the failure of attempts to prevent plant closure and in some cases, decisive moments of defeat for the working class. In the case of the UK, Thatcher's defeat of the 1984-1985 miners' strike or the failed attempts by British city governments to develop municipal socialism in the 1980s in the face of the neoliberal onslaught at the national level. In the USA, the bankruptcy of New York City (Harvey, 2005) and the subsequent collapse of a progressive urban politics of redistribution alongside the job losses, plant relocation and emasculation of the autoworkers are similar symbolic moments. (Cumbers, Helms, Swanson, 2010: 61).

¹³ But just as social movements take root and slow down, so these problematics stop moving. What was once new becomes codified. It's a vicious circle: as problematics slow down, they acquire baggage; as they acquire baggage, they slow down. Rather than being innovative and productive, the problematic loses its purchase and becomes cliché. It becomes saturated in meaning (The Free Association, 2010: 1023).

supporters and to the outside world. Some of these movements were motivated by a desire for more political freedom and some were motivated by the increasing social inequalities and injustice, as well as the economic crisis itself. Third kind of movements were the ones that had both political and economic motives that initiated them. It also has to be noted that this differentiation is sometimes very vague, since changes in the political arena are usually preconditions for changes in the economic arena.

Urban movements

Neoliberalisation of the cities is referred to by Smith (1996) as “revanchism”: “A ruthless, right-wing reaction against the supposed theft of the city by, among others, the working class, the unemployed, immigrants and minorities.”

The response to the elimination of collective bargaining rights for public employees in Wisconsin, the growth of the Occupy Movements, and the emergence of student protests to the oppressive cost of education remind us that radical activism is still possible. However, certain instances within these moments of possibility brought with them the baggage of privilege and essentialism that should serve as reminders of the importance of anti-racism to anti-capitalist activism (Inwood, Bonds, 2013: 518).

The people who were evicted formed the wellspring of urban movements in cities around the world (Sugranyes, Mathivet, 2011). At this stage, interventionist urban agendas and state entrepreneurialism are likely to be found not only in developing countries but also in advanced economies (Swyngedouw, 1996).

The response of the Turkish state to urban movements in the last decade illustrates that economic neoliberalism does not have to coincide with the dismantling of the state. (...) Neoliberal urban policies and practice are used to legitimize the enhancement of authoritarian governance¹⁴.

Urban movements and urban poor are not only typical for the underdeveloped countries and emerging economies that are under harsh pressure of neoliberalism. It is also typical for the most of the developed countries and their cities: “The resurgence of an urban poor is the starkest manifestation of the growing economic polarization evident in advanced industrial societies (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Dorling and Thomas, 2004; The Guardian, 2004). For example, in the UK since 1978 there has not only been a growth in the number of households living in relative poverty, but also a growing divide in absolute levels of income between upper and lower quartile of earners (Hocking, 2003; Nickell, 2004). The greatest gaps in wealth are to be found in the major cities, particularly in the disjuncture between the relative few with the right professional qualifications who have benefited from the small number of knowledge economy jobs available (Thompson, 2004) and a working class which has seen its livelihoods and economic identity disappear as the result of a shift from manufacturing to service-based work (Helms and Cumbers, 2006). It is in those old industrial cities and regions that experienced the

¹⁴ Second, it shows that governments use urban areas not only as a growth machine but also as grounds for a socio-political transformation project. This approach, which necessitated a strong role for the state, has engendered different forms of intervention in urban areas combining economic neoliberalism with increasing social control, restrictions, penalization, and exclusion of certain social groups. Third, the response of the Turkish state to urban movements depicts changing partnerships between the state, the market, and the citizens. (Eraydin, Tasan-Kok, 2014: 111).

In view of the common features of the state’s response to urban movements, three different types of state response can be identified since the 1960s: collective consumption, urban social movements, and clientalism (ie the urban politics of the post-war period for many places); the new entrepreneurialism (a first strand of revision of post-war urban politics); and the new authoritarianism (a second strand of revision of post-war urban politics, connected to the first strand). (Ibid. 112)

most dramatic economic decline and subsequent restructuring that these concerns are most urgent¹⁵ (Cumbers, Helms, Swanson, 2010: 49).

Through the strong theoretical lens of neoliberalism, the PFI¹⁶ is in many respects an ideal-type capitalist technology that tries to mystify an enormous transfer of public revenues and assets to finance capital under the ruse of so-called “risk transfer”. At the national scale, the PFI has played a small but nevertheless significant role in the New Labour government’s 2000–2010 Decent Homes programme, which, beneath the rhetoric of modernisation, has been designed to facilitate the long-term privatisation of council housing¹⁷ (Hodkinson, 2011: 378).

As far as the resistance to PFI is concerned, from the perspective of urban movements, there are some positive developments: Nationally, the Defend Council Housing campaign has successfully fought off dozens of stock transfers, while internationally, momentum is gathering behind Lefebvre’s slogan of The Right to the City as myriad local urban movements seek to connect up working class struggles “against gentrification and displacement to other local and international struggles for human rights, land, and democracy” (Right to the City Alliance, www.righttothecity.org; also Harvey 2008) (Hodkinson, 2011: 379).

4 CONCLUSION

Unless the state is limiting the access to the Internet, social media decrease or almost completely annul the monopoly on circulation of the information, and that can mean the end of any dictatorship. However, the dictatorship of neoliberal capitalism and the ubiquitous „TINA“ (There Is No Alternative)¹⁸ doctrine, continues, despite the actions of social movements and social media. Social media are the means that help make the struggle against the

¹⁵ “Dorling and Thomas’s (2004) study found that, outside London, the city with the highest proportion of households living in poverty, with over 40%, was Glasgow. In as far as the absence of paid work is responsible for poverty levels, the decline of traditional industries such as heavy engineering and shipbuilding has severely affected old industrial cities such as Glasgow. Although unemployment levels are relatively low (in comparison to say 25 years ago), economic activity rates remain well below the national average. Recent evidence available from the UK Office of National Statistics suggests that almost a third of the working population in the UK’s major old industrial cities continues to be “economically inactive”, not in paid formal employment nor classified as unemployed according to the ILO.” (49-50)

¹⁶ PFI - *private finance initiative*, developed in England. The PFI is here described as “the Labour government’s flagship public–private partnership (PPP) approach to public infrastructure modernisation.”

¹⁷ The Little London regeneration scheme also suggests, however, that the PFI’s neoliberal straitjacket has three intended urban effects (or at the very least presents local actors with the following openings): the imposition of the government’s proactive gentrification approach to regenerating inner city working class estates; the geographical rationalisation of public services and assets to free up land and other resources in order to feed the complex and costly financial model; and the further embedding of what Crouch (2004) calls “postdemocracy” by simultaneously “locking in” private sector interests into the governance of the area, while “locking out” grassroots stakeholders such as tenants, community activists and housing workers. So far, so disempowering. Yet we have also seen that the intended consequences of the PFI’s neoliberal urban straitjacket confront other realities that shape and even threaten to derail them. Structurally, the PFI is a highly precarious technology because it rests on creating long-term contracts in which risk and uncertainty are massively increased, thus making the actual signing of schemes vulnerable to delays and any changes in future economic forecasting. This makes “time” the Achilles heel of the PFI, and, just as in the myth, this weakness can be exploited through the arrow of resistance (Hodkinson, 2011: 378-379).

¹⁸ A phrase/doctrine of neoliberal proponents of the omnipresent globalization, first used in the 1980ies by M. Thatcher, and used again by D. Cameron: “If there was another way I would take it. But there is no alternative.” <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-21703018>; <http://www.pandopopulus.com/tina-there-is-no-alternative/>.

neoliberalisation of the cities of the social and therefore of the urban movements as well, different and probably more successful.

As Smith (2005: 898), bluntly pointed out: “So what is the alternative to a flat-earth pluralism and neo-critical geography? How do we both keep a multiplicity of voices alive and at the same time create a robust body of political thought and debate that helps guide and build political struggles. Major social transformations can spring from any number of sources: police abuse in Brixton, struggles over natural resources in Bolivia, religious strife in Bombay, imperialist occupation in Baghdad. The vital point for a critical geography is not an uncritical celebration of all revolts, but nor is it a tidy, detached desquamation of what counts as the only core struggle. Having said this, I also believe that as long as the class, race, gender and many other hierarchies of capitalism remain intact, we will get nowhere.” Both forms of intervention (authoritarian and entrepreneurial) in urban practices and projects have become commonplace in cities that are undergoing neoliberal transformation increasingly.

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