

## **The struggle to belong:**

*Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.*

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## **PRECARITY AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPEAN CITIES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

I will argue in this paper that the commonality between urban localized battles against neoliberal restructuring and the protest movements which now occupy central squares in Madrid, Paris, and Athens is precarity itself. The condition of precarity is complex, varied and operates in the margins as well as at times below the radar of formal representation. Urban resistance in a neighborhood in Barcelona called la Barceloneta which defeated a proposed restructuring of their historical neighborhood was made up of older residents, squatters and urban activists. Those in the central squares or 'los indignados' in Madrid, Barcelona, and Athens have no central political identity or even ideology, what brought them together instead was a common anger and opposition to the way modern forms of power are managing and regulating the conditions of their lives. These are the precarious conditions of unrepresented bodies, the overflows which are forcing the reformulation of the neoliberal inclusion project itself. The power of unrepresented movement of bodies in space has historically been the leading edge of social and labor transformation so perhaps we have now entered the age of precarity. In this paper I will consider the question of how the increasing precarity of life conditions in Western European cities creates a context for rereading political subjectivity, urban governance and potential forms of new urban social transformation. To do so I will draw on my research in Barcelona, Spain and beginning observations from research I am currently conducting in Athens, Greece on precarity and mobility.

## PRECARITY AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHERN EUROPEAN CITIES

*me llaman calle la sin futuro  
me llaman calle la sin salida  
me llaman calle, calle más calle  
la que mujeres de la vida  
suben pa bajo, bajan para arriba  
como maquina por la gran ciudad*

*-Manu Chao, Me llaman calle<sup>1</sup>*

*they call me the street with no future  
they call me the street with no exit  
they call me the street, street (and) more street  
that the women of life  
go up from below, go down from above  
like the little machine for the big city*

### I. INTRODUCTION<sup>2</sup>

I am writing this paper in an office not far from Syntagma square in Athens, Greece in May of 2011 where hundreds and at times even thousands of people have been gathering for the past two weeks, sleeping out and holding nightly meetings and protests. They meet under what has become a type of global banner called 'Real Democracy Now', a name being used for similar occupations in Madrid, Paris and elsewhere around the globe. Here in Athens in 2008 during the St. Nicholas day celebration the streets irrupted in a forceful show of rage and opposition to the blatant and unprovoked murder of a fifteen year old boy, Alexandros Grigoropoulos who was standing with friends one evening on a street near the center of Athens. The incident provoked massive rioting and huge public outrage in what some are saying reflects a new type of social movement in European cities<sup>3</sup>. The current collapsing financial conditions of the Greek state may be representative of a larger break in the neoliberal states inclusion project as the precarious conditions for growing numbers of residents can not be contained or regulated. In this sense the events that have occurred Greece, the Parisian riots of 2005 or the latest occupations of the central squares throughout Europe may be indications of a more fundamental shift in urban life conditions and power relations defined by precarity itself.

From an observational point of view it appears that a large proportion of those involved in the occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens share three general characteristics: one, they are discontent and disagree with the government's way of handling the financial crisis that the government itself had a large part in creating; secondly: they are part of the social strata which are more negatively effected by the so called 'austerity' measures being introduced to pay back the IMF; and thirdly, they are inspired to do something about it, or

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Miguel López Calzada for his help with the artistic translation.

<sup>2</sup> Please do not reprint any part of the content of this paper without permission. I can be contacted at [Matthewja3@yahoo.com](mailto:Matthewja3@yahoo.com) and would be glad to discuss the use of any of this unpublished text.

<sup>3</sup> In terms of the precarious conditions of youth, the working class, and immigrants in the European cities the riots in Greece may have similar roots to those which took place in Paris in 2005.

shall I dare use the word, *hopeful*. I don't think this hopefulness is based on some concrete plan about political change in the formal sense (in contrast to party politics), but as can be seen in the nightly general assemblies there is a commonality about how community and grass roots politics can occur and a shared confidence in collective process. The hopefulness lies in the sense that they have the ability to 'get along' together and to create good community relations with each other. This is in direct contrast to the current rhetoric of politicians who tend to speak as those they were caught in a lie, either blaming others, denying their part in it all, or by distorting even the simplest facts to the point of absurdity. The community atmosphere of the 'Real Democracy Now' movement' also creates a stark contrast to the behavior of corporate investors and the governments of other European countries who are eager to take advantage of the Greek governments inability to come up with enormous debt payments. It may be that in the end the Greek government will attempt to 'sell off' all the gains of a socialist social welfare system and nationalized utilities, not to mention the Greek islands<sup>4</sup>!

Urban social movements over the past three years in Western Europe (and other urban areas globally) are indicative of the rumblings of social change and transformation that are dynamic and anxiety provoking because of the high degree of uncertainty as to where they are going. The cities show examples of increasing violence alongside the creation of new informal communities which work as support networks and also form organizations to make demands on the neoliberal state for more sustainable and just social conditions. The Western European cities are spaces where the potentials and challenges of a dramatic increase in precarity can be seen from high rates of unemployment (or unstable employment), waves of foreign migrations, and the fragmenting of sexual and cultural politics. Certain European countries have fallen under the heavy debt mechanisms of the IMF like Ireland, Portugal and Greece and now face 'austerity' measures that eliminate jobs, salaries, and pension benefits from the working class while the formation of new transnational constellations of power continues. As frustration builds, European centered policies like the Dublin agreement of 2005<sup>5</sup> also create huge holding zones of non-papered migrants in countries like Greece intensify dangerous polarizations between followers of the extreme right and immigrants on the streets in Athens<sup>6</sup>. Greece, Spain and other

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/mar/04/greece-sell-islands-german-mps>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch/Detail/?ots591=4888caa0-b3db-1461-98b9-e20e7b9c13d4&lng=en&id=55318>

<sup>6</sup> A Greek man in May of 2011 is attacked by three immigrants in an attempt to steal his video camera, the man is stabbed and murdered and the next day extremist far right vigilante groups enter an immigrant neighbourhood and go on a rampage beating brown and black skinned men at random, breaking into stores, attacking the owners, stealing money, and destroying the merchandize. Eventually a 21 year old Bangladeshi man is trapped by the vigilante groups in the streets and stabbed to death. The Greek police have said they can do nothing in spite of the fact that video cameras capture the beatings and

border countries are so called 'entry points' which become transit zones where concentrations of moving bodies are held for varied periods before being released to continue on their journeys. These migrating populations live in their own unique precarious conditions along side the unemployed, partially or temporally employed, or retired populations of Greece. It is common to see precarity as a result of a kind of 'victimization', but it is important also to note that precarity is the result of choices and movements in which populations refuse to be captured and/or represented in certain forms and locations, so they move as many will say to 'escape' and be 'free'<sup>7</sup>.

I will argue in this paper that the commonality between urban neighborhood movements in Barcelona and those that are protesting and occupying plazas in Madrid, Paris, and Athens is precarity itself. The condition of precarity is complex, varied and operates in the margins as well as at times below the radar of formal representation. Those in the central squares or 'los indignados' have no central political identity or even ideology, what brought them together instead was a common anger and opposition to the way modern forms of power are managing and regulating the conditions of their lives. These are the precarious conditions of unrepresented bodies, the overflows which are forcing the reformulation of the neoliberal inclusion project itself. The power of unrepresented movement of bodies in space has historically been the leading edge of social and labor transformation so perhaps we have now entered the age of precarity. In this paper I will consider the question of how the increasing precarity of life conditions in Western European cities creates a context for rereading political subjectivity, urban governance and potential forms of new urban social transformation. To do so I will draw on my research in Barcelona, Spain and beginning observations from research I am currently conducting in Athens, Greece on precarity and mobility.

### **Power relations and urban subjectivity in 'postliberal' conditions**

Critical social researchers have attempted to understanding modern forms of Western power relations based on Foucault's formulation of governance and political subjectivity, suggesting the existence of a neoliberal governance which can be read as producing the conditions whereby subjectivities are characterized by 'competition and self responsibility' and make decisions based on 'rational economic' reasoning in every aspect

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robberies taking place. <http://greece.greekreporter.com/2011/05/11/violent-anti-immigrant-riot-after-fatal-stabbing-of-manolis-kadaris/>

<sup>7</sup> A Nigerian women in Athens recently explained to us in an interview that she liked being in Greece because it reminded her of her country. 'I am free here' she said, 'we just want our papers so we can leave and come back when we want'.

of life from the personal to political (Brown, 2005; Larson,2000; Lemke, 2000;). The construct of the 'neoliberal subject' has been suggested as an essential component of modern forms of Western European urban governance and their contestation (Jacobson, 2010). Yet perhaps we can and need to reappropriate the urban subject in terms of precarity (postneoliberalism) given the dynamic collapse and shifting of the neoliberal inclusion project in the West. Papadopoulos et. al., have suggested that neoliberalism itself has become one part of what they refer to as a postliberal structure of power relations and as a component of 'vertical aggregates' which are alliances which are not based on national projects or private institutions, but 'which reconnect different segments of nation states and different social actors who have emerged in the phase of transnational governance into new condensations of power' (Papadopoulos et.al.,2008, p.27-28). These alliances are made up of mixtures of aspects of private and public institutional frameworks and agreements (formal and informal) including among others, local and international government policies, legal frameworks on large and small scales, and non-governmental organizations. The key is that they are structures or 'aggregates' that are peiced together and constituted by non-ideological and even at times contradictory transnational and temporal state and private agreements. The discourses of various institutions which provide pieces to these aggregates create kinds of mirages of wholeness as they promote their own institutional agendas, but in reality power on the hegemonic level could be and perhaps even gains its strength by being contradictory at times. Examples of the these aggregates include such phenomena as the post political power of the United States in which 'governance' itself can be passed by as was seen in how the latest war in Iraq can be started, and even moved to other countries with no need for any type of political consensus. In this way the US is not imposing a new imperialist agenda as much as it is supporting the formation of a transnational structure, neither nationalistic nor totally privatized. The agenda of vertical aggregates is a kind of pure non-polity set up to 'install a set of eclectic principles whose only aim is to solidify the internal coherence and alliances of the vertical aggregate' (Papadopoulos, 2008: p. 34). In this sense then, vertical aggregates are a response to the inability of neoliberalism to capture precarity or *escape*. The future question may be how precarity itself will again transform to escape a 'postliberal' system of power and regulation. I will use examples drawn from my research on neoliberal subjectivity and urban governance in Barcelona to consider the question of urban social transformation within the conceptualization of a larger hegemonic 'post liberal' project (Papadopoulos, et.al., 2008). I will conclude by reflecting on some of the tentative reflections presenting themselves in my current research in Athens, Greece on bordering regimes and social transformation.

## **URBAN GOVERNANCE: Technologies of inclusion and resistance**

In my doctoral research on political subjectivity and urban social movements in Barcelona (2010) I argued that the discourses of 'citizen participation' and 'civic behavior' were being used by the city government to produce subjectivities as part of inclusion strategies to 'capture' in a sense or manage the tensions from opposing groups who were clashing with the orderly neoliberal restructuring of their urban space.

Two reflections:

1. That new forms of city governance were creating particular forms of representation in a kind of inclusion project for what has been referred to as a kind of 'neoliberal' subjectivity (Foucault, 1978-79).
2. Particular sectors of the urban population which tend to be marginalized and in the periphery of the neoliberal city project (such as young people, older retired or working class populations and immigrants without papers) are overloading or refusing to conform to the regulation and inclusion systems of the modern neoliberal state producing new subjectivities and relations and transforming power relations.

Urban governance refers to the broad technologies of self in which create subjectivities which are embedded in material conditions and contingencies (Hook, 2004). Yet in contrast to Foucault's formulation focused on how power relations produce subjectivities we can also consider how these are technologies of capture in which attempts are made to regulate the movements of people into regimes of labor control (Papadopoulos, et. al., 2008). Aside from resistance, we also have to take into account how power has had to change to include bodies which were not resisting, but moved outside the production system. Precarity describes the populations of urban dwellers who are moving increasingly outside regulated spaces, which then power moves to include then as in the case of youth, immigrants, and the unemployed. It is precisely these movements that modern systems of neoliberal inclusion are failing to manage. One example of these attempts can be seen in new civic laws introduced by city governments in many European cities.

## **Barcelona's civic law (2006)**

Barcelona passed a new civic law in 2006 which gave the city government and police more power to regulate and control street behavior by widening the definition of what was considered non-civic and increasing the fines for violators<sup>8</sup>. In this case the representational strategies of the city were to make a moral mandate out of the civic law in which 'maturity' and 'responsibility' were defined by the city itself and linked with selected behaviours the city wanted to decrease particularly in the city center. The city gave itself and its panel of academic and professional consultants the task of widening and strengthening the definition and regulation of 'good' and acceptable city behavior. Three effects of the civic law worth underlining:

1. To reproduce and normalize the city as the agent which has the knowledge and right to morally define correct city behavior and enforce it. Thus, the residents of the city are positioned as political subjects who do not have the rights (ability or knowledge) to debate or decide about critical issues of the community relations. They were essentially positioned as politically 'incompetent' and capable of only selecting between the options the 'good city government' provides for them.
2. To justify the extension of power and presence of the city police to monitor and enforce control over the resident's circulation and relations.
3. To capture and regulate the movements of increasingly precarious populations of residents in the business district and who tend to disrupt at times the city's desired image of a tranquil and non-polemic space for tourists and business travelers.

The civic law was territorially specific in that the central business district of the city was the targeted area, and even more specifically an area of the inner city (Raval) which is largely populated by groups of immigrants, in contrast to the other side of the central business area which contains high density areas of tourist bars and shops. The poorer more marginal outskirts of the city were not the target of the civic ordinance and tend to be left to their own means in terms of security and living conditions.

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<sup>8</sup> Non-civic behaviors included graffiti, begging in the street, playing sports and skateboarding, passing out political information, and loitering. Penalties were increased by creating a three tier system from mild to severe infractions which brought up to 5,000 euro fines.  
[http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cataluna/Barcelona/aprueba/ordenanza/civismo/reproches/cruzados/ERC/ICV/elpepuespcat/20051224elpcat\\_3/Tes](http://www.elpais.com/articulo/cataluna/Barcelona/aprueba/ordenanza/civismo/reproches/cruzados/ERC/ICV/elpepuespcat/20051224elpcat_3/Tes)



## **Participation campaign: La Barceloneta, Barcelona**

During my research in Barcelona I studied a particular 'urban rebellion' which was occurring in a neighborhood in Barcelona, Spain called 'la Barceloneta'. The city of Barcelona since the death of Franco in 1975 had aggressively developed a privatized urban development strategy which had been renovating various areas of the city through public/private corporations in part to attract business and tourist investment. In 2006 they developed an intensive urban restructuring plan for the beachfront neighborhood called la Barceloneta. Yet the city met up heavy resistance from a collection of varied social networks that in different ways were countercurrent to the modern aggressive neoliberal culture of the city's development strategies including in particular a substantial group of older residents who had long standing generational community networks. These residents had families that had often lived in the neighborhood for over three generations and survived and thrived based on close proximity and community 'street life'. There were a number of squatted unoccupied buildings, tourists, and students who usually stayed for several months at a time along with a group of unrepresented residents who came largely from Northern Africa and did not participate to any great extent in the formal neighborhood political system. In addition there were also small businesses and restaurants, swimming clubs and a traditional neighborhood association which was fairly integrated with the city's political system.

In response to the resistance they encountered, the city initially became more aggressive and attempted to override the oppositions demands and push through the restructuring of the neighborhood, yet this backfired and stimulated the formation of a more formidable and aggressive resistance community made of up what became a network of older working class residents and the younger squatters and activists<sup>9</sup>. The city attempted to convince the more conservative residents of la Barceloneta of the value of their plan with promises of securing restructuring money and 'elevators'. In exchange for large scale upgrading the city wanted the residents to approve of a plan to remove close to 200 elderly residents outside the neighborhood. The neighborhood organized in spite of being divided into two factions and aggressively opposed the city's plan eventually causing the city to shelf the original plan and come up with a new one. The resistance community was disperse and to a degree 'unmanageable' in that they did not conform themselves to

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<sup>9</sup> <http://labarcelonetaambelaiguacoll.blogspot.com/>

formal city politics but continually invented nonconventional forms of resistance including drawing up their own alternative urban plan with professional urban planners and lawyers, the publication of a new critical historical map and CD of the working class culture and resistance, and a 'naked' swim and flotillas to protest the opening of a 5 star luxury hotel Vela built 'illegally' at the beachfront edge of the neighborhood, etc<sup>10</sup>.

Partly in response to the troubles the city was having in la Barceloneta and elsewhere in similar cases throughout the 'old town' of the city, they hired a professional mediator to smooth out relations between the residents and the city. The city was well aware that la Barceloneta had become one of the most lucrative in terms of tourism and development prices, and did not want further conflicts, many of which became media events in the local and even national news. Conflicts between developer's investment interests, the city tourist interests, and the resident's needs were extensive and thus the mediator was seen as a good option to negotiate and manage the conflicts. One of the mediator's first moves was to begin a 'participation campaign' to *include* residents in the urban renovation process by educating them on how to be good 'participatory' citizens. The participation 'meetings' had a question and answer format where residents had the opportunity to ask questions about the city's plan. At no point was there a consideration that the residents should have the right or ability to make decisions about what alternatives should be considered. In fact in interviews I had with the mediator the residents were described as 'immature and unprepared' to participate politically so they were offered a year of intensive training as to how to become effective political citizens.

### **New urban political subjectivities**

The cities efforts at creating a 'participation campaign' were part of an inclusion project in which the city along with private developers had designed the plan and the residents were 'included' by expressing their opinion in favor or against. Due to the neighborhoods working class history and relative neglect from city attentions until the reforms initiated by the Olympics in Barcelona in 1992 a less ordered and represented space in la Barceloneta had been created. Squatters, students, working class residents mobilized together when the city's proposals threatened their ability to stay in the neighborhood. The formation of a new neighborhood association called 'la Ostia' was particularly

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<sup>10</sup> Starwood hotels obtained 'special' permission from the city to build the 'W hotel', more popularly known as hotel Vela in spite of a long standing law against building on the waterfront. The hotel was built on public owned land and was celebrated by the city. The room prices begin at 280 euros per night. A song of resistance had been created by neighborhood activists called 'Bomba la Hotel Vela'. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMv7KVU6L4k>

interesting as it was made up largely of older retired women, younger people from the squatter's houses and urban activists all over Barcelona. The youth created expressive and creative resistive campaigns with the older residents and they became a very close knit community. Their demands were very concrete in terms of resisting the city's plan and claiming the right to decide how their neighborhood developed, but their forms of politics were constantly changing from educational forums, to 'illegal' fund raiser soccer games, 'critical history' tours of the neighborhood, street demonstrations and revitalized traditional celebrations. In this sense the breakdown of the neoliberal inclusion project happened because of an inability to include what were already residents outside the central representational politics of the city. In this marginality new forms of expression and resistance originated and flourished. They gained citywide and even international attention from urban activists across the globe. In this sense the inclusion project failed for several reasons: one being the community culture of the neighborhood rejected the breakup of the social network it had, for many generations, survived on. Secondly, the city proposal to merely give the residents the right to state an opinion was refused and countered by the residents who claimed they had the 'right to decide' how their neighborhood should develop. We can read these results as a breakdown in the efforts of the neoliberal project to 'capture' and 'colonize' more representational and literal city space, and the expression of new forms of political engagement.

### **Transition from neoliberalism to postliberalism?**

If the neoliberal inclusion process is breaking down in part due to its inability to include precarious populations in the production process then it is fair to ask, what is replacing it? Papadopoulos et, al., (2008) suggest that we need to think beyond totalizing frameworks and their binary counterpart: resistance. They suggest that modern power relations have formulated in response to the movements of populations and the counterpart, the need to capture movement for labor to be regulated in certain forms. So now power has become transnational and further disconnected from one of its former central objectives; the reproduction of the state. Rather power 'aggregates' function vertically with their only real objective being their own competitiveness and survival (Papadopoulos, et, al. p. 30). These vertical aggregates are like a temporal and spatial constellation, a network or 'being' made up of segments of other institutions and bodies. Papadopoulos, et, al., states:

*...the promise of the vertical aggregate lies more in its becoming and holding together a series of different actors... by articulating interests, wills and political views and by linking with many different, selected segments of social classes, social groups, associations of civil society (such as trade unions, customers organizations, pressure groups), local business companies, transnational companies, non-governmental organizations, international*

*governments, transnational organizations...The main objective of postliberal sovereignty is to articulate, in a positive way, a not-yet-represented commonality of the actors participating in a post-liberal aggregate. (Papadopoulos, et, al., 2008.p. 31-32.*

Neoliberalism (deregulation and privatization) then lends parts of its structure to these 'vertical aggregates' that borrow or bind with aspects of state power, privatized institutions and transnational networks. The aggregates are vertical structures made up of aspects of institutions, discourses, territories, and resources that exist in temporal agreements and are made up of a complex web of local and transnational material and institutional pieces.

### **Movement, control and 'escape' in the precarious city**

Neoliberalism is not over, but it has transformed and it is important for critical social researchers to consider what is changing and discuss together how and what the implications are. For urban critical researchers the city will be the stage in which new shifts in distance, time and geopolitics come together. Nationalist discourses, trade agreements, and the more recent financial crisis should be questioned as forms of power not in service of the nation state, but whose critical function may lie more in the manner in their role in larger transnational structures of power. What does this mean in terms of power relations, politics and social transformation in the urban context when increasing numbers of resident's lives are defined by precarity? For city populations the transnational postliberal system of power relations means a loosening of the benefits as well as some of the constraints of the welfare state labor contract creating an instability which is dynamic and building in intensity with unpredictable consequences. Precarity also opens space and time in such a way as to reemphasize social relationships, community and daily life conditions as a means of survival and as the tracks upon which movement flows. Foucault's idea of political subjectivity as the mechanism of governance suggested perhaps there was a 'neoliberal subject, a 'self responsible and competitive' subject position which could form the basis for an analysis of power as such. But in a postliberal theorization although the political subject is relevant it must be incorporated into the consideration of the increasing number of lives that are largely and increasingly unrepresented and marginal in terms of inclusion in formal and visible production and regulation. The examples in this paper suggest that the resistance in cases like the neighborhood of la Barceloneta and the social movements in Athens represent a new kind of collective politics related to precarity and coalesced more around what Haraway referred to as temporal situated oriented politics rather than movements which are

attached to a central group identity or ideology (Haraway, 1988). This unity is formed by projects or perhaps a common opposition rather than identity politics. In this way even contradictory groupings of young, old, wealthy, radical or not in terms of ideology can come together to challenge power relations and practices not based on the formation of political entities or even as a formally recognized social movement, but focused on practical claims in relation to the life conditions they are facing.

Yet precarity in itself is a very complex and diverse phenomena and the differences between the conditions of precarity must be integrated into any analysis. The resistance movements in la Barceloneta are indications of a certain type of precarity on the urban level, on particular relations between groups and individuals with certain interests and investments. Other residents in the neighborhood had their own unique precarious conditions and did not join or participate in these movements, such as the immigrants. A similar phenomenon can be seen in the absence of immigrants in the mass of bodies in Syntagma Square in Athens. There are levels of precarity and immigrants are faced with a set of conditions which are very different to those of the residents in la Barceloneta or the Greek youth and working class. The immigrants in Athens with no legal papers often live in unrepresented space, one which provides both anonymity and the constant threat of deportation and the difficulties of constraints on their mobility in certain national territories. Problematizing the differences in conditions of precarity is critical in understanding precarious social movements and their potentials in terms of social transformation<sup>11</sup>. The movement of migrants through southern European borders reflect postliberal conditions which make national frontiers function as transit zones rather than the conceptualization of traditional borders which fuels the image of 'fortress Europe'. The problems of the national borders and regulation in southern European countries shows that multinational corporations, transnational economic institutions, and the state are not acting in terms of national or even European interests, but aspects of their systems are utilized by an aggregate force or constellations of power which move transnationally and are vertical in terms of hierarchy, not horizontal as in the conceptualization of neoliberalism. In the case of policing, European border agent's border regimes in Europe are now stationed in all the so called 'sending countries' and are heavily involved in monitoring movement through foreign embassies in non-European countries. Thus, power

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<sup>11</sup> Athens has been the stage of various 'hunger strike' movements where immigrants have gathered and staged a protest in the center to demand that the Greek government act on their promise to process their applications for legal papers in Greece. Some have lived in Greece for up to a decade without any decision being made about their right to have legal residence in the country. These conditions work for providing Greece with a cheap labor source as can be seen in the agricultural business, cleaning industry and in construction, but provide no security or rights to the workers themselves. <http://www.athensnews.gr/portal/9/36740>

relations are being driven by combined aspects of particular institutional agents (nations, private corporations, and the state) to form a constellation of power which does not run on national agendas. This makes for flexible and mobile aggregates which can move around the globe (re)constellating themselves much like a virus or composite *being* taking aspects of various systems to comprise its own structure. It can take off parts, recombine them, and eliminate them and even self destruct. So how does this type of aggregate movement relate to the way in which we think about urban social movements?

Battles over representation have been central in that the inclusion strategies of neoliberal power relations depending on their ability to appropriate certain subjects in certain terms and conditions. Yet precariousness itself implies a kind of 'freedom' from institutional representation as they are bodies which are in particular ways less constrained by the fact that they have temporal or no contract with formal institutions, institutional power then loses the right to representation. In a sense precarity is a kind of distancing from representation which of course has binding consequences particularly in relation to the claim to rights and movement. Whereas a fully employed labor force traditionally is constrained by representation and rights as defined by an employer, the precarious population may be out of the grasp of representation but their ability to survive financially and even move freely can be made much more difficult. A postliberal system functions also with a more limited notion of representation as its power does not rely on a stable political subject, its base of power is in its functionality and works by taking advantage of certain degrees of crisis, fragmentation and precariousness. It may need to control representation in any given circumstance, but not by necessity, in fact vertical aggregates are often better off by avoiding the issue of representation at all or diverting the issue to other institutional bodies like the state.

If social transformation is assumed to be stimulated by particularly unregulated movement we can look for change in power relations by the manner in which movement is happening. The history of movement and control takes us to the precarious city and the story of attempts to make flows of movement productive in term of labor and accumulation strategies. Precarity has two sides; one is instability in terms of the individuals or communities capacity to accumulate and secure basic needs, stability or wealth. The other is that movement itself becomes difficult to regulate and as result new forms of social relations and creative or invented collective politics.

## Occupations and the 'Real Democracy Now' movement in Athens, Greece

*'Social transformation...is not about cultivating faith in the change to come; it is about honing our senses so that we can perceive the processes which create change in ordinary life. Social transformation is not about reason and belief; it is about perception and hope. It is not about the production of subjects, but about the making of life. It is not about subjectivity, it is about experience.'* (Papadopoulos, et, al.,2008, p.xii.).

The current situation in Athens, Greece could be seen as an indicator of increasingly precarious conditions in the southern border countries of Europe. In relation to urban resistance movements there are indications which point to the breaking point of power relations as we have known them in the emergence of precarious urban social movements. The increasing precarity of the southern European city may be the leading edge of movements which overload and contribute to the breakdown of the neoliberal inclusion project. The urban movements in Athens and Barcelona are initiated in reaction to power attempting to further regulate and control city space. What is unclear is what types of power relations will be produced as the financial crisis is unfolding? If it is a postliberal type of vertical aggregates as Papadopoulos et. al., suggest, then we might see accumulation mechanisms and regulation regimes which will look for ways to shift precarious conditions, modify and direct their flows to their advantage. We can see indicators of this as money is being moved out of Greece and power relations appear to shift to the right with crackdown types of regulation and police control. Perhaps vertical power aggregates will leave Greece to its own devices with distant extractions systems as set up by the IMF debt mechanisms, takeovers of energy industries, tourism, and other potentially lucrative areas of the Greek economy. Foreign owners do not have to manage social unrest, they can distance themselves in many ways, but in terms of wealth extraction they will tend to rely on the state which in itself is unable to provide any reassurance to their creditors or citizens.

If precarity defines the social movements we are seeing then we can also reflect on the role of technology in situations like the 'Real Democracy Now' movement in the plazas in Europe and related spontaneous calls for different types of reforms by 'non-political' social movements<sup>12</sup>. In interesting ways both the resistance communities in la Barceloneta the occupation of Syntagma Square and the migrant demonstrations in Athens demonstrate how new media technologies give precarious movements a power to

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<sup>12</sup> One such group has formed of Greek lawyers and other professionals who are doing an audit of the State independently. They have used the expression 'debtocracy' to resignify the Greek governments approach. Others have called for Greece to pull out from the Euro currency and go back to the drachma arguing that the country may fare better in spite of devalued currency or other negative effects of leaving the EU. <http://www.debtocracy.gr/>

organize and gather support in new and far reaching ways (as we have seen in the Northern African pro-democracy movements). One small example could be seen recently in Plaza Cataluña in Barcelona as the Catalan police were caught on handfuls of video tapes aggressively hitting peacefully seated passive protestors in an effort to clear out the central plaza. These videos went out instantly all over the globe. Live webcams have also been set up in many of the major occupied central squares in Madrid, Barcelona and Athens giving viewers an updated perspective at what was happening in the square. Precarity and mobility are also integral to the explosion of social media like 'facebook' which makes money from commercial, not political agendas, so it has little investment (or so it seems) in whether it is used to organize an occupation or social protest, publicize violence by the state, or supports far right extremist organizations. One can also think about precarity and mobility through the metaphor of a police line in a demonstration. The demonstrators have no lines to follow, no regiments, or orders, they are left to their own creativity and are the reason the police assemble, not the other way around. Precarious bodies go over fences, appearing in unplanned and unordered form, their only limits are their own imagination and ability to form collective projects and community.

Movement creates the conditions by which power relations are transformed. Governance now is becoming increasingly transnational, so nationalism will become a discourse within a transnational praxis. The center is no longer the state or the private market, but structures of hybrid power which will be the structures in which precarity will tangle. As critical social researchers we will be challenged to make sense of the chaotic urban resistance movements from new perspectives, in some ways perhaps without a political subject, but with a relational gaze toward a new kind of hopefulness, not in a particular outcome of where we are going, but in the power of new emerging relations in the precarious city.



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