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**Abstract for Session 29 (RC 21 Berlin, Resourceful Cities)**

**„Participation between Consensus and Contestation“**

**Title: Post-democracy, participation and the question of resistance – On conduct and counter-conduct in Vancouver, Canada**

The paper contributes to understandings of contestation and resistance in urban politics, using a land use struggle against a 'big-box' development in relation to a participatory neighbourhood planning process in Vancouver, Canada, as example. The paper surveys Foucault's work on 'governmentality,' highlighting the centrality of the notion of resistance in this work. The paper particularly focuses on Foucault's still underexplored conceptions of 'conduct' and 'counter-conduct' and summarizes their key characteristics. These concepts offer an analysis of urban politics beyond the binary of implementation of successful city policies or their failure, and of cooption through participation or revolt. They therefore prove especially useful for an analysis of urban governance that is increasingly characterized as 'post-political'.

I first briefly situate contested urban politics within the post-political city debates and the urban social movement literatures, before elaborating on Foucault's concepts of governmentality, conduct and counter-conduct. In the second part, I use the concept of counter-conduct to analyze the example of the struggle around the controversial 'big-box' development proposal. Importantly, the development proposal and its support by the ruling party within Vancouver City Council not only led to a conflict around corporate urban development, but also around political representation of the adjacent neighborhoods. Specifically, it started a conflict around the political mandate of a group of residents, the Community Vision Implementation Committee - CVIC, whose task, approved by the City, is to watch over the implementation of a participatory neighborhood planning process. In this process residents had previously decided against such developments, a decision that was now official City policy in the form of "Vancouver CityPlan Community Visions". Nevertheless, CVIC members were told that it would be inappropriate to speak out against the proposal in the name of the CVIC. In consequence, they did not only challenge the re-zoning proposal, but had to fight for their political mandate as CVIC and their participatory rights as well.

The paper does not aim at a comprehensive analysis of the example. Its purpose is to offer insight into what in a specific instance of contested urban politics a search for forms of counter-conduct, instead of open protest and confrontation alone, can reveal, thinking through ways in which we can make use of the concept of counter-conduct in times of post-political urban governance.