

Section 6 – Partecipazione e Movimenti Sociali

Chairs: Gianni Piazza, Massimiliano Andretta

Panel 6.8 Right to the city and mobilization for public services rights: The fight for the commons in Western and Eastern Europe

In the decade following the peak of the Great Recession, the privatization and commodification of natural resources, urban space and public services has inspired social action, political mobilizations and protests in many cities around the world. In particular, in Southern Europe we are witnessing the rise and consolidations of various forms of urban mobilizations, under the claim of the “right to the city”. With the broad aim of constructing “cities for people and not for profit”, these grassroots groups (i.e. squatting movements, citizens’ committees, social center activists) mobilize on different issues: privatization of spaces and services, gentrification processes, pollution, and many others. Despite the specific claims at stake of each mobilization, what distinguishes the urban social movements is their double intention of voicing the effects of neo-liberal urbanization process, and also performing alternatives practices. By employing different tactics, these variety of citizen initiatives and grassroots groups put in place a radical alternative model of space organization that goes beyond the dichotomy public/private and affirm urban spaces as “urban commons”, namely resources belonging to the collectivity that cannot be inserted in the commodification and privatization process.

Even though these types of practices are not a novelty, they are assuming an increasing importance. Indeed, the exacerbating effects of neoliberalism, deregulation dynamics and austerity politics are more and more unaffordable for an increasing part of urban dwellers. Therefore, the concept of “urban commons” is becoming crucial for the analysis of contemporary urban and social dynamics. Nevertheless, empirically and theoretically, the practices related to the urban commons are far way from being exhausted.

This panel welcomes proposals that include studies addressing and elaborating on the dynamics of urban activism, right to the city groups and mobilization for public space and public services rights, from a theoretical as well as empirical point of view. In particular, the panel encourages proposals for papers that can improve our understanding of social movements for the commons, and how space, public services and natural resources transformed into an arena for cultural, political and social conflicts in Western and Eastern Europe.

Chairs: Carlotta Caciagli, Chiara Milan