The Right to the City and Struggles over Urban Citizenship: Exploring the Links

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INTRODUCTION: CITIZENSHIP AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Citizenship ensures the uniformity of rights and obligations of political participants, and therefore “mitigates – but by no means eliminates – political effects of inequalities in routine social life” (Tilly 1999: 256). Urban citizenship has been discussed at some length as a possible contemporary alternative to long-established notions of citizenship, those built on the pillars of rights, duties, and belonging to a political entity, typically a nation state (Purcell 2003: 566). Under very diverse pressures, which can fairly simplistically be summarised using terms such as neo-liberalism, globalisation, inequality, economic rescaling and spatial segregation, urban citizenship is called upon to better reflect the identity and experience of the city’s inhabitants. Since the 1960s, the idea of a Right to the City has occupied an important place in such debates, alternately falling in and out of grace with social, political and legal thinkers.

For Purcell (2003), the Right to the City is a fundamental ingredient of a necessary new model of urban citizenship. While I willingly take Purcell’s

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argument as a point of departure, by the end of this article I arrive at a somewhat different conceptualisation of the interrelations between urban citizenship and the Right to the City.

In the first section of this article, I will explore some differing definitions of the Right to the City, in order to bring to the forefront the need for further clarification of this concept as it is presently used. I then briefly outline the current attempts of applying the concept in legal terms, suggesting that any application should be discussed in light of the existing shortcomings of the theoretical discussion.

The second section presents my own attempt at exploring the implications of the Right to the City in a critical way. Firstly, in order to shed light on some possible conceptualisations, I offer four examples of how the Right to the City can be differently understood and applied. I conclude the second part with a possible interpretation of the Right to the City, positioning it in the discussion on urban citizenship.

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY UNDER SCRUTINY

A note on the city and the urban

The debate whether the city constitutes a unit of socio-political analysis in its own right or simply one possible terrain where socio-political processes can be studied has been raging for quite some time (Gottdiener and Hutchinson 2006: 45). On this occasion setting this fundamental question aside, the city is unambitiously posited here as just a fascinating topic to reflect upon. The city houses intense and highly politicised social processes. Its dense interconnections, tense transactions and utter heterogeneity may well help create both the necessity and the inspiration to contest the status quo of institutions, processes of marginalisation, and social (in)justice. Unlike Jansen (2001: 47), I do not take the city to only signify a discursive construct: while my aim has been to acknowledge the discursive unsettledness of the city throughout this paper, I envisage that the reason why the city exists as a discursive construct is that people inhabit it, locate their power-ridden interactions in it, and modify it, collectively and individually. Thus, the city as discursive construct is a symptom of the city as a physical and socio-political entity, and even if the city-discourse of the
inhabitants is almost never a superimposition of the city-that-is, I cannot deny the city as an entity which actually is, by dismissing it as an ephemeral construct of discourse. For my purposes, this ambitious claim to critical realism is the only stance from which it is possible to fruitfully engage with the elusive concept of the Right to the City.

*Lefebvre’s Right to the City and subsequent definitions*

The concept, or idea (to use a term which has lesser claims to scientific precision), of the Right to the City, was developed by French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre and first appeared in his 1968 *Le Droit à la Ville*, which was written and published before the historic protest in Paris that same year (Kofman and Lebas 1996: 55). However, Lefebvre’s use of the Right to the City is in no evident way a straightforward definition and recipe. In fact, the Right’s ambiguous definition has resulted in it being given a range of different meanings in writings on citizenship, urban studies, human rights and development (Purcell 2003: 576). What follows is a brief attempt to look at some of those interpretations which are particularly relevant to informing my attempt, in the next section, to retrace the linkages between the Right to the City and urban struggles.

*For Purcell* (2003: 564), the Right to the City represents one of the especially promising routes to rescuing the notion of citizenship from accelerating obsoletation. He questions the utility of traditional notions of citizenship, linked to the nation and the nation state, in times of neo-liberal globalisation and growing corporate control over socio-political processes. The Right to the City is then to be practiced in the most direct sense, as a right to configure the urban space in all its manifestations. In its institutionalised form, this right would involve, for example, the participation of residents of Los Angeles in the board meetings of a Chicago-based corporation when the latter involve making decisions which are to affect life in Los Angeles (Purcell 2003: 578).

*Harvey* (2008), by contrast, conceptualises Lefebvre’s creation more as a
political platform and an inspiring slogan than a legally codified practice:

“The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. (...) The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.” (Harvey 2008: 23)

Did the catchiness of the phrase become clear to Lefebvre before its meaning did? According to Mitchell (2003: 17), this is not unlikely. Even so, there is nothing to stop academics and activists from borrowing this resonating concept in order to provide a vessel for a pressing socio-political debate as it emerges today. The question is: can we determine with relative certainty what came first, the vessel or the debate? There is a real danger of the Right to the City following in the footsteps of ‘globalisation’, ‘development’ and ‘well-being’ into the intellectual wasteland of meaning everything to everybody. This section sets out to look for existing possibilities of rescuing the notion of the Right to the City with the help of departing from an adequate definition.

In his 2008 book on the changing notion of citizenship in Brazil, James Holston focuses on the transition from needs-based to rights-based discourses in relation to urban poverty and segregation. Holston provides an account of the relevance of citizenship in the account of invasions, legal battles and autoconstrução (auto-construction) of the Brazilian marginalised urban peripheries. Although Holston uses the concept of the Right to the City sparingly, he vividly describes the transformation from the denied-dignity beginnings of auto-construction to the prevailing sense of pride among the inhabitants of the peripheries. Having contributed to the building of the city itself, the inhabitants of the auto-constructed peripheries transform this sense of pride into a quintessential sense of urban citizenship (2008: 23). A Right to the City appears to evolve naturally from what Holston calls ‘insurgent citizenship’ – the right to change (and the fact of exercising that right) the set of available rights when they no longer (if they ever have) reflect the justified necessities of citizenship.
For Holston (2008: 240) the shift in focus from ‘the needs of the poor’ to ‘the rights of the citizens’, provides the foundation for the evolving discourse of urban citizenship. The Right to the City, of course, has a central role in this discourse: if urban spaces indeed reproduce the social relations bound in them (Purcell 2002: 102), urban citizens cannot enjoy any of their freedoms without the freedom to shape their environment.

At this point, it is necessary to critically expose this main assumption built into the Right of the City discourse: that the production of urban spaces reproduces social injustice (Fainstein 1996: 26). This question was posed by Harvey as early as 1973, in his influential “Social Justice and the City”:

“Is there some spatial structure or set of structures which will maximize equity and efficiency in the urban system or, at least, maximize our ability to control the powerful hidden mechanisms which bring about redistribution? This is both a normative and a positive question for it suggests that we can explain current distributional effects by looking at existing spatial structures and also devise spatial structures to achieve a given distributional goal.” (Harvey 1973: 86)

For those advocating the intellectual value of the Right to the City, it is inevitably necessary to found their position on an affirmative answer to Harvey’s question. For Fernandes (2007: 208), “the ‘right to the city’ [consists] of the right of all city dwellers to fully enjoy urban life with all of its services and advantages – the right to habitation – as well as taking direct part in the management of cities – the right to participation.” Put simply, the Right to the City defends two elements of citizenship: the ability of all groups and individuals to live in the city, being present and enjoying in all its parts; and partaking in the control over the decisions that shape the city, using its spaces to exercise their citizenship. If this access to control is not ensured, powerful groups and individuals would exploit their privileges to further shape the city to their advantage – thus reinforcing and extending the oppression and isolation of the marginalised (Purcell 2002: 99). While deeply convincing, this conceptualisation leaves open the question of what, if any, analytical power, the Right to the City contributes to previously existing discussions of urban social justice.
A further, more concrete critique of this view of the Right to the City should be highlighted here. As a right to express one’s opinion on urban processes and spaces and how they shape life in the city, as a right to actively participate in re-shaping these processes and spaces (Lefebvre 1991 in Kofman and Lebas 1996), the Right to the City becomes one very difficult and time-consuming right to exercise. The conscious production of space, be it physical, perceived, or lived space, is a demanding task. If the Right to the City indeed envisages a social reality where “all decisions that affect the production of space in the city are subject to citizen control” (Purcell 2003: 577), it is a tall, and arguably undesirable order to fulfil. In this vision, the only hope those urban dwellers previously deprived and marginalised, to begin to inhabit a just, accessible and enjoyable city is to roll up their sleeves and work very hard for it themselves, in person, on a regular basis, making space for the Right to the City in their holidays and working weeks. Thus, what might be seen as a ‘right to engage’ within the intellectual debate, is actually a highly-demanding second job, which not every citizen might aspire to. This kind of Right to the City cannot be lived as a practice invisibly incorporated into the everyday, like so many other rights – it is conditioned by active engagement and participation, two aspects not universally desirable, but increasingly seen as fundamental to ‘active citizenship’, and to the agendas of social movements worldwide. Do we then, as urban dwellers, have an Obligation to the City?

Attempts at codification

There are abundant recent efforts towards consolidating and structuring the notion of the Right to the City. In Brazil, the 2001 City Statute was the first to materialise it in legal terms (Fernandes 2007: 204). At the global level, a World Charter on the Right to the City has been discussed by various NGOs and intergovernmental agencies, including by the World Social Forum and UN HABITAT (Tibaijuka 2005: 26). Fernandes (2007: 206) advocates the codification of the right to the city approach into what he calls “a new political contract of social citizenship”, which would complement rather than replace the traditional liberal-democratic model of
citizenship, adding collective rights to the now widely accepted individual ones. Harvey (2008) goes even further, suggesting that the Right to the City can be both the slogan and the political project of a global urban revolution, as it has the unifying potential to connect diverse social movements on an international scale and expose the links between urbanisation, social in/justice and marginalisation (2008: 40).

The most radical application is that suggested by Purcell (2003), who coined a notion he refers to as the ‘Right to the Global City’. He elaborates a framework in which urban citizens have direct say in all decisions which produce and configure urban space – those made within the government system, but also those (which are the majority) made outside of it by private or supra-governmental agents (2003: 579). In Purcell’s example, the citizens’ Right to the Global City can prevent a corporation from relocating its factory and the many manufacturing jobs which go with it, to a lower-cost location. This entitlement is justified by the role the factory plays in the shaping of the city.

Undoubtedly, this proposition is problematic in a number of ways. Even though many contested instances of neoliberal globalisation have demonstrated that some direct citizen control over corporate decisions which affect the natural environment and thousands of lives may be highly desirable, Lefebvre’s Right to the City is just not a strong- and inclusive-enough conceptual platform to support such a change. Purcell’s vision of coerced collaborative production of urban space (given also that in his broad definition, there is hardly any social activity that does not fall into this category), if applied in this form, would simply halt all corporate decision-making, and necessitate a fundamental re-thinking of the global political and economic order – a project which Lefebvre’s Right to the City treasures, yet hardly claims to deliver.

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY: REFLECTING FURTHER
Locating the Right to the City in interpretations of urban struggles
I would like to illustrate my further analysis of the Right to the City with four key examples of the different ways in which it has been interpreted, applied and lived in the context of citizenship. I will use these examples,
chosen for their geographical diversity rather than superior importance over the many others that exist, to evaluate the extent to which the Right to the City is analytically useful or politically enriching in various contexts. This will allow for some answers to be suggested (probably themselves leading to even more questions being asked), towards the end of the discussion.

The first example is an episode discussed by Jansen (2001: 53) as an instance when the Right to the City was asserted. Jansen describes an occasion when citizens “claimed” the city by “inserting” their bodies into non-accidental urban locations. The incident in question is the 1996-1997 protest in the Serbian capital of Beograd, as rendered in Jansen (2001). The protests, aimed at the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, had many distinctly urban aspects. Firstly, the protesters explicitly distinguished themselves from “villagers” (Jansen 2001: 38), who for them epitomised obedience, political apathy and anti-citizenship. Furthermore, the protests took place in the most symbolic locations at the heart of the Serbian capital (Republic square, Freedom square), allowing Jansen to describe the events as an outcome of the protesters’ strategy for “re-territorialising the city” (2001: 39). Through filling the urban space with noise, long marches, and traffic obstructions, the anti-Milosevic protesters re-shaped the city; through minor and major inconveniences they redefined the nature of the urban space, and the meaning of the continued interaction with Beograd for Beograd’s own inhabitants.

The 1996-1997 Beograd protesters thus practiced their Right to the City, and the consequence of this practice was the profound alteration of the urban space, a consequence which can be argued to be justifiable (given the regime’s various onslaughts on civil freedoms, and its restrictive practices with regards to the use of public space), even if it may have resulted in material damages and disrupted routines for many. However, the Right to the City was not the political project of the protesters in Beograd. It emerged as instrumental in their confrontation with the nationwide regime; like an unforeseen consequence in this citizenship struggle, it materialised to remind urban dwellers that, while their use of streets and squares had long been explicitly and implicitly limited by the regime to getting from A to B, urban public spaces were political arenas as much as they were pavement
and asphalt.

To take another example: since the early 1990s, the South African Homeless People’s Federation (subsequently Federation of the Urban Poor) and the People's Dialogue on Land and Shelter worked across South Africa to bring to the political forefront the segregation and deprivation of urban slum dwellers (Homeless International 2009). The presence, the auto-construction and the collective action of slum dwellers has undeniably constructed, and continues to shape, the South African city as it is today. The collective action of segregated urban citizens has targeted the ‘apartheid city’ (Berrisford 1998: 214) – first its legal framework, and after its dismantling, its far-reaching consequences. As an urban landscape, this episode is not dissimilar to the context in which Lefebvre wrote the original Le Droit à la Ville, in France of the 1960s, where the unprecedented number of foreign workers and their families were first housed in isolated peripheral housing projects (Dikeç and Gilbert 2002: 65). Certainly, the conceptualisation of the notions of racial discrimination and spatial segregation, whatever principle they might be based on, and the struggle not to be subjected to them, does not analytically necessitate the Right to the City. In my interpretation, it is equality and dignity and not the urban space itself that is at the core of this struggle, although undeniably amplified by the city in which it unfolds. However, the Right to the City is again manifested in this struggle, as the principle that provides the arena in which the contestation of segregation can unfold. As a struggle which is begins as a battle over space and evolves into a struggle for social justice, those participating in the fight against the apartheid city through auto-construction and street protests, rather than, for example, through writing to members of the National Assembly, could benefit from the notion of the Right to the City to justify the ‘disruption’ they would cause to urban life.

During my research in Lima, Peru in 2009, I was able to witness the privatisation of public spaces as it has been extensively discussed by Mitchell (2003) for the case of the USA, another process which I would like to highlight in the discussion on the Right to the City. Examples of restricted access to previously public spaces abound, from the ultra-modern Larcomar shopping centre, constructed in 1998 on the prime
spot of the urban seafront on the Pacific Ocean, to the new Huascar Park in one of Lima’s low-income peripheries. While the Larcomar has private guards who exercise ‘face-control’ at every entrance, Huascar Park is concealed behind walls, and charges an entrance fee (the use of parks in high-income residential areas, by contrast, is free). In both cases, the result is a semi-public private space with restricted access (in the case of Larcomar, often criticised as being based on racist criteria), where previously a freely accessible space existed. These are only two of the numerous cases of intertwining between social and spatial segregation, familiar from Latin American, American, and indeed world cities, and these developments do seem to provide a raison d’être for a Right to the City movement. As counteracting social segregation is a complex, multifaceted and equivocal process, arguing against this specific form of spatial segregation, which reinforces the social one, appears to be a logical alternative for urban activism. While, to the best of my knowledge, no collective action movement in Lima currently explicitly adopts the Right to the City as its political project, the city’s contemporary development has produced the social need for such a wide-reaching slogan. Here, the Right to the City as a universal right of the urban dweller to access and influence the city’s public spaces, would be a much-needed appendix to the standard set of rights spelled out by the national Constitution. Elusive and difficult to codify as it might be (what is a sufficient number of accessible public spaces?), the Right to the City would ensure that Lima’s streets and squares are not simply transport arteries between the home, the work and the (private) entertainment venues, but spaces of political and social relevance in their own right.

Finally, I would like to turn to the example of the Urban Playground Movement (Berton 2007), an international collective which explicitly adopts the Right to the City as its political agenda. The movement organises various spontaneous and planned happenings in urban public spaces, including the now annual Global Pillow Fight Day. Organised in various cities worldwide by local individuals and groups, global pillow-fighting takes place on a
specified date, with word-of-mouth spreading almost exclusively through online social networks. The seemingly ‘pure fun’ intent of a Global Pillow Fight Day has as its true goal

“[T]o make these unique happenings in public space become a significant part of popular culture, partially replacing passive, non-social, branded consumption experiences like watching television, and consciously rejecting the blight on our cities” (Urban Playground Movement 2008)

The Pillow Fight events organised by this global, decentralised and largely anonymous network are the closest application of the Right to the City as intended in Harvey’s (2008) call-to-action that I have come across. In their nature, these events both re-shape the urban environment and educate those participating, changing them as citizens and changing their relations to the city they inhabit. Their impact is indisputably limited by a range of factors, including the widely varying degree of severity which can be expected from the official response in different cities. Nevertheless, they seem to encapsulate the vivaciousness and ambiguities of Lefebvre’s original Right to the City.

There are currently very few things an individual or group can do in an urban public space, without incurring at least disapproving looks, but often also formal warnings and fines. The right to perform a special activity in the city – such as gathering friends for a group yoga session, or organising a reading of one’s literary work – typically has to be commercially bought, and is therefore only accessible to those who can afford to buy it. This is a fundamental aspect of the Right to the City platform, and an important argument for its existence – the right to alter the urban public space, and the need to argue that public space is not meant to be ‘normal’, static and untouchable, but that its intrinsic nature is to be dynamic, changeable according to inhabitants’ needs and, within reason, full of surprises.

The Urban Playground Movement stops short of demanding an actual ‘urban playground’ – what I imagine as a vast and easily accessible urban public space where citizens can experiment with creating consensus-based, non-commercial units which can serve a common purpose – from a green
patch with medicinal plants to a giant sandbox for building sand castles. Such a space would allow the nurturing and evolution of the Right to the City as citizen practice, creating opportunities for transgressing the socio-economic barriers otherwise created by urban spaces.

**Urban Citizenship: the right to claim rights**

It seems to be indeed the case that Lefebvre imagined a city as a constantly changing, constantly contested environment, which is never stable or completed to any significant extent (Harvey 1989: 218). Apart from the apparent difficulties this poses for those urban inhabitants who like, and have the right to, their private, stable and undisrupted urban routine, the codification of a Right to the City as a stand-alone right of all inhabitants to continuously modify all aspects of the urban space, creates much more serious problems. If the Right to the City is granted in those terms to every inhabitant, there is nothing to prevent those with political power and financial means to also shape the urban space according to their needs. In this cycle, the inequality of power and means is yet again reproduced, while a constant instability is produced at a very high cost in terms of resources and human effort. The alternative of only granting the Right to the City to a particular, previously marginalised, social group such as slum dwellers (as it appears to be implied in Budds and Teixeira 2005) would contradict the pursuit of locating the Right to the City within a democratic framework.

Similarly, while acknowledging the compelling might of the argument that public space is increasingly drowned in concerns over security and control, making the ability to inhabit and experience it ever-more elusive (Mitchell 2003: 13), I find Mitchell’s view of the Right to the City as a right to inhabit all the spaces of the city useful, yet unsatisfactory.

Instead of discarding it however, the Right to the City can be conceived differently. It can be used to denote an enabling right, a right-as-means rather than right-as-end for those pursuing or defending their other fundamental rights in an urban context, for those actively engaging with the architecture of citizenship, which is always ‘under construction’, always in need of creative tensions, always producing inequalities and injustices at one end while resolving them at another (simultaneously expanding
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and contracting, in the words of Holston 2008). In this perspective, for example, the auto-construction of slums on the peripheries of the city would not be regarded as claiming the Right to the City, but as exercising the fundamental right to shelter. The Right to the City can then be the concept used to resolve the conflict between the slum-dwellers right to shelter and the right of surrounding residents to peace, quite and aesthetic view. The full exercising of the Right to the City would inevitably produce major ‘disruptions’ (presuming that everyday urban processes represent any sort of desirable normality) and inconveniences. However, as Harvey (2003: 939) points out, “the city has never been a harmonious place, free of confusions, conflicts, violence”. The Right to the City then becomes not a right, but an explanatory tool which re-defines what is ‘permitted’ in the course of pursuing citizenship rights. Thus, if without the Right to the City it is permissible for inhabitants pursuing their rights to be somewhere (protesting, squatting, etc), with the help of it, it is permissible to make our common somewhere despite the inconveniences this might produce.

To position this argument within the theoretical context cited above, this view is much closer to Harvey’s view of the Right to the City as a political slogan and inspirational call to action (2008), then to the call for its codification and legal enforcement suggested by other authors. Adopted in this way, the Right to the City preserves the essence of Lefebvre’s notion of citizens who have the awareness of their right (and their ability, and their duty) to shape the appearance, functioning and meaning of the urban space at any time. However, only those claiming their core citizenship rights can apply this kind of Right to the City.

The full application of such a perspective allows extending the Right to the City beyond the inhabitants of that city. Since the city is often the most effective and visible arena for political struggle, it has always staged episodes of contention also on behalf of its non-inhabitants: agricultural producers, industrial workers, disaster victims – long before anyone thought they might also have something like a Right to the City. However, explicitly stating that

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The city has never been a harmonious place, free of confusion, conflicts, violence

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it is so, brings to the surface what should be a fundamental principle of urban citizenship: that the Right to the City of non-inhabitants acting in pursuit of their rights almost always overrides the entitlement to comfort, predictability and aesthetics of the inhabitants. This also contrasts with the distinction Beograd protesters in the Jensen (2001) example drew between themselves and “villagers”. Undoubtedly, a wide public debate would be required in order to determine the exact extent of the ‘almost always’ permissibility of disruption and contention. Such an entitlement, if it is to inform not only legal codes but also the predispositions and understandings of the actors involved in the public sphere, can act as a catalyst for collective efforts towards social justice.

Being an inhabitant is neither a strict condition, nor the only condition, therefore; being an ‘active citizen’, in the sense of a member of a socio-political community acting to shape its explicit and implicit architecture, is the single sufficient precondition. Acting to redress injustices, inequalities, segregation for oneself or for others is what then entitles the inhabitant to gather in parks after their closure, to make noise, to stop the traffic, to paint the walls with graffiti, and to build a house in any available place.

All of this is not to say that the participatory democracy approaches to updating the concept of citizenship, developed in Latin American cities and increasingly applied in many locations around the world (Avritzer 2002; Hordijk 2005), are not a fruitful and needed addition to liberal democracy in an urban context. In fact, they are increasingly proving their utility in giving a voice to those who seemed to be continually marginalised by traditional mechanisms of political representation when it comes to urban planning and urban management. Urban citizenship does need further exploration into ways of adding a substantive dimension to its practice (Dikeç and Gilbert 2002: 69). However, this shift, or rather, extension of democracy, does not need the Right to the City framework to either justify its existence or to function effectively. Models of direct democratic participation in urban management overhaul the mechanism of claiming rights but not the rights themselves. Thus, retaining the traditional focus on shelter, health, education, public gathering and expression, for instance, in or outside of the urban context, does not undermine the vast political
potential of participatory democracy. In addition, participatory democracy is now firmly on the way to institutionalisation and amalgamation with the traditional structures of representative democracy – through mechanisms such as participatory budgeting, for instance (Hordijk 2005). The Right to the City can therefore assume the critical role of safeguarding participatory democracy from its greatest enemy, co-option, by offering the fluid, unstructured and ‘insurgent’ (in the words of Holston 2008) element of citizenship participation.

**CONCLUSION**

Although, as suggested above, the Right to the City might not be a sufficient platform for a complete redesign of global economic relations, it does have a place in the renewed discussion on the meaning and practice of urban citizenship. It embodies two rights which have not received sufficient affirmation: the right to have sufficient access to, and make full use of, urban public spaces, and the right to directly participate, in contentious and collective ways, in urban political processes. These two rights have various interfaces, but one is the most obvious, and possibly the most fundamental: political protests, or street collective action. An effort to publicise, debate and entrench the Right to the City into urban life would aid a heightened awareness of the relevance of such collective action to the livelihood of each individual urban citizen. Currently, while most people would be aware that street action is legal, often necessary, and occasionally beneficial to furthering the interests of the disadvantaged and the marginalised, the vast majority will not recognise its fundamental importance to every single urban citizen. The Right to the City can be the platform which re-established collective action not simply as the last-resort tool of especially ‘political’ sections of society, such as students, environmental movements, or trade unions. It can bring the urban political agenda closer to every citizen, and remind them of the instruments within their reach to insert themselves into this agenda. Without the occurrence of a struggle for other rights, the Right to the City is deprived of meaning. However, in the pursuit of the right to speak freely in public, the right to enjoy recreation in open air, the right to see one’s historical heritage in a museum: the Right to the City becomes a critical valve en route to the appropriation and practice of urban citizenship.
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