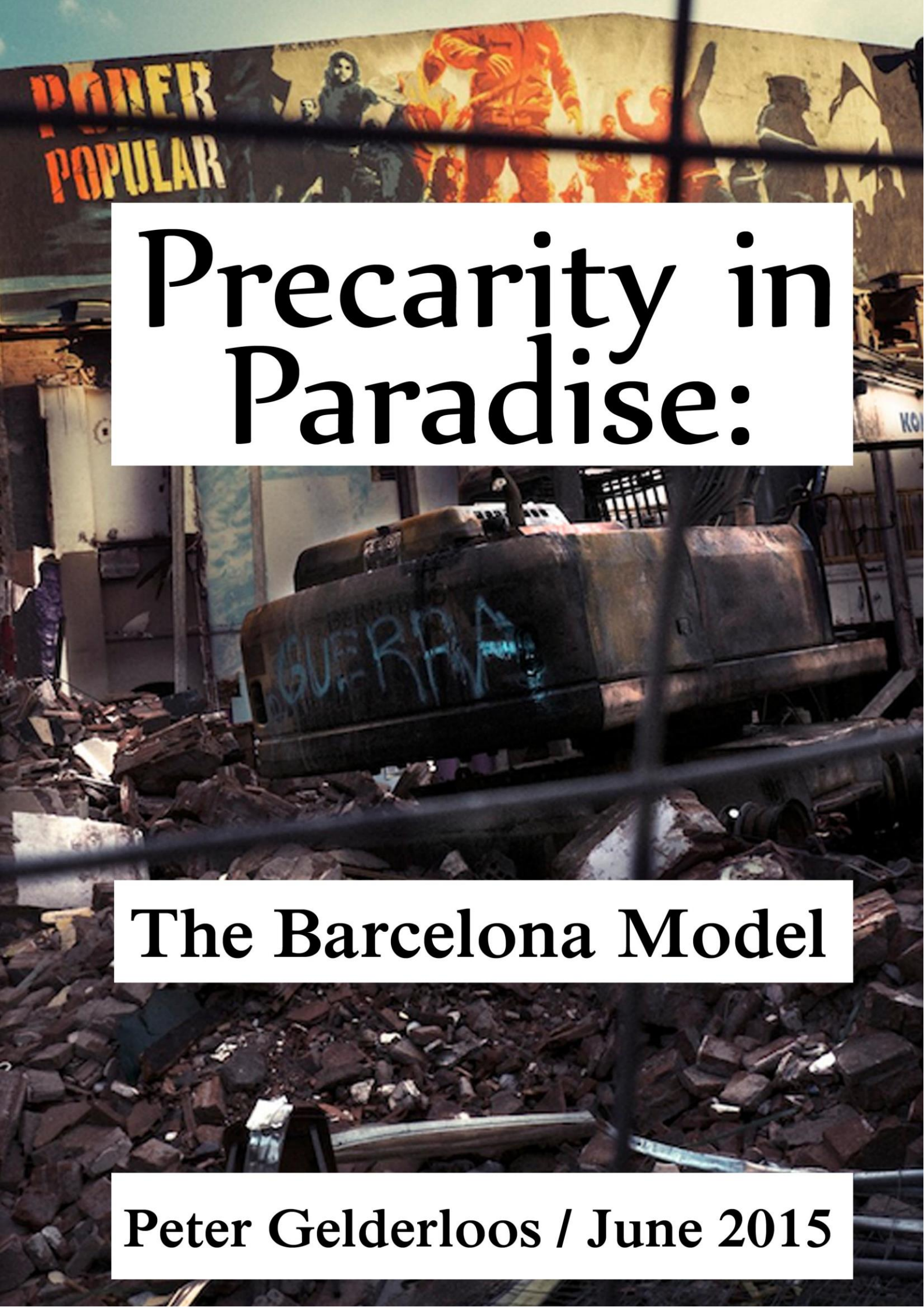

Precarity in Paradise:

The Barcelona Model

Peter Gelderloos / June 2015

Cover Image: Can Vies social center in Barcelona, after residents successfully managed to stop its eviction and destruction by city authorities

Fusing gentrification, technology, tourism and anti-terrorism, the Barcelona model of urban redevelopment has sparked an upsurge of popular resistance.

The city of Barcelona evokes a contrasting range of images. Many know it as a hip city on the sea, famed for its paella and flamenco, and its rich street life. But anyone who follows the news will also recall the massive assemblies in occupied plazas, protests against mortgage foreclosures, and more than a couple incidents of heavy rioting, including a week of uninterrupted street fighting last May that forced City Hall to cancel the eviction of the 17-year-old squatted social center, Can Vies, a *fait accompli* since the building had already been retaken and the demolition equipment torched by rioters.

There is in fact an intimate relationship between these two distinct facets of the city. Continued economic growth in Barcelona despite the crisis that is hammering Spain, with unemployment reaching up to 26%, relies on a dynamic process of gentrification that is violently remaking the city. Far from a typical case of urban renewal, the renovation of Barcelona enjoys international investment and heavy central planning that blurs the traditional distinctions between industry and tourism, work and leisure, good jobs and precarious ones, strategically playing to the city's strengths and turning crisis into bonanza.

The San Francisco Model

"Marca Barcelona," the Barcelona Brand, as the city government often calls it, is innovative, but it is not *sui generis*. The original urban laboratory in which the model being deployed in Barcelona first took on a recognizable form is San Francisco. Ironically, it was probably San Francisco's status as a rough and gritty haven for street culture that made it interesting for the yuppies of Silicon Valley. Over the course of decades, counterculture was turned into cultural capital, and the city became a playground for the employees of Google, Facebook, Twitter, and other IT firms.

This playground, however, is not the typical service sector zone designed to capture the salaries distributed by an adjacent large employer, like the towns of bars and strip clubs that invariably border army bases. Perhaps the most significant element of this new economy is that the playground is first and foremost a productive model. As intelligent and ruthless as the tech sector is, does anyone really think they would ever let their employees stop working? Far from it: the days of punching the clock and going home are over.

Just as cellphones nefariously increase worker productivity by forcing all of us to be perpetually on call, IT employees are increasingly being centralized in culturally stimulating neighborhoods where they can socialize with other yuppies, display their gadgets, and brainstorm ever newer applications for the latest technologies. They are not always on the clock, but they are intended to take their work home with them. The playgrounds where they frolic, therefore, need to have the infrastructural backing to interface with the new apps that make up a large part of economic production today, and they also need the social and cultural

allure that make such apps exciting, both for their designers and their consumers. These can include apps for dating, finding hip restaurants and clubs, and linking people with shared hobbies. A city that doesn't cater to a wide range of hobbies, that doesn't have good infrastructure, and that doesn't boast first rate cuisine and night life won't be able to attract the brightest young minds necessary for growth in the tech sector, nor will it inspire them to keep producing all around the clock. Just as work and leisure are fused, cultural production, material production, and intellectual production become indistinguishable.

How and why did San Francisco become such a playground? It seems contradictory to claim that it was the very poverty and rebelliousness of San Francisco that attracted the yuppies, given that the IT-fueled gentrification has led to a veritable ethnic cleansing that has killed or driven out everything that once constituted that aspect of San Francisco. But by now it is an aphorism that capitalism is full of contradictions. In fact, the covetousness of yuppies is quite naturally directed at that which they can never create, only destroy.

In his techno-punk scifi novel, *Count Zero*, William Gibson contemplates whether the hyper-rich can actually be considered human. Whatever the verdict, there can be no doubt that capital is an inhuman force. Nearly all the great musical innovations of the last century, though they become material for economic production, from the jazz clubs catering to rich whites to the hip hop labels, were the fruits of poor and oppressed people living at the margins of their society. I would assert that, across the board, the margins and not the center tend to be the places of greatest cultural creativity. In stark contrast, places characterized by the concentration of capital (think of banking and insurance centers like Frankfurt, Zurich, Charlotte, Toronto, and Hartford) tend to be culturally dead. Suburbia, the child of the great American financial expansion, is infamous for being culturally moribund, and in fact it is this graveyard that many aspiring tech workers are fleeing.

They run to what entices them but what they can never understand: countercultural zones that defy lawfulness and conformity. Like all conformists, these yuppies want to believe that they are also creative, self-actualizing individuals. And then they engage in the greatest act of conformism: they attempt to create and to self-actualize with the tools proffered by the predominant forms of economic expansion. In the process they buy into that fundamental myth of entrepreneurialism: getting paid to do what you love, as though work could ever be anything but an antagonistic relationship. At least in the short term, that antagonism is displaced onto the classes of people who actually deserve the credit for creating vibrant neighborhoods, but who, up close, are actually a little too disorderly, too low class, and too lawless for the yuppies' comfort. Original inhabitants are pushed out, neighborhoods dry up and die out, and the search continues, from the Lower East Side to Brooklyn, from Kreuzberg to Prenzlauer Berg, and from the Mission to Oakland. A lively, radical, multiracial counterculture is broken up, separating the responsible, maturing radicals willing to cash in on their ideals and enter the middle class, from the increasingly marginalized who mediate a lifetime of rebellion and repression in whatever ways they can, often facing homelessness, imprisonment, drug addiction, and mental health problems.

Gentrification is not carried out by rising rents alone. The police play an important role in cleaning the life out of a city. In San Francisco, the police rode the same wave that broke

across the rest of the country. As though *Dirty Harry* were their playbook, they made use of victimistic hyperbole to instill the public with the idea that criminals (a category which of course they left unexamined) used their many rights and protections (another unexamined assumption) to walk all over society and the police; in this endeavor the proponents of law and order were vociferously aided by the media. With newly expanded powers, the police were able to direct their War on Crime against the most criminalized elements of society, poor people and people of color, and effectively determine who could live in a neighborhood and who could not.

It would be useful to analyze, at least briefly, the racism that is integral to both gentrification and policing. Strikingly, the kind of racism that Google and company need in order to have their playground is not the static, vertical racism typical of traditional "white flight" real estate patterns or traditional "don't let the sun set on you here" policing. To be economically competitive, Google and other IT companies need to be able to recruit brainpower not at the regional or national level but worldwide. That means hiring and bringing together people from many different countries, backgrounds, and races. The kind of racism that such a delicate operation requires, with harmony above and ethnic cleansing below, is in fact the liberal version of anti-racism: colorblindness. Blinding ourselves to racialized histories and power dynamics, pretending to erase the ever present legacies of slavery and colonialism and start with a clean slate, colorblindness emphasizes not race *per se* but other closely connected cues and traits to determine inclusion and exclusion in the new system. The intersection of race and class achieves primary importance, meaning that people of color have to effusively signal that they belong or desire to belong to the dominant class in order to win the approval of the gatekeepers of law, order, and economic advancement, from police to lenders to employers. If colorblindness works, the employer, the coworkers, and the real estate zone (I hesitate to say "community") will accept someone from Bangalore with smart clothes and an engineering degree, while the homeless black person who has lived on that street their entire life will be violently excluded. In cities where this model is in place, such a high premium is placed on giving police cultural sensitivity trainings, precisely so that cops don't kill the *wrong* people of color.

Barcelona's Precarity Advantage

For a couple years already, Spanish newspapers have been talking about a "technology axis" linking San Francisco, Barcelona, and Israel. This triumvirate has not yet gained international recognition. Longstanding powerhouses like London and Berlin may be seen as the frontrunners for the third jewel in the worldwide IT crown. Meanwhile, the two recognized giants don't appear to acknowledge any additional rivals. According to Jonathan Medved, CEO of Israeli venture captial firm, OurCrowd, Silicon Valley and Israel constitute "a duopoly and everyone else is eating our dust."

Naturally, this grim prognosis won't keep cities around the world from competing for international IT investment. Barcelona's position is by no means secure, but the city elite have made a convincing bid, developing a strategy that plays to their strengths rather than blindly trying to copy the San Francisco model. The model they have deployed could very well

prove influential for other cities whose fortunes are far from guaranteed, but which are waging serious campaigns for international capital.

For decades, Barcelona was a city where one could expect to see that played-out showdown between industry and tourism. On the one hand, the Catalan capital has long been Spain's undisputed manufacturing center. On the other, located on the Mediterranean, boasting a lively street culture, and famed for its cuisine, Barcelona has exercised an increasingly potent draw on the tourism market, both within Europe and internationally.

Which sector would win out? After all, industry does not fulfill the aesthetic expectations demanded of a tourist paradise, and it also tends to create stable, long-term jobs and employee expectations that are not all compatible with the hyper-precarious labor needs of tourism.

The solution has instead been to fuse tourism and industry, following the pattern laid down in the San Francisco model that make work and leisure, cultural, material, and intellectual productivity indistinguishable.

Transportation infrastructure is a clear point of convergence, promoting both industry and tourism. Barcelona's airport is the fastest growing in Europe, the high speed trainlines connecting the city to Madrid and to Paris have been completed in recent years—over the protests of locals—and the extensive port is able to cater to shipping companies, luxury yachts, and cruiseships, with the more unsightly, industrial functions largely hidden behind Montjuic, closer, incidentally, to the airport.

A large part of contemporary Catalan industry is in food production. Not only does the region boast the greatest concentration in this sector in the whole Spanish state, its capital city is also home to the world's second largest foodstuff fair. And as any vacationer knows, gastronomy is one of Barcelona's greatest draws. Never mind that paella is actually from Valencia, or that tapas were actually intended to be given out for free, since it's considered rude to serve someone a drink without offering them anything to munch on—tourists, as consumers of authenticity, are paying to be lied to. The food industry has been made complementary to the thriving restaurant business.

The Catalan auto industry, which claims nearly 30% of the Spanish total, is exploring links with the IT sector to produce automotive applications for new technologies. With generous support from both the Catalan and the Barcelona governments, they are developing electric cars, while the city is expanding the infrastructural network necessary to support such vehicles, with a planned 300 free, public charging stations across the metropolitan area, in addition to the 150 charging stations for electric scooters already in place. The private sector is pushing the development of apps to promote IT interface (the most obvious example being apps for finding charging stations, ride shares, and parking).

Barcelona is also shifting its conception of tourism. Tourist destinations have typically opted for a parasitic strategy, trying to woo monied working families and college students from places where the supposedly real economic production takes place. Such economies are entirely tertiary, dependent on the fortunes of economic cycles they play no part in. But

instead of waiting for vacationers from Germany or the US and resigning themselves to the cyclical drought of the off season, the Barcelona elite are increasingly trying to attract tourists of a different kind: trade fairs and the delegates they bring, voluntary expatriates, yuppies and their startups, and tech geeks on work-vacation.

Barcelona has no Google, no Apple, no Facebook, and it is unlikely to ever create one. How can it hope to establish itself as an IT giant? By playing to its cultural capital and its precarity advantage. The city has what it takes to attract intellectual capital. Beaches, good food, attractive weather, an exciting night life, a wide range of outdoor hobbies, and a more engaging, exotic counterculture even than Berlin, Barcelona can bring the yuppies. But tech workers alone are not enough to create an IT powerhouse, which is why the city elite are busily building themselves a special niche, and this is where the Barcelona model differs from its California predecessor. With increasing success, Barcelona is branding itself as an ideal location for work/play, complementing rather than replacing the existing giants.

The first element are the trade fairs. Important gatherings, the trade fairs encourage networking among the global delegates of a given industry, allowing them to show off their products and make new contacts. But they are also meant to have an element of fun. No one wants to go to a trade fair in Des Moines. Barcelona is not only a city with pizazz, it is also a site of innovation in IT and other industries. Barcelona is the number one city worldwide in the number of conference delegates it hosts (in fact 40% of visitors who overnight in the city come to town for an international event), and the third ranked city worldwide in the number of international conferences. Its most important fair is the Mobile World Congress, which is the largest cellphone and app trade fair in the world. The Congress is a source of resentment, and in past years it has been targeted by protests or even partially interrupted by riots. Though many people rely on the economic activity associated with the MWC, the jobs generated are temporary and stressful, and the thousands of delegates who attend occupy the city with a grand sense of entitlement. Like any macro-event, the Congress also entails a heavy police presence and extreme security measures, imposed on adjacent neighborhoods and on its own workforce. This year the police blacklisted at least a dozen people who had already been hired to work the fair. Mostly anarchists, many of those on the blacklist did not have any criminal records, and none of them had been arrested for anything that would present a legitimate security concern for temp workers. Nonetheless, the Catalan police are in charge of security at the Fira, the large complex that hosts the major trade fairs in Barcelona, and they reserve the right to impose whatever conditions they wish.

To host a trade fair, a city needs a great deal of disposable, precarious labor. The Mobile World Congress employs over twelve thousand people every year, most of them for just over a week, often working them 14 hours a day. The only people who would work in such conditions are those who live month to month and, lacking stable employment, have to take whatever job they can get. With youth employment around 50%, Barcelona has that kind of labor pool. Additionally, trade fairs require a city with a lot of hotels and a developed service sector, with plenty of restaurants and entertainment options. In Barcelona, the restaurants are one of the major employers for young people, and the hotel guild is the local economic kingpin. Barcelona also has a high concentration of mostly immigrant sex workers, and it isn’t

often mentioned that many trade fair delegates come with the intention of exploiting that labor pool as well.

A second element are work-vacations. Telecommuting is especially common in the tech sector, and increasingly, telecommuting doesn't mean working from home, but from anywhere there's a good wifi connection. Incidentally, l'Ajuntament, Barcelona's City Hall, was one of the first municipalities to install citywide wireless, and the free access network will soon be extended to public transportation. Many people now come to Barcelona for a month or two to divide their time between working from a café—or better yet, the café's streetside terrace—and going to clubs or hanging out at the beach. This growth sector is fueling the proliferation of short-term apartment rentals that are filling up the many vacant flats left over from Barcelona's real estate bubble. In fact, the hotel guild has felt so threatened by this new form of mid-term residency that they are demanding l'Ajuntament crack down on all the illegal (read: unregulated) "tourist apartments." Several new companies are filling in the void, specializing in such rentals.

The rising foreign demand for Barcelona real estate has ameliorated the popping of the real estate bubble and kept rent prices from falling too low—good news for owners and bad news for renters. Up until now, l'Ajuntament has continued its financing of major construction projects, keeping the construction industry, once a chief recipient of capital investment in the city, from collapsing. However, instead of runaway private housing construction, the industry now focuses on major infrastructure and gentrification projects laid out within l'Ajuntament's central planning process. Will Ada Colau's administration put an end to this? Many of the contracts are already signed, and besides that, a slow-down in construction could fan the crisis, since so much employment is tied up with gentrification in a vicious cycle that requires the city to cannibalize itself in order to survive.

Parallel to both the trade fairs and the work-vacations are the cultural festivals, which can play a role in encouraging industrial expansion and also attract productive vacationers. Barcelona has over 223 international events confirmed through 2021, and it recently won out over Berlin, Paris, and Rome to be the new seat of the Hard Rock Festival. It also boasts dozens of sporting events, music, art, and theater festivals, craft fairs, homebrewing, culinary, and wine conventions, as well as a network of 43 public markets that receive more than 60 million visitors a year (in fact the 9th International Public Markets Conference, with representative from 120 cities, was hosted this March in Barcelona).

A third and important element of the new, productive tourism are the startups. *Wired UK* declared the city one of "Europe's hottest startup capitals". With eight prestigious universities (including two of Spain's three best) and a highly rated business school, Barcelona hopes to cultivate local talent, and with its tourist attractions, to entice tech workers from around the world to become "voluntary expatriates," moving to the city for a few years in order to realize a creative, business-oriented project. With its low prices and governmental support, it has also been winning IT entrepreneurs away from saturated markets like Silicon Valley. Cost of living is much lower, with rents often a fifth of what one finds in San Francisco, New York, or London, so the initial costs for a startup are correspondingly lower. And if the business expands, there is a large pool of qualified

personnel looking for jobs, and the new hands come cheap. According to one blog for expat entrepreneurs, “technical expertise [in Spain] can cost a quarter of what it would in Silicon Valley”.

L’Ajuntament is still marketing Barcelona as a “Smart City,” a city where the new information technologies are not only developed, but immediately put into practice, boasting the responsiveness, the flexibility, and the willingness to mold the urban terrain and the lives of its inhabitants to interface more compliantly with all the new communications, consumer, transport, networking, and surveillance apps. Both a marketing scheme and a technology growth sector, the Smart City showcases a number of methods for mollifying the plebs, using communications technologies and the novelty they still command to create the illusion of citizen participation (similar to how comments sections were once supposed to revolutionize the news media). One example, mobileID, is a smartphone app that lets citizens securely access government websites, consult the census, copy tax documents, locate polling places on election day, and find where their car has been towed to, as the official Smart City website proudly explains.

The Smart City concept has bamboozled the moderate environmentalist crowd, promoting models of rational urban planning that highlight a few feel-good features like electric cars while distracting from the global view of economic growth that is increasingly, and not decreasingly, destructive of the environment. A study published on 10-globally-resilient-cities/" **|**triplepundit.com (“people, planet, profit”) ranks Barcelona third worldwide for “climate-resilient cities” that “have decided to forge ahead, taking action on climate change and participating in the 21st century.” The analysis of Barcelona’s ecological footprint does not take into account the airplane and cruiseship traffic that bring many visitors to the city, highly toxic computer and cellphone production, nor the major greenhouse gas emissions caused by the internet, on which the city’s economic model relies.

In the formerly working class, industrial neighborhood of Poble Nou, we find one of the special campuses that is pioneering the Smart City model. “22@”, a zone dedicated to tech companies and startups, boasts over 4 million cubic meters of office space, and 1,500 companies that have already moved in. With full support from l’Ajuntament, old apartment blocks are emptied out, old factories eviscerated, renovated, and used to house the new companies. At the heart of this “Smart City campus” is the government-funded Barcelona Activa, a center dedicated to encouraging startups, even giving them free office space for their first two years. `

A New Logic of Gentrification

Giants like Apple, Google, and Samsung will continue to shape the IT universe and the global economy for the foreseeable future. Rather than trying to compete with them, l’Ajuntament has cultivated a niche that complements them, a breeding ground for the startups that develop many of the apps and innovations that fill in the technological frontiers opened up by the likes of Google; and a meeting ground for the financiers and developers desperate for a break from the comparatively dreary climes of San Francisco, New York, and London.

Unlike those other cities, Barcelona can boast a cheap yet increasingly qualified intellectual workforce, and an even cheaper service sector willing to cater to all the gastronomic, cultural, and entertainment whims of the yuppies and trade delegates. A historical problem for capitalism has been that crucial industrial sectors have often had to be rewarded with privileges and stability that eventually constitute obstructions to their exponentially expanding exploitation. In the IT sector, however, we can observe a highly precarious form of labor (temporary contracts, few or no labor rights) that is also highly remunerated, and Barcelona is exploiting this phenomenon to the max. Taking advantage of its low cost of living on the one hand, and the saturation of more prominent centers of IT employment on the other, it can offer a locale where potentially surplus IT workers can be enticed to engage in their high value production for wages that are relatively low in their field.

And they have wed this highly paid precarious labor to the lowly paid precarious labor of the service sector. Another bonus of the Barcelona model is that it won't cause real estate prices and cost of living to rise as sharply, as has been the case with the economic expansion in San Francisco, London, and other cities. Traditional gentrification, as measured by rising rents, would make Barcelona culturally moribund, and force either rising wages or labor shortages in the service sector, as the restaurant, hotel, and shop workers could no longer afford to live nearby. The resulting crunch would constitute a threat to the whole cycle of accumulation, with the excess generation of wealth threatening to devalue the very wealth created.

The concept of gentrification was originally developed to describe a process of displacement in which market and government mechanisms allowed a higher economic class to appropriate the neighborhood of a lower economic class, the original example being working-class London districts like Islington. In my mind, the fundamental element is one of collective loss and powerlessness. However, in the study of gentrification, rising rents—the most easily quantifiable mechanism that can impel the process—often becomes a stand-in for gentrification itself, overshadowing the strategic dimensions of state planning, and ignoring questions of neighborhood collective identity and self-organization. If the neighborhood is lost without rents rising, is it still gentrification?

That question is particularly pertinent in Barcelona, where the crisis and the popping of the real estate bubble have actually led to rents falling some years (although not necessarily relative to wages). Formerly proletarian Poble Nou has been filled with cafés for tourists on their way to the beach, and an entire chunk of the neighborhood was taken over for 22@; immigrant and working class Raval and Casc Antic are being ravaged by hipsters, brought in by cultural events, new museums, aggressive construction projects, trendy bars, and vegan restaurants; Barceloneta, once a fishing village, has been turned into an appendage of the beach, with homes being converted into short-term rentals and neighbors forced to endure the endless hordes of vacationers; Poble Sec has been declared a shopping zone for the tourists debarking from the cruise ships in the nearby port, and in the other neighborhoods empty apartments are being bought up by or rented out to vacationers from northern Europe and North America. Parks and plazas that neighbors won after hard-fought battles, resisting the out-of-control construction boom of the '80s and '90s, have been taken over by bars and restaurants, greedily extending their private terraces into public space (and paying l'Ajuntament, of course, for permits).

Increasingly, people are losing control of their neighborhoods, and those neighborhoods are losing their communal, working class character as the yuppies and tourists are brought in by any means necessary. Even though rents aren't rising sharply, property values are, and some people are getting displaced because, for lack of employment, their only option is to lease out their apartments and move to the peripheries. There is also the mortgage crisis. Between 2007 and 2010, there were -per-la-crisi/noticia/981606/" |40,000 foreclosures in Catalunya. Tens of thousands of people in Barcelona have been kicked out of their homes after they could no longer make their payments. Rising interest rates, higher unemployment, and bank bailouts without any controls or social protections have constituted a whole other set of measures by which neighborhoods can be vacated of their traditional inhabitants.

Many neighborhoods have organized protests against tourism. L'Ajuntament responded with a few lackluster measures appealing to civic behavior and "convivencia," or neighborly harmony. The new progressive administration includes challenges to runaway tourism in their platform. Yet, the city elite also demonstrate an interest in changing the kind of tourism that is encouraged. After all, playgrounds for drunken college students are not fitting for the intellectually and culturally stimulating playgrounds required by the IT sector. However, the college students are still welcomed and catered to, though they may be nudged towards party islands like Ibiza, just a ferry ride away in the Barcelona port.

Despite the half-measures, many residents feel that their city has been taken over by tourism, a sentiment that fueled the outrage made manifest in the Can Vies riots last May. Though according to the media, only one squatted social center was at stake, the thousands of people who took to the streets, fought with police, and set fire to construction equipment, spoke loudly and frequently about diametrically opposed models of the city: the model designed to generate profit and ensure social control, imposed by distant investors and l'Ajuntament; and the model proposed and put into practice through direct action by the neighbors themselves, based on housing for all, autonomous social centers, self-organized parks and gardens, free, high-quality healthcare, education, and transport, non-commodified culture, and neighborhood assemblies.

The rioters had so much support, they forced l'Ajuntament to back down, cancelling the eviction of Can Vies. But since it was never about one social center, the real battle has only been postponed.

The Strong Arm Behind the Free Market

Market forces alone are not enough to fuel the processes of development that are ravaging Barcelona. L'Ajuntament has always been a step ahead of the game, instituting farsighted, proactive, and aggressive policies and projects, linked together in a unified urban plan that carries over from one political administration to the next, extends beyond the municipal limits of Barcelona city, and is regularly evaluated and updated. This strong central planning is instrumental in nourishing investment and progress. Without such elite strategizing, Barcelona would surely have stagnated as a city torn between second-rate industry and second-rate tourism, and burdened with a collapsed construction sector that had built itself into a corner.

The political elite, however, are not all in Barcelona's corner. The recent upsurge in the Catalan independence movement, with support even coming from the media and political institutions, can be read in part as an attempt by the Catalan elite to leverage the Spanish elite and the central government in Madrid to more fully support Barcelona's economic gamble. After all, Barcelona and not Madrid is best positioned to win a place on the international tech axis, yet the Spanish government continues to subsidize Madrid, by many accounts taking more from Catalunya in taxes than they give in development projects or other favors. In contrast with the US, Spain follows a more traditional model in which the provinces exist to feed the central government, rather than the other way around. By threatening to break away, the Catalan business and political class can force Madrid to contemplate the prospect of a Spain without its economic crown jewel, potentially effecting a favorable change in policy.

Despite a lack of support from Madrid, l'Ajuntament has cultivated "Marca Barcelona" for years, promoting the city's market niche, and hustling to attract trade fairs and other big events. The beginning of the end was 1992, when Barcelona hosted the Summer Olympics, fueling the first big wave of tourism, urban renewal, and demolition of poor neighborhoods. They had been considered an unlikely candidate for the honor, but in the '80s they campaigned hard and convinced the Olympic Committee that they were up to the task, snatching the prize away from frontrunner Amsterdam. Since then, l'Ajuntament has been anticipating the needs of investors, entrepreneurs, tourists, and the forces of law and order who keep the city presentable for the former. While developing its civic behavior ordinances, passed in 2006, Barcelona hosted ex-mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani, who advised l'Ajuntament on "Broken Window" policing, "Zero Tolerance," and cleaning up the city's image. The "civismo" laws have since spread across Spain, and Giuliani has been cited as a major influence on the current Barcelona mayor, Xavier Trias. Extending policing to communal activities like postering and graffiti, drinking or playing music in the streets, or hanging clothes to dry on balconies, the city began heavily fining popular activities in order to increase commercial control over public space.

As in San Francisco, the police in Barcelona have had to play an energetic role to underwrite the processes of economic development and gentrification in play. But unlike in the States, a draconian War on Crime would not fly in Catalunya, because the extra police powers, harsh sentences, and inevitable rise in overt police violence would remind too many people of the fascist dictatorship. Nor is greater elite support for fascist organizations a viable option, though the most rightwing elements of the elite have in fact been trying to copy the strategy deployed in Greece, where fascists have been used as paramilitaries to crush resistance to austerity measures. Fascists, however, just aren't hip, nor are they cosmopolitan, so they aren't compatible with the economic and cultural needs of a yuppy playground. The answer, and a linchpin in the Barcelona model of urban development, has been anti-terrorism.

This is no surprise, given that Spain was one of the first countries to deploy an integral politics of anti-terrorism as a means for social control within a democratic society. In fact, the exceptionalism principle central to anti-terrorism andoras-box-of-antiterrorism/" ❙stems from Nazi jurisprudence, and it was two recently fascist democracies—the other one being Germany of course—where such a politics first came to prominence, decades before al-Qaida

and September 11th. In Spain, the first social target to be straightjacketed within the category of terrorism was the Basque independence movement. An important force in bringing down the Franco dictatorship, the Basque movement was nonetheless targeted for repression starting in the very first years of the new democracy. This was a predictable development. The de facto two-party system was run by the fascists-turned-conservatives and the communists-turned-socialists who had been legalized and welcomed into power in a Faustian pact with their former enemies.

Police torture, isolation, long-term imprisonment, and the criminalization of any kind of popular support were the exceptional measures democratic Spain normalized in its war against the Basque independence movement. Since the State never surrenders power, only accumulates it, it is predictable that after disarming the Basque movement, the Spanish government would identify a new terrorist threat rather than dismantling its anti-terror apparatus. In the cynical words of Javier Bermúdez, judge and former president of the Audiencia Nacional, one of Spain's highest courts, "terrorism is not, and cannot be, a static phenomenon, but rather it extends and diversifies itself constantly and gradually, within a wide range of activities, for which reason the democratic penal legislator in the obligatory response to this complex phenomenon must also go on extending the penal space of those behaviors that objectively must be considered terrorist [...] A terrorist organization with pseudopolitical aims can attempt to achieve them not only through terrorist acts, but also through actions that considered by themselves could not be qualified as terrorist acts (nonviolent popular mobilizations, nonviolent acts of political propaganda, raising of the popular consciousness of the importance of their goals, etc.)" (2002).

The new terrorists are the anarchists. Not even the prosecutors, ever a fan of fiction, claim that anarchists in Spain have killed anybody, yet for several years the media have been faithfully reproducing police press releases announcing the anarchist threat. The profile of the anarchist is an immigrant and a professional agitator whose only aim is to seize any opportunity to create violence and disorder. It's a tired old trope, making the rounds for over a hundred years now, but some people, sadly, still find it credible. Lacking blood on their hands, anarchists have not, however, been idle. What they have done is participate enthusiastically and effectively in the general strikes of 2010 and 2012 that temporarily shut down the economy and took over the streets in protest of the austerity measures, in the plaza occupation movement that challenged the legitimacy of the Spanish democracy, in the riots to protect Can Vies, in the campaigns against the increasing controls imposed on public space, in the annual May Day marches and other events that keep Barcelona's radical history alive, in the social centers and autonomous infrastructual projects that present a model of non-commodified culture and small-scale economies based on solidarity and mutual aid rather than profit and private property, in resistance to mortgage foreclosures and home evictions, and in attacks against banks and government institutions.

The anarchists are by no means the only ones who participate in these movements and forms of rebellion, nor is the police repression intended to only target them. The anarchists symbolize the most radical and uncompromising elements. By attacking them, the State is actually attacking the practices of direct action, solidarity, self-organization, sabotage, and collective self-defense. If the anarchists can be demonized as terrorists, everyone else will be

pushed to distance themselves from anarchist tactics and embrace institutional, reformist lines of action that are easy to deflect or co-opt.

In November, 2013, five anarchists were arrested in Barcelona, all of them immigrants; two are still locked up awaiting trial. This first strike would eventually give way to a larger operation. On December 16, 2014, 11 anarchists in Barcelona city and province were arrested on terrorism charges, and three social centers were raided. The investigation was carried out by the Catalan autonomous police, and the warrants were signed by Javier Bermúdez. The evidence connecting them to any sabotage actions is weak, but they are also accused of belonging to the Grupos Anarquistas Coordinados. The GAC are, or were, a public anarchist organization that did little more than hold some debates and publish a book criticizing democracy, but the police, aided by compliant mass media, have arbitrarily declared the group a terrorist organization. Not finished, the police carried out more arrests on terrorism charges on March 30th, targeting 15 people, mostly from Madrid this time, but with three from Barcelona.

The government is not foolish enough to state openly that these arrests are in retaliation for anarchist participation in the strikes, protests, revolts, and riots of recent years; in fact they are trying hard to portray them as entirely unconnected phenomena. But a few facts belie their maneuver. The media began laying the groundwork for the police repression, preparing the figure of the criminal, immigrant anarchist, specifically in response to combative May Day protests and rioutous general strikes. Additionally, the police repression in those moments of urban disorder, specifically in Barcelona, have not been effective at leading to the arrest and imprisonment of actual anarchists, who in general have built up a collective experience that allows them to contest state control of the streets and get away with it. For example, those prosecuted for the Can Vies riots have been on the whole random passersby, drunken partygoers who participated in the illegal festivities without covering their faces, journalists, spectators, and teenagers coming to their first protest. The government clearly needed other mechanisms to punish an important element in these conflicts.

Finally, many of the specific sabotage actions the anarchists arrested in 2014 and 2015 are accused of occurred in the context of the austerity measures, the anti-eviction protests, the general strikes, the riots in Burgos against a gentrification project and the corresponding solidarity protests in Barcelona, student occupations, and so forth. The communiqués claiming these attacks, typically targeting banks, often explicitly referenced the ongoing social conflicts. Sabotage, a longstanding working class tradition that governments around the world are increasingly trying to prosecute as terrorism, is part and parcel of popular movements, and these specific actions were part of the response, from the street, against the government's attempt to impose austerity, to aggressively redesign neighborhoods in the interests of business, and to demand people be happy with the scraps.

And though prosecutors cannot honestly claim with any certainty that the anarchists they have arrested actually participated in any of these sabotage actions, what they do know is that the accused are vocal about their support for revolutionary struggles, just as they were vocal supporters of earlier arrestees before their own time came. These are the consciousness-raising activities judge Bermúdez warned of. Police do not know who

committed specific illegal actions, but their true target is an entire movement. Their heavyhanded scare tactics were obvious across the political spectrum. After the Operation Pandora arrests of 2014, a spontaneous solidarity march of 5,000 people from many walks of life in support of the anarchists, and in the Twittersphere, #yotambiensoyanarquista (*I am also an anarchist*), spread like wildfire across Spain, making it in to the top ten most followed.

The Catalan government has no hope of projecting Barcelona onto an international IT axis if it cannot control its own population. People, after all, are supposed to be resources, not self-organized beings with their own dreams, an ability to define their own desires and needs, and their own visions of what their neighborhoods should look like. Some Catalans are buying in to the new model of city, studying web design, imagining their own tech startups, or contenting themselves with jobs in hip bars and restaurants. But many residents of Barcelona are not at all happy with the new arrangement, and they are increasingly constituting a force capable of blocking the plans of investors and l'Ajuntament. Trade fair delegates who get spat on and insulted in the streets, or who have their work-vacations interrupted by a student riot or a transport strike, do not come back. Tourists who get robbed, or who can't find cheap accomodations, look for other destinations. If neighbors collectively resist evictions, the character of their neighborhood can't be changed as quickly. And if people fight for control of the streets, City Hall can't impose its plans as though we were nothing more than a map to be drawn on.

If the locals will not comply, the authorities will be forced to replace them. On their imaginary axis, they don't only enjoy the example of San Francisco gentrification. The other pole is the tech enclave that has grown up around Tel Aviv. And what better example of country as gated community than Israel? Just as San Francisco provides a playground that is meant to be culturally stimulating for its intellectual workers, Israel boasts another sort of playground, a laboratory, more precisely, in which the ever present concerns of security and social control create a most stimulating environment for the many military and police applications of the ongoing high-tech expansion. The leftwing of the Catalan independence movement has long decried the close political and economic connections between Catalunya and Israel. Those connections could provide l'Ajuntament with the resources and innovations it will need to gentrify a battleground.

Will Colau's administration make use of such measures? The new mayor has already announced a change in leadership for the city police, though such a move is standard. And we shouldn't forget that it was while the Green Party (ICV) controlled the Catalan Interior Ministry that the mossos committed some of their worst abuses in the last decade, like the 4F case in which several squatters were framed and tortured, resulting in one of them committing suicide, or the "kubotan" case, in which police attacked a protest with an illegal new crowd control weapon. Another disturbing possibility is that Barcelona en Comú opts for an innovative use of proximity policing, restoring the police's rightfully tarnished public image and regaining the social peace that the present model of gentrification profits off of.

Public Space, Private Space, and Communal Space

One of the reasons that Amsterdam lost its bid for the 1992 Olympics, opening the gate to aggressive gentrification in Barcelona, is because a determined group of autonomists, squatters, and anarchists was strategically paying attention to the movements of their adversaries, caught wind of the plans, and launched a creative, disruptive, tenacious campaign to harass the Olympic Committee and promise disaster should the Games be brought to their city.

Likewise, people in Barcelona could feasibly sabotage elite plans by trashing Marca Barcelona, defending their neighborhoods, and making the city an uncomfortable place for yuppies, tourists, and trade fair delegates. The dubious honor, then, of constituting the third node in an international IT axis would pass to some other city where the dissidents were not as fierce or perspicacious. Capital has this great advantage of mobility, allowing it to subvert popular resistance by abruptly replacing the curse of growth with the blight of depression. But it does not have to be a zero-sum game. Every battle against social control provides a wealth of lessons learned, and these lessons can be shared.

The war for the city of Barcelona has not only been fought in major battles that make the headlines. There is a parallel struggle, unfolding in a quiet, quotidian way, as people learn how to reassert control over their own neighborhoods. It is waged with discussions and debates in social centers, assemblies and cultural events in the parks and plazas, posters and graffiti, unpermitted reclamations of popular festivals l'Ajuntament has commercialized, mutual aid networks to resist evictions and create a safety net against precarity.

Traditionally, activists who confront gentrification, commercialization, and the imposition of social control champion the dichotomy between public space and private space. Just as anti-austerity activists are fighting the privatization of health care and education, calling for a full return to public services, they bemoan the privatization of public space, most visibly by bars and restaurants that take over sidewalks and plazas to extend their terraces for paying customers. But some of the anarchists and other anti-capitalists participating in these movements find the dichotomy misleading, presenting people with an artifically constricted choice. Their interventions in the movement against the privatization of healthcare highlight a third option; neither private, nor public, but communal.

This trichotomy is at the heart of the analysis presented in the book, *Salut en Perill, Cossos en Lluita: De la resistencia a les retallades a l'autogestió de la sanitat* (*Health in Peril, Bodies in Struggle: From the resistance against the cutbacks to the self-organization of healthcare*), itself a product of the anarchist participation in that struggle. The vision contained calls progressives to task for their shortsighted embrace of public healthcare, ignoring the many ways the service prioritizes economic needs over human needs, treating bodies like defective machines, and the ways it is pervaded with a patriarchal practice. Instead of simply reversing the cutbacks, the book argues, we should allow the current spirit of solidarity to transform us and transform the very institution of healthcare, occupying and self-organizing the existing hospitals and clinics, rethinking medicine itself to promote a holistic, ecological, and

preventive concept of health, and fully communalizing healthcare, taking it into our own hands rather than entrusting it to the government or to private corporations.

The same trichotomy can be applied to the battle for space and the fight for the city. Contrary to democratic mythology, public space does not belong to us, it belongs to the State, and it is a relatively simple matter for the government to turn it over to private administration. In fact, it does not really matter if space is policed by private security guards or by the police themselves; the critical feature is that in neither case does it belong to us, nor are we allowed to directly determine its use, its framing, its construction, or its disappearance. The civic behavior ordinances, passed after l'Ajuntament's consultation with Rudolph Giuliani, were not in fact a privatization measure, but they heavily restricted people's access to space all the same. The new laws greatly increased state control over space by instituting or increasing fines for many popular, working-class uses of public space, such as playing music or drinking in the streets, hanging laundry from balconies, graffiti, and so on. Some of these measures directly benefit privatized spaces, for example criminalizing someone drinking on a bench but legitimizing someone drinking at a table a bar has placed on the street (after paying l'Ajuntament for a permit, of course). This just underscores what the now dominant development model of the "public-private partnership" already makes plain: that there is no profound tension between public and private spaces. The two ideals exist on a continuum that is bound by common interests. After all, if you compare the relatively mild urban conflicts generated by the recent privatization of public space with the centuries of enclosure, warfare, mass executions, deportations, evictions, and uprooting that modern states had to go through in order to destroy the vestiges of communal space and to universalize the institution of public space, it becomes clear where the true difference lies.

The real question is not: which external power governs the spaces we are forced to spend our lives in? but rather: do we or don't we have direct control over our vital spaces? That is the logic that constitutes the concept of communal space. Why is this theoretical nuance so important to the battle against gentrification? Because everything that doesn't kill capitalism makes it stronger. If we squander all this mobilized anger and energy by demanding a mere reversal of the most recent outrages, blocking one specific gentrification plan but continuing to entrust the city to an elite that has different interests at heart, at best we will only forestall a deepening of our misery, just as the social welfare state forestalled revolutionary workers' movements with a new array of public services, only to sell those services off once the movements had disintegrated and neoliberalism could emerge.

Even worse, a partial movement for the city could prolong those conditions that make Barcelona attractive as a yuppy paradise. Anti-eviction groups that don't take the next step of occupying vacant units to create free housing, thus challenging private property, can have the effect of keeping rents down, which sounds like a fine thing, except that Barcelona's (relatively) low rents are one of the chief factors driving the IT boom and bringing the waves of yuppies and startups, and as mentioned before, rising rents aren't the only way to clean out a neighborhood. In fact, if the rents rise too steeply, the lowly paid service sector workers that the tech sector relies on can no longer afford to live in the city, giving rise to the same labor crunch that is already eating away at profits in San Francisco. Capitalism has always needed reformers to save itself from its own excesses, and a housing movement that isn't

too radical can stave off the contradictions that would otherwise destroy the profits generated by the cycle of accumulation driving the whole process. Likewise, countercultural movements that only succeed in diversifying the city, rather than taking it over, make the city culturally attractive to those who will bleed it dry.

The point of this analysis is not to suggest that we win or go home (or rather, move out, since our very homes are at stake), which would be a tall order considering we face such a potent enemy. Rather, the idea of communal space is a plea to not sell ourselves short. The elements necessary for taking over the city and transforming it to meet our own needs are already in play. Neighborhood assemblies, the occupation of housing blocks, hospitals, and schools, squatted gardens, channels of counterinformation and alternative media, non-commercial cultural traditions, non-commercial workshops, spaces of sharing and free exchange, social centers, techniques and traditions of confronting police in the streets. What is lacking is a belief in ourselves, a vision in our own city, self-organized, unmediated by politicians or monetary relations.

It is self-evident that the democratic institutions that exist to guarantee us input and participation in the changes that effect our world are designed not to work, that the structures of democracy are hierarchical, elite structures that concentrate power, allowing a powerful few to organize our society in the name of a public that is nothing more than passive spectator. I don't believe that anyone can honestly cite meaningful examples to the contrary. Yet people continue to believe in these structures, or at least to abet them, despite all the disappointments and betrayals, because taking full responsibility over our own lives is a frightening prospect. It is more frightening still if we do not even talk about it, if we insist on quibbling between public administration and private administration but never contest the right of others to administrate us.

The city elite have an aggressive, ambitious vision for Barcelona that would spell increasing precarity and the death of all that many inhabitants love. If people only react with a simple affirmation or negation of this plan, there is no hope for anything but slowing down the inevitable. But radical social movements have their own models for resistance and transformation. Barcelona can offer the rich example of experiences with plaza occupations, neighborhood assemblies, general strikes, and battles with police that have halted evictions or gentrification projects. Simultaneously, dissidents in Barcelona have fed off the examples provided by rebellions in Buenos Aires, Berlin, Athens, Oakland, Cairo, and Istanbul. Who will take the next steps? Who will put a belief in our own visions for the city into ardent practice? The powerful have turned the world into a battlefield, but: "we carry a new world in our hearts."

Postscript

The research and most of the writing for this article were conducted before the municipal elections, in which Barcelona en Comú, a progressive party that arose from the remnants of the 15M movement, won a surprise victory and put the housing rights activist Ada Colau in the mayor's office. Because the urban development plans of prior administrations are still in place and most of the processes of gentrification unfold through bureaucratic and private channels that do not respond immediately to a specific political administration, all the dynamics described in this article remain current.

Whether Colau's far-reaching campaign promises will result in any deepseated changes will only become apparent over time. In about a year, I hope to publish a follow-up exploring the effects of the change in administration. There is little cause, however, for unbridled optimism. To stop this runaway train, Colau would have to abrogate contracts already signed, cancel trade fairs already scheduled, violate property rights that will be protected by all the other branches of government, overcome the political clout of the police, and disappoint the investors and businessmen on whom l'Ajuntament relies to finance and implement their policies. It is no mistake that elections only pertain to one small part of the processes at work in a democratic society. Nor should it be read as an aberration that just last week, an occupied building that hosted a feminist social center and several housing units was partially evicted on schedule.

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