

Abstract submitted by Federico Venturini

Reconceptualising the right to the city through social ecology

Abstract:

Building on existing literature and experiences of social movements, this presentation explores the relations between the right to the city and social ecology.

Since its inception, the “right to the city” has been vaguely defined as a “a cry and a demand” (Lefebvre 1996: 158), a definition that makes it possible for different actors to use it for different scopes (Attoh 2011, Marcuse 2014). Social movements all around the globe are using this mobilizing concept in their campaigns. However, NGOs, international bodies, and cities’ authorities all around the globe have assumed a different perspective on the right to the city, co-opting and redefining this concept to a point that (Souza 2010; Mayer 2012; Kuymulu 2013).

Social ecology is a social theory that explores the roots of domination and it is a powerful analytical tool of current crises and a theory of action that offers strategies, ethics and a reconstructive vision for a future society. Applying dialectical naturalism, the philosophy of social ecology, to the right to the city it is possible to consider if the right to the city is able to foster mutualism, differentiation, and development, as proposed by Heller (1999), for the creation of an ecological and free society. In this way social ecology is able to broaden the discussion around the right to the city and put it at the service of social change.

Both social ecology and the right to the city are transformative concepts: they presuppose a sea change in the social, economic and political sphere, clearly connecting with the transformative agenda and power of urban social movements. However, the right to the city assumes real value only when paired with the concept of domination. The concept of ‘fighting against all forms of domination’ towards freedom developed in social ecology can be taken as a unifying concept that includes and amplifies the agenda of both right to the city and spatial justice.

CV:

Dr. Federico Venturini is an independent activist-researcher. In 2016 he obtained his PhD at the University of Leeds with the title *A Critical Perspective on Social Ecology and Urban Crises: Learning about, with and from Urban Social Movements in Rio de Janeiro*. Focusing on the experiences in Rio de Janeiro between 2013-2014, in his research he explored the relations between contemporary cities and urban social

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Key words: social ecology, right to the city, social movements, city, dialectical naturalism