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Contesting Neoliberal Urbanism on the European Semi-periphery: the Right to the City movement in Croatia

Introduction

The city is the primary site of social conflict within contemporary capitalism, at the same time exposing its relentless logic of commodification, as well as generating space for envisioning and mobilizing towards its alternatives (Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer 2012). Analysing city dynamics is particularly insightful because it encapsulates larger processes of economic and political change, with urban struggles serving as "detectors of the critical issues and conflicts of our time" (Jacobsson 2015, p. 12). We focus on one such struggle, *Pravo na grad* [Right to the City] protest movement in Croatia, which started in the country's capital Zagreb in mid-2006, choosing its name to signal its relationship to critical urban theory and struggles against neoliberal urbanisation. Putting Harvey's (2008, p. 23) claim that the Right to the City "is a right to change ourselves by changing the city" into action, the protest movement grew into the main source of opposition to neoliberal city transformations, subsequently moving the target of its contention to the national level, as well as supporting similar urban initiatives in Croatia and the region. In 2014, eight years after its inception, the Right to the City was instrumental in building a national alliance of organisations which successfully implemented a citizens' petition for a referendum aimed at preventing the long-term private concession of the national highway grid.

We first situate the Right to the City movement in Zagreb within contemporary struggles against the neoliberalisation of cities. Given that the movement invoked a long tradition of urban struggles under the banner of the Right to the City, first captured by Henry Lefebvre in the 1960s (Lefebvre 1968, Brenner, Marcuse and Mayer 2012), we relate the movement's relationship to such urban struggles. We suggest that the Zagreb Right to the City movement is part of a global phenomenon of resisting neoliberal transformations, and that its local

configuration relates to the context of the post-socialist semi-periphery, which shaped the movement's framing (Benford and Snow 2000) and repertoire of action (Tarrow 2011, 2012). Secondly, we analyse the trajectory of the movement with respect to its objectives, organisational forms and repertoire of action. The Right to the City protest movement seems to have avoided the "unavoidable" destiny that the literature on social movements predicts: routinising into a conventional organisation under Michels's "iron law of oligarchy", or dissipating due to "burn out" (Tarrow 2011, 2012). Instead, this Right to the City movement has exhibited a remarkable capacity for metamorphosis, always managing to prioritise political confrontation over concerns for organisational self-preservation. Finally, we investigate dominant conceptions of successful protest outcomes alongside how success of a given movement is understood from a participant perspective. In this part, we draw on interviews with Right to the City activists in order to problematise the "productivist vision" of social action (Castells 2012), which reduces the success of protests to whether a concrete outcome has been achieved. Instead, we propose that an undervalued success of protest movements is their contribution to the development of activist citizens (Isin 2009).

We relied on five main sources in building this case study. The first is the archival material of the movement itself, which has kept records of its public activities, press-releases, and other aspects of its work. We use this material in establishing key stages in the movement's trajectory and explaining the drivers of its capacity for metamorphosis in reaction to the changing political environment. Secondly, we draw on media sources that published reports on the demonstrations and other activities of the protest movement. Thirdly, we use interview material collected in September 2014. This material refers to responses obtained from 10 Right to the City protesters who answered in writing 13 questions exploring their experience of protest participation.[1] The interviewees belonged to the inner circle of the Right to the City initiative who were intensely involved in the movement. This material is used to problematise understandings of protest movement's outcomes and conceptions of success. For confidentiality purposes, we use pseudonyms in the interview extracts. Fourthly, we rely on written and oral accounts of the movement from the movement leaders themselves. Finally, one of the authors played a leadership role in the Right to the City movement and all three authors of this article are part of a collective[2] involved in knowledge-production in support of the Right to the City and similar protest movements

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[1] The interview protocol was adapted from a study on the biographical consequences of participation in student protests in Croatia, reported in Ćulum and Doolan (2015).

[2] Group 22, www.group22.hr

in Croatia. In other words, this analysis is in part an activist self-reflection and at the same time part of a larger analytical endeavour, exemplifying Marcuse's (2009) understanding of critical theory as simultaneously aiming to illuminate existing emancipatory urban practices and informing their future course.

The Political Economy of Protest on the European Semi-periphery

Popular and scholarly attention regarding contemporary cycles of protest is focused on the arc from the Arab Spring, to the Indignados, Syntagma Square, and the Occupy movements. However, the Balkans have also witnessed a growing cycle of contention since the mid-2000s, with the Right to the City movement in Zagreb turning out to be the harbinger of things to come. A cursory overview of the politics of contention in this region includes the Initiative for the Protection of Peti Park in Belgrade, followed by student protests and occupations in Zagreb and Belgrade in 2008 and 2009[3], workers' strikes in 2011 in Bulgaria (Dolenec et al 2014), violent protests against the Maribor mayor in Slovenia in 2012[4], "Park is ours" protests in Banja Luka in 2012 (Bosnia and Herzegovina), protests against an open-cast gold mine in Romania in 2013 (Swyngedouw 2014), violent riots across Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2014[5], as well as the 2015 anti-government protests in Macedonia, which were rekindled in the spring of 2016 amid a deep government crisis[6]. At the time of writing, a struggle very

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[3] In 2014, students occupied the University of Skopje in Macedonia.

[4] 'Maribor Mayor Resigns after Violent Protests in Slovenia', 6 December 2012, available at: http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-12-06/maribor-mayor-resigns-after-violent-protests-in-slovenia, accessed 14 June 2016.

[5] 'Bosnia-Herzegovina hit by wave of violent protests', 7 February 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/07/bosnia-herzegovina-wave-violent-protests, accessed 14 June 2016.

[6] 'Survey: Macedonians Lose Faith as Crisis Escalates', 10 June 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/survey-macedonia-crisis-escalates-06-09-2016, accessed 14 June 2016.

similar to that fought by the Right to the City movement in Zagreb has emerged in Belgrade, against a large real-estate development project on the Sava waterfront, under the name "Let's not drown Belgrade"[7].

Not all of these protests are focused on re-claiming public space, but they do share common currencies. Across the Balkans many social spheres are exposed to demands for privatisation and pressured into demonstrating their short-term economic value (Dolenec et al. 2014). The concept of the "public" has been thoroughly vilified as synonymous with corruption and inefficiency, while private ownership is invariably presented as the superior solution that yields efficiency and productivity. As a result, the state is withdrawing from its role as provider of key social services and, following the neoliberal recipe, re-appearing as the enabler of "a favourable economic climate" (ibid.)

Apart from being embedded in the context of these contemporary struggles in the Balkans, the Right to the City protest movement in Zagreb also draws on the legacy of other Right to the City movements. These date back to the 1968 protest cycle in Western Europe, when they were first captured in the expression "the Right to the City" by Henry Lefebvre, who described it as a right "to urban life, to renewed centrality, to places of encounter and exchange, to life rhythms and time uses, enabling the full and complete usage of these moments and places" (1996; in Schmid 2012). Mayer (2012) described urban social movements of the 1960s as struggling against bureaucratisation and in favour of increased participation, autonomy and alternative lifestyles. In other words, these movements emerged in the specific political economic context of the Western European welfare state and its concomitant urbanism, which was marked by strong state intervention in organising urban life (Schmid 2012). Needless to say, the situation today is markedly different: contemporary urban social movements are reacting to ever expanding commodification and a fundamentally changed role of the state in urban planning and development, which more often than not facilitates the reshaping of the city along private rather than public interest.

In Kerbo's (1982) terms, movements of the 1960s belonged to a period of affluence, which we associate with the development of post-materialist value orientations that emphasise individual autonomy and self-expression

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[7]   'Serbian Activists Plan Fresh Waterfront Protest', 25 May 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/protest-in-belgrade-scheduled-for-wednesday-05-25-2016, accessed 14 June 2016.

(Inglehart 1971, Inglehart and Welzel 2005). However, given the tectonic shifts in the political economy of European states since then, and the fact that European cities are experiencing a renewed rise of poverty and inequality, class contestation is back on the agenda of social struggles (Mayer 2012). One may say that with the rise of neoliberalism, even urban movements in the hyper-developed European core countries started exhibiting features of Kerbo's (1982) "movements of crisis", which appear in conditions that are life-disrupting, such as widespread unemployment, food shortages, or major social dislocations. Therefore, contemporary social movement analysis advocates "bringing capitalism back into the analysis" in order to understand current cycles of contention (Della Porta 2015). By bridging political economy and social movement studies, we are able to analyse ways in which the neoliberal recipes for urban transformation, according to which the market is a "solution looking for problems […], and usually finding them, in all sectors of society" (Olsen and Maassen, 2007, p. 4), are resisted by protest movements and initiatives. In this analysis, we chart the trajectory of social resistance that emerges from the dynamic in which the state is re-shaped according to its neoliberal role as a service provider to capital and an enforcer of private property rights (Harvey 2005).

At the same time, if we follow Pickvance's (2003) reasoning, contemporary urban social movements can be understood as exhibiting features of both movements of affluence and movements of crisis. They oppose the exemplary, physically visible process of capitalist enclosure and dispossession, while at the same time articulating demands that social science would recognise as post-materialist – including demands for democratisation, participation, and alternative forms of governance. Urban struggles will therefore confound analysts who, applying the said dichotomy, look for pure forms of either anti-capitalist struggle or protests aimed at increased citizen participation and democratisation of city governance. Urban struggles are quite often both of these things simultaneously, and the Right to the City movement in Zagreb testifies to this hybridity. The movement framed its objective as fighting against "the economic exploitation of space, governing public space against public interest, unsustainable urbanisation policy and excluding citizens from decision-making regarding urbanisation".[8] The movement therefore simultaneously engaged economic and political domains, arguing that the citizens of Zagreb are experiencing economic exploitation as well as exclusion from decision-making. The fundamental catalyst that shifted the movement towards broader mobilisation was opposing a large private investment project that aimed to privatise public space and infrastructure, which is often identified in the literature as the crucial fault line sparking contemporary urban protest (Hackworth 2008, Mayer 2012). As

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[8] The Right to the City website: http://pravonagrad.org/, accessed 28 November 2015.

Hackworth (2007, p. 192) argues, Right to the City movements oppose inequitable real estate development in cities as "the knife-edge of neoliberal urbanism".

In 2008, the Right to the City initiative organised a conference in Zagreb, entitled "The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies", hosting leading theoreticians of neoliberal urban transformations, such as critical urban geographers Neil Smith and Jason Hackworth.[9] In a number of contributions, the conference thematised specific configurations of neoliberal city transformations in post-socialist context, and the Right to the City initiative published a conference newsletter[10] and the *Handbook for Life in Neoliberal Reality[11]*. The Handbook made available Croatian translations of texts by Lefebvre, Foucault, Harvey, Smith and others, included a study of urban development of Zagreb, and displayed a series of art interventions in Zagreb public spaces that took place between November and December that year. The conference and accompanying events thematised numerous aspects of neoliberal urbanism in post-socialism, highlighting ways in which neoliberal urbanisation promoted private interest at the expense of the public. From this contextualisation it was clear that while many features of this transformation follow a similar logic both West and East, post-socialist neoliberal urbanisation suffered from stronger democratic deficit, government corruption and the legacy of dubious privatisation projects from the 1990s,[12] which some analysts characterised as "daylight robberies" (Eagleton 2011: 14). These conference conclusions echoed a growing body of research into the political economies of the European semi-periphery.[13] Cities in post-communist Europe have developed within a variety of capitalism

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[9] More information about the conference is available at: http://www.mi2.hr/programi-i-projekti/commons/#T2, accessed 28 November 2015.

[10] The newsletter is available at:

https://monoskop.org/images/3/3d/Operation.City_2008_The_Neoliberal_Frontline_Urban_Struggles_in_Post-Socialist_Societies.pdf, accessed 27 June 2016.

[11] The handbook is available at:

https://monoskop.org/images/f/f4/Operacija.Grad_Prirucnik_za_zivot_u_neoliberalnoj_stvarnosti.pdf, accessed 27 June 2016.

[12] Ibid.

[13] In employing the concept of the semi-periphery (Wallerstein 1979), we want to stress that we understand Southeast Europe not only with respect to its geographical location vis-à-vis Western Europe, but as possessing political economic features of both core and peripheral regions, and acting as a mediator and an "in-between

characterised by the retrenchment of the welfare state and the vanishing power of organised labour on the one hand, and a structural dependency on investment strategies of multinational corporations on the other (see King 2007, Nolke and Veinghart 2009, Bohle and Greskovits 2013). The fact that in the 1990s regime change in this region entailed simultaneous transformations of the economic and the political sphere created a particular morphology of power where political power was converted into economic gain, and *vice versa* (Dolenec 2013). In such a context, the application of the Washington Consensus recipe of liberalisation, deregulation, and privatization led to "privileged information, privileged access, privileged loan terms, and appropriations by dubious means" (Ramet and Wagner 2010, p. 22). With inside capture of the privatisation process (Gould 2003) being the rule rather than the exception, political corruption became the primary manifestation of capitalism in the Balkans. As a result, compared to their Western counterparts, in post-socialist cities the demolition of the social in favour of the market has been met with fewer obstacles, resulting in far-reaching transformations of how the city is used and experienced.

Though in Yugoslavia Zagreb grew within a socialist developmental logic which aimed to equalise life conditions across class boundaries, this urbanisation philosophy was rejected in the 1990s in favour of "desolidarisation" (Brenner 2000). By putting their faith in the market, post-socialist cities have become more responsive to the interest of capital and more tolerant of illegal practices. The result was widespread corruption (Woolcock 1998), as well as a general lack of urban planning and development policies. Citizen participation is low, institutional mechanisms for participatory governance are lacking, and post-communist political elites have been unwilling to take into consideration demands of civic groups (Petrović 2005). Furthermore, regulations pertaining to city planning in post-socialist cities have been particularly malleable. In Croatia, the relevant legislation underwent numerous amendments: between 1991 and 2006, the Building Act was changed eight

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space" (Wallerstein 1979; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997). More importantly, following Wallerstein's world systems theory, we consider the semi-periphery as carrying politically and socially transformative potential, making it not so much a geographical descriptor, but rather a position within the world hierarchy through which social and economic transformation can be interpreted (Domazet 2014). In terms of what this means for our analysis, we do not approach social contention in Southeast Europe simply as an "echo" of events taking place elsewhere, but as a phenomena in its own right, which might carry important insights into informing future emancipatory practices.

times, while the Physical Planning Act was changed 10 times (Šarić 2012). This has arguably contributed not only to the absence of coherent urban planning, but has encouraged the growth of grey markets in construction and real estate (Mišetić Ursić 2010). The city being a place where global trends "touch down" (Mayer 2012), the described post-socialist context affected the movement's configuration and framing of grievances towards stronger emphasis on the protection of public interest and the fight against corruption.

The following sections engage with the movement's trajectory and outcomes. We reconstruct the movement's trajectory by addressing the supposedly unavoidable contradiction that social movements encounter, whereby due to the dynamic of competitive polarisation, they diverge over time either into institutionalisation or radicalisation (Tarrow 2011). The identified five phases of the movement shed light on the evolution of its targets and campaigns, its changing repertoire of contention, and the networks it was central in producing. Considering outcomes, we analyse the views and opinions of protesters who took part in the Right to the City movement, arguing that one of the most relevant long term outcomes of the movement has been the strengthening of activist citizenship (Isin 2009). In this, we align with Castells's (2012) critique of the "productivist vision" of social action according to which, if nothing concrete is accomplished by the action, particularly vis-à-vis state institutions, then the action has failed.

Contesting Neoliberal Urbanism on the European Semi-periphery [14]

Tarrow (2011) has written about social movements' trajectories as diverging over time into either institutionalisation or radicalisation. The first trajectory was famously described by Michels (1968) and formulated as "the iron law of oligarchy". Michels studied the transformation of the German labour movement and the growth of the German Social Democratic Party, concluding that the growth of the movement inevitably necessitated organisation-building and hence bureaucratisation. This, in turn, set into motion an organisational logic of self-preservation which killed off radicalism and the pursuit of substantial social change. Organisational bureaucratisation transposed to the substantive level meant de-radicalisation, with movements eventually becoming conventional players in the political arena, no longer posing a challenge to the status quo (Piven and Cloward 1977, Rucht 1999). The fact that Michels formulated his iron law by studying socialist organisations, which were supposed to embody participatory and democratic principles, made his conclusions particularly

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[14] A more detailed analytical narrative is provided in Appendix 1.

pertinent for progressive Left movements (Lipset 1969). According to Tarrow (2011), movements that wanted to stay true to their radical objectives and avoid this destiny decided, as a rule, to keep only loose organisational networks and eschew formal organisation. However, without the personal, financial, and logistical infrastructure that organisations secure for movements, they end up in the other trap – their voluntarism "burns out" and the movement loses its capacity to mobilise. The most recent wave of Occupy movements around the world is a good illustration of this dynamic. Occupations of city squares were powerful demonstrations of direct-democratic, participatory culture, carrying the performative strength of lived alternatives, but their aversion to more permanent organisational forms and protest repertoires contributed to their quick dissipation (Gitlin 2013).

Though today most social scientists are uncomfortable with pronouncing social "laws", Michels's thesis on oligarchisation has not only kept its theoretical relevance, but has also been confirmed empirically. Rucht (1999) analysed a large number of protest organisations and their tactics to find that Michels's thesis generally holds: movements become more bureaucratic with time, and they moderate their actions. Synthesising from various existing studies, Tarrow (2011) found that even though in principle movements strive to create organisational models that are sufficiently robust to structure contention, but flexible enough to ensure vitality and a reliable grassroots base, in practice they either go down the "bureaucratise and moderate" route, or they "radicalise and dissipate". Based on these propositions, we identify five stages that the Right to the City Zagreb movement has undergone, arguing that it escaped this trap by constantly reinventing its methods, objectives, and organisational base.

Escalating Confrontation with the City of Zagreb

The roots of the Right to the City movement in Zagreb can be traced back to cooperation between independent culture non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and youth NGOs in 2005. The period between May 2005 and June 2006 was the first phase of the movement, which we have named "Claiming Rights". It was marked by the issuing of a joint declaration "Independent Culture and Youth in the Development of the City of Zagreb", signed by national associations of cultural and youth NGOs as well as a number of other organisations. This declaration was presented at a round-table discussion and offered for signing to the main candidates for city mayor on the eve of the 2005 local elections in Zagreb. The declaration contained nine objectives, the most concrete of which was a call for the establishment of a multi-functional centre for independent culture and youth in abandoned

factory sites owned by the City of Zagreb. The declaration was signed by most mayoral candidates, including Milan Bandić, who became Mayor of Zagreb in May 2005 as a member of the Social Democratic Party.

With the city's permission, the coalition occupied the factory site of Badel-Gorica in September 2005, organising a two-week cultural event entitled "Operation City" in order to demonstrate the potential of such a cultural-youth centre. This occupation was the spin-off of an earlier 2005 cultural project, "Invisible Zagreb", which had mapped abandoned industrial sites in the city. The default plan for these former factories was a sell-off to private investors, and in order to contest that, the "Invisible Zagreb" project advocated their restoration and public use. This project was probably the first instance of programmatic claims for citizens' right to the city in this case study. The project's stated objective was to "show the public that they have the right to claim the city, that the city is the exclusive right of its citizens, and that they have the right and the opportunity to use it creatively".[15]

During this event, the mayor promised that the city would establish an independent culture centre on this industrial site, agreeing to the creation of a public-civic institution that would require the centre to be co-governed by the city and the culture-youth coalition. In summary, during the first phase of the movement, the coalition of independent culture and youth NGOs employed a combination of negotiations and public pressure on the city administration in pursuit of its main objective – the establishment of a cultural youth centre in Zagreb. In terms of framing, in this first phase the coalition aimed to address the insufficient attention paid to youth policy and to negotiate for space and resources from the city for its activities. At the same time, some of the framing of grievances referenced the rights of citizens to the city, and the necessity of the city to include citizens into decision-making processes.

What happened next was that the mayor reneged on his promises. Six months later, the site was transformed into a commercial area. In response, the coalition of NGOs moved to a more confrontational pressure tactic – in June

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[15] From an interview with the project coordinator, *Deutche Welle* 21 March 2005, available at:

http://www.dw.com/hr/nevidljivi-zagreb/a-2282374-1, accessed 28 November 2015.

2006, they gathered under the name "The Right to the City" and adbusted[16] billboards with the mayor's photo on them, provoking a lot of media attention (Picture 1 and 2 below).

Photo credit: Pravo na Grad/ Right to the City Archive

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[16] This expression originates from Adbusters, a Canadian-based organisation that publishes a magazine by the same title. They are known for their anti-consumerism, and in particular for "busting" and subverting advertisments from well-known brands. See more at: https://www.adbusters.org/, accessed 28 November 2015.

Photo credit: Pravo na Grad/ Right to the City Archive

Apart from marking the decisive point that catalysed the conflict with the city government after which negotiations with the mayor were broken off, adbusting also served to broaden the scope of the movement from spatial demands for culture and youth NGOs to Zagreb's urban planning policy, whereby the movement entered its second phase.

The second phase of the movement starts with the establishment of the Right to the City initiative, which formulated its objective explicitly as fighting against "the economic exploitation of space, governing public space against public interest, unsustainable urbanisation policy and excluding citizens from decision-making regarding urbanisation"[17]. The initiative soon formed a partnership with the NGO *Zelena Akcija* [Green Action – Friends of the Earth Croatia]. The entry of Green Action, a seasoned fighter in environmental and urban planning policy, decisively influenced the future trajectory of the movement. This partnership was not an easy decision, since it meant involving a large professional NGO with its complex decision-making procedures and parallel struggles that needed to be taken into consideration, but cooperation with Green Action provided the movement with legitimacy and resources.

In its second phase, the movement was focused on opposing a developmental project in Zagreb in *Petar Preradović* Square, colloquially known as Flower Square. After realising that the agreement with the mayor was off, activists had started investigating development policies of the city, discovering "systematic mismanagement

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[17] The Right to the City website: http://pravonagrad.org/, accessed 28 November 2015.

of public space and public resources for the benefit of private investors, and a complete disenfranchisement of the public in the issues of urban development" (Medak, Domes and Celakoski 2013),[18] which is how they learned about the proposed project of Flower Passage. This was a project for upscale residences and a shopping mall, envisaged as the redevelopment of one of the blocks in Flower Square. However, making the project profitable required numerous concessions by city authorities: amending the planning regulation, rewriting the masterplan to allow a garage to be built in the historic downtown, giving up part of a pedestrian public space for the garage entryway, and demolishing protected heritage buildings (Medak 2011). The initiative chose this particular re-development project as the focal point of their struggle in order to tangibly demonstrate systematic trends of public space privatisation happening in Zagreb and elsewhere. The Flower Square occupies a central location in downtown Zagreb, only steps away from Zagreb's main square, Ban Jelačić Square. Once a leafy, quaint space for flower sellers, surrounded by cinemas, bookstores and cafés, it is now a tree-less space dominated by rows of café tables and chairs, and a shopping mall on its western side. However, despite its exaggerated commercialisation, the square remains a socialising hotspot. This second phase, which we named "Flower Passage", lasted from December 2006 until January 2010.

In the second phase, the movement used both disruptive and symbolic public actions designed to attract media attention and mobilise support. For one, the movement organised a petition in February 2007, collecting 54,000 signatures against the construction of the 'Flower Passage'. At the same time, in April 2007 several hundred activists organised a sit-in on the crossroads between *Gundulićeva* and *Varšavska* streets, blocking traffic and provoking police arrest.[19] Actions blocking city traffic around the Flower Square continued in 2008, together with the organisation of first citizen demonstrations, attended by several thousand people approx. 4,000 in January 2008).[20] In 2007, the movement unveiled a renaming of the city square from Flower Square to "Victims of Milan Bandić Square"[21] (Picture 3), and in 2008 they taped the entrance to the Ministry of Environmental

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[18] Article written by the founders of the Right to the City movement.

[19] "Activists Expand Pedestrian Zone in Varšavska", *Friends of the Earth Croatia*, 21 April 2007, available at: http://zelenaakcija.hr/hr/programi/info_centar_zelene_akcije/dan_planeta_zemlje/aktivisti_prosirili_pjesacku_zo nu_na_gundulicevu, accessed 20 November 2015.

[20] *Kontrapunkt*, 28 January 2008, available at: http://old.kontra-punkt.info/print.php?sid=55845, accessed 20 November 2015.

[21] This pun plays on the fact that another central square in Zagreb is named *Victims of Fascism*.

Protection, Spatial Planning, and Construction with 'Crime Scene' yellow tape. The latter action was designed to attract attention to the fact that the acting minister was also a significant shareholder in a construction company which designed the entrance to the garage in *Varšavska* Street (while the same Ministry was responsible for licencing this work).

Picture 3. 'Victims of Milan Bandić Square'.

Photo credit: Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia Archive

As confrontation with city authorities escalated, the Right to the City established an NGO in order to be able to fundraise, as well as pursue legal action against the mayor and the city administration. According to one of the leaders of the movement, this move was also made in order to insulate cultural and youth NGOs from the growing confrontation with the city, given that these organisations depended on the city for funding, working space, and programme permits. The previously mentioned conference, *The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies,* took part during this time, in December 2008, which was important for the political articulation of the movement's objective of contesting neoliberal urbanism and the framing of the struggle in broader terms than the particular locality on Varšavska Street. In parallel, the movement was building a network of initiatives involved in urban struggles across the country, establishing *Nacionalni forum za prostor* [National Forum for Space] as a coordinating platform. The parallel reconfiguring of local organisations in Zagreb involved in the struggle against the Flower Passage project, and incipient national networking signalled a second morphing of the movement as it modified both its organisational form and objectives.

The catalyst for the third phase of the Right to the City protest movement came in January 2010 when construction works began on *Varšavska* Street, which was the crucial part of redevelopment on the Flower Square. We named this phase "We won't give up *Varšavska*". The movement managed to initially stop and after that substantially delay the start of construction works, employing a combination of physical occupation of the square and surrounding streets, demonstrations and marches, as well as the initiation of legal actions against the project and the city administration. This is the phase of the protest movement which captured national media attention, drew in new supporters and successfully mobilised the citizens of Zagreb for a number of demonstrations and marches.

Under the banner "We won't give up *Varšavska*", the movement further radicalised its tactics and the confrontation with city authorities escalated. The movement organised the "Live Wall for *Varšavska*", a mailing group of around 2,000 citizens who responded to calls to physically occupy the Flower Square and *Varšavska* street. Two live-in containers were illegally placed in *Varšavska* in order to keep vigil and physically occupy the street, which was maintained for five days. As part of the occupation of *Varšavska* Street, during the large protest that was attended by around 4,000 people, the movement wheeled in a large wooden Trojan Horse to the square (Picture 4),[22] to symbolise the fraud of presenting the development project as "in the public interest".

Picture 4. The 'Trojan Horse' in the Flower Square.

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[22] *Jutarnji List*, 10 February 2010, available at http://www.jutarnji.hr/foto--cetiri-tisuce-ljudi-i--trojanski-konj-protiv-cvjetnog-prolaza/552360/, accessed 20 November 2015.

Photo credit: Marina Kelava

The occupation of *Varšavska* Street led to the arrest of 23 non-violent activists in the middle of the night, ending the occupation but generating unprecedented media attention and citizen mobilisation. The movement continued to use the "Live Wall" as a human shield against construction works.

In parallel, in April 2010 the Right to the City and Green Action submitted a criminal lawsuit to the State Attorney's Office against the Zagreb mayor for licensing the Flower Passage project. However, the project went ahead and in May 2010, in preparation for the start of construction works, *Varšavska* Street was fenced off and guarded by private security guards. In response, the "Live Wall for *Varšavska*" action destroyed the fence and began the second illegal occupation of *Varšavska* Street, which lasted for almost the whole month. It is worth noting here that the Right to the City movement's occupation of the Flower Square and *Varšavska* Street, though by no means being the first to introduce this tactic into the repertoire of protest movements, does predate 15M in Spain and the subsequent wave of occupations of public space epitomised by "Occupy" movements[23].

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[23] A student protest movement that originated at the University of Zagreb in 2009 and subsequently spread to other cities in Croatia also used the tactic of occupation, but with the important distinction that this was done within the university property, more akin to a sit-in. The Right to the City introduced occupations of public squares, roads, and intersections into protest repertoires in Croatia.

The following day, around 3,000 citizens gathered in *Varšavska* Street to support its physical occupation.[24] On average, around 100 citizens and activists guarded the street in shifts day and night, watched by police. After a few days the movement again mobilised around 4,000 citizens in a march to the State Attorney General's office and to the City Council, requesting the mayor's resignation.[25] In June 2010, the State Attorney General announced that the amendments to the City Master Urban Plan that had allowed the Flower Passage project were in effect illegal. As a result, the occupation of *Varšavska* was stopped. Disregarding this ruling, construction work on *Varšavska* Street began on 15 July 2010, guarded by around 200 police officers. Activists and citizens tried to stop it through a non-violent human shield but 142 of them were arrested.[26] This was the biggest mass arrest of non-violent protesters in Croatia's history, and it mobilised citizens in large numbers. Protesters were prevented from entering the street as the whole block was guarded by police. The beginning of construction and the mass arrest made this a top story in the Croatian media, and for five days several thousands of citizens marched through city streets, creating spontaneous sit-ins at crossroads and illegally blocking car traffic.[27] However, as *Varšavska* Street was heavily guarded by the police, the protests did not stop construction works and the battle for *Varšavska* Street was lost.

Overall, the protest movement significantly influenced the implementation of the development project. Their efforts reduced the size of the garage in the pedestrian zone to almost half of the original plan, delayed the project for four years and cut it in size by half (Medak 2011). In addition to that, in February 2010 the City Assembly unanimously decided to reverse changes to Zagreb's urban master plan that had enabled the Flower Passage project, preventing the realisation of other similar projects on downtown blocks. On a symbolic level, they provoked a public apology from the Social Democratic party that formed the majority in the City Council at

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[24] *Metro Portal*, 18 May 2010; available at http://metro-portal.hr/policija-postavila-novu-ogradu-u-varsavskoj-na-prosvjedu-tisuce-ljudi/40333, accessed 20 November 2015.

[25] *Večernji list*, 20 May 2010, available at http://www.vecernji.hr/zg-vijesti/bandicu-donijeli-kofer-s-cetkicom-sapunom-i-rucnikom-za-remetinec-143860, accessed 20 November 2015.

[26] *Večernji List*, 17 July 2010, available at http://www.vecernji.hr/zg-vijesti/konacni-obracun-aktivisti-traze-karamarkovu-smjenu-167987, accessed 20 November 2015.

[27] *Index*, 19 July 2010, available at http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/video-bandic-ce-biti-prvi-politicar-kojega-su-svrgnuli-gradjani/502610.aspx, accessed 20 November 2015.

the time. The movement symbolically marked the end of this struggle by 'burying public interest' at the entrance to the garage built underneath *Varšavska* Street (Picture 5).

Picture 5. "Burying public interest" in *Varšavska*.

Photo credit: Zelena Akcija/Friends of the Earth Croatia Archive

Tactical Shapeshifting

The first three phases of the protest movement were focused on the City of Zagreb's government and its mayor who wields both formal power and wide discretionary informal power in the city. Between 2005 and 2010, the Right to the City movement grew from a coalition of cultural and youth NGOs pressuring the mayor to establish an independent cultural centre in the city, to one of the largest citizens' struggles in the country's recent history. The significance of the movement is reflected in the fact that it received two national activist awards and was voted by NGOs in Croatia as the most positive civil society initiative for three years in a row.[28] Therefore, we agree with Stubbs (2012, p. 23) that the fight for *Varšavska* held both immediate and long-term resonance, in

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[28] *2010 GONG Award* to Right to the City, 27 May 2010, available at http://www.gong.hr/hr/aktivni-gradani/nagrada-gong-a/pravo-na-grad/, accessed 20 Nov 2015. *2010 Centre for Peace Award* to the "We Won't Give Up Varšavska" Campaign, available at http://www.krunoslav-sukic.centar-za-mir.hr/priznanja/, accessed 20 Nov 2015. *5+5 Civil Society Poll 2010*, *H-alter,* 24 December 2010, available at http://www.h-alter.org/vijesti/5-5-anketa-civilno-drustvo-2010, accessed 20 November 2015.

part because it facilitated later protests in Croatia and the region, but crucially because this campaign managed "to move discursively between the particular and the general, mobilising broad, popular concerns over corruption, the links between political and economic elites, the failure of ministerial regulation and control, the structural nature of 'conflicts of interest', and the lack of public participation in urban planning". As we have shown, although the movement initially operated in the context of a declaratively "friendly" local government, this quickly soured and led to open confrontation. In response to the enclosure of public space for the sake of private interest, the movement exposed city politics as collusive with capital interest, disregarding both citizens' demands and the broad legal framework that is supposed to guide city planning. The dynamic between the city government and the movement exhibited mutual radicalisation – as the movement employed ever more disruptive methods, the city authorities responded with growing repression.

Regarding the iron law of oligarchy, the first three phases of the movement exhibit a dynamic opposite to what Mayer (2012) has termed "from protest to program". This is a feature she observes in the neoliberal era and describes as the increasing fragmentation and co-optation of urban movements into providing various services which used to be the city's responsibility. According to Mayer (2012), as governments roll back from social service provision, NGOs and other civic initiatives jump in to fill that space, managing community centres, caring for the elderly and the children, or maintaining urban spaces. Thus urban movements inadvertently move from "protest to program" (ibid.). In a reversal of this dynamic, the Right to the City movement in Croatia started as a loose coalition of NGOs which focused its attention on the failures in the implementation of the City's Youth Policy. While in the beginning it used conventional forms of participation to address city authorities, it dramatically radicalised its objectives and tactics in response to the city's disregard of their demands.

Reflecting Tarrow's (2012) dynamic of competitive polarisation between institutionalisation and radicalisation, during the first three phases the Right to the City movement follows the radicalisation trajectory – but, instead of it leading to burnout, the movement substantially grew in strength during its first years and in 2010 it initiated new struggles, morphing first into a national network and, as we show in the following section, later into a coalition with trade union associations and new NGO partners. Though at one point it institutionalised into an NGO in order to be able to fundraise, the energy of the movement and its objectives were carefully kept separate from the organisational logic of self-preservation and growth. Bilić and Stubbs (2015, p. 127) attribute the

contemporary shift away from conventional NGO formation to a broader set of movements that they understand as the new Left in the Balkans, for which the "NGO shape is either irrelevant, part of the problem, or a useful means of attracting project-based funding which can then be used for wider political aims". Acknowledging the fact that this new wave of activism in Croatia and elsewhere in the region has eschewed formal organisation, we contend that the Right to the City is quite unique in that it in principle sought any organisational form that best fit its purpose at a given time. This pragmatism sets it apart from the principled anti-NGOism of some of the new Left activism, and it, arguably, makes it politically more effective.

As we learn from leaders of the movement, they understood the dangers of conventional institutionalisation, and strived to achieve, in Tarrow's (2011) terms, the balance between robustness necessary to structure contention and flexibility that ensures vitality. According to an account provided by one of them[29], concrete decisions regarding targets, repertoires of contention, chosen framings, and partnerships that we described in this analytical narrative were based on two explicit principles. The first was "tactical shapeshifting" whereby an organisation is understood as a framework rather than as being embodied in an institution. As a result, the movement deliberately relied on hard and soft infrastructure of already existing organisations. When it established its own NGO, it was clear that its purpose was to serve as an interface for putting together campaigns in partnership with others. One measure taken to secure this objective was the decision that no one in the organisation was to be employed full-time. Instead, people were "shared" through modular employment across several organisations.

The second principle was "tactical networking" with actors and organisations across various domains; mostly in the sphere of civil society, but later also with trade unions and other institutional actors. The purpose was achieving greater social impact, which also meant that the repertoire of contention shifted in accordance with specific campaigns. As we have shown, the the Right to the City movement in Croatia comprises a series of campaigns, each of which had a specific focus and objective. The principle was always the same – selecting targets which can be used to highlight systematic features of the political regime. Though networks are built around specific targets, partnerships across organisations are not maintained purely for pragmatic purposes, but represent conscious investment into longer term partnerships. The principle of "tactical networking" is captured in the second part of the analytical narrative in the following section.

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[29] Email interview, conducted 18 November 2015.

Taking the Fight Elsewhere

The start of the fourth phase of the project was the activation of the National Forum for Space, a coordination network established back in 2006. This phase lasted from September 2010 until April 2013, during which the political struggle over public space was relocated to the city of Dubrovnik. The Right to the City movement supported *Srđ je naš* [Srđ is Ours] initiative in Dubrovnik, which then joined the National Forum for Space network. The support was in the form of funding, media visibility and activist know-how, with the objective of jointly stopping a mega real-estate project "Golf Park Dubrovnik" on the *Srđ* hill above Old City Dubrovnik. Again the campaign was shaped so as to signal the systemic character of neoliberal transformations of urban space[30].

Apart from supporting the initiative *Srđ* is Ours, the Right to the City networked with other similar initiatives against the enclosure of public space in Croatia and the region, e.g. the project *Muzil* in Pula (Croatia), the "Park is Ours" initiative in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina), "Freedom Square" in Skopje (Macedonia) and "Let's not drown Belgrade" (Serbia). This included the mutual exchange of information, skill sharing, and activists traveling between locations. For instance, key activists involved in the Right to the City and Park is

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[30] Supported by the Right to the City, the *Srđ* is Ours initiative used protest actions and media communication to mobilise the citizens of Dubrovnik against the development project. The initiative decided to use the citizens' petition for referenda as a mechanism to pressure the city government, and was successful in collecting the required number of signatures in February 2013. As a result, a local referendum took place in April 2013, with a significant majority of those who came to vote being against the building of the Golf Park Dubrovnik. However, given that the turnout was 31%, which was lower than the legally required 50% turnout of all registered voters in Dubrovnik, the outcome of the referendum was not legally binding for the City. After this battle was lost, the initiative *Srđ* is Ours established an independent list to contest the local election that was held in 2013. They managed to secure three out of 25 seats in the City council, but were faced with the 'Dubrovnik Agreement', a broad coalition of left and right-wing parties, pragmatically formed, among other objectives, to secure the passing of necessary legislation for the Golf Park.

See *Dubrovački Vjesnik*, 12 July 2013, available at http://dubrovacki.hr/clanak/53609/dubrovacki-dogovor-okupio-16-vijecnika, accessed 20 November 2015.

Ours knew each other for years before both protests happened, given that partner organisations, Green Action and the Centre for Environment (Banja Luka), had a history of cooperation in joint environmental projects.

Parallel to supporting local struggles in Croatia and the region and building its network within the National Forum for Space, the Right to the City initiated another coalition in 2013 around a nationally relevant topic: the announced long-term private concession of the largest highway system in Croatia. The fifth and final phase of the Right to the City movement was therefore marked by the campaign 'We won't give up our highways'. We have named this phase after the campaign. It started in October 2013 and is still ongoing. Further developing its platform around the protection of public interest in urban planning and the use of natural and urban space in Croatia, as well as advocating for greater transparency and citizen participation in the governance of public infrastructure and utilities, it initiated a campaign to oppose the government's plan to give around 1,000 km of highways in concession to a private company for 40 years while the government would guarantee the exponential growth of car traffic, funded with taxpayers money. In October 2014, the campaign collected voters' signatures to initiate a national referendum that would ban private concessions on highways. The petition for the referendum collected around 500,000 signatures[31]. The campaign attracted national public attention and wide media coverage, as well as parliamentary debates and numerous comments from the government.

The citizens' petition was successful despite the prohibitively high threshold for success (10% of registered voters need to sign the petition within 15 days), which could at least in part be attributed to the organisational resources at the disposal of trade unions. It was *de jure* unsuccessful, given that the Constitutional Court ruled the referendum question inadmissible, but it was *de facto* a success since the government dropped the project. In the trajectory of the movement, the decision to use the citizens' petition for referendums as a tool for mobilisation can be interpreted as an attempt at reaching a wider constituency. Apart from that however, turning to a referendum as a mobilisation tool was partly contingent on the fact that, prior to this one, there were six national campaigns for citizens' referendums since 2010, two of which had been successfully organised by trade unions (Dolenec 2015). As we have argued elsewhere, since 2010 citizens' petitions have emerged as a powerful agenda-setting tool for influencing government actions, used by both movements on the left and on the right of the political spectrum (ibid.).

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[31] *Dnevnik*, 22 January 2015, available at http://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/referendumska-inicijativa-ne-damo-nase-autoceste-prikupila-dovoljan-broj-potpisa---369552.html, accessed 20 November 2015.

Figure 1 visually summarises the five phases of the Right to the City movement. The trajectory of the movement reveals its persistent struggle against enclosures of public space and the commodification of public infrastructure.

Figure 1. The five phases of the Right to the City movement in Croatia.

| Claiming Rights (May 2005-June 2006) | Flower Passage (Dec. 2006- Jan. 2010) | We won't give up Varšavska (Feb. 2010- June 2010) | Nat. Forum for Space (Sept. 2010-April 2013) | We won't give up our highways (Oct. 2013-present) |

The presented analytical narrative captures how, by carefully selecting the targets of their contention, over time the Right to the City movement managed to elaborate a coherent critique of privatisation and commodification of public space and expose the systemic trends of market-driven development behind ostensibly local political dynamics. By prioritising political confrontation and consciously applying its principles of tactical shapeshifting and networking, it exhibited a remarkable capacity of metamorphosis and hence managed to thwart the double-edged danger of institutionalisation versus dissipation. After the initial three phases, which evidenced a growing confrontation with the City of Zagreb, the movement shifted its attention to the national and regional arenas, providing resources and expertise to other urban struggles, as well as investing considerable efforts in engendering the 'We won't give up our highways" coalition with unions and national union associations.

Challenging the "productivist vision" of social action

In their analysis of 843 protests that took place worldwide between 2006 and 2013, Ortiz, Burke, Berrada, and Cortes (2013) calculate that 63% of them did not achieve their specific demands in the short-term. At the same time, these same protests are often "engaged with long-term structural issues that may yield results in time" (2013, p.6). An evaluation of the success of protests in terms of achieving specific demands in the short-term is what Castells (2012) has critiqued as a "productivist vision" of social action, which is underpinned by the conviction that if nothing concrete is accomplished (particularly vis-à-vis state institutions), then it has failed. According to Castells (ibid.), some contemporary social movements see this as a reproduction of the capitalist

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logic in the evaluation of the movement, which they expectedly reject. We engage with this debate by analysing the views and opinions of protesters who took part in the Right to the City protests; in doing so, we argue that the most relevant long term success of the protests has been the strengthening of activist citizenship (Isin 2009) on the European semi-periphery. Isin's (2009) conception of activist citizenship is characterised not by routine forms of participation in designated times and format, but instead by contentious acts of citizenship which question existing laws and regulations, challenge institutions and demand a transformation of existing conceptions of citizens' rights. Activist citizenship captures well the experience of Right to the City activists whom we interviewed since it moves the discussion away from 'auditing' specific short-term outcomes, and towards appreciating the long-term effects that arise from protest participation.

The interviews focussed on protesters' experiences of the "We won't give up *Varšavska*" protests elaborated earlier. Their responses suggest that the question of a protest's success is complex, multi-faceted and process-sensitive, and that its evaluation requires longitudinal observation rather than being 'obvious', narrow and outcome-oriented with success measured at one moment in time. Excerpts from three interviews reflect the tension between some aspects of these opposed understandings, implicitly criticising the "productivist vision" of social action[32]:

1. I used to think protests were successful only if they resulted in the accomplishment of the desired goal. Having taken part in these protests I have become aware that things are not so black and white. (Ida)

2. If we look at it from a narrow perspective as opposition to the building of the shopping centre Flower Passage and the devastation of *Varšavska* Street, then the whole thing wasn't successful, which is a frequent cynical complaint made by different parts of the political and activist scene in Croatia. But one shouldn't look at it in such narrow terms. (Ana)

3. I think that the success of the Right to the City campaign is big, even though the controversial object was built at the very end. The end result of the campaign hasn't demotivated me because…I didn't have any large false hopes that we will be fully successful at the end. But I think that at the end the campaign was very successful because since then I can see a great improvement in civil society and society more generally. (Filip)

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[32] Interview extracts have been translated from Croatian into English by the authors.

For the 10 protesters who participated in our study, going beyond "black and white" and "narrow" understandings of success (in this case the building of the shopping centre) entail entailed, among other things, influencing other actions, strengthening the civil society scene, impacting urban development policy more generally, raising consciousness on urban policy, highlighting the value of citizen engagement and alternative forms of political engagement, as well as personal benefits of protest participation.

In terms of influencing other actions, several of the protesters who participated in our study mentioned initiatives that they felt drew inspiration and knowledge from the Zagreb Right to the City protests both in Croatia and regionally (although one interviewee mentioned further research would be required to establish these links clearly). According to the protesters, these initiatives, some of which have already been mentioned as comprising the fourth phase of the movement included urban struggles mentioned above, as well as protests with a broader agenda, including the so-called *Facebook* protests in Croatia.[33] The following excerpts illustrate such protest interconnections:

1. Initiatives for [public] space started to multiply, not only in Croatia but also neighbouring countries, and many emphasised the struggle for *Varšavska* as an incentive for them to raise their voice in their local communities. Some of these struggles have managed to prevent the pillage and devastation of space. (Katarina)
2. I believe that the *Facebook* protests were partly inspired by *Varšavska*. (Ivana)

Strengthening the civil society scene in Croatia through intensified networking and trust building was seen as integral to the protests' success. Protesters remarked:

1. What is particularly important is that the activist scene became stronger. (Ivan)

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[33] The *Facebook* protests, named after the social media site through which they were predominantly organised, took place in 2011 as a reaction against the country's political elites. The Right to the City movement publicly supported the protests. See for instance *Večernji list*, 8 March 2011, available at: http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/pravo-na-grad-i-zelena-akcija-poduprli-prosvjede-262015, accessed 28 November 2015.

2. Different actors on the scene connected – 'traditional' human rights civil society organisations had the opportunity to cooperate with the independent cultural scene, the latter with students who initiated the student sit-in, students with environmental organisations etc. This wasn't the only such moment, but I think a basic trust was established between different actors on the civil society scene through this action. (Ana)

Our interviewees also noted protest success with regard to urban development. Protesters mentioned the tangible impact on decision-making processes in urban policies. According to one protester, new regulations on urban planning have been influenced by the action, which echoes a "productivist vision" of success. A protester also stated that nepotism and favouring certain private investors will be less likely to happen in the future since politicians have been made aware of the damaging effect this can have on them. Although generally optimistic about the movement's impact, one of our interviewees - Filip - noted that there was a limit to how much urban policy could be influenced by urban struggles.

More abstractly, protesters framed success in terms of agenda setting: drawing attention to injustice, introducing new ideas and concepts of the Left into the public sphere, and raising media and public consciousness regarding the governance of public space. The following three excerpts illustrate these points:

1. I think they raised people's awareness of the problem of governing public space, or at least I hope they have. (Ivana)
2. Problems of governing urban and other public goods became a normal topic in public. (Ana)
3. I have a feeling that the view that urban policy was of little relevance has changed significantly and has become one of the core themes of the activist scene in Croatia. (Ivan)

Echoing Isin's (2009) conception of activist citizenship, several interviewees mentioned how the protests highlighted the importance of alternative forms of political engagement. One protester noted that some people started having more positive associations with citizen activism, while another stressed that awareness was raised about the need for protests and their legitimacy. The importance of "becoming aware of unconventional approaches to participating in the political life of one's community" (Ana), the idea of non-violent resistance and protests as an occasion for a critical mass gathering are further examples of this understanding of success. One of

our interviewees, Peter, noted that activism provides a rare chance for an individual to participate in the social life of his/her community. However, he also added that it can be exhausting and disappointing too.

Finally, for some of the protesters, success was also framed in terms of personal consequences. Research on the biographical impact of protest participation is empirically modest. Studies published in the 1970s and 1980s which explored the biographical consequences of participation in 1960s protests, such as Fendrich (1977), Whalen and Flacks (1980) and McAdam (1988, 1989), came to similar conclusions. Protesters tended to remain committed to a leftist agenda, they remained active politically, and many took up careers in professions such as teaching and 'helping professions' including social work. For several protesters in our study who reflected on their experience of protest participation four years later, the Right to the City protests were a personally transformative experience. For one protester, "it (the protest) defined me and made me as a person" (Ivana); another described the protest as having "an immeasurably great impact on me" (Filip). Personal consequences included "learning a lot" (Sanda), meeting new people, professional effects, and a disposition to activism. One interviewee summed it up as follows: "I think that participation in these protests…was formative in an activist, professional, but also socialising sense" (Ana).

Protesting as a valuable learning experience involved acquiring knowledge of protest techniques and one's rights, communication and organisation skills, campaign management, and teamwork, as well as the importance of solidarity and democratic values. As already mentioned, many of our study participants emphasised deepening existing friendships and forging new ones. Tina noted that she "met a lot of people, and those I knew from before I got to know better", while Sanda asserted that she "met a lot of great, enthusiastic, smart people". One person mentioned a negative consequence of protest engagement: some friendships ended because of disagreements about the protests.

Selected quotes illustrate the professional impact of protest participation for two of our study participants:

1. The experiences I acquired then are something I often use in everyday professional life (Ana).
2. It changed my professional interests. I think it's indicative that, in various ways, I have tried to be involved in activism and to research it. (Ida)

Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Crossley (2003) develops the concept of a "radical habitus" to capture a transformed disposition to political activism resulting from protest engagement. In our study this was reflected in participants' responses such as:

1. When I think back to certain moments – like the first big protest 'Give Up' or taking down the fence or 'sending' Bandić [Zagreb city mayor] to Remetinec [Zagreb city jail] with suitcases, my heart pounds and asks 'When shall we do it again'? (Sanda)

2. I have caught the activism virus…the legacy is a generation ready to take to the streets again. (Tina)

An analysis of protests which reduces their success to measurable short-term outcomes overlooks both the multiple meanings protest success has for the protesters themselves, and the myriad ways in which this experience influences forging alliances among organisations and initiatives, strengthening the social fabric and making it more resilient. The cited experience of Right to the City protesters profoundly challenges the "productivist vision" of social action. Going beyond narrow definitions of short-term success, participants' narratives illustrate the complex ways in which protest participation is productive of new subjectivities and meaningful beyond any specific objective. These findings echo those by Ćulum and Doolan (2015), who explored the biographical legacy of 2009 student protest participation in Croatia. In both cases, protesters share narratives of empowerment and personal change, suggesting that participation in protests had transformative effects on their biographies which the "productivist vision" fails to capture.

Conclusion

The case study of the Right to the City movement in Croatia suggests that urban struggles often do not fit clear cut typologies such as Kerbo's dichotomy between movements of affluence and movements of crisis. Instead, urban struggles tend to simultaneously engage both dimensions of "old style" class conflict and post-modern demands for broad participation in decision-making. Over its eight years of existence, the Right to the City movement has built a coherent critique of the processes of enclosure and commodification of public space, as well as articulated demands for democratizing public sector governance. The fact that, in comparison with Western Europe, post-socialist neoliberal urbanisation suffers from stronger democratic deficit and more

pervasive government corruption created an even greater urgency to go beyond critique and into articulating alternative models of public sector governance.

In this paper we provided an analytical narrative of the trajectory of the Right to the City movement. Between 2005 and 2010, the Right to the City movement grew into one of the largest citizens' struggles in the country's recent history. It initially encountered declaratively "friendly" local authorities, but with time this turned to increasing confrontation with the City of Zagreb, which peaked with the occupation of *Varšavska* Street in opposition to the Flower Passage development project. Though the contested project was in the end implemented, the movement significantly influenced it, both by delaying it for several years and by substantially reducing its scope. Overall however, probably the most important legacy of this protest action was that it "changed the game" when it came to large development projects in Zagreb and elsewhere. As our interviewees suggested, both the movement's framing of grievances as fighting against enclosure of public space, and its action repertoire inspired other protest movements and impacted civil society more generally. On the part of investors and city authorities, it seems safe to say that they have started to anticipate grassroots opposition to large scale development projects, which will hopefully with time result in more participatory processes of city planning. After 2010, the Right to the City supported several local struggles in Croatia and the region, continued building its network within the National Forum for Space, and in 2013 initiated another coalition to oppose the concession of the largest highway system in Croatia. In October 2014, the movement collected sufficient number of signatures in a citizens' petition for referendum to oppose this government project. Though the referendum in the end did not take place due to the ruling of the Constitutional Court, the campaign was successful because the government decided not to move forward with the project.

This analytical narrative was intended to illuminate features of the Right to the City movement that helped it escape Michels' iron law of oligarchy. As we showed, during its first three phases the Right to the City movement followed the radicalisation trajectory but at the same time it managed to secure organisational robustness necessary for maintaining long-term political confrontation. As conveyed by one of the leaders of the movement, this was no accidental outcome, but the result of implementing organisational principles with the explicit objective of prioritising social impact over institutional self-preservation. Tactical shapeshifting was achieved for instance through the reliance on infrastructure of existing organisations, and the decision to create long-term links between partner organisations through modular employment. Tactical networking meant investing considerable efforts into building relationships of trust across different actors in civil society and

beyond, such as between large NGOs (e.g. Green Action), radical Left groups, professional associations (e.g. architects and urban developers) and trade unions. Building such platforms in order to broaden its reach meant that the movement redefined its primary target several times in the observed period. Though the target changed, the principle of selection was always the same: highlighting the systematic character of enclosure and commodification of public space and infrastructure. The fact that the movement began in 2005 as a challenge to the City of Zagreb's Youth Policy while its last campaign was a national petition for referenda which mobilised half a million people suggests it has indeed managed to avoid the iron law of oligarchy.

The fact that the Right to the City was not a one-off confrontation, but by now a decade-long civic-political phenomenon probably in part accounts for the way the protesters we interviewed understand its impacts. Apart from reflecting on the struggle for *Varšavska* Street, they highlighted several other outcomes they consider as emerging from Right to the City movement. The outcomes they mentioned, such as strengthening civil society, impacting urban development policy, and encouraging citizen engagement and political participation can be read as important indicators of bottom-up democratisation. If the Right to the City is a movement advocating the management of public space and infrastructure through principles of participatory governance and democratic accountability, the features of evolving activist citizenship that we recorded in interviews with protesters suggest that it has engendered forms of political subjectivity necessary for such democratisation to happen in the future.

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Appendix 1: Right to the City 5 Key Phases

TIMELINE	ACTIONS	ACTOR	STAGE	PHASE
May 2005	Round-table discussion with civil society and political leaders on needs of independent culture and youth NGOs in Zagreb	Informal coalition of independent culture and youth NGOs in Zagreb	*Objective* - committing candidates for mayor of Zagreb to nine demands in the declaration "Independent Culture and Youth in Development of City of Zagreb"	**Claiming Rights**
September 2005	"Operation City" cultural manifestation in former industrial complex Badel-Gorica, demanding establishment of centre for independent culture and youth	Informal coalition of independent culture and youth NGOs in Zagreb	*Method* - legal physical occupation of former industrial complex by independent culture and youth NGOs for cultural event	
June 2006	Founding assembly of "Alliance for Centre for Independent Culture and Youth" in Zagreb	Formal association of NGOs "Alliance for Centre for Independent Culture and Youth"	*Outcome* - foundation of formal association of youth and independent culture NGOs to establish centre for independent culture and youth in Zagreb	
June 2006	Illegal adbusting action of posters with mayor's photo by Right to the City after unfulfilled mayor's promise to establish Centre for Independent Culture and Youth in Zagreb	Informal coalition "Right to the City" consisted of the independent culture and youth NGOs in Zagreb	*Catalyst* - mobilisation of around 60 activists for illegal action resulting with media coverage and public support which directs "Right to the City" to work on spatial issues beyond needs of culture and youth	

			NGOs	
December 2006	Illegal action "Total Sale" with banner over the whole building announcing total sale of publicly owned spaces and buildings with example of "Flower Passage" project	Informal coalition of independent culture and youth NGOs, Right to the City and Green Action	*Objective* - coalition between Right to the City and Green Action with objective to stop "Flower Passage" project	**Flower Passage**
February 2007	Beginning of petition "Stop the devastation of Flower Square and Down Town"	Informal coalition "Right to the City" in partnership with Green Action	*Method* - the first activity in which citizens could participate; in three months, 54,000 citizens' signatures were collected against the "Flower Passage" project	
April 2007	Illegal "Reclaim the Streets " protest action in which Gundulićeva Street was temporarily transformed into pedestrian zone to disable the "Flower Passage" project	Green Action in partnership with Right to the City	*Method* - mobilisation of 150 activists for the first time used physical occupation of space as protest method, and for the first time one activist was arrested	
July 2007	Legal action "Defending the block of buildings with signatures" surrounding the block with 150 activists holding banners made of petition signatures	Initiative Right to the City as partnership of informal coalition Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - first larger action with legal permit and for the first time used "Right to the City" as the name of the initiative on T-shirts	

November 2007	Round-table discussion and establishment of coalition of initiatives against commodification of space - National Forum for Space	Informal coalition of NGOs and individuals - National Forum for Space	*Outcome* - spatial issues get national coverage and become inspiration for citizens' initiatives on the Adriatic coast	
January 2008	Mass citizens' protest "Give up" in Varšavska street to protest against adoption of Detailed Urban Plan for "Flower Passage" by the City Assembly	Initiative Right to the City as partnership between informal coalition Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - first protest to which citizens were invited; more than 4,000 of them gathered to protest against "Flower Passage" plan	
November 2008	Illegal march shutting down car traffic in front of City Government building to protest permits for "Flower Passage" in Varšavska street	Initiative Right to the City as partnership of informal coalition Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - illegal secret action involving 500 activists which blocked car traffic in front of the City Government building	
December 2008	Conference *The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies*; thematised configurations of neoliberal city transformations in post-socialist context.	Initiative Right to the City.	*Catalyst* - The conference and accompanying events thematised numerous aspects of neoliberal urbanism in post-socialism.	
June 2009	Founding assembly of NGO Right to the City as association of key	NGO Right to the City	*Outcome* - establishment of Right to the City as NGO to enable fundraising, legal	

	activists of initiative Right to the City from independent culture, youth NGOs, and Green Action		actions, and to separate the initiative formally from independent culture and youth NGOs in Zagreb	
January 2010	Temporary occupation of Varšavska Street to stop illegal start of construction in pedestrian zone	Initiative Right to the City as partnership of NGO Right to the City and Green Action	*Catalyst*- first temporary occupation of public space to stop construction works led to establishment of citizens' watch and human shield called "Living Wall for Varšavska"	
February 2010	Illegal placement of two living containers in Varšavska Street for physical permanent occupation to stop construction works and beginning of "Living Wall for Varšavska"	Initiative Right to the City as partnership of NGO Right to the City and Green Action	*Objective* - first permanent physical occupation of space by activists and citizens with objective to stop expected beginning of construction works in Varšavska Street	**"We won't give up Varšavska"**
February 2010	Mass citizens' protest with massive Trojan Horse sculpture in Varšavska street, followed by night arrests of activists who occupied the containers and destruction of the Trojan Horse sculpture by riot police	Initiative "We won't give up Varšavska" led by Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - protest of 4,000 citizens followed by first mass arrest of 23 non-violent activists; generated unprecedented media coverage and massive mobilisation of citizens into "Living Wall for Varšavka"	
April 2010	Protest action "Zagreb calls you" in front of the	Initiative "We won't give up	*Outcome* - Right to the City and Green Action	

	State Attorney General Office in which criminal lawsuit against the mayor of Zagreb was submitted	Varšavska" led by Right to the City and Green Action	submit criminal lawsuit against the Zagreb mayor in company of 300 activists and citizens symbolising beginning of direct conflict with the Zagreb mayor	
May 2010	Citizens' protest against fencing of the Varšavska street in which citizens' and activists spontaneously decided to destroy the fence and permanently occupy Varšavska street	"Living Wall for Varšavska" and Right to the City and Green Action	*Catalyst* - for the first time 300 citizens took the lead from NGOs and violently destroyed the fence after which permanent physical illegal occupation of Varšavska street began	
May 2010	Mass citizens' protest to support occupation of Varšavska street against the beginning of construction works	Movement "We won't give up Varšavska" facilitated by Right to the City and Green Action	*Objective* - around 3000 citizens supported illegal occupation and camping of 100 citizens continually in Varšavska street with objective to stop construction works	
May 2010	Mass protest in front of City Government building asking for Zagreb mayor to resign	Movement "We won't give up Varšavska" facilitated by Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - around 4000 citizens marched from Varšavska street to mayor's office asking the mayor to resign and prepare for prison as the criminal investigation was in process	
June 2010	After one month, the end of the continuous physical	Movement "We won't give up	*Outcome* - End of physical occupation because claims	

	occupation of Varšavska Street after State Attorney General announced that Zagreb Master Plan changes that allowed "Flower Passage" project were illegal	Varšavska" facilitated by Right to the City and Green Action	of the movement were confirmed by the State Attorney General that "Flower Passage" is illegal so construction works should not began on Varšavska Street	
July 2015	Beginning of construction works in Varšavska Street met with human shield of activists and citizens followed by massive arrests and police occupation of Varšavska and surrounding streets	Movement "We won't give up Varšavska" facilitated by Right to the City and Green Action	*Catalyst* - 142 arrested non-violent activists and citizens sparks mass non-violent protests for five days with 3000-4000 people attending but because of police guarding Varšavska street construction works are not stopped	
September 2010	Establishment of citizens' initiative "Srđ is ours" at public debate in Dubrovnik with support of initiative "Right to the City" within National Forum for Space	Initiative "Srđ is ours" in partnership with Right to the City and Green Action	*Objective* - Citizens' initiative "Srđ is ours" is established at the public debate with support of initiative "Right to the City" to fight against real-estate project "Golf Park Dubrovnik" at the Srđ hill above Dubrovnik	**National Forum for Space**
February 2011	Published and distributed newspapers "Srđ is ours" with articles and analysis from activists within National Forum for Space	Initiative "Srđ is ours" in partnership with Right to the City and Green Action	*Method* - with support of initiative "Right to the City" for the first time used newspapers as method to inform and mobilise citizens	

			with 4,000 copies distributed in Dubrovnik	
April 2011	Mass citizens' protest for the opening of "Flower Passage" shopping centre ending with private security guards using physical force against some protesters followed by arrests of these protesters by the police	Initiative "We won't give up Varšavska" led by Right to the City and Green Action	*Outcome* - End of initiative "We don't give Varšavska" by symbolic protest of 1000 citizens at the opening of the shopping centre in which private security guards used force against some protesters with the support of police	
February 2011	Initiative "Srđ is ours" collects signatures to initiate local referendum on "Golf Park Srđ" project	Initiative "Srđ is ours" in partnership with Green Action and Right to the City	*Catalyst* - Initiative "Srđ is ours" supported by initiative "Right to the City" starts collection of voters' signatures in legal timeframe of 15 days to initiate referendum and manages to collect more than required or 11,000 voters' signatures	
April 2013	Held referendum on golf project at Srđ on which citizens vote against the project but they do not reach legally required turnout	Initiative "Srđ is ours" in partnership with Green Action and Right to the City	*Outcome* - mobilisation of citizens to vote is 31% of which huge majority votes against golf project but legal threshold of 50% turnout is not reached, which allows golf project to progress legally	
October	Coalition of NGOs and	Right to the City	*Objective* - established	"We won't

2013	trade unions submits request to the Croatian Government for access to the study which recommends concession of Croatian highways	in partnership with two trade unions and three NGOs including "Green Action"	coalition of trade unions and NGOs including Right to the City to fight the government's plan to give Croatian highways into concession	**give up our highways"**
December 2013	Protest action "Give up on concession" against Croatian Government by the coalition of trade unions and NGOs	Right to the City in partnership with two trade unions and two NGOs including Green Action	*Method* - first protest action of the coalition, involving around 100 activists	
October 2014	Establishment of initiative "We don't give our highways" and collecting signatures of voters to initiate national referendum that would ban new concessions on highways in Croatia	Initiative "We don't give our highways" led by Right to the City on behalf of NGOs and Independent Roads Trade Union on behalf of trade unions	*Catalyst* - Initiative "We don't give our highways" co-led by Right to the City starts collection of voters' signatures in legal timeframe of 15 days to initiate referendum and manages to collect more than required or 500,000 voters' signatures	

April 2015	Decision of Croatian Constitutional Court to ban national referendum that would ban new concessions on highways after decision of Croatian government to give up from their concession plan	Initiative "We don't give our highways" led by Right to the City on behalf of NGOs and Independent Roads Trade Union on behalf of trade unions	*Outcome* - Initiative "We don't give our highways" co-led by Right to the City forced the Croatian Government to rescind their concession, but the national referendum to legislate ban on future concessions will not be held.	