



Parallel session 3B-2.1

Community collaborations, activism and conflict in planning

Tuesday 12 November, 12.00 – 14.00

DPU Room 101 (34 Tavistock Square)

Chair: **Dr Pablo Sendra**, Lecturer in Planning and Urban Design, UCL

Discussant: **Prof. Sophie Oldfield**, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Cape Town-
University of Basel

Scaling up the Fight to Stay Put on London's final gentrification frontiers?

Prof. Loretta Lees, Professor of Human Geography, University of Leicester

The state-led gentrification of the final gentrification frontiers in inner London – council estates – has been going on since the late 1990s and continues today. In this paper, I focus on the resistance to gentrification that emerged in and around some of these estates in which I have been involved as a public scholar. I discuss some of the different forms of resistance and what they achieved. I discuss the value of collaboration and participation with/in local communities on the front line of gentrification. In so doing I reflect on the recent rise of self-identified scholar activists in urban studies, the care and ethics required for such work, and the possibility of comparative and globalised knowledge production in fighting gentrification. I reflect (briefly) on the 'Urban Activism: Staking Claims in the 21st Century City' conference I recently attended at Harvard in the US (see <https://urbanactivism2019.org/>), which aimed to create a collective discourse on how critical urban research and urban political activism are increasingly converging and creating a common field of inquiry and action. Like this conference, the Harvard conference connected scholars from various fields such as planning, geography, anthropology, sociology, history and critical urbanism with activists working on housing rights and the right to urban identity and the city more generally. But what now?

[Title TBC]

Just Space – an informal alliance of around 80 community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations, formed to act as a voice for Londoners at grass-roots level during the formulation of London's major planning strategy, particularly the London Plan.

"Fighting for planning, planning for fighting": an experience of conflictual planning – Vila Autodromo, Rio de Janeiro

Prof. Carlos Vainer, Institute of Urban and Regional Planning and Research, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

In the face of conflict, mainstream planning points to participatory and businesslike processes, whose core and primary purpose is to avoid, bypass, mediate or resolve conflicts that are seen as dysfunctional, costly, or anomic. Civic peace and harmony would constitute, in this perspective, the condition through which the corporate city achieves its competitive potential: the polis submits itself to the city, politics gives way to business. Preventing, avoiding and resolving disputes would establish the kingdom of a pacified and consensual city (society).

Conflictual Planning, on the contrary, points to and bets on the creative potential of conflict, from which emerge collective subjects that rescue the city as political arena, as a place in which citizens face and confront each other to discuss and arbitrate its fates. Now it is the polis that imposes itself on the city.

The paper tells the experience of the Popular Plan of Vila Autodromo, where 500 hundred poor households were threatened with forced removal by the Olympic Park, the main site of the Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympic Games. With its technicalities and language, planning practices and discourse are usually part of the legitimation process of the capital dynamics and needs. With the technical support of an academic consulting group, the case of the Popular Plan of Vila Autodromo shows that planning practices and discourse can be a weapon of resistance. Fighting for Planning and Planning for Fighting: the Vila Autodromo resistance and alternative planning became an inspiration to many communities in Brazilian cities.