

27/28 January 2019

A 2-Day Workshop on the History of Urban Struggle and Urban Social Movements

Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel

Organized Labor, the City, and the Grassroots: Towards a History of Urban Social Movements (c.1860s–1960s)

The global protest cycle of 2011 has brought to life a plethora of urban social movements. From occupying Puerta del Sol in downtown Madrid to pitching tents on Tel Aviv's Rothschild Boulevard, from struggles against evictions in Cape Town to the tenants' movement of Warsaw, from Gezi Park to Wall Street—cities across the globe witnessed waves of collective action that were genuinely urban in both form and content. In the light of these events, historians have rediscovered the rich legacy of past urban struggle. But notwithstanding the growing number of contributions that analyze urban riots, rent strikes, anti-eviction campaigns, housing reform initiatives or struggles for access to collective consumption and political participation in the cities of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, past urban protest is usually studied in a heavily localized and temporalized context that tends to shun comparison across borders or through time. By default skeptical of generalizations, historians are thus contributing to the widespread perception in the social sciences that urban social movements somehow appeared out of thin air in the aftermath of the rebellious 1960s.

Against this backdrop, our two-day workshop aims at contextualizing the manifold urban struggles that erupted across the globe from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. By exploring the rich legacy of past urban movements, we hope to generate new insights into how and why protest transformed or endured through time and space. The workshop is therefore also meant to foster exchanges with neighboring fields. While historical trajectories featured prominently among the urbanist classics published in the 1970s and 1980s—from Manuel Castells' *The City and the Grassroots* to Henri Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution* to David Harvey's *The Urbanization of Capital*—, of all disciplines, it was History that was largely absent from debate. Despite the fact that urban historians have adopted many of the categories introduced by Geography and Sociology in particular—such as, to paraphrase the late Michael B. Katz, the study of *site*, *place*, and *space*—, they contributed rather little to historicizing urban protest or to advancing a historical theory of urban movements. This applies also to the field of social movement studies. Rarely do insights derived from research on repertoires of collective action, resource mobilization or political opportunity structures appear in historical studies of urban contention. Addressing these gaps and blanks, our workshop offers a meeting ground for interdisciplinary discussion on

the peculiarities, contradictions, and commonalities of past urban struggles. In so doing, it will provide new avenues for an empirically rich and theoretically sophisticated History of Urban Social Movements.

We seek contributions covering, roughly, the period from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. There will be no geographical restriction but papers on non-Western experiences are particularly welcome. Discussions of transnational or comparative character (both regional and temporal) as well as proposals focusing on methodological, theoretical or historiographical aspects are likewise highly encouraged.

Topics may include but are not limited to

- The relationship, tensions or modes of co-operation between urban movements on the one hand and organized labor or socialist/communist/anarchist parties on the other.
- The composition, ideology or strategy of urban movements especially vis-à-vis working-class organizations.
- The impact of political and economic transformation on past urban movements and identities.
- The influence of urban and anti-urban thought on trade union discourse, left-wing parties, and other working-class organizations.
- Comparison between past and contemporary urban social movements.
- Innovative methodologies that help establish solid cases, build comparative or transnational research designs, and open up new or underused bodies of sources.
- Interdisciplinary approaches that make use of methods and theories provided by urban sociology/geography for research in urban history.
- Historiographical questions, such as “What could a history of urban social movements look like, and when does it begin?”

The workshop language is English. Deadline for abstracts (c. 400 words) is 15 September 2018. Decisions will be made and communicated by 1 October 2018. Final papers are due on 1 January 2019. Please send abstracts and all inquiries to Philipp.Reick@mail.huji.ac.il.