

## **CFP: Urban commons: Moving beyond state and market**

September 27th & 28th, 2013, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Germany

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Urban space is a commons; simultaneously a sphere of human cooperation and negotiation and its product. Today, we need to understand urban *commoning*, the creation and maintenance of urban commons, as a dialectical relationship between state and capital (e.g. Hardt and Negri 2009). Rather than positing commons as *beyond* state and market (e.g. Helfrich 2012), this conference asks how to move there. In particular, we wish to scrutinize how a focus on commons might advance (or preempt) existing or emergent urban struggles.

Understanding urban space as a commons means that the much sought-after productivity of the city *precedes* rather than *results from* strategies of the state and capital. It challenges assumptions of urbanization as capital-driven (e.g. Harvey 2006). This idea resonates with a range of recent urban social movements, from the Arab Spring and the occupy movement, to the “Right to the City” alliance, and countless initiatives seeking to “Reclaim the City”. Initiatives to create “commons”, such as networks of small entrepreneurs, subcultural producers, initiatives offering direct services to the marginalized and urban gardening, are welcomed and even facilitated by governments in order to (re-)valorize urban space and lessen the impacts of economic restructuring. However, at the same time, the creative and reproductive potential of the urban commons is undermined by new attempts to exploit and control (i.e. enclose) them, which are exacerbated by austerity politics.

In this context, this symposium seeks to explore the role and position of commons in urban research and open the debate to contributions from all disciplines. We are particularly interested in contributions that address the following six topics around which the panels of the symposium will be based:

1. Gentrification’s tragic pioneers: Victims of enclosure of the commons?: How do struggles to preserve urban commons against economic enclosures of the city (i.e. gentrification) differ from state attempts to foster dynamics of commons generation (as a basis for future exploitation)?
2. Agency of urban commons: What strategies, tools and methods do urban commons employ to reach their goals and meet their needs? What role do they play in subjectivity production, urban dwellers' empowerment and actual social and spatial change in the urban realm?
3. “The city is our factory”: Immaterial labor and resistance in Post-Fordism: What does resistance mean when the rise of the creative class is premised upon the refusal of Fordist discipline and the embrace of common resources is a central paradigm for urban economic development?
4. The city and the sovereign: How do “commons”-oriented initiatives navigate between cooptation and criminalization? How do the subjectivities that they engender relate to emergent forms of governance?
5. Urban commons and public services: What are the political perspectives of introducing a commons perspective into (municipal) government? The concrete example to be discussed in this panel is recent initiatives to defend public real estate and infrastructure.
6. Spatialization of the digital commons: How does urban space relate to the digital commons? In what ways can we see the struggles for digital commons connected to urban space? To what extent can we understand urban space as spatialized digital commons?

Please send abstracts of **300-500 words** to [gsz.urbancommons@gmail.com](mailto:gsz.urbancommons@gmail.com) by **March 28<sup>th</sup>**. The deadline for finished papers is September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. A publication of a symposium anthology is planned for summer 2014.