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The City is the Factory: New Solidarities and Spatial Strategies in an Urban Age

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The City is the Factory: New Solidarities and Spatial Strategies in an Urban Age

Abstract

[Excerpt] Urban public spaces, from the streets and squares of Buenos Aires to Zuccotti Park in New York City, have become the emblematic sites of contentious politics in the twenty-first century. As the contributors to *The City Is the Factory* argue, this resurgent politics of the square is itself part of a broader shift in the primary locations and targets of popular protest from the workplace to the city. This shift is due to an array of intersecting developments: the concentration of people, profit, and social inequality in growing urban areas; the attacks on and precarity faced by unions and workers' movements; and the sense of possibility and actual leverage afforded by local politics and the tactical use of urban space. Thus, "the city"—from the town square to the banlieu—is becoming like the factory of old: a site of production and profit-making as well as new forms of solidarity, resistance, and social reimagining. We see examples of the city as factory in new place-based political alliances, as workers and the unemployed find common cause with "right to the city" struggles. Demands for jobs with justice are linked with demands for the urban commons—from affordable housing to a healthy environment, from immigrant rights to "urban citizenship" and the right to streets free from both violence and racially biased policing. The case studies and essays in *The City Is the Factory* provide descriptions and analysis of the form, substance, limits, and possibilities of these timely struggles.

Keywords

Urban spaces, unions, urbanism, labor movements, redevelopment, political movements

Disciplines

Collective Bargaining | International and Comparative Labor Relations | Unions | Urban Studies and Planning

Comments

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THE CITY IS THE FACTORY

New Solidarities and Spatial Strategies
in an Urban Age

**Edited by Miriam Greenberg
and Penny Lewis**

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FROM THE FACTORY TO THE CITY AND BACK AGAIN

Miriam Greenberg and Penny Lewis

This is a book about the interaction between work, new social movements, cities, and urban space. We begin with three different urban spaces—all in New York City—that inspired us, helped us crystallize our ideas, and pushed us to recognize what was at stake in our writing.

Oddly enough, the first of these spaces was a conference room. We had gone to interview a lead organizer for the Alliance for a Greater New York (ALIGN), an organization that consolidates the efforts of two other organizations, New York City’s Jobs with Justice, connected to the nationwide labor-community coalition, and Urban Agenda, a local progressive research and policy institute. Visiting ALIGN’s busy office in Lower Manhattan, we ducked into the conference room for a quiet space to talk. The wall we faced upon sitting down was covered with an oversize map of New York City, studded with color-coded tabs for labor, community, religious, environmental, and other groups, organized in clusters all over the city. When asked about it, the organizer explained how this map was fundamental to their mission. The unions that support ALIGN, and the organization itself, recognize the traditional shortcomings of the labor movement—organized workplace by workplace, focused mostly on economic issues important to their members, but too rarely addressing the problems their members experience as renters or parents, as community members facing environmental threats or police harassment. ALIGN’s form of coalition building has been framed in terms of a broad-based “right to the city” agenda, and is self-consciously “place based,” paying attention to neighborhood and geography, alongside worker issues. This framing has proved essential across all the campaigns the organization initiates

or lends support to, from Alliance for a Just Rebuilding, which mobilized a cross-section of workers and residents impacted by Hurricane Sandy, to the living-wage campaigns in New York, including the Workers Rising demonstration of July 2013 and the “Fight for \$15” (hourly minimum wage). Ultimately, the organizer explained, ALIGN has learned to approach coalition building from a “geostrategic dimension,” as evident on the city map. “We’ve come to realize that the city is now like the factory once was—it’s in the neighborhoods and on the streets where the organizing happens. And so we have to change our strategy.”¹

We heard this argument—the city is the factory—echoed numerous times over the years that led to the research and writing of this book. Perhaps nowhere did we hear it more forcefully than by participants in Occupy Wall Street (OWS), whose original encampment was located just a few blocks up Broadway from ALIGN’s offices—and which became a second place where our ideas took shape. For a few months at the end of 2011, the Occupy movement seized delimited, central, and highly symbolic public spaces in hundreds of cities and towns across the globe. This upsurge expressed the outrage of the “99 percent,” who were still reeling from the world financial crisis and drawing global attention to the historic levels of economic and political inequality endemic to contemporary capitalism. The first occupation took advantage of the freighted symbol of Wall Street, an actual locale that also serves to represent the global power of finance capital. Like striking workers occupying a factory, the protesters who marched daily from Zuccotti Park in downtown Manhattan sought to “shut it down” and disrupt the capacity of urban financial elites to engage in regular commerce and work. And like factory occupations, the encampments dramatized central questions of power and control: who runs things, who should run things, how can things run differently?

While their occupation lacked the immediate leverage workers can achieve when taking over their workplaces, it carried levels of symbolic and associative power that echoed the dramatic self-organization achieved in places like Seattle’s general strike of 1919 or Flint’s famous autoworker sit-downs in 1937. For a brief period the Occupy encampments took great advantage of the public spectacle they created, shifting the media and political discourse around inequality, corporate power, and the shortcomings of liberal democracies. Similarly, they “capitalized” on the associative ties made possible by their enduring physical presence in public space, engaging creative tactics, forging new friendships and networks, and exploring innovative forms of social and political organization.

Michael Kimmelman, the *New York Times* architecture reporter, articulated what many saw upon first laying eyes on OWS: “Much as it can look at a glance like a refugee camp in the early morning, when the protesters are just emerging from their sleeping bags, Zuccotti Park has in fact become a miniature polis, a

little city in the making” (Kimmelman 2011). It was in this sense a *prefigurative* city, in which one could experience what a radically different world might look, sound, and feel like. Here food and lodging were free, work was collaborative, and one could participate in the deliberative democracy governing the daily interactions and decisions at the park. Included in this prefigurative work were the difficulties faced by occupiers confronting internal power dynamics, inequalities, and conflicting goals, which made Occupy messy, generative, and difficult to sustain.² Nevertheless, here the city was a “factory” for imagining an alternative future.

For all the symbolism and tactical leverage of the central square, the problems of inequality, access to power, and public control of community that had inspired OWS were the daily bread of the neighborhoods far from Manhattan’s cavernous financial district. These neighborhoods became our third site of inspiration. During OWS’s heyday and in the months and years since the occupations were shut down by police forces across the country, many Occupy activists turned to, or returned to, the local work of building social movements rooted in preexisting places with their own long histories of organizing. In the working-class-majority African American and Caribbean neighborhood of Crown Heights, Brooklyn, for instance, occupiers began a neighborhood-based “assembly,” bringing long-term residents together with the newer, “gentrifying,” college-educated and predominantly white Occupy crowd. Over time, through their focus on landlords who force evictions and then gouge the newcomers, a diverse alliance drawing from the Crown Heights Assembly and tenant advocates such as the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board began to organize together using a traditional model—a tenants union. With three “locals” grouped by common landlord, stretching across the neighborhood and making connections to nearby Bushwick and Williamsburg, the Crown Heights Tenants Union has grounded aspects of the initial OWS in the concrete (and brick and mortar) daily lives of Brooklynites, old and new. Crown Heights residents—who include union members in transit; workers in city offices, education, and communications; graduate students and the unemployed; artists and designers—meet monthly in a coalition that, when working well, recognizes the differences within as well as common interests across the vast “99 percent.” The CHTU combines direct action, protest, and traditional pressure on elected politicians to get landlords to fix the heat and stop evictions. It also joined with other housing groups whose pressure helped assure the lowest rent hike in the history of regulated apartments in New York City in 2014–2015, followed by a historic rent freeze for 2016.³

We saw in these emergent spatial politics—from ALIGN’s citywide worker organizing, to Occupy’s tactical and prefigurative transformation of public space, to CHTU’s neighborhood-based tenants unions and coalition building—a growing global trend. For while the particular cases mentioned above were situated

FIGURE 0.1.
Workers Rising
#RiseUpNY
demonstration,
July 24, 2012. Photo
by Annette Bernhardt.

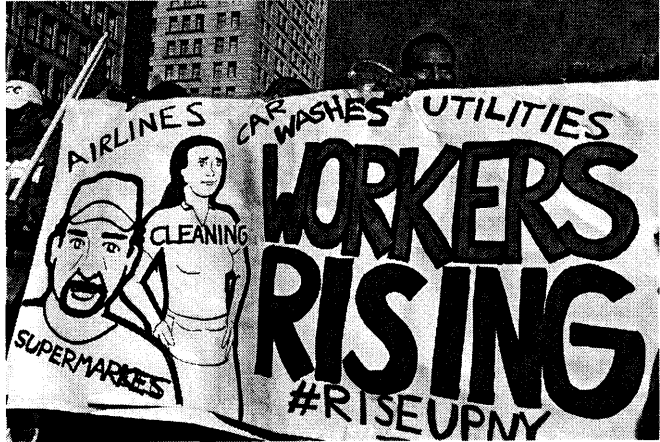


FIGURE 0.2.
General Assembly,
Occupy Wall Street,
October 14, 2011.
Photo by Michael
Gould-Wartofsky.

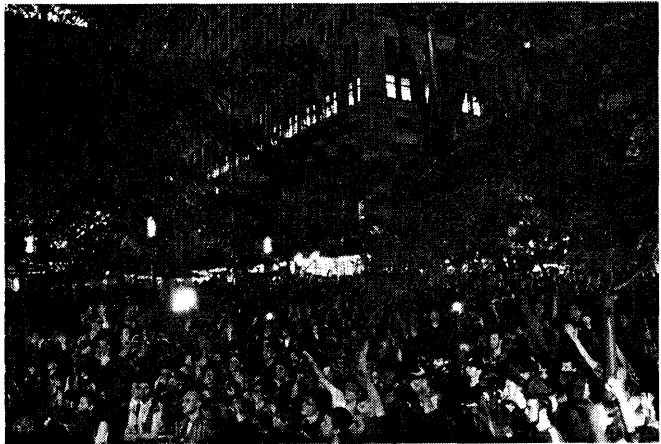


FIGURE 0.3.
Crown Heights
Tenants Union
Rally, June 7, 2014.
Photo by Urban
Homesteading
Assistance Board.



within a few miles of each other in Manhattan and Brooklyn, it was hard to miss how related they were in political spirit, and often actual political ties, to similar mobilizations around the world. Over the past decades, many places have witnessed a shift in the primary location of worker-based and popular protests from the gates of the workplace to urban public space. The target of protesters' organizing has similarly shifted, from individual bosses or corporations to political elites and industry groups often bounded by the urban centers the protesters use and disrupt. From Puerta del Sol in Madrid to Gezi Park in Istanbul, from the streets and squares of Buenos Aires to Zuccotti Park in New York City, we have seen "the urban" become the emblematic site and scale of contentious politics among workers and precariously employed people in the twenty-first century, much as the shop floor was for the twentieth. In an era of escalating inequality; unemployment and underemployment; and increasing recognition of the interconnection between economic, social, environmental, and spatial justice, organizers find common cause across disparate groups whose similar experiences and physical proximity bridge their roles as citizen, neighbor, and worker. Labor and community coalitions move outside the workplace to social halls, church basements, and pubs to organize campaigns around issues of joint concern—from living wages to immigrant rights to disaster relief. Activists increasingly seize plazas and buildings, disrupt business and traffic, and use direct action to call attention to their causes and to create new movement spaces for future action.

The use of streets and squares, bridges and parks, churches and bars, is not a new tactic of popular organizing or dissent. Indeed, contemporary struggles echo the spatial tactics of social movements of the last two centuries, from the Paris Commune to the march on Selma. Traditional workplace-based struggles, meanwhile, are far from obsolete. Strikes, boycotts, and slowdowns continue to be a central part of the protest landscape, dominant in China, and intermittently paralyzing cities and countries of the European Union, West and Southern Africa, Latin America, and even on rare occasion the United States (for example the Chicago Teachers Union strike of 2012). Furthermore, these strikes reveal the degree to which work stoppages, when successful, leverage their ability to bring business as usual to a halt far beyond the gates of the workplace.

Nonetheless, we find there are interesting indications of a shift away from workplace-based struggles. Data compiled by the New Unionism Network and others indicate that "while the number of traditional work stoppages may be on the decline in many parts of the world, the number of people involved in larger political or general strikes may be on the rise, at least in parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa" (Luce 2014, 141). Though the data collected from country to country are inconsistent, analysts find that strikes at particular firms, or even across particular industries, have grown less common. At the same time, cities in Spain, Portugal, France, Greece, Turkey, South Africa, Nigeria, and India have

been shut down by general strikes, wherein unions make use of the organizing opportunities afforded by urban space, informal workers engage in direct action, and together they leverage allies beyond the workplace.

We draw attention to this relocation of the space of protest from the factory to the city because we see in it a shift that is both historically distinct and politically significant. Across these city-oriented struggles, we focus on the increasing prominence of what Henri Lefebvre called “right to the city” demands and frameworks that link work-related and “place-based” actions and identities to forge more sustained movements. Here workplace concerns, for example of port truckers, teachers, or fast food workers, are linked to the environmental health of local port communities, or keeping neighborhood schools open, or ending brutal policing in marginalized communities. So, too, we see precarious workers, new immigrants, and the unemployed using the city as a lever of power, from gaining community support for day labor centers and rights for street vendors, to organizing in public squares when job conditions or surveillance means shop-floor organizing is not an option. Finally, urban social movements focused on what Manuel Castells termed “collective consumption” goods, like housing, education, child care, and public green space, find allies among labor organizations that aim to connect good jobs to broader social and environmental needs in the neighborhoods in which their members live.

These allied struggles involving labor, the “precarariat,” and right to the city, while in many ways continuous with the past, are also shaped by, and revealing of, our current political and social moment, a moment characterized as neoliberal and precarious, and distinguished by the importance of the city as political, economic, cultural, ecological, and demographic force in what is popularly termed “the urban age.” The pieces in *The City Is the Factory* provide an analytical overview of the form, substance, limits, and possibilities of these timely struggles. On the one hand, many authors address how these efforts recognize the *profound challenges facing workers* in this new age, from rampant unemployment and the “fissured” workplace (Weil 2014), to resurgent antiunion politics and the difficulties in running successful strikes. On the other, they recognize the *expansion of “right to the city” organizations and efforts*, and the salience of their struggles—over who can afford to live in the city, under what environmental conditions, and according to whose justice—for non-rich urban populations as a whole. Together, these efforts are taking seriously the strategic territories of their urban milieus, and organizing with self-conscious knowledge of the multi-scalar points of leverage that the contemporary city makes possible. Thus the campaigns and activists profiled here examine where work and right-to-the-city orientations explicitly or implicitly overlap. The book focuses on U.S. cities, but

the dynamics at play can be traced internationally as well, and half our chapters address cities outside the United States or compare U.S. and international cases.

To frame these contemporary dynamics, we build upon the work of a wide range of scholars who—much like the activists cited above—now argue that the contemporary metropolis is both preeminent “space of the commons” and an emergent site of sociopolitical mobilization, analogous in its strategic centrality to the role of the factory in the industrial era (D. Mitchell 2003; Hardt and Negri 2011; Harvey 2003, 2012). Seizing control of the city, or key parts of it, now provides significant political leverage at multiple levels of governance, from the national to the global. This idea is entering the liberal mainstream, evinced by a spate of new books—*If Mayors Ruled the World*, *Triumph of the City*, and *The Metropolitan Revolution*—celebrating the ability of a constellation of progressive mayors and urban-regional coalitions to transcend state, federal, and international gridlock to advance commonsense environmental, labor, immigration, living-wage, and social welfare policies (Barber 2013; Glaeser 2011, Katz and Bradley 2013).⁴ It is also entering the calculus of groups striving for more radical forms of social change, as evident in cases highlighted in books like *Rebel Cities*, *Labor in the New Urban Battlegrounds*, and *Cities for People, Not for Profit* (Harvey 2012; Turner and Cornfield 2007; Brenner, Marcuse, Mayer 2011).

In short, and together with much of this analysis, we see the contemporary roles of the metropolis—as commons, locus of power, economic engine, and target of organizing—underlying the everyday dynamics of contemporary politics in crucial ways, and in ways that can be distinguished from earlier eras of capitalism. We concur with Neil Brenner when he says: “The urban is . . . no longer only a site or arena of contentious politics but has become one of its primary stakes. Reorganizing urban conditions is increasingly seen as a means to transform the broader political economic structures and spatial formations of early twenty-first-century world capitalism as a whole” (2014, xx). In our volume we draw upon an interdisciplinary and empirically grounded set of contributions to critically examine, and explore the actual politics of, these crucial arguments.

In what follows, we situate these contributions in three key contexts: (1) following Lefebvre, *the urban revolution* transforming conditions for workers and low-income people, and politicizing urban inhabitants in new ways; (2) *new alliances between labor, precarious urban workers, and right-to-the-city movements* that seek to transform these conditions; and (3) *the new tactical and creative uses of urban space* that these movements frequently deploy. These areas necessarily intersect, of course. Yet, we argue, they are also usefully examined separately. For instance, recalling the three sites that open this chapter, we can think of the Crown Heights Tenants Union, contending as it does with issues of gentrification

and the escalating cost of housing, as exemplifying the new struggles of urban inhabitants of the first context. We can consider ALIGN's geostrategic, coalitional organizing around campaigns like "Fight for \$15" as exemplifying the new alliances of the second context. And finally, we can see the tactical and prefigurative transformation of central plazas by the Occupy movement as exemplifying the third. In organizing our text in this way, we argue that these areas need to be understood both on their own terms and in interaction with one another for us to make sense of our current moment, and effectively act within it. The political intervention offered by the book, then, is to encourage and provide multiple visions for such interaction, in both the questions future scholars ask and the campaigns future organizers undertake.

The Urban Revolution

As noted, we live in a period commonly referred to as "the urban age." The evidence typically marshaled to establish this fact is demographic. For the first time in human history, cities are where more than 50 percent of the world's population lives and works. And with accelerating rates of global migration from South to North, as well as within the South, this figure is set to increase to 75 percent by 2050 (Burdett and Sudjic 2007, 2011).⁵ The significance of urban areas, however, extends beyond sheer population growth. Indeed the capacity to measure such trends is notoriously difficult since, with the growth of informal settlements and the blurring of boundaries between cities, suburbs, and hinterlands, it is unclear how to identify where "the urban" begins and ends. Rather than looking at cities as finite units, then, urban geographers increasingly focus—following Lefebvre—on *urbanization* as an ongoing process, and one taking place on a planetary scale (Lefebvre [1968] 2003; Brenner and Schmid 2013). By this is meant the extension of the "urban fabric"—including networked infrastructures of communication, transportation, water, sanitation, food, and energy, and the relative density of human settlement, economic activity, and built environments. With urbanization comes the increasing interaction between the city and the countryside, as well as the progressive spread of "urban society"—in both a political and cultural sense—across the planet. The rapid pace and massive scale of this urbanization, stitching together urban and rural ecosystems, channeling political economic energies, and altering cultural sensibilities, is intertwined with, and a driving force of, contemporary forms of global capitalism and global politics.

Cities, of course, have always been essential to capitalist development. They are a crucial motor of production and profit making, through the spatial

concentration of manufacturing, services, and commerce within them, as well as via the lucrative markets in finance, insurance, and real estate driven by and driving urban development itself. Yet this role has greatly expanded in the current, globalizing period. Estimates on this dynamic abound. To cite one popular report, by the McKinsey Global Institute, on what the authors call the “City 600,” by 2025 some six hundred cities are set to account for 60 percent of global GDP, with this amount doubling that created in 2007. Moreover, of these six hundred, only 10 percent are the “megacities” with populations of ten million or more that emerged in the 1990s. Instead, 577 fast-growing, relatively unfamiliar “emerging market cities”—from Ahmedabad in India to Viña del Mar in Chile to Shenzhen in China, as well as Chicago in the United States—will contribute half of global growth, and so gain share from and ultimately become megacities themselves (Dobbs et al. 2011). Thus we seem to be experiencing what Lefebvre predicted in the 1960s: an urban revolution, whereby urbanization itself—as in the production and extension of cities and their infrastructures—is occurring at such a rate and on such a scale that it has surpassed industrialization to become the primary engine of economic growth. (Lefebvre [1968] 2003; Brenner 2014). This planetary urbanization brings with it transformations of the global environment—from climate change to habitat loss—akin to the impact of the industrial age.

Similarly, we are seeing evidence of what Saskia Sassen (1996) predicted two decades after Lefebvre: that the popular notion that digital technology and off-shore production would obviate the need for urban agglomeration would prove false. The highest-growth industries of our age continue to cluster in cities and profit from their growth—including retail, commerce, tourism, media, finance, real estate, and high-end services. Meanwhile, the tentacles of production, distribution, and consumption, facilitated by communications and transportation technologies old and new, link people, places, and supply chains within ever-expanding metropolitan areas and across ever-thickening global networks. Some of the most powerful labor organizations globally—including the SEIU and UNITE HERE in the United States—are based in these industries and take advantage of metropolitan locations in their choice of labor actions, from ex-urban warehouse districts and logistics headquarters to the hotels and office buildings in redeveloped downtowns (Bonacich 2003).

Yet it must be added that production is not the only role for cities within capitalism. Urban neighborhoods have also always enabled what Marx called “social reproduction”—providing the lodging, resources, and communal space for the physical sustenance, conviviality, and cultural connections necessary for everyday people to survive and, ideally, thrive. It is precisely these urban “use values,” found in the streets, houses, schools, cafés, parks, shops, and squares outside the

gates of the workplace, that were fought for by the early twentieth-century labor movement, and that often provided necessary solidarity for strikers inside the gates. Post-1960s, the role of these place-based solidarities—called “new urban social movements”—grew in power and scope, together with expanding claims on the state. As Manuel Castells framed “USMs” in 1983, their primary demands were for “collective consumption” goods—including housing, health care, education, transit, food, and public space itself. These broad-based demands also tended to create movements that were more inclusive across lines of culture, race, gender, sexuality, and, significantly for Castells, class, as counterposed to the mainstream labor movement.⁶ As we read it, the urban commons have always been as essential to the well-being of low-income and working people as their wages, hours, and working conditions, even if the former has not always been understood in these terms by the leadership of worker movements.

Over the last forty years, the work people find in cities has grown increasingly polarized, with secure, high-end or decent jobs available for a shrinking number of highly skilled workers, often in tech, finance, and real estate, and, for much of the rest, jobs that are degraded and with little promise of a secure future. Global-city scholars have shown how market deregulation since the 1970s, intended to produce an increase in foreign trade, investment, and competition, has also helped produce such unstable and unequal labor markets (Ross and Trachte 1983; Sassen 2011; Buechler 2006). As Simone Buechler describes, in the case of São Paulo, as in so many other aspiring global cities, local efforts to make the city more attractive to global capital have entailed increased attacks on unions and exploitation of low-wage workers, and an extended process of “precaritization” of work itself (2006, 241).

However, as Buechler also notes, “global forces are actively embraced, resisted, or transformed by national and local forces and actors.” Or, to quote Andrew Herod in this volume, “social life does not take place on the head of a pin but is, rather, deeply spatially informed and structured.” Here we emphasize the context of neoliberal restructuring of the city within which the restructuring of labor markets and collective consumption has unfolded, albeit in a highly variegated and nonlinear fashion around the globe. In other words, we highlight the role of the neoliberal city in the transformation of, and growing fight for control over, both economic production and social reproduction.

In this sense neoliberalism, commonly associated with the policy cocktail of privatization, deregulation, and austerity (Hackworth 2006), should also be understood geographically, in terms of the role of urban areas in the innovation and development of these policies, as well as the profound impact of these policies on urban space and populations. As with the progressive restructuring of the 1930s–1950s that ushered in Fordist-Keynesianism in much of the Global North

and South, 1970s-era neoliberal shifts were justified as a necessary response to crisis—in this case the fiscal crisis of the state, concentrated at the metropolitan scale, and often referred to in shorthand as “the urban crisis.” The latter was really a constellation of local crises intertwined with larger macroeconomic events, including deindustrialization, rising energy costs, inflation, and federal retrenchment, as well as the rise of radical urban movements themselves. In the United States, and much of the Global North, they also represented a rising antiurban political sentiment, usually framed in racialized terms, whereby cities and their black and brown, poor and working-class residents were blamed for their own demise and broader social decline. In response to these budget-battering and socially dislocating forces, urban neoliberalism seemed to provide a clean break.

Geographers Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell have described the shifts of this era in terms of dynamics of “creative-destruction,” involving two moments of “rollback” and “rollout” neoliberalism. First, in the rollback phase, public-private leaders worked to dismantle the Keynesian-era, “managerial” mode of urban governance that targeted the collective consumption needs of large working-class and middle-class populations (Peck and Tickell 2002; Harvey 1989a). This included the defunding of institutions that served the poor and low-income—from public housing to schools to transit—as well as the dismantling of rent regulations, environmental protections, and wage laws. Unions across the Global North and South were especially hard hit in this rollback. In the public sector, budget-balancing agreements were used to erode collective-bargaining agreements and gut pensions and benefits. Political attacks on the very existence of tax-supported public goods and services have further decimated and destabilized public-sector workers and the unions that represent them. With deindustrialization—a process in which the local state was also heavily involved—private-sector workers saw mass layoffs, as their jobs, and entire blue-collar sectors, were exported elsewhere. Measured by density of organization or by political clout, today’s unions have a fraction of the leverage and power they once exercised. Together, this has meant a pauperization of vast segments of the urban working class (Fletcher 2014). For some cities in the United States, such as Camden (New Jersey), Stockton (California), and Detroit, such restructuring has resulted in economic collapse.

Second, political and economic elites, often governing through public-private partnerships, worked over subsequent decades to roll out new, “entrepreneurial” solutions to urban economic decline, and to spur interurban competition (Harvey 1989a). This included the creation of new corporate tax breaks, “enterprise zones,” business-improvement districts, and other incentives to attract speculative investment in urban real estate and economic development. Hip urban redevelopment schemes, from “urban greening” to the “creative city” to “new urbanism,” abound, and are designed to help cities rebrand themselves and attract investment, tourism,

and more affluent consumers and residents. In combination, rollback and rollout neoliberalism are associated with growing rates of inequality, experienced both in socioeconomic and socio-spatial terms. Urban innovations that signal opportunity for developers, higher-income residents, and higher-end businesses often spell the displacement of those in the middle and at the lower end. This pushes urban populations to suburban or exurban areas lacking services, jobs, or access to urban infrastructure like transit, in a process that exacerbates both uneven spatial development and environmentally damaging urban sprawl.⁷

Associated with this reshuffling we see the “informalization” of urban housing and economic activity, becoming, according to scholars and the UN alike, the dominant forms of urbanization in the world today (Al Sayyad and Roy 2003; Davis 2006; UNDP 2012). Rapidly expanding urban areas are rarely governed by formal planning processes, but rather are “informally” built and regulated, and precarious in both physical and financial terms. Contrary to popular representations of anarchic and unregulated construction, which are usually focused exclusively on shantytowns in the developing world, such informal development takes forms both high and low, and is found in both the Global South and North (Jennifer Robinson 2011). For the low-income, it means “informal settlements”—from tripled-up apartments in the urban core to shantytowns and squats on the margins. At the high end, it means speculative bubbles of luxury condo and office-tower construction, which can be found in the revalorized urban core as well as in pricy real estate on the periphery, such as on desirable waterfronts vulnerable to flooding. Alongside these makeshift and risky residences are equally makeshift and risky economies—from the informal to the underground, and from the high to the low end, with growth in the freewheeling finance, real estate, and retail sectors matched by that of street vending and day labor.

Thus we see multiple features of the “urban revolution,” from the transformation of places of production and work, to that of spaces of social reproduction, the commons, urban nature, and everyday life. In turn we see how these become the basis of new intersections between workers and right-to-the-city movements. Here the city is both the ground and the goal, creating new challenges as well as possibilities for organizing.

New Alliances

A second contribution of *The City Is the Factory* is a sustained examination of new urban mobilizations emerging in the context of the urban revolution, with particular focus on alliances among worker-oriented and place-based groups in which there is a link between “workplace” and “community” issues within a

right-to-the-city framework. Following David Harvey, our understanding of the “urban working class” goes beyond traditional conceptions that focus on those centralized through mass production or stably employed. The broader group more often discussed by our contributors resembles the urban workers Harvey describes: “fragmented and divided, multiple in [their] aims and needs, more often itinerant, disorganized and fluid rather than solidly implanted” (2012, xiii; see also Kalleberg 2011). This echoes Latin American urban scholarship on the shifting subjectivity of the “popular classes,” who relate to large institutions no longer as “workers” with social protections but as residents of neighborhoods and other forms of territory, ushering in new forms of social movements and contentious politics (Merklen 2005).

To make sense of the organizing undertaken by these groups, our case studies build on literature from labor studies on labor community alliances (Turner and Cornfield 2007; Milkman, Bloom, and Narro 2010; Milkman and Ott 2014), while extending this work by examining the right-to-the-city frameworks within which these coalitions are now embedded. Some of our chapters provide overviews of efforts to organize urban industries that are emerging as dominant around the world, including informal food service, day labor, street vending, and retail work. At the same time, our chapters explore how problems created by widening urban inequality and market-oriented redevelopment have led to allied struggles for affordable housing and rent control, for well-funded neighborhood schools and urban gardens, against the siting of toxics and other hazards, and against police abuse and harassment. Across these efforts we see goals that may include, but also reach beyond, typical workplace issues of hours, wages, benefits, and working conditions. Similarly, place-based issues alone don’t explain the extent of the vision of these alliances. Rather, we find the conditions of urban life are inextricably intertwined with the concerns of workers, the unemployed, and low- to moderate-income people generally, and thus the political power exercised by these coalitions is having its effects on the electoral level as well. In cities such as New York, Pittsburgh, Boston, Minneapolis, and Seattle in the United States, as well as São Paulo, Lima, Seoul, Barcelona, Paris, and London, progressive mayors and city councils have been elected to carry out the demands of the groups whose agitation created the groundwork for their election (Turner and Cornfield 2007; Meyerson 2014).

From the perspective of the organized labor movement, we see contemporary city-based campaigns tapping into a spectrum of working-class concerns broader than those frequently associated with the union movement as it was established and developed from the mid-twentieth century onward. In the United States most of all, but to varying degrees in all industrialized countries, it was during that period that organized labor’s social purview tended to shrink toward the concerns

of the workers who belonged to unions, and the basics of their conditions on the job. Against the “business unionism” of that period, the broad concerns being addressed in the campaigns we examine here reflect what many “social movement unions,” and social democratic and labor parties, commonly identify as their own. But they have older echoes as well, to days before legal rights to unions had been broadly established, and labor organizations were just one of a number of forms that urban workers sought and demands they made. In the United States, for instance, before most private-sector unions won national recognition with the National Labor Relations (Wagner) Act of 1935, workers organized as tenants, as food shoppers, as riders of mass transit, in addition to organizing as workers on the job. Rent strikes and meat boycotts, frequently led by marginally employed mothers and new immigrants, helped rein in the power of the landlord and food producer. Workers demanded access to their parks through rallies and control of their streets by defiantly marching through them. Incipient and established unions joined boycotts, fought for public education and health care clinics, united with other civil society organizations to seek redress and progress on an array of local concerns, including sanitation and transportation. At times when national changes seemed beyond the realm of the possible, workers sought to change conditions in their immediate milieus. Like today’s progressive mayors, reform politicians of the “sewer socialist” variety campaigned, and at times governed, according to the principles of these movements, with greater regulation and investment in urban infrastructure—including better-made housing, green spaces, clean water, heat, and electricity—the result.⁸

Today, political attacks and legal hurdles have made traditional union organizing a near impossibility in many locales. Employers directly resist unionization through aggressive anti-union campaigns in which workers are fired, harassed, and otherwise intimidated in their efforts to form unions. In the United States, over half of the states have passed restrictive “right to work” legislation, which deny unions the ability to collect fees from all workers represented by the union, and the U.S. Supreme Court will likely make such restrictions universal in the public sector. But some U.S. cities remain bastions of union density and centers of community-based organizations; the traditions and institutions in these sites are increasingly recognized as possible sources of power for a renewed, if different, labor movement. Critiquing the business unionism of the recent past, for the past two decades workers’ movements have been experimenting with new forms of organization and new styles of campaigns that reflect the decentralized work lives of city dwellers. One such form is worker centers, which bridge the needs of their members both in and outside the workplace. In the urban context, these organizations typically work within immigrant communities,

representing the workplace, community, and legal concerns of their members, fighting for unpaid wages, access to housing and healthcare, and broader immigrant rights. Notably, in many cases these centers are working among populations and industries that labor unions have historically ignored or failed to organize, such as day laborers or domestic workers—and in fact the initial worker centers were frequently formed for this reason (Fine 2007).

The organized labor movement has increasingly participated in these efforts, and, within a sizable number of its international bodies, has shifted its focus from a narrow member-focused and collective-bargaining framework to a broader vision of what the “labor movement” could, should, and needs to be. At the turn of the twenty-first century, the AFL-CIO explicitly embraced the idea of “union cities,” pledging a focus on central labor councils and community labor coalitions in its future work. Beginning in 2006, the AFL-CIO created organizational space for worker center affiliation. In its biennial convention in 2013, the AFL-CIO passed dozens of resolutions aimed at creating (as Resolution 5 spells out) “a broad, inclusive, and effective labor movement.” Prisons, immigration, public education, and student debt joined more traditional issues such as collective bargaining, new organizing, and higher wages as key commitments. Vital to this vision were commitments spelled out in Resolution 16, “Building Enduring Labor-Community Partnerships.” The resolution calls for “rooted, dynamic, and abiding” relationships with community partners, established with “a scale, a potency, and an exuberance” commensurate to the common experience and needs of labor and community.

The bracing and expansive language of the long resolution reflects some of the work already underway in various sectors of organized labor. A compelling instance of this collaboration was the Chicago Teachers Union’s successful strike of 2012, which was notable for the community support it received. For more than a year before the strike, the union fostered joint discussions and action with families over issues related to students’ learning conditions and curricula, while fighting school closures and criticizing the accelerating privatization of the public schools and the increasing use of high-stakes standardized testing. The union’s commitment to the shared goal of high quality education for students earned it the active and ongoing support of families during the strike itself, as parents who struggled to find childcare nevertheless rallied to the teachers’ cause. Such mutual support has continued, as CTU has continued to engage in the broader community struggles against the pernicious effects of education reform; we have since seen education unions in cities like Seattle and Los Angeles similarly connecting with community concerns. Health care unions have emerged as effective voices for community concerns as well, such as National Nurses United, which, for

example, coordinated broad labor support to protest water shut-offs in Detroit in 2014, and coalitions in New York and elsewhere that fight alongside community groups for expanded access to healthcare facilities and against hospital closures. Some building trade locals have joined affordable housing coalitions. While such a “class perspective” or “social movement unionism” is not yet the normal practice among unions, reality is unevenly and fitfully catching up with rhetoric, and it is our sense that efforts along these lines are becoming more common.

Unions have further played central roles providing resources for numerous, broad, workers’ rights campaigns, especially around minimum wage and immigration reform. In fact, it is labor’s relatively deeper pockets created by member dues that have sustained many of the labor-community coalitions and other efforts described in this book and across the literature. Unions such as the Service Employees International Union, the United Food and Commercial Workers and the Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Union are among those at the forefront of such efforts, and cities are ground zero for this new work. Organizers see that strong citywide regulations around wages, benefits, and working conditions—such as living-wage and anti-wage-theft laws—will in many cases exert greater pressure over employers than work-site-specific actions or less robust and poorly enforced national legislation. They grasp, too, that the social space of the city expands the organizing possibility for traditional labor fights and can be a decisive factor when unions are on the defensive. In situations of workplace autocracy and isolation, and where collective-bargaining rights have been repealed, political strategies must transcend the shop floor and go out into community spaces where workers are freer to congregate, and where broader popular pressure can be exerted. Organizations like ALIGN and the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), campaigns for higher minimum wages and paid sick leave, fair and stable scheduling, protective ordinances for day labor—all seek, in urban planning and policy, remedies that in a previous era were more often considered private, labor-management affairs.

Inevitably, these coalitions are also informed by, and help influence, real debates occurring around the globe about the appropriate level at which to direct efforts for progressive social change. In the United States in particular, the national state is viewed by many as “captured” by corporate interests or paralyzed by gridlock; as importantly, it has devolved its central authority and limited its central resources, leaving the states and localities overseeing higher education, prisons, and policing, welfare support, housing funds, and more.⁹ Obviously, there are limits to what can be accomplished at the local level and dangers in privileging this, or any, spatial scale (Leitner, Sheppard, and Sziarto 2008). Nonetheless, in the United States, as well as other countries around the world, local and state governments, under more direct pressure than the national government from labor

and place-based movements, have taken the lead in passing innovative legislation on issues ranging from wages, fair scheduling, paid sick leave, domestic-worker rights, affordable housing, and even climate change. As the executive director of LAANE reported to the *New York Times*, “Given the dysfunction of the federal government, our sense is, in a country as huge and complex as ours, cities should serve as the laboratories for change” (Greenhouse 2014).¹⁰

New Spatial Tactics

Out of our close examination of emerging movements flows a third contribution of this volume: an investigation into the increasingly sophisticated geographic thinking going on inside labor and right-to-the-city campaigns. Much as the shutdown of the workplace via the strike has been—and continues to be—a central tactic in efforts to leverage capital to do labor’s bidding, shutting down business as usual in the central squares, thoroughfares, bridges, and highways of today’s cities has become the prime tactic of today’s urban social movements. From tactical occupations, barricades, street theater, and squats, to long-term campaigns and broad-based forms of coalition building, urban alliances are finding ways—some new, many drawing on older strategies—to “organize the city” as a means of advancing broader struggles. Here we see how the neighborhoods, streets, infrastructure, and commons of today’s cities have joined, if not displaced, the shop floor as the strategic location for new forms of social struggle and solidarity. As we will explore in our chapters, we see this in the case of now iconic urban actions such as the assemblies and highway blockades of Buenos Aires and the occupations of Zuccotti Park, as well as some lesser-known instances, like the squatting in buildings slated for upscale redevelopment in central São Paulo and the daily appropriation of downtown sidewalks by migrant street vendors in Durban, New Delhi, and Los Angeles.

As we stated above, these efforts and strategies, while promising, are at root symptomatic of a decline in the power of traditional workplace-based organizations, particularly unions, but also the stand-alone community-based organizations representing working-class enclaves that are increasingly fragmented by gentrification and under pressure from unemployment and underemployment. Budget cuts and the privatizing of city services and public goods (such as parks and schools) have caused further erosion of the “public sphere” and “public spaces” of the city. Public police and private security forces compound the problem, as citizens and demonstrators are barred from exercising basic rights in the few places extended to them. Many of the groups and movements we examine here understand that they need to challenge these trends directly and

claim new places for organizing. Tracing how these places are thought about and used strategically, both at a theoretical level and in concrete campaigns, is the final consideration of this volume. David Harvey argues that the challenge for today's Left is to tap into the power of those who produce and reproduce the city from the ground up: "It is the metropolis that now constitutes a vast common produced by the collective labor expended on and in the city[.] The right to use that common must surely then be accorded to all those who have had a part in producing it" (2012, 78).

Asserting this "right to the urban commons" takes many forms, but we observe that most of these forms share one thing: the tactical use of urban space. In this sense, the streets and neighborhoods of global cities are emerging not only as a preeminent space for production and social reproduction, but also for politicization and for asserting power, that is, for what Mark Gottdeiner has called socio-spatial praxis (1994). Creative new actions target and transform highways and street corners, bridges and downtown plazas. Some urban protesters are interested in staging dramatic forms of civil disobedience. Some are interested in creating prefigurative, utopian spaces, the polis in miniature. All make tactical use of divided urban spaces of the neoliberal city, from the growing centrality of downtown business and tourist districts, to the growing marginalization of outer boroughs and suburbs.

The occupations of central squares across Egypt, Spain, Israel, and the United States in 2011; of Gezi Park and massing on Istanbul's thoroughfares in 2013; of Central Hong Kong in the "umbrella revolution" of 2014; and more recently the mass demonstrations for urban transportation in São Paulo and the fight against labor law reform in the *Nuit debout* overnight occupations in Paris in 2016—all signify this tactical shift. The direct action of occupation stakes out the public's power to control urban space, and the prolonged interaction of these demonstrations have helped create networks ushering in new political movements and even parties. In the labor movement, organizers increasingly frame efforts as "wall to wall," seeing organizing as both sectoral *and* spatial. The emerging call to "organize the neighborhood" and "organize the city"—by groups as diverse as Crown Heights Tenants Unions and day labor campaigns—engenders tactics that not only link workers across a supply chain or industry, but also link workers and urban residents across diverse communities, seeking to make connections between labor issues and broader, related calls for urban justice.

The movements that mass in these public spaces have faced police repression. Police forces and private security have continued in the vein of repression established during the first years of the global justice movement in the late 1990s, executing mass arrests, using water cannons, "kettling" (corralling groups of protesters to control their movement), sound cannons, tear gas, and rubber bullets

to constrain urban protesters. Such repression has tended to expand the demands of the protesters to include the very “right to protest for rights,” as Martin Luther King Jr. told striking sanitation workers in Memphis in 1968.

Chapters

The interdisciplinary chapters in our volume take up the major themes outlined here—the urban revolution, new alliances, and new spatial tactics—through grounded analyses focused on particular cities or urban comparisons, as well as on particular popular struggles. The first three chapters focus on the challenges facing workers in the low-wage and precarious industries that predominate in our neoliberal urban era. As the chapters make clear, these workers are creating new strategies for organizing across the dispersed and fragmented work sites of their jobs, as well as against neoliberal urban conditions themselves.

In chapter 1, “The Street Labor Movement,” Kathleen Dunn explores the workplaces, working conditions, and political climate facing street vendors. She begins with a close look at New York, but develops her discussion to include vendor work and organizations around the globe. She finds patterns of harassment and criminalization, as well as fundamental exclusion, governing state–vendor interaction, patterns intensified among poor and working-class, often immigrant, vendors. This treatment has led to novel forms of street-vendor organizing that “have emerged as paradigmatic right-to-the-city struggles in the United States and globally.” Identifying such campaigns in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, as well as globally in India, South Africa, and elsewhere, these cases belie arguments that the problem of street vending is a technocratic rather than political one. As Dunn says, “It is street vendors’ *appropriation* of public space that threatens the *moral* order of neoliberal urbanism, as it flouts the sacred bond between property rights and class dominance.”

In chapter 2, “Day Labor Agencies and the Logic and Landscape of Neoliberal Poverty Management,” Gretchen Purser directly addresses some of the strategic and analytic challenges to efforts to organize and regulate low-wage work from below through a close look at day-labor agencies—storefront “labor pools” or “body shops”—where jobless and cash-strapped individuals engage in a congregate clamor for a day’s work. In her chapter, she draws upon extensive fieldwork carried out in the day-labor agencies of Baltimore and Oakland to document the links between these purveyors of low-wage, precarious employment and the geographically proximate “poverty management” institutions from which they recruit would-be workers, revealing the interconnections between homelessness,

prisoner reentry, and sites of subjugated labor. She argues that these trends require that organizers shift attention away from the labor process of singular, bounded work sites and focus on the processing of labor that takes place both between and beyond work sites.

In chapter 3, “Economic Development for Whom? Retail, Neoliberal Urbanism, and the ‘Fight for 15,’” Stephanie Luce and Penny Lewis consider the growing prominence of the fast food and broader retail industries in the global cityscape, and with it, the simultaneous urbanization and globalization of the fights to empower these workers. Displacing small businesses, large retailers and franchises have used their size and power to alter zoning laws and shopping and eating patterns, as well as impact labor standards and regulations. Urban coalitions have contested economic development aimed at enticing big-box retailers and shopping malls to their neighborhoods, while other campaigns are successfully challenging the erratic scheduling norms of today’s retail. The Fight for \$15 campaign has fused labor, broader movements over inequality (including Occupy and Black Lives Matter), and city-based living-wage efforts in successful pressure campaigns that are having significant legal and political effects. While cases differ, they share a common theme: workers and community partners attempting to claim some democratic voice over—and drawing connections between—wage and hour standards, the use of urban space, and the purpose of economic development.

In these chapters we see how the precarious and degraded conditions facing workers across the so-called “informal” and “formal” wage sectors—from street vending to day labor to retail and fast food—are an essential part, and integral to the functioning, of the contemporary city. Thus, the argument is made that working conditions must be a feature of right-to-the-city organizing, and indeed that worker and urban issues cannot be understood in isolation from each other.

The following four chapters analyze innovative alliances between low-wage or unemployed worker organizations and community groups, focusing on the conditions under which they emerge, their potential impact, and the challenges they face. Depending on their political context, depth, and breadth, these alliances have met with varying degrees of success, as Els de Graauw and Shannon Gleeson’s contribution to this volume makes clear. In chapter 4, “Context, Coalitions, and Organizing: Immigrant Labor Rights Advocacy in San Francisco and Houston,” they provide an analysis of the organizing and advocacy campaigns for new labor rights laws in these two divergent municipalities. In San Francisco, they trace the successful living-wage and anti-wage-theft campaigns in a city with one of the highest union densities in the country and where labor remains a political force to be reckoned with. They contrast the coalitions and strategies of San Francisco with the more nascent “Down with Wage Theft” campaign in

Houston, which seeks to enact a municipal ordinance compelling city officials to dedicate resources to rooting out the illegal labor practices of private-sector employers in the city. In both cases, the low-wage workers who stood to benefit most from higher municipal wages and more stringent enforcement mechanisms were immigrants who toil in the contingent and informal sector. Varying coalitions of (at times unlikely) advocacy groups have lobbied for policy enactment and implementation, highlighting the importance of immigrant nonprofit organizations in advancing change on behalf of noncitizens. The authors argue that these nonprofits—including, but not limited to, worker centers—are of growing importance for labor policy advocacy, yet with roles, tactics, and impacts that vary significantly depending on the local, urban context in which they operate.

As noted above, the political power exercised by these coalitions is having its effects on the electoral level. But new electoral victories are only part of the story. As the issues confronted are increasingly understood to be both community and labor concerns, the struggles these coalitions face are also uniting groups that in the recent past were less than united. Thus we have seen in the last two decades a resurgence of coalitional urban social movement organizing.

One of the primary fronts of such organizing is around issues of urban environmental justice, issues that have taken on new dimensions in an era of neoliberal forms of “green” urban development, as explored by Melissa Checker in chapter 5, “A Bridge Too Far: Industrial Gentrification and the Dynamics of Sacrifice in New York City.” Following a proposal to raise the Bayonne Bridge to make way for exhaust-spewing supertankers in New York Harbor, Checker explores how neighborhood-based environmental justice activists on the North Shore of Staten Island, New York, understood and challenged the global political and economic forces that threatened the health and safety of their local environments, and also forged novel alliances with truck driver unions whose workers were likewise threatened. Staten Island’s North Shore already hosts waste-producing facilities, toxic contamination, and air pollution, especially from the ships and trucks that served the port. This 5.2-mile stretch of land contains approximately twenty contaminated industrial properties, all of which sit yards away from densely populated neighborhoods, including the borough’s highest numbers of poor, African American, Hispanic, and immigrant households. Checker finds that these spatial arrangements worked in a dialectic, and uneven, relationship with development in other parts of the city. As leaders allocated space in ways that fostered high-end development and that privileged residents in affluent areas, they also moved toxic industries that undermined the health, safety, and livelihoods of blue-collar workers, poor communities, and communities of color. Recent efforts to “green” the city and to promote small-scale, boutique manufacturing businesses have intensified these inequities

by further displacing heavy industries to these “sacrifice zones.” In 2013–2014, the controversy over the raising of the Bayonne Bridge brought these tensions and dynamics to light, giving rise to burgeoning alliances between environmental justice activists and unions, as well as to awareness of the contradictions of environmental planning in the neoliberal city.

As noted above, we also see neoliberal urbanism associated with declining public investments in urban infrastructure, alongside informal and market-oriented forms of urban redevelopment that reinforce and extend both socio-spatial inequalities and risk. In chapter 6, “Radical Ruptures: Crisis Organizing and the Spatial Politics of Uneven Redevelopment,” Miriam Greenberg explores how these dynamics have made urban populations more vulnerable to economic downturns and disasters of all kinds, from the “man-made” to the “natural.” Yet, with the unequal impacts of disasters compounded by inequitable forms of redevelopment that follow, new solidarities and forms of crisis organizing have arisen, with some of the most innovative and broad-based urban social movements of recent years—from local coalitions to the National Right to the City Alliance—formed in this context. Seeing crises as moments of simultaneous rupture and intervention of great significance for the shape and future of cities, she explores the spatial politics of these moments in all their messiness and indeterminacy. While new movements of grassroots crisis organizers emerge, so too do empowered elite coalitions, as was seen following 9/11 and Katrina. These latter groups restructured disaster aid and redevelopment funding to support long-awaited development ambitions, while shortchanging many of the communities hardest hit, with progressive alliances unable to prevent this. The question becomes how crisis organizers can learn from past disaster moments and movements and act strategically. Greenberg grounds her analysis in a study of post-Hurricane Sandy political mobilization in New York City, which made strides in shifting the narrative frame and “turning the tide” on the top-down disaster regime. Through interviews and observation of coalitions and their campaigns, Greenberg examines how shared visions of the “right to the city” emerged from the wreckage of disaster and from the reconfigured post-crisis political environment.

Despite evident bases for solidarity, however, a major challenge facing broad-based urban coalitions are entrenched and class-polarized ideas about who should be participating in them, and to what end. Daniel Aldana Cohen explores these polarities and potential, often unrealized solidarities in chapter 7, “The Other Low-Carbon Protagonists: Poor People’s Movements and Climate Politics in São Paulo.” Scholars and practitioners across the political spectrum agree that catastrophic effects of climate change can be avoided only by transforming cities. Many estimate that cutting energy demand through urban reforms could play as important a role as decarbonizing the energy supply. The neoliberal consensus is that increasing density and clustering home, work, commerce, and services

can both grow urban economies and reduce energy demand. Others agree that density is vital, yet worry that neoliberal efforts will exacerbate inequalities and increase elite consumption, while pushing low income people to peripheries far from jobs, and thus result in little progress in curbing carbon emissions. In his case study of São Paulo, briefly a Global South leader of neoliberal low-carbon policy, Cohen addresses the stagnation of that approach, the ineffectiveness of so many green policy elites, and the potential of popular housing movements to anchor a democratic low-carbon urbanism. He explores why green policy elites failed to work together with low-income-housing movements, even though both groups expressed similar visions for a dense, accessible downtown. The theoretical intuition that collective consumption objectives and urban climate politics could be linked is being tested in struggle. It remains to be seen whether a green-left rhetoric will emerge as one of these popular movements' dominant frames.

Our final group of chapters takes up the ways in which the public space of cities enables and constrains today's movements and, more broadly, the imagination of labor and community groups within them. As Lize Mogel demonstrates in chapter 8, "The Space of Speech," state policies constrain the public's access to, and actions within, varying configurations of social space. Since the 1990s, and especially after 9/11, the policing of protest has given rise to the oxymoronic "free-speech zones" that demarcate where elementary rights to free expression are, and are not, enforced. But today's movements are once again laying claim to a broader commons, and taking to the streets. Mogel's graphic illustrations of this dialectic of freedom and repression underscore both the difficulty that social movements face against police repression and the possibilities that the dense urban environment presents for mass action and resistance.

In chapter 9, "Spatial Politics and Urban Borders: A Study of Buenos Aires," Alejandro Grimson addresses the relationship between everyday politics and urban space in Buenos Aires, with a particular focus on uprisings that followed the Argentine financial crisis of 2001. Interweaving ethnographic and socio-spatial analysis, this chapter examines the locations, scales, and spatial relations in and through which everyday politics occur, and which themselves shape and are shaped by these politics and subjectivities. In the case of Buenos Aires, the three concentric circles of the city—from the central capital area to the first and second ring of Greater Buenos Aires—interact with the city's cardinal points, generating conflict between popular conceptions of the rich "north" and poor "south," as well as between the powerful center and the industrial periphery. These gradient boundaries meanwhile situate the hundreds of barrios in Buenos Aires, which have historically played an essential role in grounding citizen identity, political organization, and integration within the nation. In the onset and

aftermath of the 2001 crisis, and the entrenching of neoliberalism, the inequality between these geographies was exacerbated while the boundaries dividing them were fortified. This infused the political imagination of protest movements, all of which made new, tactical use of urban space to advance their claims on the state. Grimson shows the necessary relationship between local understandings and lived experience of inequality and urban space, and the tactics and vision of right-to-the-city protest movements.

In the tenth and concluding chapter, “From Workers in the City to Workers’ Cities?,” Andrew Herod provides a theoretically rich overview of the main concepts at work in this volume, synthesizing and extending the field of labor geography in emancipatory directions. He writes, “In order to understand the potential for working-class people to gain a right to the city . . . we must pay attention to the material geographical contexts within which they find themselves.” Through attention to the interactive history of urbanism and capitalism, and to how class and other conflicts play out spatially, Herod traces the dialectical role played by geographic context—the spaces make possible the struggle, the struggle helps reshape the spaces, tapping into and creating new possibilities for the urban citizen’s capacity to effect change.

In short, our chapters point toward the myriad ways in which the contemporary city can indeed be viewed as the factory of old: a locus of capital accumulation and the deployment of labor; a space that combines inequalities of power, livelihood, and risk with the commingling of peoples; and a staging ground of possibilities that such concatenation helps create. For, like factories, cities are also sites of resistance to the derogations produced therein. In the face of new conditions—the urban revolution, neoliberal urbanism, informal development, and mounting threats of global climate change—the city’s role in people’s lives and politics, and the stakes of campaigns to alter that role, have increased in magnitude and urgency. Given the increased role of cities in the global economy, the role of cities as critical tactical sites for struggle has increased as well. The fights that take place in cities are not just *a* struggle in today’s neoliberal order. With the “hollowing out,” or reorientation, of the powers of the nation state, and with the concentration of peoples and powers, cities and urban regions—from the town square to the *banlieus*—are increasingly where the struggle is at.

As we explore throughout this book, the city is not an incidental site for this innovative organizing. Rather, such a focus reflects the political calculation of groups like ALIGN, movements like Occupy, and organizing tactics like the Crown Heights Tenants Union—as well as the growing importance of cities and urbanization processes in contemporary capitalism. For while the seizing of the local might be seen, in our current political landscape, as a retreat to the possible, we support those who argue it is also a crucially strategic, future-facing move.

This move is born of a recognition of the peculiarly powerful political and economic role that cities now play, at multiple scales, from the local to the global. How these campaigns strategically navigate and shape the social, political, and physical landscapes of their home cities, and leverage the position(s) that cities occupy in relation to subnational, national, cross-border, and supranational dynamics and processes, thus constitutes a unifying theme of the book.

We see this moment as one of enormous possibility, and a number of our essays emphasize successful roads taken. Nonetheless, we don't intend this volume to be overly optimistic in its analysis. The conditions that structure the new thinking and movements we profile here are daunting. For traditional proponents of workplace-based organizing like unions to see the compelling need to go beyond the workplace and commit resources to do so; for previously isolated urban movements to find common cause and leverage sufficient power to make real change; for the tactical repertoire of urban social movements to reflect geostrategic analysis and action: all are significantly easier said than done. While urban space does provide a form of leverage, the limitations of "home rule" can shrink the extent to which these local movements can effect change. Legal restrictions and police repression have hobbled efforts to organize and disrupt, and wealth and political power are concentrated at the top at historic levels. Compared to general strikes or revolutionary cities of a century ago, the movements today display an incipient radicalism, a potential for greater solidarity and power—but also the reality of tenuous political and institutional cohesion, saddled with the past history of their own shortcomings, including racial, ethnic, gender, and class-based division. The issues they seek to address—from climate change to housing policy—are often national or global in scale, and so require urban coalitions joining in complex, multi-scalar networks. Meanwhile, the very institutions that have helped previous urban upsurges—unions and political parties most obviously, but also community organizations, and religious and neighborhood associations—are frequently weaker, in flux, on the defensive.

Yet for many workers and their organizations, the long odds of success promised by business as usual have prompted experimentation and innovation. It is often through defeats and setbacks that groups, particularly sections of organized labor, have come to appreciate the strategic leverage, new solidarities, and tactical possibilities contained in an analysis of the city as the factory. Taken as a whole, the chapters in *The City Is the Factory* indicate that the problems encountered by urban workers, residents, and social movements are deeply complex and require a longer view, while the visionary political roles of these various groups have been essential in bringing about social change. The possibilities, and the pitfalls, they face are considered together.