

INTRODUCTION

Education and the Right to the City

Derek R. Ford
DePauw University

Christina Convertino
University of Texas, El Paso

Laura Jordan Jaffee
Syracuse University

Throughout the last 2 centuries, changes in political economy, social organization, and international relations have resulted in the increased concentration of the world's population in cities. Several different United Nations reports released throughout the first decade of the 21st century anticipated—and then declared—the emergence of the urban age, in which the majority of the world's population will be living in urban areas instead of rural ones (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2009; United Nations Human Settlement Programme, 2006; United Nations Population Fund, 2007).¹ Urbanization is, of course, not just a simple demographic shift in where people live. Rather, the demographic changes are part of broader shifts that include the growth of society's productive forces and transformations in the relations of production. While there are complicated and competing theories of urbanization (Harvey, 1973/2008), there is no doubt that cities play a

crucial role in a range of social processes including politics, economics and, increasingly, education.

In the United States, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study in 1966, the latter of which is commonly referred to as the Coleman Study (Buendía, 2011) situated the city as central to national educational policy. This was just shortly before Henri Lefebvre (1967/1996) published his short book, *Right to the City*. Whereas the U.S. policy reports interpreted the city and the mostly working class and Black urban population as unstable, chaotic, and ultimately in need of discipline by the capitalist state, Lefebvre viewed the city as a contradictory sociospatial formation, as a space in which the peril and promise of humanity is on full display. Lefebvre, for his part, formulated the right to the city in order to overcome the reifying and alienating impact of capitalism on social life.

• Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Derek R. Ford, derekrford1@gmail.com

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Since the book's publication, the right to the city has been taken up in various ways across the globe; it has been mobilized as a principle for protest and social movements, a theoretical framework for conducting geographical and sociological research, and even a slogan for mainstream urban development by the United Nations and World Bank. Recently, too, educational scholars and activists have turned to the concept of the right to the city to think through and against the recent neoliberal attacks on public education in the United States (e.g., Convertino, 2014; Ford, 2013; Jaffee & Ford, in press; Lipman, 2011; Means, 2014). This special issue advances this engagement by exploring the relationship between educational policies and practices (including pedagogy, teaching, studying, and learning) and the struggle for the city and urbanism, broadly conceived.

Hossler and Casey open this issue by introducing the right to the city as both a theoretical vision and a framework that has propelled vibrant social movements in cities across the globe. Asking how Lefebvre's framework can inform struggles over the production of educational space, the authors offer keen insight for how this radical vision can provide scaffolding for activists engaged in struggles over public schools and teachers' labor in cities. They highlight the Chicago teachers' strike of 2012 as one educative example of how social movements can gain power from transcending labor affiliations to encompass the concerns of disparate groups of disenfranchised urban inhabitants. This article stresses the import of critical education for challenging dominant ideologies rooted in the capitalist mode of production and for instigating collective action against the social conditions that define city spaces under neoliberal capitalism.

Similarly foregrounding lived struggle, King, Hussain, and Wattles reflect on a community education effort that utilized intergroup dialogue to develop political solidarity in the wake of the police killing of an unarmed Black man in a Central New York city. They provide a useful overview of theoretical questions sur-

rounding the right to the city and its ultimate incommensurability with the capitalist need for private property while attending to practical considerations of how to actualize the framework without compromising its radical promise. Offering intergroup dialogue as one constructive tool in a larger effort to collectively claim the right to participate in urban life and appropriate urban space, the authors describe how this effort to resist the individuating of social actors through collective activism and grassroots organizing offers a productive model for alliance building in the broader fight for the right to the city.

Expanding theories of hidden curriculum, Ficarra, Cottrell, Burton, and Miller ask how cities can themselves be understood as schools. They consider what the spatial organization, built environment, and social policies of cities teach through an insightful comparative analysis of urban policy in Bogotá, Colombia and Berlin, Germany. Bogotá's *estrato* system and Berlin's in-school tracking system are situated as aspects of the hidden curriculum of these cities. This article raises critical questions around how programs intended to address social stratification through the provision of needed services simultaneously enable the maintenance of the structural forces that continuously generate these needs. The authors begin developing a compelling theory of the *curriculum of the city*.

Drawing on Andy Merrifield's work on the encounter, Backer discusses how horizontal pedagogical practices enabled students and activists to appropriate space during the Occupy Wall Street movement. Discussion is positioned as a means of generating encounters that take hold and shift the reigning social formation to explicate its role in ultimately upending capitalist relations of production. Backer specifically proffers turn-taking as a discursive practice through which subjects engaged in direct-democratic participation can assert the right to the city by ceasing to act in space and instead taking hold of and becoming space.

Further delineating the role of language and communication in political struggle, Boggs and Stewart expound how urban teachers' online utterances represent rhetorics of resistance that challenge market-based education reform narratives. Teachers' utterances reject the predominant narrative that lays blame on teachers for a myriad of social problems that are ultimately rooted in the economic structure. Intimating the revolutionary potential of resistant rhetorics published by teachers in digital spaces, the authors read these published critiques as teachers acting to restructure the social and material spaces in which they work and challenge exploitative working conditions. Urban teachers' online utterances, they suggest, concretize a demand for the right to the city. Taken together, the articles included in this special issue make meaningful contributions to a nascent yet politically potent body of critical educational scholarship that engages the right to the city as a political revolutionary framework to redress social and educational injustices.

NOTE

1. For an important critique of the "urban age" thesis, see Brenner and Schmid (2014).

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