Victories from Insurgency: Re-Negotiating Housing, Community Control, and Citizenship at the Margins

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Abstract: This article considers how insurgent campaigns for housing the poor in New York City and Chicago succeeded in engaging the local state, non-profits and financial institutions in the creation of community land trusts. These campaigns had long arcs in which victories and losses built from each other, neither as permanent as they initially seemed. The campaigns moved iteratively between spaces of "invited citizenship" (courtrooms, planning committees) and "invented" spaces of collective action (property takeovers). They found their greatest success when, exploiting state incapacity to defend abandoned property, they elicited a degree of complicity from local governments in their takeovers of housing and land. The article thus contests dichotomised accounts of social movements that oppose losses to victories, cooptation to resistance, and movements to institutions. Instead, we call for situated and dynamic accounts of insurgent practice, capable of theorising the long, messy, co-constituted evolution of political contexts and popular struggle.

Résumé: Cet article examine comment des campagnes populaires pour le logement des démunis à New York et à Chicago ont réussi à engager l'Etat et des institutions financières locales dans la création de community land trusts. Dans la trajectoire de leurs luttes, victoires et pertes se sont construites les unes des autres, ni aussi permanentes qu'elles semblaient au départ. Les campagnes ont joué de manière itérative sur des espaces de «citoyenneté invitée» (tribunaux, mairie) et des espaces «inventés» d'action collective (squats). Elles ont trouvé leur plus grand succès lorsque, exploitant l'incapacité de l'État à défendre des propriétés abandonnées, elles ont suscité une certaine complicité des gouvernements locaux dans leurs prises de contrôle des terrains. L'article conteste donc les récits dichotomiques de mouvements sociaux opposant les pertes aux victoires, la cooptation à la résistance, et les mouvements aux institutions. Au lieu de cela, nous favorisons des comptes rendus contextualisés et dynamiques de la pratique des «insurgés», cherchant à théoriser l'évolution longue, nuancée et co-constituée des contextes politiques et de la lutte populaire.

Keywords: insurgent planning, housing, citizenship, community land trusts

Every decade, housing for low-income people in the United States becomes more precarious, amplified by the threat of eviction, homelessness and a disappearing subsidised housing stock. As we go well beyond a crisis point, housing activism appears to be reviving as are municipal government responses that draw much on local context and history. In 2017, after over a decade of activism, Picture the

Homeless (PTH) and the New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) secured municipal funds to place property in the East Harlem/El Barrio Community Land Trust.[1] This same year, the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign (CAEC) that had organised squatting in foreclosed homes, in partnership with the Chicago Community Loan Fund, the Action Now Institute, and the Greater Southwest Development Corporation received funding from Bank of America to support the Chicagoland Owners Land Trust. Both developments were heralded as victories for poor people's campaigns. While these organisations are today being invited to create community land trusts (CLTs), the groups were, at their start, founded by activists who existed outside of local property markets. They represented a segment of the contemporary housing precariat filling the metaphorical and literal edges of large US cities—the chronically homeless, those evicted from public housing, and those displaced by foreclosure. Without political clout or capital to make formal claims on property, these activists asserted their right to housing through whatever means they could: squats, tent occupations, eviction blockades, and tenant organising. Their work exhibited an insurgent character, a tendency toward enforcing their own plans for survival, while critiquing the state and financial institutions that had left them dispossessed and "banished" to the "city's end" (Roy 2017:A3).

As they possibly gain a seat at the table, we consider how these organisations worked with an evolving political economic context to translate their housing activism into meaningful victories, obtained, nonetheless, after setbacks and multiple organisational shifts. We use the lens of insurgent planning to interrogate their long-range struggles and answer three questions: How and why does the housing precariat organise itself? How can it engage public, quasi-public, and non-governmental organisations in its struggles? How are struggles for housing connected to a broader vision for full inclusion, citizenship, and the right to self-determination? Specifically, we seek to understand how the material goals of struggle engaged the shifting context of New York City and Chicago in ways that shaped insurgent practices and outcomes.

The concept of insurgent planning, and insurgent practice generally, foregrounds the emergent forms of contestation, resistance, and negotiation located at the "fault lines of urban existence" (Sandercock 1998:21) that "aim to reveal, confront and disrupt neoliberal dominance, challenging entrenched inequalities in the city" (Butcher and Frediani 2014:120). Conceptually, insurgent planning draws on Holston's (1999:158) notion of insurgent citizenship which "recognizes the state is not the only legitimate source of citizenship rights, meanings, and practices". These can be enacted through everyday social bonds. Similarly, insurgent planning contends that not only the state and professional planners but also those who organise at city margins can be cast as planners. While starting an important conversation, this literature has demonstrated a processual orientation, often at the expense of a meaningful engagement of the possibilities insurgent planning holds for achieving material gains and lasting outcomes. On this point, we agree with Shrestha and Aranya (2015:439): insurgent planning "should be [a] means to an end rather than end in itself".

Our concern with the material goals of insurgent citizenship requires that we address the situated character of insurgent practice. This situatedness is informed by history and the specificities of place which, taken together, produce the power

relations that practice is enmeshed in. Here, we attend to the importance of socio-spatial practices for insurgency as elaborated by García-Lamarca (2017) while understanding "history as an argument about the present" (Holston 2008:33). Where previous scholarship has drawn out the "historical formulations [that] simultaneously produce and limit possible counterformulations" (Holston 2008:33; Meth 2010:249), the relationship we are interested in is reciprocal and iterative. Counterformulations are not just enabled and limited by but also shape historical formulations. Power relations are asymmetric but insurgent movements and capital (or the capitalist state) dynamically coproduce the landscape. For example, in New York City, the fiscal crisis of the 1970s and widespread abandonment of housing in its wake led to rent strikes and protests of tenants, who opposed city attempts to seize properties in tax arrears. The city soon realised it could not manage (or often even find) the tens of thousands of tax foreclosed properties for which it had become the landlord of last resort. It conceded to tenant bids for community control. Programs were created, such as the Tenant-Interim Lease (TIL), to allow residents to become cooperative owners of their buildings. Today, NYCCLI seeks to restore the viability and community control of some of these same buildings, which the state is once again turning away from.

We note that, though the specifics of Chicago's historical trajectory are (inevitably) different, and though the neglect of property that gave rise to CAEC occurred later, in the 2007–2009 foreclosure crisis, the overarching dynamics are analogous. Capital abandonment of property and state incapacity to manage (or sometimes even locate the owners of) foreclosed homes, set the stage for CAEC's strategies and tactics. These included occupying, rehabilitating, and reclaiming vacant housing.

Moreover, in both cities, people of colour and lower middle-class homeowners experienced severe drops in home value such that their mortgages exceeded the value of the property. Albeit to different degrees, these populations suffered the unemployment consequences of the "Great Recession" the mortgage fiasco unleashed. In Chicago foreclosures proceeded apace as there were few buyers on the South Side for underwater homes (Immergluck and Smith 2005; Institute for Housing Studies 2013). The job loss was more severe and the recovery slower. In New York, people of colour and middle-income homeowners were displaced from their homes by the threat of foreclosure and economic pressure. Yet through short sales, their homes avoided foreclosure though they themselves were cast into an ever more expensive and inaccessible rental market, often jobless or forced to take a pay cut (New Economy Project 2012). The result, in both places, was an enlarged housing precariat, political unrest, and—to a certain extent—a crisis of legitimacy of homeownership and private property that the activist groups sought to exploit.

In these broad sketches of our cases, historical formulations and counterformulations interact and coevolve. Specific municipal contexts, like the inability or unwillingness of the state to defend private property rights, enables dissident collective action. In turn, managing these counterformulations requires the creation of new state or capital-backed institutions. Analytically, we build here on Miraftab's (2004, 2006, 2009) concepts of "invited" and "invented" spaces of

participation. These reformulate Holston's (1999) use of formal and substantive citizenship. Invited spaces are analogous to formal citizenship where rights are rooted in political membership. Substantive citizenship is the everyday manifestations of these rights—both in their presence and absence. Formal citizenship does not guarantee that people or groups experience substantive rights. Similarly, invited spaces, those spaces "occupied by the grassroots and their allied NGOs that are legitimized by donors and governmental institutions" (Miraftab 2006:195), do not guarantee meaningful rights to property, land, infrastructure or inclusion. Rather, within invited spaces, people find coping mechanisms and propositions to support member survival (Miraftab 2006). This is not the case in invented spaces, which are also occupied by the grassroots and claimed by collective action, but "directly confront the authorities and the status quo" (Miraftab 2006:195). The primary goal here is social transformation and a resistance to dominant power relations (Miraftab 2006).

In our study of insurgent practice in Chicago and New York, we find, like previous scholars (Atehortúa 2014; Ay and Miraftab 2016; Meir 2005; Shrestha and Aranya 2015; Sletto 2013), a double-movement between these spaces. In pursuit of a "right to housing", PTH and CAEC occupied invented spaces that were not sanctioned by the state. As time wore on and gains were made, each group moved into invited spaces to institutionalise new forms of ownership and citizenship. Their invited spaces often grew out of their invented spaces. Thus, like Miraftab (2009), we argue that invited and invented spaces are not a binary; they are mutually constituted and interacting. We push the argument further to suggest that invented spaces are invited by certain socio-spatial and historical conditions (here, abandonment). The invitation is not an explicit authorisation from the state for insurgents to exercise legal rights and processes, but it is the state's complicity in accepting and sometimes tacitly endorsing grassroots intervention on certain terrain. Conversely, adequate invited spaces for insurgent groups to solidify gains are not always found. Often, invited spaces have to be invented. We use invented here in the colloquial sense—to mean envisioned first through grassroots pressure and, eventually, grassroots collaboration with the state and allied institutions.

This reformulation of invented spaces as invited and invited spaces as invented leads to a final argument. Despite the porous boundaries between grassroots and state-sanctioned spaces, the aims of insurgent practice ought to remain transgressive, counter-hegemonic, and imaginative (Miraftab 2009). Can insurgent practice meet these criteria when its centre of gravity shifts to invited spaces? A long literature on social movements, beginning with Piven and Cloward's (1977) seminal analysis, argues movements lose their radicalism as they are incorporated into formalised institutional frameworks. However, while militancy can be most heightened prior to institutionalisation, we resist the notion that incorporation into formal frameworks forecloses future counter-hegemonic inventions. First, struggles are long and victories, even formalised ones, are fragile and susceptible to retreat. The need for renewed militancy and invention rises again. Second, the urgency of material needs, paired with the realities of aging into struggle, are such that movements require mechanisms to formally protect what they can, and ensure actors in the struggle (and the movements themselves) can press forward

(Starecheski 2016). Today, the more oppositional, inventive strategies of PTH/ NYCCLI and CAEC give way to negotiation in invited spaces. But the formal negotiation of CLTs is not the end goal for these organisations: CLTs are a vehicle to undermine the exclusionary and exploitative relations of property in New York and Chicago. They are means to a "right to housing" and a "right to the city" where the poor can not only exist, but fully and meaningfully participate in making (inventing) a future for their communities.

   The paper that follows, then, contests binary accounts not only of movements and institutions, but of formulations and counterformulations, and a simplified opposition of losses to gains. The movements presented here, like those elsewhere in the literature on insurgent planning, emerged in precarious and punitive contexts, with high material stakes and victories that were far from assured. Our hope is to offer a contextualised and historicised evaluation of their insurgency—their tactics and strategies; when these are effective; when these collide with limitations; how limitations give birth to new strategies; and how victories can be secured, though never permanently. In the first two sections of the paper, we introduce our cases more fully, telling the story of the founding of Picture the Homeless and the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign. These accounts locate each group in the historical trajectories of their respective cities and each city's particular formulation of neoliberal urban governance (Wilson 2004). We give detailed accounts of the early campaigns for housing led by both groups. Our focus is on the meaning of housing—how housing comes to be an arena of political struggle. In the third and fourth sections of the paper, we trace each campaign's pathway to the CLT. Here, we explore the tensions of moving between invented and invited spaces as the groups attempt to formally institutionalise gains. In the US urban context, we argue that invitations from the state and allied institutions are rarely received outright: the invited spaces in which gains can be made must first be invented by the grassroots. Conversely, inventive organising must find its invitations, the material conditions allowing for new creations. We argue the ability to manoeuver between invented and invited spaces has been key for these groups in achieving victories. However, we suggest moving toward an institutionalisation of gains requires finding a medium—in this case, the CLT—that does not just represent a formally sanctioned space of citizenship, but rather serves to transfer long-term community control into the groups' hands. This is a theme we take up in the conclusion. The data presented come from 12 months of fieldwork and relied on a variety of methods, including 17 semi-structured interviews of key informants, natural and participant observation and archival research.

Mounting Losses

As in other cities where insurgent planning efforts have erupted, neoliberal reconfiguration in New York City and Chicago has involved an exercise in not housing the poor.

   In New York City, the local state has gradually withdrawn from the provision of affordable housing (Madden and Marcuse 2016; Starecheski 2016), shedding its responsibilities to its poorer citizens and feeding instead an unwieldy shelter

system of hundreds of brick and mortar accommodations, some with beds, many without, and a voucher system that temporarily places the poor in motels and single room occupancies (Main 2016). The shelter system is municipal, created and maintained since 1979 as a result of judicial decisions and settlements that have interpreted "a right to shelter" in the state constitution (Main 2016). Unfortunately, this is a right one "cannot eat" (Miraftab 2009:33). Punitive and dangerous, shelter spaces are in a state of neglect (Sandoval et al. 2016). Yearly reports of the accidental deaths of dozens of sheltered homeless New Yorkers haunt and embarrass politicians term after term. Yet, the municipal government spends no less than $1.8 billion annually to maintain this infrastructure (New York City Data 2018).

In Chicago, there is less public infrastructure for both the homeless and low-income housing. The city, well known for its segregation (Moser 2017), has since the city's period of suburban flight relied on depressed property markets in non-white neighbourhoods to supply cheap lodging. In the past few decades stable and safe housing for poor people has been especially undercut. This occurred first in the public sphere with the demolition of public housing and subsequently in the private market with the foreclosure crisis and the disproportionate targeting of people of colour with subprime loans (Saegert et al. 2011; Williams et al. 2005; Wyly et al. 2006). While parts of Chicago are gentrifying, some non-white neighbourhoods outside the city centre are still reeling today from large-scale property abandonment.

More broadly, the ability of poor people to continue to exist in these two cities is being undermined, often in distinctly racialised ways. In 2017, the Greater Chicago area experienced a black exodus for the seventh straight year (Eltogouri 2017). In New York, which has lost tens of thousands of affordable units in the past 30 years (Furman Center 2016), the largest systems of social housing left standing, such as public housing, have been neglected. Their living conditions can border on brutal and raise questions of how much longer they will survive. Concomitantly, as the conditions have become harsher and the country seems to have tilted rightward politically, community development groups seem to have learned to make smaller demands. As a study on homeless organising in Seattle noted: "We once used to talk about providing shelter beds for everyone, now we talk about the right to exist on the street". Or as another put it, "the contested territories are increasingly marginal, the issues increasingly marginal" (Demirel 2000:30). As we will see, the insurgent planning efforts described in this paper evolved from these contexts, born of local struggles for survival and much deeper ties to international and national movements challenging variants of the same patterned dispossessive dynamics. Their shared political hope was to widen the contested territories of housing and the right to the city.

Emergent Housing Campaigns: Early Trials and Errors
The two insurgent planning efforts described here came to focus on housing for different reasons and through different pathways. In this section, we examine how and why housing came to be their arena of political struggle; the organising

traditions they drew on in their insurgency; and the kinds of repression they were met with as they struggled to find an entry point through which to create (or preserve) housing for the poor. We begin in New York City, with the story of Picture the Homeless (PTH).

When PTH was founded in 1999, the crackdown on homelessness, especially via broken windows policing,[2] seemed at an apex. Subway ads with pictures of menacing vagrants reminded passengers not to give money to "those violent crazies",[3] while homeless New Yorkers were being arrested in midnight raids of shelters and tent encampments (Picture the Homeless 2018; Smith 1998). The founders of PTH, two men without homes, believed this criminalisation would not end until homeless people were sufficiently organised to end it. They recruited homeless New Yorkers in parks and shelters and invited them to their office where warm showers could be had and political education sessions were ongoing. Aside from offering showers, however, PTH generally eschewed providing for people's individual material needs: their intent was to recruit membership not with the promise of charity but the possibility of resistance. When, in response to growing homelessness and increased gentrification, PTH launched a housing campaign in 2005, it did so with the aim not of directly providing lodging for members but of systemically changing New York City policy to produce affordable housing for the very low-income and hard to house.

This political orientation meant that PTH engaged the housing question with a certain abstraction, making it the heart of a broader battle for the right of the poor to remain in the city. Members were working with their existing socio-spatial conditions, and dispossessed and chronically homeless as most were, they did not have specific properties or neighbourhoods to lay claim to. They did, however, have an unfulfilled constitutional "right to shelter". For nearly six years, they worked in this invited space of formal rights without substantive realisation, pressuring politicians to divert funds from the unsafe and bloated shelter system into creating affordable homes on vacant, city-owned properties. Tactics, always subject to debate from members, ranged from participatory research to back policy recommendations to direct action in the form of squatting, press conferences, and protests. Some tactics leaned more toward invention, drawing on historical and international memory (Miraftab 2009:33), visiting, for example, the People's Landless Movement in Brazil to learn more about popular education and the 1984–1999 Lower East Side Squats[4] to learn how vacant city-owned property had successfully been reclaimed in the past.

PTH faced repression at many turns. Strikingly, this was as true for its benign and invited lobbying efforts as its confrontational tactics. Two examples are noteworthy. The first concerned PTH's efforts to pass a commonsense mandate for the city to track vacant properties, a first step in assessing—and regulating—a problem that officials denied existed, that of "warehousing", the landlord practice of holding units empty until they gain greater speculative value. For three years, the bill was quashed by the City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, with rumours reaching PTH members that she had threatened to withhold funding from the districts of any officials who voted for the bill. The second example concerns PTH's experiment with taking over vacant, city-owned property during the

foreclosure crisis, when squatting enjoyed an international resurgence (Martinez Lopez 2018). Before even attempting this invention, the organisation was infiltrated by the police, attacked for its illegal activities in local newspapers, and threatened by City Council members with the loss of its funding.

Perhaps, the core of PTH's strategy in both these efforts—one of reclaiming vacant housing for human use, a strategy extended from countless preceding movements, including the National Union of the Homeless that leaders of both PTH and CAEC drew inspiration and guidance from—was no longer adapted to what had become a tight property market, with vacancy below 5% (Fields 2015). Perhaps, the pressures of this market, combined with a revanchist political climate directed at the homeless, made the context too uninviting for PTH's preferred inventive actions. Tactics that had worked in decades prior saw little success here. PTH members, materially in need and socially vulnerable, grew frustrated and scared as victories eluded them. As one informant noted, "the nature of policing being such … many weren't looking at direct action as viable" anymore and were more inclined to engage in less risky, invited policy work. At the other end of the spectrum, other leaders were growing agitated and more inclined to squat—to seize properties if this could be a pathway to victory.

By contrast, CAEC's focus on housing was immediate and born of necessity. In 2000, the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) began taking steps to demolish one of Chicago's more notorious public housing complexes, Cabrini-Green. As a *New York Times* article noted, this complex "was never the largest, toughest or most troubled in Chicago. It was, however, the closest to the city's rich and influential neighborhoods" (Terry 2010). Arguing poverty should be deconcentrated and that residents of dense, poor neighbourhoods should be dispersed into mixed-income communities, CHA began issuing eviction notices. Cabrini tenants were forcibly relocated. Those given housing vouchers were left to try their luck in the private market against the odds of discrimination, insufficient income, and homelessness.

Most Cabrini residents opposed the demolition (Pfeiffer 2006). Many got organised to do so and sought to express their influence in invited spaces. They used coalitions and local advisory councils to challenge evictions in courts, win better relocation protections, and engage institutions like the UN Human Rights Committee in support of their moral and humanitarian claims on the public properties (Smith 2006). These claims revealed much about the way Cabrini residents conceptualised their housing: at the individual level, the destruction of the complex represented a threat to survival and a loss of shelter. As in other studies of housing (Cooper 1971; Starecheski 2016), people's selves and communities were entangled with their buildings, both revealed to be fragile as walls were knocked down. Collectively, this was the loss of a public good, of a system of social housing that crystallised that housing is a right that could (should) be guaranteed by the state. In this case, the loss of this right meant the eviction of primarily black Chicagoans who experienced the planned demolition as a land grab, extending housing's legacy as the site of racialised dispossession (Pfeiffer 2006). CAEC, coming out of and on the heels of nearly a decade of other resident efforts that had

had limited success in saving the projects, took all of these messages with it when it burst on the scene in 2009.

CAEC's founders had been moved to start the organisation following the visit of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (WCAEC) to Cabrini. The inventive tactics of WCAEC, including eviction blockades, were an inspiration and a call to assert Cabrini residents' "right to housing". Three housing activists, one of whom, Willie "JR" Fleming, was a Cabrini resident, led the charge, vowing to shield the bodies of tenants slated for eviction with their own. In what would prove to be the last two years of the fight to save the public housing complex, CAEC worked tirelessly to keep residents in place. They complemented eviction blockades with an entry to invited spaces, which were largely adapted from the WCAEC: legal challenges to delay and, if possible, stop tenant removal, as well as continued engagement of moral and political authorities, such as the UN and HUD, in calls for support.

A few differences with PTH are worth noting. First, the more situated, explosive context in which CAEC was born gave way to a more situated campaign: the organisation was making claims on specific properties, in the name of specific citizens. Second, the organisation intervened more directly in people's immediate material situations, fighting as a collective for people's individual housing. Still, the bulldozers came. CHA evicted the last of Cabrini residents in 2010, including at least once late in the night, defying court orders when these stood in the way (Terry 2010). Chicago was one of the nation's first experiments in striking down public housing and the city showed no willingness to concede to activists whether in invented or invited spaces. Like PTH, CAEC met the limits of an insurgency that had not yet found the conditions in which it could enlist the complicity of the state.

Invented Invitations and Invited Inventions: The Pathway to Insurgent CLTs

In this section, we trace the trajectories of the organisations as they shifted strategies and entered their "second lives". Both organisations came to focus on inventing housing by locating an invitation to act and making claims on properties that were either vacant or neglected. Formalising claims to these properties involved fashioning new invited spaces, forcing authorities who were initially reluctant to negotiate to strike a deal.

Inventive Organising and Partial Invitations

Though New York City is often considered the pinnacle of gentrification, the city has a remarkable legacy of housing activism, the hard-won victories of which continue to translate into affordable housing today. Notably for this story, New York City has more cooperative homeownership and low-income tenant-run housing than most other US cities, and New York City residents, aided (or, as some embittered activists might suggest, stymied) by a robust CDC infrastructure, have collectively experimented with more forms of cooperative housing tenure

arrangements than perhaps any other place in the US. These include mutual housing associations (MHA's) paired with CLTs (Engelsman et al. 2016), union-built cooperative complexes and shareholder owned limited-equity cooperatives scattered throughout all boroughs (Bloom and Lasner 2016). To be sure, this housing represents a fraction of New York City real estate and makes only a dent in meeting the actual need. Moreover, many limited-equity housing arrangements, fought for in the aftermath of fiscal collapse and property abandonment in the late 1970s, are reaching the end of their affordability terms. Restrictions on their appreciation and on homeowner income are being and will continue to be removed. Still, this heritage has not yet vanished and the activists, organisers, squatters, mothers and older women (Saegert 1989) who fought for collective property ownership have, through their repeated encounters with PTH, very much shaped the kinds of alternative housing arrangements the organisation has understood as possible and desirable.

In 2013, struggling still to win housing, and incited by a number of allies to look into CLTs, PTH drew on these traditions to make claims, for the first time in its 14-year history, on specific properties and in the name of specific New Yorkers. With the broader New York City Community Land Initiative (NYCCLI) it helped form, PTH turned its attention to East Harlem. The neighbourhood was chosen because it had high rates of homelessness and its community board had drafted a plan recommending CLTs as a solution to displacement and gentrification in the area. Moreover, the neighbourhood was home to nine buildings held over from the community development program known as TIL, the Tenant-Interim Lease program. For a variety of reasons, these buildings had never finished the process of converting to low-income cooperatives. One was entirely vacant; all were in need of repairs and likely to be disposed of in the private market. Indeed, since the Giuliani administration of the 1990s, New York City had made selling its city-owned housing stock the crux of its plan to exit the landlord business (Fields 2015). In the 1980s, the city owned over 10,000 buildings; by 2003, it had about 800 left; by 2009, this number was down to 156 (Starecheski 2016). When Giuliani began expediting properties on the private market, these were usually sold to the highest bidder. By the time PTH identified the nine TIL buildings in question, the DeBlasio administration was letting them go for $1 apiece (596 Acres 2018).

NYCCLI and PTH spearheaded a campaign to preserve the affordability of the properties and work with existing tenants to place them in a CLT instead. This organising strategy falls within the parameters of insurgent and inventive practice. PTH/NYCCLI autonomously identified the buildings to be organised and charted a grassroots plan for their alternative future. However, PTH/NYCCLI's plan to "invent" housing emerged from conditions that were attractive for action and partially invited by the state and other institutions. Those include a rich legacy of housing activism and other politically progressive traditions, as well as the abandonment of the local state in the upkeep of TIL buildings and their residents. To the extent that NYCCLI received some rhetorical support from the mayor's office, their efforts showed that the history of progressive housing activism has in the past and continues to contest policy and electoral outcomes in New York City.

Similarly, CAEC too began inventing housing when it received a series of challenges from its member activists. During the Cabrini-Green fight, the organisation had gained media attention and was receiving calls to intervene on behalf of another housing precariat, one displaced by foreclosures and evictions. A member leader argued to the Campaign's founders that, if CAEC was to make good on its promises to stand for African-American justice, then it needed to intervene in a different terrain: not only on behalf of those threatened with eviction, but for those who had already been evicted or were otherwise living under conditions of housing precarity.

The Campaign's founders conceded and, though they continued to block and delay evictions, they also incorporated a new tactic for inventing housing: squatting, or property liberation, as they called it. Their strategy was to "put people without homes in homes without people". In ways typical of insurgent practice, they initially made a spectacle of liberating homes, doing so publicly while inviting the media and making it clear that, if the state and the banks could not be responsible for the upkeep of vacant properties on the South Side, then the people could. Homeless Chicagoans needed the shelter and were ready, with community support, to rehabilitate the properties and make them liveable. Moreover, the Campaign conducted outreach to neighbours of liberated homes to obtain their consent, pitching their strategy of reclamation and occupation as defending the right to housing of those in need, while also limiting the negative effects community members experience when a home is left vacant. Members of the neighbourhood were invited to help rehabilitate the house in whatever ways they could, from donating materials to physical labour.

However, it should be noted that, like PTH's invention of CLT housing in the TIL buildings, so too did CAEC's inventions of housing take advantage of existing conditions of state incapacity. The foreclosure crisis was wreaking havoc and ordinary citizens in blighted neighbourhoods were contending with the fact that properties had been abandoned by their owners, whether financial institutions or landlords, who were either entirely abdicating their claim to the property or waiting until market conditions made their claims viable. Legal claims on private property possession, including through titles of homes, were revealed to be fragile in this era, less determinate than previously assumed. In places like Cook County, tens of thousands of houses lay abandoned, with local governments unable to determine their "rightful" owners. The moral economy of private property was being renegotiated, leaving the door ajar for CAEC to enter. When CAEC took over properties and set up eviction blockades, it did so on behalf of an urban citizenry whose material need and moral claim on housing could perhaps, in this specific historical window, be considered commensurate with formal property claims. Moreover, unlike when CAEC was trying to preserve public housing on land deeply coveted by capital, the spatial conditions in this case were relatively favourable. Property abandonment was acute on the South Side, already a segregated site of planning by omission and "selective neglect" (Martinez Lopez 2018:11) from authorities, precisely the type of space in which insurgent planning and squatting movements can flourish, freer from repression (Martinez Lopez 2018; Sletto 2013; Starecheski 2016).

It is noteworthy that CAEC and PTH faced two different kinds of state abandonment. One took the form of unclaimed properties on Chicago's South Side and the other was embodied by TIL buildings in East Harlem, which were the object of relative long-term disinvestment neglect from the state, as well as disintegration of the tenant governance structure. We suggest that such abandonment can be considered a second type of invitation, different from the more common usage of state invitations as the exercise of legal rights and processes. Building on the legal concepts of "attractive nuisance" and "adverse possession" and the difficulty of "placing" ownership because of the complexity of mortgage securitisation, we suggest that a case could be made that abandonment invites take overs by those wanting to claim the space. Invitations come quietly, but with the (tempered) complicity of the state, as government finds itself incapable of enforcing private property rights in the absence of private owners. Legally, in such invited spaces, insurgent movements can invent, less inhibited by policing. Tactically, however, occupying spaces of abandonment constrains the insurgent movements too: both PTH and CAEC had to be flexible in deciding to intervene on the terrain they could occupy, not the terrain they originally wanted.

Making Claims on "Abandoned" Properties, or Inventing Invitations

Over time, formalising claims on "abandoned" properties became the primary focus of both PTH's and CAEC's campaigns. Let us detail the outcomes of CAEC's insurgent activities in the South Side.

CAEC's three-pronged strategy of eviction blockades, property liberation, and defence in courts yielded some material gains. Evictions were delayed, homeless families were moved into properties, houses were rehabilitated, and neighbourhood residents gained concrete repair and construction skills. To be sure, each of these was an advance made as CAEC laid claims on properties, either through their labour[5] or through a moral stance, as seen above. Yet, even in relatively inviting circumstances, such claims could only go so far without the backing of a legal title. Eviction could not always be blocked when the sheriff appeared. While some families kept their homes, in some cases prompting the end of their participation in the Campaign, others found themselves forced to move, shuffling from one property to another. Legal fees for those evicted amassed.

The dilemmas posed in this campaign of "musical homes" raise pressing questions for insurgent planning. What are the merits of providing temporary reprieve from homelessness? What are the drawbacks? Can more be won? To the first question, we emphasise the many material merits of these types of inventive strategies. From the beginning, CAEC, learning from its predecessor in South Africa, demonstrated the value of intervening, case-by-case, to improve people's material realities. This was an approach that PTH rejected in its early years, for fear of becoming yet another clientelist organisation that services rather than organises the homeless. Yet CAEC showed that, with inventive and insurgent strategies, an organisation can do both—"service" and organise. In fact, they confirm what the Black Panther Party came to learn before them: with poor people's

movements, campaigns must be for "survival pending revolution" (Huey P. New-
ton Foundation 2008; Heynen 2009), lest there be no poor people left to organ-
ise. The second merit concerns movement-building: CAEC radicalised people by
meeting their lived experience. They enacted alternative models of cooperative
citizenship, proving the collective could stand up for individual families. CAEC also
embodied a challenge to the state and to the capitalist financial system, which
would not or could not meet people's needs. Far from falling into charity, CAEC
built a consistent base through their interventions in people's everyday lives and
offered members who participated in the Campaign what the Zapatistas call "the
joy and dignity of rebellion" (Marcos 1994:241).[6] This joy fed into a broader
vision that CAEC repeatedly touted: of a community that could "do for itself".
Housing became a metonym for neighbourhood and black self-determination: if
predominantly black Chicagoans on the South Side could rehabilitate abandoned
housing, so too did they deserve community control of their neighbourhoods.
And, because CAEC worked tirelessly, their continued physical obstruction of evic-
tions and occupations of homes made them a credible threat to the private prop-
erty regime, a force that would, at the very least, need to be accounted for with
any redevelopment plans in the South Side.

Yet, these very same high material stakes made permanent informality unac-
ceptable to CAEC. The organisation may have rhetorically emphasised a politics of
autonomy from the state and the banks, but to secure community control of its
properties and win more permanent gains for its members, it needed to obtain
titles to homes. It needed, in other words, to turn to invited spaces and open
negotiations with authorities. In effect, under a capitalist private property regime,
it is hard to imagine how else housing might be won. The organisation leveraged
its political power to begin discussing, in 2014, how it might work with the Cook
County Land Bank, an organisation that the group was involved in forming, to
purchase properties in its inventory. Ironically, its (partially invited) actions in the
South Side served the interest of community development agencies who wanted
to stabilise the area. County Commissioner Bridget Gainer, who led the formation
of the Land Bank, recognised the important contribution that CAEC and its tactics
had made: "Their methods were controversial, but they played a crucial role in
hitting the pause button" (Policy Link 2017), referring to the glut of vacant prop-
erties amassing in the area. Eventually, CAEC received a $1 million commitment
from Bank of America in partnership with Greater Southwest Development Corp.,
Cook County Loan Fund, and the Action Now Institute, and moved to create, in
late-2017, the Chicagoland Owners Land Trust.

In New York, formalising NYCCLI's/PTH's claims on the nine properties required
going door-to-door to organise remaining building tenants. PTH activists were
asked to lead the charge. Many resisted the push, with tenant organising requir-
ing, as it did, hours spent on one's feet convincing distrustful residents with signif-
icant skin in the game[7] of the viability of an obscure housing model. As one
informant summarised, this kind of high-stakes, one-on-one organising was new
territory for PTH, most members of which were accustomed to paternalist and
reactive governance models found in social services. While they were resentful of
the condescension encountered in these other spaces, there was also "a kind of

acceptance of not wanting to take on the additional responsibilities of … alienating administrative tasks".

CATCH, an experienced mutual housing organisation stepped forward to devise a detailed development plan identifying buildings, funding sources and housing units to be produced and maintained for hard-to-house members like those of PTH. The study helped solidify the campaign: the majority of tenants in four of the nine buildings signed on to the idea, incorporating the East Harlem/El Barrio CLT. They created a CLT board and, in their building meetings, role played how to handle different governance scenarios, including around repairs. Yet, even as PTH/NYCCLI were inventing a new cooperative set-up, they were, like CAEC, looking for ways to invent an invitation and make a deal with authorities.

NYCCLI initially approached the city armed with petitions and the feasibility study. Their demands to revive housing cooperatives were treated as anachronistic, especially at a time when the city had shown little interest in holding on to any property at all. The negotiations that ensued were slow as NYCCLI ran up against institutional reluctance. The organisation was made to jump through hoops, including agreeing to multiple rounds of petitions and countless meetings to confirm resident interest in a CLT. But NYCCLI, PTH, and the newly organised residents of the buildings (in effect, members of the newly incorporated East Harlem CLT) cooperated to keep their hard-fought channel to negotiation open. In the summer of 2017 came an announcement that surprised everybody. In a first victory, the City awarded various groups, including NYCCLI, $1.35 million to advance CLT projects (Axel-Lute 2017). As of this writing, the East Harlem/El Barrio CLT has been given five buildings by the NYC Department of Housing and Property Development, and is in the process of putting together funding, and legal documents to commence operation. Also in 2017, the Housing Not Warehousing Act that city officials had stymied years earlier passed easily, as the City Council, to which PTH had been a fair partner for decades, sought to prove its progressivism to a disgruntled, squeezed, and increasingly vocal voting populace.[8]

By 2017, then, PTH was benefiting from shifting political tides, though its insurgency was one of the forces driving the change. PTH's long-range struggle helped transform the city's politics through lobbying, networking, alliances (some uneasy and others less so), confrontation, invention and a dose of strategic pragmatism. Importantly, PTH and NYCCLI received perhaps their most meaningful invitation to exercise housing rights when they acquired a transfer of property into the CLT. This invitation was not easily extracted and had no recent precedent. Moreover, unlike the other invited spaces PTH occupied—city council meetings and press conferences —which were state and capital-dominated, and the engagement of which resulted in only modest gains, the invited space they ultimately sought to formalise wins in —the CLT—was one they had to first create through collective action. A case could be made that meaningful invitations, such as this one, have to be invented.

Toward a Deal: Placing Hopes in (Insurgent?) CLTs

This study responds to calls for situated and dynamic accounts of insurgent practice. It suggests that scholarship that remains focused on one point-in-time risks

missing the long co-evolution of political contexts and popular struggle, which are mutually constitutive, if on unequal footing. The study is also keenly interested in the meaning of housing struggles and how these engage local contexts in ongoing battles to house the poor. We conclude with brief commentary on both topics.

The study builds on previous literature arguing insurgent practice must manoeuver between imbricated, but conceptually distinct invited and invented spaces of struggle. We subvert the binary further and suggest a more capacious inversion: inventions can be contextually invited much like invitations can be invented through grassroots action. In our cases, the abandonment of entire neighbourhoods/forms of housing provided a potent framework of invitation for grassroots intervention. Elsewhere, heightened political unrest might provide a similar point of entry—especially as occupation is popularised as a prominent and eminently spatial political tactic (Clover 2018). Our reformulation of invited spaces as invented suggests scholarship might continue to attend to how such spaces are realised. How are insurgent movements engaging the state and other quasi-public institutions to create spaces of political transformation? In our cases, this took the form of a CLT, building on New York City's history of cooperative housing and a legacy of African-American movements for community control. What other spaces are being conceived and why? How is insurgency not just responsive to but productive of new historical formulations?

The long view taken here contests teleological narratives of movements as evolving from oppositional and inventive to bureaucratised and narrow. In our study, as the political economic context changed, victories turned into losses, for example with the disposition of limited equity cooperatives on the private market. Losses also turned into victories, with the passage of Housing Not Warehousing. In the proverbial long run, neither gains nor setbacks could be counted as permanent. Even after prolonged moments of quiet, new waves of insurgency continued to surface from legacies of activism.

At an organisational scale, binaries between organising and servicing did not hold either. In fact, PTH and CAEC were best able to build a base and flex their muscle when they directly intervened to improve the material realities of the existing urban poor and made claims on actually existing properties. Then, they engaged the state not only in negotiations, but in negotiations that occurred on the terms they had invented. Finally, movement actors were changed by struggle: some tired of threats of arrests and embraced new roles as planners. Others dropped off as their personal housing crises were resolved, burnt out by the conditions of scarcity that provided the very political opportunities the movements were exploiting. Others still, such as the TIL residents, became willing to participate in the CLT and forego the equity on their buildings in exchange for better control of their living conditions and the future of their neighbourhood. Their agency and subjectivity in these matters demand a more capacious analysis than the accept/resist dichotomy can accommodate.

We emphasise these nuances to foreground the protracted nature of struggle. This does not negate the centrality of the victories obtained here at multiple scales. At the person-level, participants in insurgency gained a vehicle that offers

them homes they hope to hold on to over the life cycle. They can become formal citizens of a political community. At the population-level, insurgency established new cooperative forms of land ownership and housing, with the aspiration to make a permanent space for poor and working-class people in their cities. This, in turn, perpetuates an activist housing movement in New York City and Chicago, inducting a new generation into the fight and retaining and adding to the reputation of these activists as a force to be dealt with.

Prior to the legalisation process, PTH, NYCCLI, and CAEC members expressed many important insights into the meaning of housing in a financialised economy. In PTH's early years, when it focused on the criminalisation of homelessness, housing represented a material object without which its membership could not enter legality, safety, or even human relations. The parallel for CAEC was to locate housing as a site of racialised dispossession of wealth, first in the demolition of public housing and second in the seizure of homes by the banks in the foreclosure crisis. All three groups came to argue that so long as capital could unlock local land values to create speculative wealth, housing could not be relied on to provide shelter, community, and security to poor folks, primarily of colour. By the same token, housing became, for all three organisations, an incontrovertible arena of political struggle, a necessary site from which dispossessive capitalist property relations needed to be challenged.

This understanding fuelled their calls to bring land under community control through a CLT. In Chicago, the CLT became a metonym for achieving self-determination within entire neighbourhoods. In New York, the CLT became an antidote to gentrification, as well as an enactment of a long-term politics of emplacement to preserve the diverse community ties and potential for political engagement that make up a polity. The CLT was recognised as a medium through which to institutionalise housing gains—to move from inventive, but temporary solutions to long-term material relief and expanded housing rights. In and of itself, the CLT was not the goal. The goal was a transfer of a power—an ability to create an alternative future that the dispossessive tendencies of the market otherwise foreclosed.

CAEC, NYCCLI and PTH are not alone in placing high hopes in the potential of the CLT. This form of land tenure has enjoyed a popularity surge in recent years. CLTs have been recently highlighted in community plans in cities ranging from Detroit to Pittsburgh (Burnly 2016; Savitch-Lew 2016); they have received start-up public funds in cities like New York, of course, but also Washington DC (Dubb 2017); and were named as a tool for community control by Black Lives Matter (Dubb 2017). A recent article showed how one form of collectively owned, resident controlled housing (limited equity cooperatives) became more affordable over time (Thompson 2018). While formal research doesn't yet examine this outcome for CLTs, their similar systems of ownership and governance suggest that a similar outcome in CLTs is likely. These kinds of advantages are luring many to the model.

Yet, members of CAEC, NYCCLI and PTH have been wrestling with a number of compromises as they settle on the terms of their legalisation deal. Many CAEC members do not meet the credit and income requirements to buy into CLT

housing. Many PTH members will be unable to qualify for the limited number of CLT units reserved for folks with very, very low income (around 30% AMI). How will their potential exclusion articulate with the mission of both organisations to defend housing as a human right? How can they preserve their activism when they are also, in effect, learning to operate as developers and landlords (DeFilippis et al.2018)? In some ways, the limitations of the CLT were foreshadowed early for these groups: both fought for more expansive public (or publicly funded) housing systems for the very poor in their early years. These struggles were not successful in inventing housing. Goals had to be renegotiated as the groups identified terrains where they could be invited to act. The matter was one of working with existing conditions.

In a financialised economy dependent on "unlocking local land values" (Rolnik 2013:1063), housing is under as severe a threat as it ever has been. Thus, even when the campaigns were met with repression, they could not give up. When the most they could muster was informal shelter, they clung to and defended their invented solutions. When the deals they were invited to strike came with the necessity of compromise, they marched forward, pursuing a settlement. The stakes were too high to do otherwise. We share with these groups an enthusiasm that they have successfully made headway in establishing a CLT. We also share concerns that formalising their operations may lead to some political concessions. However, their struggles remind us to never underestimate the threat. Victories, always hard won and never immediate, can and should be grabbed when they arise.

We began this paper by reminding ourselves that, under post-Fordist capitalism, the losses often seem to be mounting. We questioned whether and how the contested territories of housing struggles could be widened. We hope these campaigns have offered some guidance. Finally, we recognise the potential for housing to become so inaccessible and exclusionary in either city that political activism will be diluted. Permanently affordable housing provides one form of counterbalance. Yet, as many more individuals are pushed out, we must remember that people who do not live in a city, and those who do but have no residence, cannot claim rights and cannot vote. We acknowledge hard won spaces of invitation may disappear. Spaces of invention and strategies and tactics will need to be carved out anew.

Acknowledgements

Endnotes

[1] Community land trusts (CLTs) are a form of affordable, limited-equity housing in which the value of the land is severed from the value of the home. The land is removed from the speculative market and held in trust by a non-profit organization, while the home can be sold in the private market.

[2] A model of policing that contends that cracking down on petty, quality-of-life crimes, such as loitering and graffiti, will deter larger crimes (Smith 1998).
[3] *New York Post* headline cited in PTH (2017).
[4] Eleven buildings that were squatted during this period were legalised in 1999; five have today completed the conversion to low-income cooperatives.
[5] Consider the following statement from CAEC's founder: "We didn't ask the banks for no money to fix up this house, we didn't ask the government for no money to fix up this house. The community, the citizens of Chicago, and the neighborhood stood up to fix this house up."
[6] Consider this comment for a CAEC activist Patricia Hill, who was asked by a reporter why she was smiling during her second eviction: " … I can fight and smile. I mean, I'm not upset that this is happening, because I understood once I resisted. When you say no to the power … what? In America? Are you kidding?"
[7] Indeed, a portion of tenants believed their buildings could finish the conversion process and that they would then become homeowners in possession of properties from which the prospect of a future windfall was quite attractive. PTH members were, in effect, asking them to forfeit wealth-building in favour of a model that would guarantee them a say in the building's fate, as well as the affordability of the building for themselves and future generations.
[8] Whether the census of vacant property resulting from this Act will translate into rights the homeless can eat remains to be seen.

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