

Who owns our cities?

Defending the right to housing - Exchanging experiences from Athens and Berlin

Workshop in Athens 3rd – 4th October 2024

PROGRAM

Venue: Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung Athens Offices, Kallidromiou 17

Thursday, 3rd of October

Welcoming from the organizers

16:00 – 18:00/ Session I: Housing crisis: Ownership and the nature of the problem

In most countries and cities, the geography of home ownership is changing radically. Neoliberal politics have led to the privatization of public space and housing. Gentrification, rent increases, social exclusion are some of the consequences. Apart from private ownership, many cities and towns still have considerable public, cooperative or non-profit housing stocks, which must be defended and expanded if citizens want to take back their cities. An important issue is to determine where power to transform our cities lies. Clearly, there is a diverse list of powerful players including banks, investment funds, small and large landlords. There is also the state, national and local, with several instruments at its disposal, but which is often weak against powerful private interests or actually in collusion with those interests.

In other words, who owns our cities: a matter not just of ownership structure but also access to data collection and instruments of regulation? Are there strategies and concepts for how to return the cities back to their citizens?

Speakers:

- **Sabine Nuss**, political scientist/journalist
- **Alkis Kafetzis**, housing researcher
- **Theodoros Mitrakos**, former Deputy Governor of the Bank of Greece

Discussion - Moderator: **Georgios Chondros** (political scientist)

19:00 – 21:00/ Session II: Lessons from housing movements

The financialisation of rents has triggered a cycle of urban struggles and conflicts in Europe that pose the question of the urban space, raising the issue of its common and collective aspects. While the precarity of labour and survival wage regimes certainly do not facilitate mobilisation processes, the neo-liberal 'governance' of the city has favoured a general repoliticisation of the urban question. This is not only expressed in struggles for housing, but also those for public services and social spaces. This is stronger where, as in Germany, there is a tradition of popular struggles for the right to housing and the city. What are the features of the mobilisations and their demands to the right to housing in Greece today? Are there broader perspectives, which starting from the various forms of resistance in the neo-liberal city, pose the question of inequalities and the historical meeting of old and new inequalities?

Speakers:

- **Cesare Ottolini**, IAI - International Zero Eviction Marathon
- **Tonia Katerini**, Unitarian Initiative against Auctions
- **Nikos Vrantzis**, Initiative for the establishment of a tenants' association in Thessaloniki
- **Haris Triantafyllidou**, Xespitogatos
- **Konstantina Theodorou and Katerina Boukogianni**, Cohab Athens

Discussion - Moderator: **Olga Nassis** (Social Anthropologist RLS/IAI)

Friday, 4th of October

16:00 – 18:00h/ Session III: Searching for solutions

The session compares regulatory instruments and broader policies for housing policies in three different European contexts: German, Austrian and Greek. In particular, the models of rent control implemented in Germany, the governance of the public housing stock in Austria and the management of the housing crisis during the debt crisis in Greece. The session aims to offer tools, good practices and critical issues for the governance of the housing issue.

Speakers:

- **Theano Fotiou**, MP (New Left) - Managing the housing crisis during the debt crisis and today
- **Niklas Schenker**, Member of the Berlin Landtag (Die Linke) - Rent control systems: legislation and negotiation
- **Waltraud Fritz-Klackl**, Communist Party of Austria - The Austrian model of social housing

Discussion - Moderator: **Danae Koltsida** (political scientist)

19:00 – 21:00h: Wrap-up session: Housing and the context of left politics

The final session will discuss the main conclusions of the meetings and ways forward.

Speakers:

- **Niklas Schenker**, Member of the Berlin State Parliament Die Linke
- **Christos Goulas**, General Director of INE/GSEE - The labour perspective
- **Harris Mamoulakis**, MP SYRIZA-PS
- PASOK MP (TBD)
- **Elena Botsi**, Greens-Ecology
- **Euclid Tsakalotos**, New Left MP - After neoliberalism, what?

Discussion - Moderator: **Fotini Lambridi** (Journalist TVXS)
