Webinar

'Stay Home Without a Home'.
The Right to Housing in COVID-19 Lockdown Times

Date: Thursday, April 16, 2020

Time: 11 a.m (EDT, New York City); 12 a.m. (UTC-3, Rio de Janeiro); 4 p.m (WEST, Lisbon); 5 p.m (CEST, Barcelona and Turin); 6 p.m. (EEST, Beirut)

Duration: 1h15

Event in partnership with the project HOPES: HOusing PErspectives and Struggle (FCT, PTDC/GES-URB/28826/2017), and the *CIES-ISCTE-IUL Monthly Seminar on Social Movements and Political Action*

Zoom:
https://videoconf-colibri.zoom.us/meeting/register/vJcvcOipqzMiDdltmn3EEp5KC2kuCEorNg

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Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, lockdown measures of many sorts have been adopted by authorities throughout the world. Framed in different legal regulations according to the country, and with varying extent, these measures have instructed citizens to 'stay home' in order to protect public health. While the importance of such restrictions is undeniable, they have simultaneously exacerbated our societies' inequalities and made them even more evident . With the sudden suspension of the flux of social and economic activities – which ordinarily distracts us from these unequal conditions – the reality has brutally appeared. Housing is one of the sectors in which inequalities have been most evident. How can people stay home when they do not have a home? How can people pay their rent – and thereby secure their homes – when many have suddenly lost their incomes, because they have been fired or because they are not earning when they are not working?

Tourists have abandoned cities, leaving luxury hotels empty, while families are being evicted from the houses they are 'illegally' occupying because they do not have any alternative. While more disadvantaged people are, not surprisingly, the most affected by the situation in terms of health and security, social movements and their struggles to defend basic rights are also being dramatically affected. By definition, social movements need to move, to appear in the streets, to meet and gather people in collective events. Social movements are collective entities. So how can they act in a

context of lockdown and social distancing or even isolation? Against this background, the case of housing movements in many cities has shown the capacity of activists to reinvent the repertoire and content of their contention and effectively adapt it to the current conditions. Many innovations have been introduced – such as protests from balconies and rental payment strikes – while digital tools have been shown to be essential to supply the impossibility of face-to-face activism. The public recommendation – or even order – to 'stay home' has been framed through the contentious claim: 'how can you stay home without a home?'. Due to its sheer simplicity, this claim has had a strong public impact and pushed some governments to adopt measures to address the situation of people who, lacking shelter, cannot stay home, or others who are no longer able to pay their rent.

In this webinar, we will deal with these situations, drawing on recent urban experiences of housing activism in the context of Covid-19 in different cities around the world (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Lebanon, Brazil and United States). We are aware that events are still new and ongoing, so it is difficult to draw out any tendency or generalizations. For this reason, our aim will be more to report and witness what is happening around the 'right to housing' at this crucial time 'in the heat of the moment', and to try to understand what room there is for maneuver – in terms of constraints and opportunities – in this specific situation, with an eye on the future.

Moderator:

Simone Tulumello (Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon)

Speakers:

Guya Accornero (Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, University Institute of Lisbon)
Felipe G. Santos (Department of Politics - University of Manchester)
Giovanni Semi (Department of Cultures, Politics and Society - University of Turin)
Mona Harb (Department of Architecture and Design - American University of Beirut)
Alex Magalhães (Institute of Urban and Regional Planning and Research - Federal University of Rio de Janeiro)
Sam Stein (Graduate Center - City University of New York)