

working title:

**Undisclosed power relations in local democracy:
examining coalitions and implications for social justice**

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abstract

This research explores the empowerment of civil society initiatives with regard to social and spatial justice in cities. Given a gap on the power of civil society in theory and practice the major objective is to investigate on the responsivity of institutional urban policy makers (at various scales e.g. national, sub-national, regional, city politics) towards actors of "real civil society" (Alexander 1998). With predominant respect to urban social movements struggling for adequate recognition and space key urban renewal programs (conceived for actors of civil society) will be tested on their responsivity to lived experiences and movements of protest and resistance demanding central participation in city development and at the high peak the "Right to the city".

Focusing on urban social movements (especially squatter movements) in Amsterdam/ Netherlands and the Ruhr/ Germany at the core of the research it is expected to find a high level of institutionalization of movements and demands formerly pushed forward by the so called "new social movements". How is this institutionalization conceived and lived today; due to which conditions? How do city institutions meet the needs of urban social movements? To what extent do movements adapt to existing regulations? What does the institutionalization imply for further democratization and new arising "social movements"? How do these conceptions relate to the overall need for social and spatial justice and the Right to the city for all?