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# Lift the class – not the place! On class and urban policies in Oslo

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## ABSTRACT

Urban studies are still troubled by Friedrich Engels' argument from 1872: that the bourgeoisie's only method to solving housing problems is to shift them elsewhere. Through analysing urban policies in Oslo, Norway, this paper demonstrates that the almost 150-year-old argument is still relevant. This cannot be confronted without a better understanding of class as a complex and constituting process in relation to urban policy. In this paper class will be analyzed through three clusters of causal relations: (i) a stratification approach, (ii) an opportunity hoarding approach (related to Weber), and (iii) domination and exploitation (a Marxian approach). Urban policies in Oslo is to a large extent consistent with a stratification approach – i.e. both individuals and places can become 'richer' and 'improve' without other individuals or places losing anything – and to some degree with a Weberian approach – the municipality wants to include local residents in education and labour markets. In order to confront the 'bourgeoisie method', we need to open the door to the third approach and discuss class in relation to the broader political economy. Rather than an area-programme with the aim of 'lifting the place', what is needed is class-programmes that aim at 'lifting the class'.

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## Introduction

In reality the bourgeoisie has only one method of solving the housing question after its fashion – that is to say, of solving it in a such a way that the solution continually reproduces the question anew [...]. The breeding places of disease, the infamous holes and cellars in which the capitalist mode of production confines our workers night after night are not abolished; they are merely *shifted elsewhere*. (Engels 1942, 74, 77, emphasis in original)

Friedrich Engels' argument from 1872 is not only a good description of how power holders in cities face problems, critical theorists have also used it for decades in order to conceptualize and understand urban changes. In this paper we will see how urban policies in Tøyen – a centrally located and relatively poor working class area in the Norwegian capital Oslo – risk shifting urban problems elsewhere. Since the social problems remain, we are forced to confront some difficult questions: How can we resist the 'bourgeoisie's only method'? How can we solve urban problems in other ways than by moving them around?

The 'bourgeoisie's method' has bothered critical scholars for decades. Hundred years after Engels, David Harvey argued that 'If we "urban renew", we merely move the poverty around; if we don't, we merely sit by and watch decay' (Harvey 1972, 31). In 1996, Neil Smith described the dilemma in modern terms: without rehabilitation and redevelopment, the neighbourhood's housing stock will

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remain severely dilapidated, and with it, residents might end up being displaced (Smith 1996). Tom Slater (2009) raised a similar question a decade later: why must improved infrastructure and service procurement in socio-economically poor places also come with displacement?

Such questions, concerns and contradictions have come to the surface in Tøyen, especially since 2013, when the unlikely coalition of the Conservative party, the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Socialist Left Party, decided to move the Munch museum from Tøyen to a newly built, high-end waterfront development in Oslo. The moving of the museum was part of a broader agreement that included 'compensation' comprised of massive urban social policies and investments in Tøyen. The political compromise was possible because the left-wing Socialist Left Party agreed to move the Munch museum out of the working class area if the centre and right wing parties committed to investing in Tøyen and 'lifting' the area. Six years later, Tøyen has, in many respects, a much better image. But with the privatization of municipal housing and increasing rents and prices in the historically poor neighbourhood, comes often dangers of displacement. One particularly fascinating aspect about this case is the way it was characterized by broad awareness about the dangers of displacement and its negative consequences, but, nevertheless, the urban policies that were implemented did not manage to keep these problems at a distance. In this paper I argue that class theory is valuable if we want to come to term with this discrepancy between aim and outcome in urban policy.

There are various ways to organize our thinking about class in the city: Edwards (1995) divides up *class functions* in urban development; Lefebvre (1975) outlines a general class conflict between those who have a use-value relation to space where the city is used for joy and reproduction, others have an exchange-value relation to space, where the city is used as a means to accumulate capital; Harvey (1985) discusses (factions of capitalist) classes in relation to the built environment; Holgersen and Haarstad (2009) discuss class positions in relation to communicative planning; Katznelson (1992) and Bridge (1995) reflect on different levels of abstraction: Katznelson articulates four 'layers' in the city<sup>1</sup> and Bridge combines three levels of abstraction – mode of production, social formation and conjuncture – with three 'critical moments of the realization of class relations'<sup>2</sup> (see also Ollman 2003); while Cockburn reminds us that 'landlord and tenant' are 'just as much capitalist relations as those between employer and employed' (1977, 368).

These are all important analysis in themselves, and others could be added as there are indeed various ways of grasping class and the city. But it would be misleading to imply that every discussion and difference in this respect derives from how we characterize or analyze class (on different levels of abstraction). This paper will focus on the fact that class is understood very differently among people who see the world from different positions (based on, for example, class position, knowledge, conviction, etc.). In this paper I will therefore seek to disclose the class character of the urban development in Tøyen through three different clusters of causal relations: (i) stratification-research, (ii) opportunity hoarding (related to the research of Max Weber), and (iii) domination and exploitation (often related to Marxist discourses) (cf. Wright 2009).

As a researcher, I have mobilized diverse methods of data collection to answer my questions about class and urban policy in Tøyen. Choosing multiple methods made sense, given that the case study involves researching a complicated and real-time event (see Burawoy 1998; Kitchin and Tate 2000). The research is based on observing the area periodically over fifteen years, analysis of written documents, and two delimited periods of field work during which I conducted interviews: twelve during spring of 2012 and eight during the spring of 2017.

This paper proceeds in four sections. In the first, I discuss relations between class and the city, and present the three different 'clusters of causal relations' that will be mobilized explicitly in the analysis. In the second section I discuss the case of Oslo, including the history and geography of Tøyen. Through this, we see how the municipality has aimed at improving both the infrastructure and the reputation of Tøyen through various urban policies, arguably without considering the dangers of displacement. In the third, we pick up the class analysis from section one and discuss the class character of urban policies at play in Tøyen. This section points toward one alternative to the

'bourgeoisie's only method': i.e. that one crucial component in articulating such an alternative is to 'lift the class' rather than 'lift the place'; or, rather than 'area programs' we need 'class programs'. In the fourth and final section we see how this 'alternative' come with spatial implications that needs to be addressed, and it does so by examining three sets of relations: (i) those between places/scales (i.e. Tøyen and other city districts and geographical scales), (ii) those between sectors (urban/extra-urban), and (iii) those between classes.

## Grasping class in and beyond the city

My general views on class and urban policies are very inspired by Nicos Poulantzas (1975, 2000). According to Poulantzas, the state should neither be conceptualized as a thing nor a subject, but rather as a *material condensation of social relations*. I use a similar approach to understand urban policy, both epistemologically and ontologically: urban policy is neither something without autonomy (a thing) or with full autonomy (a subject), but must be grasped as *dialectically* related to structures and relations in society (see Holgersen 2015).

The analysis in this paper will be conducted through investigating three 'clusters of causal relations' (taken directly from Erik Olin Wright 2009, 2015).<sup>3</sup> These are: stratification-research, opportunity hoarding (related to Weber), and (iii) domination and exploitation (related to Marx).

In the first 'cluster', the 'stratification-approach', the focus is on individual attributes and life conditions. This is not an unproblematic term, of course, as all approaches to class can be said to be about stratification. Saunders (1990) uses 'stratification' in such a broad sense, simply as layers on top of each other. For Saunders, then, Marxist class analysis also gets reduced to a way of stratifying layers of class, and not as – as Marxist themselves normally stress – a relational process linked to the broader structures of capital accumulation (for a Marxist critique of mixing Marxism and stratification, see Stolzman and Gamberg 1973). Here, and in accordance with Wright's description, the stratification-approach will be understood as an approach where advantages and disadvantages are simply understood as the outcomes of individual conditions. So, from this perspective, the rich are rich because they are holders of favourable attributes, and the poor are poor because they lack them. If poor people were just given more favourable attributes, they could also become rich.

Seen from this approach, class is a purely quantifiable thing, and people can be divided based on their attributes and categorized based on certain material conditions in all kinds of hierarchies, e.g. based on wage, living condition, rents, health and age, etc. Converted into the city, we can say that if people in one area, say a typical working class area, are given better conditions, it would not necessarily affect a more bourgeois area.

Wright's second approach is related to 'opportunity hoarding', a concept and approach often associated with Max Weber's research. Key words here are exclusion and social closure, the latter being 'the process whereby access to a position becomes reserved for some people and closed off to others' (Wright 2015, 6, see also Weber 1983). Classes are here constituted as aggregates of individuals who share similar life situations in commodity and labour markets due to their economic power (see also Saunders 1979, 1990; Breen 2005). What defines the working class is their *exclusion* from ownership of firms. For example, higher education leads to higher wages, which is again is dependent upon the fact that access to higher education needs to be limited (i.e. the majority excluded) in order for those with certain resources (higher education) to maintain their privileged position.

The third approach is related to the Marxist tradition. According to Wright (2015), the Marxian approach will generally ascribe to the Weberian, but *add* a crucial component: that class is also about *exploitation* in the labour process. This is, however, not a minor difference; as, with this addition, class cannot be understood apart from processes of capital accumulation at large (Stolzman and Gamberg 1973). In our context, this also establishes necessary links between the built environment, capital accumulation and the labour process. Most Marxists would hold that exploitation and

*domination* are the two essential qualities of class: with the latter referring to the ability to control the activities of others (Löwy 2005, 75).<sup>4</sup>

The Marxian approach is, according to Wright (2015), the most relational of the three, and we can see why by exploring how the concept of exploitation is used in two general explanatory contexts. Exploitation is understood by Marxists as the source of profits (as surplus value comes from exploitation), but it is also the source of growth, and thus absolutely crucial for the dynamics of capitalism. In this sense, capital accumulation *is* class. Exploitation is crucial to understand *conflicts* between labour and capital. Class is, from a Marxist perspective, both a process (capital accumulation) and a relation (capital versus labour).

According to the Marxist, Wright (2015), and the Weberian, Saunders (1979, 68), one central distinction between a Marxian and a Weberian take on class is that the former is primarily concerned with conflicts over production (i.e. labour processes) and latter is concerned with conflicts over distribution. There is certainly something important in this distinction, and for some researchers this might absolutely be the case. But for many others it's simply not true. Just by looking at the history of Marxist interventions in questions related to the sphere of capital circulation, consumption and distribution in the 'urban' sphere, we can surely say that Marxists are not *only* concerned with questions that centre labour processes.<sup>5</sup>

### Relations between class in the 'urban' and beyond

One key difference between Weberian and Marxian approaches that has implications in this analysis, is that the former holds that production and distribution is two different spheres, while the latter – as Marx (1973) himself does in the foreword to *Grundrisse* – tend to stress that these are dialectically related, *and* that the sphere of production is defined by exploitation and domination. I argue that this is an important distinction.

Engels and Proudhon quarrelled already in the 1870s as to whether housing and the built environment could or could not be seen independently of larger processes in capitalism (Engels 1942). More recently a similar distinction are often made within the gentrification discourse, between Weberian approaches (often exemplified by David Ley and so called demand-side explanations) and Marxist approaches (often exemplified by Neil Smith and so called supply-side explanations and rent-gap theories) can be set up as in conflict (see e.g. Saunders 1979; Van Weesep 1994; Bridge 1995; Smith 1996; Ley 2003).

In general terms, one can say that where liberals, Weber and Weberians stress distinctions and barriers between, for example, the economic and the political aspects of society, Marxists have focused on relations and connections (see Weber 1983; versus Marx 1973, 1976). Weber surely acknowledged that developments in each sphere were related and had an influence on the others, but, with Harloe's word, 'they were autonomous rather than relatively autonomous' (1977, 8). Even though 'the urban' is not ontologically synonymous with the 'broader economy', is it fruitful to analyze them as autonomous? A quick discussion on rents and tenants below will help to demonstrate how these relations are crucial, and exemplify why I stress their intersection. Class in urban settings cannot be grasped as 'autonomous' (or 'subject', à la Poulantzas).

Where does *ground rent* come from? Does it grow out of the soil? No, it is a social relation related to other social relations in the broader political economy (Smith 1996; Harvey 1999). Capitalists in the urban – developers, rentiers, landlords, construction companies, financiers – all depend upon a rate of return. Is this rate simply set in the 'urban itself'? No, the capital operating in the urban sphere relates constantly to the rate of return in the rest of the economy (Shaikh 2016). Rent has traditionally been a puzzle for Marxists, as it complicates efforts to address domination and exploitation, as the workings differently than in the labour process, but it is a crucial link between the spheres.

Tenants are never just tenants, but also workers, unemployed people, etc. Where do dwellers get the money to pay their rents to landlords or mortgages to the banks? Does the money fall from the sky? No, it is in fact most often acquired through the sale of labour power. For some, it comes from

welfare benefits from the state, but this money is too derived from other parts of the political economy. For a minority, money surely comes from owning companies and firms, buying and selling stocks and shares or apartments, or perhaps even theft. But all of this money is related, at the end of the day, to the labour process. Money for rents, mortgages, renovations, gas and heat, dinners, drinks and shopping comes, for the vast majority, from wages earned through selling labour power. To borrow, again, from Engels:

The tenant, even if he is a worker, appears as *a man with money*; he must already have sold his own particular commodity, his labour power, in order to appear with the proceeds as the buyer of the use of a dwelling, or he must be in a position to give a guarantee of the impending sale of this labour power. (Engels 1942, 24, emphasis in original.)

However, simply saying that the ‘urban’ and the broader economy are related, or that urban policy could be grasped as a condensation of social relations, does not solve everything. In order to communicate we are forced to make abstractions and categories – and even though we stress relations, we cannot do totally without distinctions (but acknowledge that these can surely be both blurry and artificial). It is also worth mentioning that the mutual influences between processes in the ‘urban’ and the broader economy always happen with a time lag: our actions on a given day take place under already ‘pre-existing structural conditions’ (Næss 2016, 53, see also Danermark et al. 2003).

In this paper, the ‘urban’ is understood broadly: to include housing, the built environment and infrastructure in cities, public spaces, and activities in city neighbourhoods. It can thus include both productive and unproductive activities (as defined within a Marxian theoretical apparatus). Urban policy will also be understood broadly, as all those initiatives and actions – all expressions of politics – from the state apparatus (including municipalities) that affect the urban (as defined above).<sup>6</sup>

There are surely differences, even among Marxists, regarding *how* to grasp relations between (class in) the urban and the broader economy (compare Harvey 1973; Castells 1977; Lefebvre 2003; see also Merrifield 2002; Ollman 2003; Smith 2003). The general view, which is sufficient for this paper, is that class (and thus capital accumulation) in the urban sphere are dialectically related to class (and thus capital accumulation) elsewhere. It is also important to stress that this is *dialectical*, and not a one-way influence. Urban class power is not a purely epiphenomenal phenomenon that follows from any logic elsewhere: it is also part of broader economic processes. As the *condensation of social relations*, urban policies also play into broader social relations, like class.

## Tøyen, Oslo: class, Edvard Munch and urban policies

Oslo is the official capital of Norway, as well as the political and economic centre of the northern, oil-producing nation, as well as one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in Europe. As capital and people are coming into Oslo, the spatial expressions of class relations are reproduced and altered.

Since the nineteenth century, Tøyen has been characterized by social deprivation and high density of poor and unhealthy housing (Huse 2011; Brattbakk et al. 2015; Tormodsgard 2015). Tøyen’s geographical placement in Oslo is important for understanding why the area has received so much attention from politicians, media and researchers lately. Tøyen is located on the east side of the *Akerselva* – which generally (but not without exceptions) have divided the poorer parts (east) from the richer parts (west) – but just four minutes (two stops) from the central station by underground metro. Compared to most wealthy western cities, this central location of a relatively poor neighbourhood has become rather rare. Tøyen is southeast of Grünerløkka (Norway’s most common used example of gentrification), just west of Kampen (a more affluent neighbourhood on a hill just above Tøyen), and south of Tøyen are two traditionally working class areas – Grønland and Gamlebyen – both in danger of being gentrified in the near future. This is not least due to the fact that they border Bjørvika, the most profiled urban development project in Oslo for the last decades. Bjørvika is a newly built sea-front development home to an opera house, offices with ‘exceptional architecture’,

company headquarters, dwellings for the affluent, and the site where the Oslo Public Library and Munch museum are currently being relocated (see Andersen and Røe 2016, on the social and political geography of Oslo, see also Kriznik 2015; Ljunggren and Andersen 2015; Wessel 2016; Ljunggren 2017).

Tøyen is a relatively small, but densely populated areas in Oslo; in 2014 only 13,600 people of the municipality of Oslo's 658,000 inhabitants lived within the borders of Tøyen (Oslo municipality 2016, 6).<sup>7</sup> Tøyen stands out with the strongest concentration of poor families with children in the whole of Oslo, with one in three families with children being classified as 'low-income' households. Poverty and stigmatization have followed Tøyen through the decades. As late as 2015, the fifth graders at Tøyen School came *last* among the 103 schools in Oslo that participated in the national standardized tests (Kriznik 2015). Eleven percent of the housing stock in the area is municipal housing (which functions more or less only as social housing in Oslo), compared to only 3.2 percent of Oslo housing in general (Brattbakk et al. 2015, 74).

Tøyen has received significant media attention due to street-crime, and reports about young boys/men spending time 'hanging out' at the main square in the neighbourhood selling drugs.<sup>8</sup> Discourses in media tend to focus less on class and more on race. One in ten in Tøyen is either from Somalia or has Somali ancestry, and among people under 16 years, 68% are born outside Norway or have two foreign-born parents (Oslo municipality 2016, 6). The municipality characterizes the population as 'young and diverse', and the area 'as a place for tolerance, generosity and diversity, where there are high ceilings and room for otherness' (Oslo municipality 2016, 6).

Tøyen has been characterized as a 'transit area' for a while, where one in three residents move every year. One general trend has been that parents with resources tended to leave the area when their kids started school. Reports about 'white flight' – as well as stories about those with socio-economic means that stayed but (typically) placed their kids in schools outside of the public system, like, for example, a nearby Catholic school – have been known for years through media and municipal reports (see Asker 2013; Kriznik 2013; Bergwitz 2014; Oslo municipality 2016).

In 2013, many parents that would not 'normally' let their children go to the stigmatized Tøyen School met, first randomly, sometimes on their way to and from kindergarten, later more organized and finally when they organized a public meeting. What united them was an interest in breaking the trend of moving when their children became school-aged, and instead enrolling their children in the local public school.

This campaign was also accompanied by other activities, like street parties and meetings, that explicitly aimed at bringing the neighbourhood together, across social backgrounds, at a time when the media very much continued to stigmatize the area (interview, local activist, 15 March 2017, interview, local activist/social entrepreneur, 15 March 2017). It can also be added that since 2014, Tøyen Park has hosted the music festival Øyafestivalen, which is one of Norway's largest festivals, and hosts over 85,000 visitors.

### **2013 and the 'agreement on Munch Museum and development of Tøyen'**

In sharp contrast to Tøyen's poor reputation, since 1963 Tøyen has also been home to a 'tourist attraction': the famous Edvard Munch Museum. The museum has been in need of better facilities for some time now, and as the high-end waterfront project was carried-out in Bjørvika, it came as no surprise that several politicians thought it would be more suitable for the Munch Museum to stand there.

On 28 May 2013, an atypical political coalition between the Conservative party, the Liberal Party, the Christian Democratic Party and the Socialist Left Party surprised everyone and announced an 'Agreement on Munch Museum and development of Tøyen' (Høyre et al. 2013) (Hereafter, the *Munch agreement*). The Conservative party went behind the back of their partner in the city government,<sup>9</sup> the right wing Progress Party, and negotiations were conducted without the major opposition party, the Social Democrats. The Socialist Left Party was originally against moving the museum out

of the working class area, but accepted the move given that it was compensated by a strong social focus and new investments in the deprived area Tøyen (interview, politician Socialist Left Party, 9 March 2017).

The Munch agreement was comprised of various key points. In terms of ‘hard’ investments, the municipality is committed to refurbish the Tøyen centre, the Tøyen underground station and the Tøyen Public Bath, and establish a ‘science centre’ and an open-air stage. The Technical Museum will be offered a plot in the area and there will be park built over Finnmarkgata, a car-road that currently divides the Tøyen Park into two. The agreement also had some more ‘soft’ investments: the municipality would inspect all their empty buildings in order to evaluate whether any of these could be used as ateliers or workshops for artists and craftspeople (Høyre et al. 2013, 4). The commitment was made to procure extra funding and improve access to the ‘after-school activity’ and increase cultural activities at the school. In 2010, only 7 percent of pupils in first grade at the school went to the ‘after-school activity’. By 2015 it had increased to 98 percent (Brattbakk et al. 2015, 92).

It is stipulated in the Munch agreement that Tøyen School would be supported to become a pioneer in natural and environmental studies, and ‘aesthetics’. The agreement also included the commitment to increase the capacity of the City of Oslo’s music school with 700 new places in the city in total, growth that would include the building of a new ‘cultural station’ in Tøyen.

One point in the agreement was to *reduce* the municipal housing stock in Tøyen, which would happen by selling two buildings: Hagegata 30 and 31. The tenants of Hagegata 30 were evicted and placed elsewhere in the city. The building, which is located right *on* the main Tøyen square, was, according to the agreement, going to be converted into student housing, but this caused problems later, as the Student Housing Organization did not find the houses to be easily converted into minor student apartments.

In Hagegata 31, the residents were given the opportunity to buy the apartments for 80% of the market price. Some argue that this was never doable, as the residents were too poor, while one politician from the Socialist Left Party argued that what actually made this so difficult was that prices skyrocketed in the area after the Munch agreement was signed in 2013 (interview politician, Socialist Left Party, 9 March 2017, interview project manager Tøyen Unlimited, 9 March 2017; see also Brattbakk et al. 2015, 75).

It might sound counterintuitive that it was a socialist party that initiated this programme of privatizing Hagegata 30 and 31, but this should be grasped as part of a broader picture where the Munch agreement outlined that the municipality would use the money from the sale to buy an ‘equivalent number of apartments outside Oslo inner east’ (Høyre et al. 2013, 5). When the agreement was made in 2013, the standard housing policy in Oslo was to sell out municipal dwellings and property. The agreement was in this respect a change in policy, as it aimed to *increase* net amount of apartments with at least 600 units distributed around the whole city until 2017 (interview, politician, Socialist Left Party, 9 March 2017). These units should be placed outside of Gamle Oslo (the city district where Tøyen is located), where the concentration of social housing was considered too high. According to one media report, 103 of the last 252 apartments intended for social housing were bought in Frogner, a very affluent city district (Haugen 2016).<sup>10</sup> Both research and narratives from interviews, conversely, indicates that at least some of the dwellers have remained either in Tøyen or in neighbouring area, or have been moved further east (Tormodsgard 2015; interviews local inhabitants, 14 March 2017 and 15 March 2017).

The most debated part of the Munch agreement, apart from moving the museum itself, is arguably the establishment of an *area programme* that would run over five-year, from 2014 to 2018. The official name of the area programme at Tøyen is *Områdeløftet Tøyen*, which literally translates to *The Area Uplift Tøyen*.

The concept of an *area programme* has become very popular in Norway recently and is generally considered a comprehensive and inclusive initiative to improve living conditions in deprived areas, arguably based on the needs and desires from the population in a bottom up approach. The idea is that if Tøyen is ‘uplifted’, not only Tøyen but the whole city will be better off. The original budget of

25 million kroner (NOK) annually, was increased to 50 million when the programme was extended to include neighbouring areas.<sup>11</sup> One interesting component of this area programme is *Tøyen Unlimited*, a ‘neighborhood incubator’ that, according to their webpage: [www.toyenunlimited.no](http://www.toyenunlimited.no), work to supports ‘local enthusiasts with innovative ideas for how social challenges can be solved through social entrepreneurship’.

## Capital at Tøyen

In terms of capital, the ownership of real estate in Tøyen is fairly scattered. One major actor in the area is Entra Eiendom, a real estate company which is 49.6% owned by the Norwegian state. In my research it has been much easier to come into contact with so-called ‘middle class gentrifiers’ than large landlords, as Entra categorically rejected giving an interview. This obviously does not mean that their role is less significant.<sup>12</sup> Entra have, together with the Norwegian Tech Industry Association (IKT Norge), the City of Oslo, and some others, established Tøyen Startup Village (TSV). TSV seeks to ‘make Tøyen a real, innovative and enriching start up venue for Oslo, both locally, regionally and nationally’. It is also stated in their visions that the TSV will have ‘both local and international relevance’ and be in dialogue with both ‘main global start-up arenas and the environments’ as well as local and national ones. Further, ‘TSV will be a natural landing place for companies coming from outside and into Oslo, which will add expertise, networks and other important resources to the city district’ (Tøyen Start Up Village 2016, 4, my translation). It is also worth mentioning that DTZ Corporate Finance, a global corporate finance advisory service with relations to the real estate sector, has been involved in making the Tøyen Square ‘more attractive’ (Bergwitz 2014).

Headlines in the media soon followed: ‘Tøyen – from ghost centre to entrepreneurial village’ (Jørgenrud 2016, my translation). Geir Lippestad (Labour Party), the Vice Mayor for Business Development and Public Ownership, stressed that in order to attract skilled people from abroad it is crucial that they are able to find places to live, and feel comfortable sending their kids to the local kindergarten (Jørgenrud 2016). As the potential for new construction of dwellings is rather limited (with some exceptions) in Tøyen, the solution is, of course, to replace someone who is already living there.

## Concerns about displacement; emerging discourses on gentrification

Tøyen has changed a lot during the last few years. Although several of the aspects in the Munch agreement most likely will never happen – e.g. the open-air stage, the science park<sup>13</sup> and the student housing – several other components have indeed transformed the area.

Discussions that indirectly deal with class at Tøyen are often articulated through the concept gentrification. Researchers (Dæhlen 2013; Brattbakk et al. 2015), media (Jørgenrud 2016; Tufan 2016), essayists (Kriznik 2013, 2015) and activists (Bergwitz 2014) have all argued since 2013 that Tøyen is going through a process of rapid gentrification. According to Oslo Airport Express Train: ‘Tøyen is now in the process of making the city’s most radical class journey’ (quoted in Bergwitz 2014). From real estate agents there are reports that the prices and rents have risen significantly over just last few years: there is an ‘incredible hype these days’, a chorus of real estate agents reported in 2015 (Dalen 2015). One highly visible change in the urban landscape is the so called ‘retail gentrification’, with 8–9 new bars, restaurants and cafes having opened on one square and a few surrounding streets just during the last few years. Tøyen Square has become a cliché of how gentrified areas are often described, where cafes, sushi-bars, burger-joints and pubs abound.<sup>14</sup>

Interestingly, there is a real concern, among the people I interviewed that live in the area, that recent changes might lead to displacement. Not surprisingly, this is especially so among the poor who might end up being displaced themselves or have seen their friends and family displaced. As one local interviewee formulated it:

We reached a level where we are hoping that there will not be renovations and new refurbished façades or whatever what we should get. Because you know that prices will get higher, and they are getting higher, so you'll be pushed out anyway. And this is never said with words, it is always indirect. That's what hurts. (interview local activist/social entrepreneur, 15 March 2017)

There are also concerns about displacement (and gentrification) among several community groups who may not necessarily face immediate threats of displacement themselves: from those uncritically called the 'white middle class' that organized in the 'parents' meeting' in 2013, to groups organized in Tøyen Unlimited, and even the organizers of Tøyen Unlimited themselves (interviews). Two of the most active 'social entrepreneurs' organized in Tøyen Unlimited where both in danger of being directly displaced from the area where they contributed so much to the local environment: Shamsa Moalin – founder of Kulmis, an organization focusing on the Somali community but open to all, that aims to prevent diseases like diabetes, cancer and mental health through social activities and information – and Wid Al-Saedy – founder of WIDE-INK, who have the aim of giving young people alternative leisure activities and get them away from 'poor environments'. In response to the very real threat of displacement, Tøyen Unlimited formulated an open letter addressed to leading politicians calling on them to take action (Tøyen Unlimited 2016).<sup>15</sup>

There are also some initiatives from below that explicitly are aiming to stop displacement and counterweigh gentrification. In November 2016 a group called *Nedenfra* ['From below'], also associated with Tøyen Unlimited, organized a conference called 'Living in Tøyen – ten more years?' ['Bo på Tøyen – ti år til?']. According to the main organizer, Ole Pedersen, they invited locals and other interested actors to open discussions about possible ways to establish alternative housing in order to combat the pressure of the market that forces people to leave the area (interview, 15 March 2017). Since tenants were evicted from Hagegata 30, the building has been left empty. *Nedenfra* has therefore established a 'pioneer project' where they want to establish alternative and non-commercial housing at the site (interview, social entrepreneur, 15 March 2017, interview project manager Tøyen Unlimited, 9 March 2017). It is not necessarily easy to predict the outcome of 'alternative housing', as it depend upon what exactly it entails. The dangers of displacement has, since the Munch agreement in 2013, become so evident that even members of the Socialist Left Party raised the question in 2017 surrounding whether the transformation they introduced with the agreement had been *too* massive and 'successful' (Johansen and Eidsvoll 2017).

### **The class character of urban policies in Tøyen**

So how can we analyze the developments in Tøyen against the three approaches to class introduced in the first section? In this section I will first discuss this by exploring differences between TSV and Tøyen Unlimited, and then examine class in Osló's urban policies, especially in relation to area based programmes and social mix. My main argument is that versions of the stratification approach and opportunity hoarding have characterized both the urban policies themselves *and* how various actors – often unconsciously – relate to the processes. This, however, have proved to be insufficient if we want to confront the 'bourgeoisie's only method' (cf. Engels). The section concludes that if we want investments and developments in poor and centrally located areas without displacement, we need to examine the possibilities in the Marxist approach.

### **The class characters of Tøyen unlimited and Tøyen Start Up Village**

Tøyen Unlimited and Tøyen Start Up Village might appear rather similar. They are both hubs for (relatively) young and (apparently) creative entrepreneurs. But interesting and important differences come to light when they are analyzed in terms of class and situated within a broader economy. Although 'social entrepreneurship' is generally tied to the language of neoliberalism, Tøyen

Unlimited is concerned with organizing local inhabitants from the bottom up, including many with immigrant backgrounds. The aim is to make small non-profit enterprises survive in Tøyen.

Tøyen Unlimited is, as mentioned above, also a part of the municipality's area programme and therefore a more direct consequence of the municipality's politics. In contrast, the Tøyen Start Up Village (TSV) is a collaboration with Austin, Texas and Hackney, London, and aims to attract entrepreneurs in their early start-up phase to Tøyen. In a document published by TSV appropriately called 'Place Making and Place Brand Management Strategy', they stress how they will give space for start-up entrepreneurs (Tøyen Start Up Village 2016). Behind TSV, we find *Entra* (perhaps the single largest landlord in Tøyen) and the City of Oslo, but also *The Trampery*, a London-based company that, according to *The Guardian* provides 'work space for tech-savvy London hipsters' (Neate 2013); *A-lab*, an international architecture office based in Oslo that have led some of the largest building projects in the country over the last few years; *IKT-Norge*, an interest organization for Norwegian ICT-companies, and *Fuglen*, an Oslo/Tokyo-based design company, responsible in TSV for 'place making and branding' (Tøyen Start Up Village 2016, 12).

Using the three approaches to class from the first section, a distinction can be made between TSV and Tøyen Unlimited. TSV is an entrepreneurial model that is fair to characterize through the stratification lens, as it works to promote individual pathways for success to whoever is interested. The underlying idea is that everyone benefits if someone – anyone – gains economic success in the area. Tøyen Unlimited, on the other hand, focuses on how local people from Tøyen can create their own jobs. This can better be read through Weberian lenses as a strategy to gain access to work, also accessible to those not necessarily described as 'gentrifiers' and/or without venture capital or financial backing. Seen in this perspective, the strategy is to erode the exclusion that indeed is characterizing Tøyen at the moment.

Both want to help entrepreneurs, but if TSV succeeds in attracting 'their' kind of entrepreneurs to the area, this will surely contribute immensely to gentrifying the area. Ironically, this will also make it harder for many of the entrepreneurs associated with Tøyen Unlimited. 'Entrepreneurs', in other words, are not one coherent group or class with united interests. Both national and international capital also circulates in and through TSV, this in stark contrast to Tøyen Unlimited. If the current international economy and relations of class power do not alter significantly in the coming years, one reasonable prediction is that TSV will succeed and Tøyen Unlimited will shut down not long after the money from the area programme is used up. I think it is reasonable to draw this rather pessimistic prediction, as TSV plays into dominant trends and processes of capitalism in ways that Tøyen Unlimited does not.

### **The class character of area-based programmes and policies of social mix in Tøyen**

Both area-based programmes and policies of social mix could be characterized as progressive ideas with noble intentions. For example, there are good arguments for geographically mixing rather than segregating classes in a class divided city. And it is – generally speaking – more progressive that municipalities invest in soft/hard infrastructure in poor city districts compared to rich ones. After all, what are the alternatives: to do nothing, and let these areas remain poor and characterized by deteriorating buildings and squares? Should the municipality *not* invest in housing, schools and libraries, just because of the danger of displacement and exclusion? Of course not. Although Engels' analysis from 1872 is still highly relevant, it would be absurd to dismiss all urban developments in poorer areas. But it does force us to do some critical thinking on class and urban policies.

The class character of the area programme in Tøyen can be discussed both in relation to the specific *content* of this area programme and the *role* of area programmes in a broader context. In regards to the content, the area programme – as with the urban policies in Tøyen more generally – are highly ambiguous. Some aspects seek to strengthen the local community and the local urban poor, like many of the social entrepreneurs in Tøyen Unlimited (including e.g. *Nedenfra* that even works explicitly to prevent gentrification). Other parts – like privatizing municipal housing

and supporting the TSV – have impacts that directly favour capital interests, and which might fuel displacement. In the introduction to the Programme Plan for the area programme, the leader of the local City District Council, Line Oma (Labour Party), argued that the programme would look for ‘cohesion’ between various agencies and stakeholders who can ‘contribute jointly so that Tøyen is perceived as a safe and inclusive place with an active population that wants to remain in the area’ (Oslo municipality 2016, 3, my translation). It is hard not to read this – *wants to remain* – as something that speaks more to those who have the opportunity to move than to those in danger of being displaced.<sup>16</sup> This is a similar focus to that which are often articulated in the media (see e.g. Asker 2013), where the underlying tone is that there must be something terribly wrong with neighbourhoods where resourceful white families do not want to raise their children. For others – which also came up in my interviews – the fact that white people with resources have left the area when their children would start school has actually been important for them being able to stay put.

‘The driving mechanisms behind area-based initiatives’, according to Andersson and Musterd who discuss the phenomenon in general terms, ‘tend to ignore, or at least underplay, structural factors determining urban social problems such as poverty and social exclusion’ (2005, 379). This is indeed the case in Tøyen. One could go one step further, and ask what determines poverty and social exclusion. This type of question is definitely not on the agenda. Relations to other places in the city, as well as higher geographical scales are easily under-communicated in area based programmes, and class relations on other levels of abstraction and processes outside the realm of the urban, are largely ignored.

Oslo’s urban policies strongly promote strategies for social mixing. As seen above, this approach has taken (at least) three forms at Oslo and Tøyen. First, the municipality has endorsed the campaigns to stop the ‘white flight’, second, the policies to distribute social housing all over the city, and third, with the Tøyen Startup Village (TSV) the aim is to attract entrepreneurs from around the world. We can immediately see a class character in this idea of ‘social mix’: the poor are seldom or never consulted when they are displaced, but in contrast, the relatively wealthy are never displaced or forced into poorer areas – they are *attracted*. One underlying presumption is that poor individuals will be better off if they live closer to affluent people: through having more mixed communities, the poor are assumed to gain more attributes and resources via living next to the affluent, and through attracting richer people to poorer areas it is assumed that this will bring greater stability, safety, order and reduced crime to the area (Chaskin and Joseph 2013).<sup>17</sup>

Coming back to the three approaches to class, the idea of social mix clearly resonates with a stratified understanding of class, as within this approach single individuals can gain more/better attributes simply by having neighbours with resources. One premise is that we can ‘all’ become a part of the so-called middle class (I write ‘all’ in quotation marks, as the rich don’t have to become ‘middle class’). Social mix thus follows one important premise of the stratification approach: there is simply no need to touch the privileges of the rich in order to help the poor. Rather, the rich are assets to help the poor. The same logic is visible within the area programme, but on a different geographical scale: the very idea of the area programme is to lift a particular place, thus it’s given that this will benefit the *whole* city – i.e. there is no need to compromise the socio-economic status of other places.

When examining the urban policies in Tøyen we also find traces of what Wright – based on Weber – refers to as opportunity hoarding. The Munch agreement, for example, put emphasis on improving the local school as a tool for development. Education, in this respect, is the main tool for becoming *included* in the labour market. The discourse on moving (either physically moving to a new apartment, or simply moving the kids every day) in order to have access to better schools is an archetypical example of opportunity hoarding. The campaign from local people ‘with resources’ to place their kids in the local school can be understood within this framework.

According to the Munch agreement, the residents in Hagegata 31 were given the opportunity to buy their apartments for 80% of the market price. This can also be grasped within a Weberian opportunity hoarding framework: the municipality not only gave the residents the ‘possibility’ to

stay put, but also the ‘possibility’ to start a housing career, i.e. to be *included* in the homeowner society.<sup>18</sup>

### Confronting the ‘bourgeoisie’s only method’: towards alternatives

From the analysis above, I draw three general conclusions. The first is that urban polices at Tøyen resonate largely with a stratification approach and partly with a Weberian approach. In terms of stratification at Tøyen, the idea that both individuals and places can become ‘richer’ and ‘improve’ without other individuals or places losing anything is imperative. In terms of a Weberian approach, the municipality articulates their desire to *include* local residents in education, labour and housing markets. From the material analyzed it is hard to see any trace of a Marxian approach: i.e. interventions that are underlined by the understanding that class society is based on exploitation and domination, and that we need to choose a side in broader class conflicts.

A second general conclusion is that, much like Engels witnessed in the nineteenth century, urban poverty and other urban problems in Oslo are more likely to be moved around than actually solved. Although polices that correspond to a Weberian approach surely have more potential to improve the lives of the urban poor than the stratification approach, it seems hard, or rather impossible, to find a sustainable solution to Engels’ dilemma when working within this framework. Even in a ‘best case’ scenario given a Weberian approach, where investments and improvements are followed by an *increase* in social housing and a strong focus on local identities and the promotion of jobs for a local working class that are allowed to stay put, there is absolutely no guarantee that processes of increased housing prices and rents – one way or another – would not displace local inhabitants at a later point in time.<sup>19</sup> The area programme at Tøyen was called *the Area Uplift Tøyen*, but we have seen that it is surely not unproblematic to ‘uplift’ poor places in cities characterized by class polarization and economic growth. Working within stratification or Weberian discourses it is difficult – if not impossible – to handle Engels’ concern that problems are moved rather than solved.

Although programmes as Tøyen Unlimited might be inspiring, they are surely insufficient. Like one interviewee argued above: even *if* the urban policy succeeded in making Tøyen a ‘better’ and ‘safer’ and ‘nicer’ neighbourhood, prices will increase, as will the dangers of displacement. With respect to these kinds of dynamics, a project like Tøyen Unlimited is surely insufficient.

The third general conclusion follows from this: in order to support urban development that does not simply shift social problems to other places, we would benefit from looking beyond stratification and Weberian approaches. The final section will therefore discuss and theorize on what opportunities Wright’s third approach – which is Marxist and more relational – could bring to discussions on urban interventions.

The argument that will be proposed and unpacked in the following section is that a strategy to improve poor places without displacement would include policies and strategies that favour *other* classes than those currently favoured. Rather than *uplift* a place, one would need to *lift* a class: rather than *area programmes*, we need *class programmes*.

This ‘one-line’ conclusion is certainly not uncomplicated. Two complicated factors must be mentioned here. First, describing the exact content of such a class programme cannot be done in a satisfactory manner here: in order to articulate such a programme, other theories, methodologies, and perspectives than the ones presented in this paper are needed. Such analysis must be combined with discussions (also outside of academic journals) on subjectivity, class consciousness, social reproduction and forms of mobilization, as well as how class interacts with other structures of power in society – in the case of Tøyen, especially racism – at various levels of abstraction. Such programmes need of course also to be context specific. That is beyond the scope of this paper.

A second complicated factor – and something I will use the next and final section to elaborate – are the complex spatial implications that follows from ‘lift the class, not the place’. Immediately, we find a tension between the bounded spatiality of municipalities and administrative entities, and

broader arguments of class that seemingly transcend such boundaries. In the next section I will develop theoretical arguments around what ‘lift a class’ might mean from a geographical and Marxist perspective. I will end by confronting the tension between urban policy as place specific activity and class processes that necessarily transgress such boundaries, and discuss which implications this might bring.

## Revealing illusions of space

When faced with real places and real processes, social relations like class are often effectively concealed. And why is this so? Lefebvre (1991) approaches precisely this question by pointing to a double illusion of space: that of *transparency* and of *opacity*. With transparency, Lefebvre points to the way space is viewed as free of traps and without secret places: this illusion makes us believe we are able to see everything there is to see. The opacity refers to naïve attitudes that the things we see in space are all there is (Lefebvre also calls this the *realistic* illusion<sup>20</sup>). Drawing on the analyses on the case of Oslo in general and on the area programme in particular, I will add a third (but still related) illusion of space: that of *cohesion*. That is, that certain spaces can be seen as *united* entities in contrast to elsewhere. By this I mean two things: first that what is ‘uplifted’ is a space without internal class conflicts, and second that this spatial unity remains even if relations to other places change.

In the following I will draw upon the above-mentioned illusions of space and analyze three related relations: (i) the *illusion of opacity* will be explored within the relations between places/scales (e.g. Tøyen and other city districts and geographical scales), (ii) the *illusion of transparency* will be analyzed through the relationship between sectors (e.g. urban/extra-urban), and (iii) the *illusion of cohesion* will be analyzed through relations between classes.

### (i)

Urban policies, like those that manifested in the *Tøyen area programme*, produce clear boundaries that are certainly not mirrored in social relations like class. Class in Tøyen cannot be grasped apart from class at other places or at other geographical scales. Take for example the relation between Tøyen and Oslo’s waterfront. In some respects, the relation is highly visible: the Munch museum forms a link between the waterfront and Tøyen, and the actual moving of the museum was a necessity for the area programme and, to large degree, triggered the investments. Other links and connections go much deeper. Class policies at Tøyen and at the waterfront are related as they are both produced by class forces at higher levels of generality. This creates both similarities and differences: mediated through their relations. At the waterfront, capital in the form of tourists and finance-capital, for example, will be attracted to ‘lift’ the whole city, at Tøyen, this should be achieved by attracting hipsters and ‘start-ups’. But although the manifestation of this capital looks different, these outcomes are features of the same class policy and the same neoliberal urban ideology. What happens at a place like Tøyen is deeply related to class relations unfolding both west and east of the neighbourhood in surrounding Oslo. Class at Tøyen needs to be analyzed in relation to class elsewhere in the city and at other geographical scales. Being sensitive to how this plays out is not only a precondition to avoid displacement of the urban poor, but also help us reveal Lefebvre’s *illusion of opacity* – all there is to see at one certain place is certainly *not* all there is.

### (ii)

It is certainly harder to see exploitation and how labour relations constitute class at Tøyen (i.e. the Marxist approach) than simply listing income differences or different tenure forms (like in stratification approach). Here we need to examine the *illusion of transparency* – as there are certainly more things going on than those we can see. In section 1, we briefly discussed relations between the ‘urban’

and the broader economy. As this is very much the key to confronting the ‘bourgeoisie’s only method’ we will continue this analysis here and make it more concrete.

Due to capitalism’s revolutionary character, the relation between the ‘urban’ and the broader economy is constantly in motion. Both the ‘capital-side’ and the ‘labour-side’ of class are themselves in motion – as are relations between them – and their relations to the urban are inherently unstable.<sup>21</sup> The fact that both the class characters of urban planning and the composition of class relations in the urban sphere have looked quite different over history, also tells us that they will continue to transform in the future. Compare, for example, how urban developments, investments in the built environment, and the role of gentrification played out during the post-war Fordist-Keynesian hegemony to how this played out during the period of neoliberal hegemony. Urban policies during neoliberalism have produced a very different situation compared to under Fordist-Keynesianism, and this is simply impossible to understand without examining, for example, the growing economic differences related to polarization of class power; with privatizations and the implementing of New Public Management; with (international) capital searching for profitable opportunities in the built environment, alongside rentiers and financial capital having gained hegemony from industrial capital (Harvey 2005; Piketty 2014; Shaikh 2016).

There is not much in the Tøyen’s urban policy that points towards a Marxist approach, but through hypothetical speculations we can start imagining what this might look like. If power relations between classes were different – say in a context where the urban poor were gaining in terms of power and resources vis-à-vis those who owned and controlled capital historically – investments and improvements in poor areas would look very different. For example, *if* low-income groups were given substantially higher wages and middle- and high-income groups were given substantially lower wages, what is often called the ‘demand side of gentrification’ would surely look very different. And *if* housing were prioritized as a right and not a commodity (cf. Madden and Marcuse) and the public sector controlled both real estate investments and construction, what is often called the ‘supply side of gentrification’ would definitely look very different. *If* the low-income groups living Tøyen were able to get jobs that paid substantially better wages, while more affluent groups in Oslo received less; *if* housing prices (both for renting and home ownership) were kept low through regulation and/or taxation; *if* the municipality increased their housing stock substantially and converted social housing to common housing; *if* Entra, the largest real estate developer in the area, which is, after all, 49.6% owned by the Norwegian state, were told by its owners to invest in local people (i.e. to rent out retail/office space cheap to ‘local entrepreneurs’ from Tøyen Unlimited) and not work to attract entrepreneurs from abroad, then political initiatives like the Munch agreement would be introduced into a very different context. I am not arguing that these alternations would mean a perfect world (far from it), as it would surely create its own contradictions and problems. But, the key point here is that it would *establish a different political economic context*, where urban politics, improvements, and ‘revitalization’ of Tøyen could happen with significantly less danger of poverty and other urban problems simply ‘shifting elsewhere’. In such a context, the neighbourhoods of the urban poor could indeed be improved with significant less dangers of displacement.

The (hypothetical) examples above show the importance of ownership over construction, finance and real estate, but also the importance of understanding how class and class power more generally influence urban policies. When discussing the *illusion of opacity*, we concluded that what happens at Tøyen is deeply related to what happens elsewhere, and with the *illusion of transparency*, that what happens in the urban context is deeply related to other spheres. It is worth emphasizing that it does *not* follow from this that what happens at Tøyen or what happens in the urban sphere is irrelevant or totally determined by factors and forces elsewhere. Here we need to think dialectically (cf. Ollman), factors and forces that influence urban policy at Tøyen are also being influenced by such urban policy. Although the influence is perhaps not equally strong, also conflicts and struggles of urban policy play into broader changes in the political economy.

This can be fruitfully explored through Madden and Marcuse’s *In Defense of Housing* (2016). Here, one important reform – encapsulating the ‘overarching goal’ (2016, 201) – is to ‘decommodify

housing'. I am sympathetic to this view, but find it unconvincing to suggest that we can lift the housing sector out of the broader capitalist market. This kind of analysis is less relational, in the sense that it seeks to solve problems in one sphere without confronting problems in another. This requires creating barriers between sectors that simply cannot hold in real life. For example, as long as socio-economic inequalities are increasing and class power is executed from above (and abroad), it is hard – if not impossible – to imagine that this would not also mean spatial expressions like gentrification, displacement, and segregation.

But Madden and Marcuse's call for decommodifying housing can also be read in a more relational way (one that I also reckon to be more in line with the authors' intentions). Here, a new housing policy is *one* part of several in a broader strategy for altering the balances of class power. From this perspective, and seen as within such a broader political project, the call becomes much more progressive: it is one step in a struggle for a class policy that would benefit workers and the poor.

### (iii)

That class in the Oslo case resonated so much with a stratification approach is certainly an illusion of transparency (e.g. that the easily viewable class differences (i.e. income differences, housing conditions) is all there is to socio-economic inequality), and that the approaches to class were limited to what happened *in situ* is certainly an illusion of opacity. But in addition to relations between places/scales and sectors (urban/extra-urban), a Marxist approach also forces us to examine a third form of relations: those between classes themselves. The Marxian approach is indeed relational, as capital-labour not only points to the two classes, but also to the relation between them – one could simply not exist without the other: without wage labour, there would be no capital, and vice versa. The same is true for landlord-tenant or creditor-debtor, but note that over-, middle- and under-class are not relational concepts in the same way.

The Marxists approach, as argued in section 1, brings exploitation and domination into the equation. What must be examined then are not only *class* and *class relations*, but *class conflicts*. Contrastingly, in the material above we see recurrently how Tøyen is presented a *unity* – e.g. *lifting* Tøyen through upgrading the built environment and attracting *any kind* of capital, so that *everyone* at this place called Tøyen will benefit. That any policies of 'lifting' Tøyen will benefit some and also disadvantage others are not only under-communicated, but also effectively hidden through the discourses on lifting Tøyen. This is the *illusion of cohesion*. This illusion is certainly also reflected in the urban policies at Tøyen: not only keeping class conflicts off the table but also contributing to even further concealing and obscuring such conflicts. Through the area programme, by for example attracting hipsters and avoiding so-called white flight, the municipality seeks to lift 'Tøyen'.

The illusion of cohesion is a powerful illusion, but still only an illusion. Class conflicts might be visible or hidden, but are always there. A socio-economic policy directed at one class will necessarily affect another: all class policies affect all classes. Displacement is one outcome of such class conflicts. The 'bourgeoisie's only method' has a class character, and, crucially, it has the wrong class character to solve the problems it is set to solve. The illusion of cohesion helps politicians hide their class policies behind façades of win-win situations, and it can give even normal capitalist activities an appearance of being philanthropic.

### Concluding remarks and one note on the role of critical urban scholars

Replacing 'area programs' with 'class programs' certainly looks different from a Marxist perspective on class, than if one were to take a Weberian or stratification approaches. From analyzing the three relations above, we can conclude that (i) class struggles cannot happen at the neighbourhood level alone, but they *also* happens at the neighbourhood level; (ii) people concerned with issues of urban development, displacement and social justice must engage with the political economy at large,

including questions of domination and exploitation in the labour market, regulating profits and public steering of investments, as well as with the question of ownership of both real estate and the construction sector; and (iii) that class policies – indeed all urban economic policies – are class conflicts.

Above we conceptualized urban policy as material condensation of social relations (cf. Poulantzas). In this paper we have seen how some social relations are indeed dominating others (i.e. (attracting) capital over labour (and the right to stay put); (white) people with certain resources over people without such resources), but also how this is concealed through illusions.

From the analysis above we are certainly confronted with significant challenges concerning strategy: can we do *everything at once*? Which bring us to the classical *who* and *how* of political change and class politics. What can urban class conflicts look like in *practice*?

One conclusion is that we need to concurrently and jointly work on class struggles in labour and ‘urban’. Questions of *how* (i.e. questions of strategy/tactics) and *who* (i.e. questions of agency) are tricky ones, here as elsewhere. But when considered in the context of the history of class struggle, I suggest that this is perhaps more a problem in theory than it is in practice. When reading volume one of *Capital*, the obvious conclusion is that class conflicts take place at workplaces, and the main theoretical tendencies of ‘western Marxism’ ever since might also confirm this view. But when analyzing actual class conflicts and socialist struggles that have taken place since the publication of *Capital*, the obvious conclusion is that they have indeed taken place elsewhere – not least in the spheres of social reproduction and the urban. The broad working class have continually resisted capitalism through demanding the right to housing and city plans and buildings designed for the working class (e.g. from Red Vienna to post-World War II Sweden) to struggles for autonomous spaces and squatting (from socialists and anarchists in Berlin to the MTST in Brazil), to rent strikes (e.g. from New York to Buenos Aires already a century ago), to ghetto uprisings (like in the USA in the 1960s) and other kinds of riots (not least related to the provision of food), as well as more generalized urban rebellions (like those that took place in Paris 1848, 1871, 1968 and 2018). (On how this plays out, either highly organized or highly spontaneous, see e.g. Harloe 1995; Merrifield 2002; Cattaneo and Martínez 2014; Madden and Marcuse 2016; Mayer, Thörn, and Thörn 2016; Davis 2018.)

Urban social movements must seek alliances with labour unions, progressive political parties and other social organizations interested in altering class power in society in favour of workers and the poor. But simply concluding that we need *both* labour and ‘urban’ class struggles is however insufficient: they also must be *combined* in productive ways. Further, as all political struggle, also this needs *direction*. Which also brings us to the *programme* part of class programmes. And here – in helping to spark *alliances* and pointing towards possible *directions* – we also find the need for work from theoreticians and intellectuals that often are afraid of getting their hands dirty.

## Notes

1. These are (i) within the structures of capitalist development, (ii) the organization of social existence; or, how ‘actual people live’, (iii) how people represent their lived experiences and constitute a normative guide to action, and (iv) that of collective action.
2. These are (i) between speculator-developers and inner-urban residents, (ii) petit-bourgeois entrepreneurial and rentier activity within the social formation, and (iii) – and exceptionally – between middle-class and working-class resident.
3. This does not mean I subscribe to Wright’s analytical Marxism in general, but I hope to show that working with these three approaches/clusters is productive if we want to disclose class characters in urban policy.
4. Slater suggests a similar understanding in terms of gentrification: ‘Social class simply cannot be reduced to measurement. It is grounded in sets of power relations (domination and exploitation) which are etched onto urban space in the form of inequality’ (Slater 2009, 197).
5. Just some examples: on social exclusion see e.g. Gough, Eisenschitz, and McCulloch 2006, on segregation and dual cities see Marcuse 1989, on the local state see Cockburn 1977, on housing see Stone 1975, on architecture see Risebero 1992, or on planning see Foglesong 1986 or Dear and Scott 1981.

6. For different definitions of *urban policy*, see e.g. <http://sociology.iresearchnet.com/urban-sociology/urban-policy/> (last accessed 12 October 2018).
7. There are minor differences between the boundaries for Tøyen in the area programme and in organization of Oslo municipalities, but I will not elaborate on this, as it does not have consequences for the analysis.
8. According to a young woman I interviewed who grew up and still live in Tøyen:

When you see older woman wearing heavy bags, you'll see him that sells drugs is the one who will ask, "Should I help you?" [...] I've passed them all the life, I've never felt unsure. On the contrary, this is where I feel safe. (interview local activist/social entrepreneur, 15 March 2017)

9. In 2015 there was a political shift in Oslo, with a new left/green majority replacing the conservative/right wing coalition.
10. That the municipality bought 248 new apartments in Gamle Oslo (Riaz and Eggesvik 2014) (the city district that part of Tøyen is part of) is surely contrary to the municipality's own aim of distributing social housing across other areas of the city, including the western parts.
11. There were some initial conflicts between City District Councils and central administration in the city over the location of the money, but this will not be elaborated on here (interview public officer Oslo Municipality, 1 March 2017; see also Brattbakk et al. 2015, viii)
12. Slater, Curran, and Lees (2004) speculate on whether the disproportionately large interest in the so called middle class is because researchers share many similarities to the so called 'middle class', and they argue that 'middle class gentrifiers' are easier to find and interview than others who are tied up in the process.
13. According to one planner in the municipality, most of these major physical investments were already on the table, but lacked – and continue to lack - financing (interview public officer Oslo Municipality, 1 March 2017).
14. As Oslo lacks statistics on housing rents, it is hard to 'prove' gentrification based on such measurable criteria, and as the major real estate developer in area refused to give an interview, it is also harder to map the capital accumulation in the built environment at play.
15. From the letter:

We hope the Mayor and City Council will work together with us and the locals to ensure that those living here also have the opportunity to do so in the future. We who live here do already know how the increasing housing prices are challenging the social glue in the area. (Tøyen Unlimited 2016, my translation)

16. If we briefly take a more cultural approach to the matter than we have done in the rest of this paper, it is also possible to see how the focus on art, science and culture in the area programme are certainly more targeted towards the already well off, than the poorest strata in the area.
17. There are also interesting discussions on social mix and gentrification. According to Davidson (2008), social mixing initiatives 'smells like gentrification'; Chaskin and Joseph (2013, 480) call the policies to develop mixed-income communities 'efforts at "positive gentrification"'; and Slater (2006, 71) argues 'Gentrification disguised as "social mix" serves as an excellent example of how the rhetoric and reality of gentrification has been replaced by a different discursive, theoretical and policy language that consistently deflects criticism and resistance'.
18. This Weberian approach to housing policy also resonates with the national policy, where the main challenge is always to include more and more groups in the housing market. One telling example is the national programme BSU (*Boligsparing for ungdom*), where young people under the age of 33 get tax benefits from saving money for housing.
19. For a discussion on the various forms displacement might take, see Marcuse 1985.
20. The 'realist' in the 'realistic illusion' is here more in line with the naïve realism of empiricism, and sharply at odds with the philosophical position of critical realism (see e.g. Danermark et al. 2003; Sayer 2008; Næss 2016).
21. Here the focus remains on class and urban policy, so for more concrete discussions on how capital operates in and through the built environment, see e.g. Castells 1977; Harvey 1985, 1999; Edwards 1995; Smith 1996.

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