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ABSTRACT

The scale and severity of property crashes following the global financial crisis has made vacancy a more visible and politically significant feature of cities. Although research has focused on urban experiments in vacant spaces, there has been less emphasis on how the contested property relations around vacancy remake urban governance. In this paper, we argue that debates about vacancy have been a central concern in post-crisis urban governance. In the first part of the paper we draw two conceptual approaches into a dialogue and apply them to an analysis of vacant space: that of Nicholas Blomley on property and Elizabeth Povinelli on "alternative social projects". In the second part of the paper, we critically analyse how three groups discursively construct the need to "activate" and "re-use" vacant spaces in Dublin: grassroots groups, urban policy-makers, and financial actors. We argue that governing vacancy will be a key feature of post-crisis urbanisation.

Introduction

In the period following the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008, urban vacancy has become at once highly visible and politicised across a range of cities. Property bubbles in countries such as Spain, Portugal, Ireland and the US, coupled in some instances with foreclosure crises, have left vast landscapes of stalled, unfinished or vacant developments and stagnant property markets. The scale and severity of these property crashes has made vacant spaces a more visible and politically significant feature of post-crisis urban landscapes, while vacancy has been centre-stage in discussions about the crisis in different national contexts (Kitchin, O'Callaghan, Boyle, Gleeson, & Keaveney, 2012; Royo, 2009). Kitchin, O'Callaghan, and Gleeson (2014) use the term "new ruins" to describe the vacant or unfinished remnants from neoliberal property bubbles, which are both "new and derelict" and characterized by an "abandoned future" rather than an "abandoned past". They represent a "speculative future" that never became a reality.

The prevalence, both material and symbolic, of these "new ruins" has also stimulated wider engagements with re-using vacant spaces in cities (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Ferreri, 2015). The growth in popularity of "temporary uses" at a grassroots and policy level, for example, is testament to the increased visibility of vacant spaces and to a mounting pressure to allow for new models of access in order to create "alterative" projects (Bishop & Williams, 2012). Similarly, recent housing activism has focused on the discrepancy between buildings lying vacant while evictions, homelessness, and poverty in cities increases (Di Feliciantonio, 2016; Roy, 2017).

In this paper, we argue that debates about vacancy have been a central concern in post-crisis urban governance. By vacancy, we refer to both vacant properties and land, and we acknowledge how different articulations of "vacant space" are used by different actors. We use the term post-crisis here to denote two components. First, we use post-crisis to specifically refer to cities that have been affected by property crashes following the GFC. Second, we use post-crisis to refer to the ways in which the GFC formed an important juncture in the trajectory of "entrepreneurial urbanism" in Europe and North America. Peck, Theodore, and Brenner (2010) have argued that the GFC constituted neoliberalism's "Berlin Wall moment" in that the project could no longer be sustained on an ideological level. We argue that the ideological legitimacy of "entrepreneurial urbanism" has similarly been challenged by the material impacts of the GFC on cities. In their normative conception, a central premise of entrepreneurial urban models has been that facilitating property development activity, along with investment in the built environment, will result in more vibrant cities. The prevalence of landscapes of vacancy has starkly undermined these claims on a mass scale, and demonstrated the failure of entrepreneurial urban plans to deliver on their promise. Our argument is that entrepreneurial urban governance cannot simply be reasserted, but rather has to be reworked and repackaged in a new post-crisis context. This has involved efforts on the part of various policy makers and market-based actors to re-legitimise pro-growth development models.

Moreover, in the post-crisis period we may be witnessing what Peck and Whiteside (2016) have conceptualised as a transition from entrepreneurial to financialized urban governance. They argue that "the ubiquitous form of weak entrepreneurialism now coexists with deepening dynamics of system-wide financialization" (Peck & Whiteside, 2016, p. 238). While the underlying dynamics of entrepreneurial, or neoliberal, urbanism prevail in the post-crisis context of austerity – in that municipalities are facilitators rather than regulators of the market – the increasingly financialised nature of both urban government and urban property markets results in new mechanisms that transform the relationships between public and private actors, along with the spatial impact of these governance arrangements. Peck and Whiteside offer the example of the municipal bankruptcy of Detroit to show how new forms of financial disciplining, gatekeeping, and technocratic management have become ubiquitous in their influence over Detroit's urban policy priorities. Another example of the creeping influence of financialized governance is the role of asset management companies, created to resolve banking crises stemming from property crashes, in restructuring urban property markets (Byrne, 2016b). One manifestation of this is the relationship between "distressed debt" and vacancy in the post-crisis context. As such, tracing the ways in which entrepreneurial urban models are being re-legitimised, along with the mechanisms

through which a transition to financialized urban governance can be apprehended, allows us to see to important transformations in urban politics (Fields, 2017).

Such top-down developments are mirrored by bottom-up processes. An emerging body of scholarship has explored how urban experiments in various cities following the crisis has led to the creation of new types of collective spaces and political subjectivity (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Di Feliciantonio, 2017a; Gonick, 2016). Similarly, many studies of temporary use have used particular case studies to explore the conflicts involved in re-using vacant spaces (Ferreri, 2015; Gray, 2016). However, there has been less emphasis on how the contested property relations around vacant spaces might more broadly shape post-crisis urban governance arrangements. By governance, we refer to the institutional and administrative forms created around urban development, particularly in terms of the ongoing evolution of specific entrepreneurial forms. Moreover, we seek to recognize the ways in which the legitimacy crisis of the entrepreneurial model has reshaped the discursive framing of new policy and market interventions at different levels. Focusing on debates about vacant space offer a useful lens to analyse the material discursive processes through which these transformations are occurring.

The paper proceeds in two parts. In the first part, we bridge the work of Nicholas Blomley (2016a) on property, territory and space as mutually constitutive, with that of Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) on the persistence of alternative social projects under what she labels "late liberal" societies.[1] By bringing into dialogue Blomley's call to view property relationally and Povinelli's emphasis on the limited possibilities of "endurance" for alternative social projects, we explore how narratives about vacancy intersect with the broader remaking of property relations, urban governance structures, and the discursive relationalities through which these are normalised in post-crisis urban contexts. Our aim is therefore to explore the possibilities offered by vacancy to shape new meanings and practices over property relations, and by extension what is made possible within urban space.

In the second part of the paper, we outline a case study based on research on contestations over how vacant spaces were viewed, valued, and re-used in Dublin following Ireland's property crash. Since the advent of the crisis, there has been a growing interest in "activating" and "re-using" vacant spaces in Dublin, inclusive of efforts by policy-makers, financial and development actors, and grassroots cultural and political groups. Dublin represents a particularly suitable case-study to explore the dynamics around experiments with urban vacant space and new governance arrangements. Indeed, the property crash offered opportunities for alternative social projects to emerge, while the ways in which such alternatives are managed by policy actors point towards newly emergent urban governance arrangements. However, driven by new processes of financialization, the city's property market has experienced a spectacular recovery in recent years, as shown by a report from Price Waterhouse Coopers and the Urban Land Institute naming the city as the second hottest Commercial Real Estate (CRE) market in Europe in 2014 (Price Waterhouse Cooper and Urban Land Institute, 2015). As such, within a very short period of time Dublin has experienced boom, catastrophic bust, trenchant period of austerity and crisis, and recovery in the property market that has resulted in a new crisis of housing affordability and associated homelessness.

Here we offer a critical analysis of how three broad groups discursively construct the need to "activate" and "re-use" vacant spaces in Dublin and act on it accordingly: grassroots groups (in relation to both housing and cultural activities), policy-makers and financial actors. We analyse where these claims originate, which actors propagate them, and how they frame their claims discursively. Moreover, we analyse how, over a period of time, these differential claims are held together, in competition, and in tension. Ultimately, we seek to answer three interlocking questions: i) which types of alternative claims on vacant urban space emerge following the crisis and what do they propose?; ii) how do urban policy-makers adapt to, co-opt, manage, or dismiss different types of alternative claims in order to rework entrepreneurial agendas?; and iii) how can increasingly financialised property market dynamics shape responses to vacancy that alter the form entrepreneurial urbanism takes? In our discussion, we draw out the ways in which these competing perspectives on vacant space have been a significant factor in re-making urban governance (both in terms of new development actors and forces of resistance) and discursive rationalities that aim to legitimise and normalise particular ways of viewing, valuing, and using urban space. In our conclusions, we reflect on how we might use the lens of vacancy to advance an agenda that aims to understand how urban space is being remade through situated responses to crisis.

This paper draws on over five years of research projects focussing on the relationships between housing vacancy, re-using vacant space, neoliberalization, and financialization in the political economy of Ireland's crisis and post-crash periods. Our analysis draws on official statistics, critical policy document analysis (produced by both national and local institutions), discourse and document analysis related to financial actors and Ireland's National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), and interviews with key stakeholders including policy-makers, politicians, development actors, and activists (in both the housing and cultural sectors).[2]

Vacancy, contested property and alternative social projects

Vacant space offers a useful foil to consider how discourses concerning the "moral and aesthetic value of private property" (Ghertner, 2012, p. 1175) emerge and change over time. It does so in two ways. First, as sites of developmental failure vacant spaces can be used to critique neoliberal development models and the notions of the value underpinning surrounding property markets (DeSilvey & Edensor, 2013). Second, vacant spaces can attract various transgressive uses and spatial practices that often directly confront the limits of the capitalist city based on private property (Colomb, 2012).

Post-crisis cities (particularly those that experienced property crashes) have been characterised by some commonalities in terms of the relationship between vacancy and private property rights and norms. The prevalence of debates about vacancy since the GFC in countries like Ireland, Spain and Portugal has made it a pivot around which private property norms are challenged (i.e. the rights of owners to leave property vacant and unused) and property rights are partially reshaped (i.e. through the introduction of new taxes on vacant property, rights to temporary use etc). Through debates about vacancy, we can see what Blomley (2016a) calls a "periodic uncoupling" of the invisible norms around property, along with efforts to reassert and reaffirm these norms in new ways.

In this section, we draw together Blomley's (2016a) call to view territory and property relationally and Povinelli's (2011) analysis of the governance of difference in contemporary societies, and link to debates on post-crisis urban politics around vacancy. What these conceptualisations have in common, we argue, is their emphasis on the need to animate the interplay between the social and spatial relations that are structured by neoliberal forms of governance (private property rights or the privileging of market-based values) and the ways in which these norms are continually reproduced on a daily basis by different actors.

Contested property

In a recent paper, Blomley (2016a) makes an argument for unpacking the relationship between territory and property (the notion of property as synonymous with absolute rights over a given territory). While these are often viewed as one and the same in Western culture, Blomley asks us to consider their intertwining as historically constructed. The territory of property, he argues, "has a specificity, a presence and a consequentiality" (Blomley, 2016a, p. 593). The territorial view of property has a particular classification (it is owned by someone and all rights assigned to the property are transferred to them), communication (the boundaries of property communicate who can use it), and enforcement (property law, e.g. trespass law, is central to enforcing the territory of property) (Blomley, 2016a, p. 597). Blomley's main concern, however, is to understand not what the territory of property is "but what the territory of property *does*": "Territorialisation helps to define, inscribe and stabilize a set of relations" (Blomley, 2016a, p. 596, emphasis in original). Private property rights are contingent on the alignment of this set of relations. On the one hand, these rights depend on the extent to which they are enforced. On the other hand, these rights need to be recognised by the public on an ongoing basis. Thus, while private property is reliant on the State, it is also made through the articulation of normative understandings about how space should be used, which are disseminated variously through planning and legal frameworks, but also through its lived spatialities (Blomley, 2016b). Thus, understanding the governance of these relationships can illuminate important processes shaping possibilities in urban space.

Indeed, the relationships between formal and informal property rights are often highly ambivalent. In various cities in the global South, informal settlements are a significant source of housing and employment for the "urban majority" (Simone, 2014). Vasudevan (2015, p. 17) draws equivalences between these informal settlements and squatting cultures in cities like Berlin. In this way, property norms and the selective enforcement of exclusive rights over use also result in what Blomley (2016a) terms "relative inclusions", though not always legalised. However, the property norms around informal use are subject to change, as new development projects, land sales, or efforts to "clean up" the image of the city serve to shift the "concrete discursive practices" (Ghertner, 2012, p. 1162) about property. As such, property "provides both a rationale for dispossession and a ground for its opposition" (Blomley, 2016a, p. 594) and in this sense functions as a site of political antagonism, as shown by the rising wave of anti-eviction activism (Roy, 2017).

Blomley's analysis relates in important ways to studying vacancy in the post-crisis era. Vacancy can make visible the contradictory nature of private property rights, in particular the relationship between use and exchange value. Upholding private property rights to limit access while spaces remain empty and unused creates a clear challenge to the "continued alignment" of property norms. Scholarship focused on Spain has shown how the main social movement around housing, the *Plataforma de los Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) has been able to challenge the cultural and political hegemony of homeownership, making squatting a widespread practice (e.g. Di Feliciantonio, 2017a; Gonick, 2016).

Vacant spaces also encourage a range of activities that challenge the "habits" of property through less overtly political contestations. The recent popularity of temporary or "meanwhile" use of vacant properties and space can be read as a re-negotiation of rights to use. The rolling out of temporary uses in different cities has been enabled not only by new trends in urban design (Bishop & Williams, 2012; Mould, 2014), but also by the introduction of new planning and policy measures and through changes to property law, such as the introduction of short-term "meanwhile leases" in the UK (Tonkiss, 2013). These interventions can be considered as a partial realignment of property rights. It should also be noted, however, that these new inclusions are sometimes explicitly promoted on the basis that they "protect" against other unsanctioned uses of properties left vacant (Ferreri, Dawson, & Vasudevan, 2017).

Our argument in this paper is that periods of crisis can present fundamental challenges to the relations that make up property. This challenge is made manifest, in part, through vacant space as a point of antagonism. In the post-crisis period, we can see on the one hand a series of new claims to use property being made and on the other hand the discourses, policy measures and mechanisms through which the state and property-owners respond to these in geographically-specific and situated ways. These processes are constitutive of new governance arrangements. Furthermore, this entails the reconstitution of the lived spatialities of property, along with the creation of new narratives concerning "legitimate" and "illegitimate" uses of urban space. In order to elaborate on these themes, we turn now to Elizabeth Povinelli's work.

The governance of alternatives

In her book *Economies of Abandonment* (Povinelli, 2011), Povinelli mobilises an extensive analysis and critique of the economic, political, and ethical formations of "the governance of difference" in what she terms "late liberalism". It is not a case, she argues, that neoliberalism forecloses difference. Rather it is regulated and "recognised", made visible or invisible through the discursive frameworks of late liberalism. Povinelli uses the term "alternative social projects" to encompass a range of forms of community: "those *social projects* that attempt to capacitate an alternative set of human and post-human worlds" (Povinelli, 2011, p. 7, emphasis in original). Here we use her conceptualisation of the governance of difference to think through the ways in which alternative social projects might emerge in response to the conditions of crisis, and how these projects might in turn be governed by state and market actors.[3]

We want to draw out three key points from Povinelli's wider argument that resonate with how we conceptualise contestations over vacancy. Firstly, Povinelli suggests how

the privileging of neoliberal market values needs to be constantly legitimised in relation to other claims that recognise alternative values. The crisis marks a clear juncture in this regard. Neoliberalism's crisis of legitimacy brought about various social projects that proposed alternative ways of valuing society and space, while different actors have simultaneously worked to re-legitimise market logics as "pragmatic" responses to the crisis (Peck et al., 2010). In some instances, this re-legitimisation has been aided by the capacity of market-based actors to re-appropriate some of the progressive claims made by alternative social projects.

Secondly, Povinelli demonstrates that, while alternative social projects may appear "abandoned" by the neoliberal state, they are subject to ongoing and active governance. Povinelli gives the example of how the Australian government has used sexual abuse scandals as a rationale for withdrawing particular forms of welfare provision from Indigenous populations, and replacing them with other assessment-based supports that involve more disciplining forms of state involvement, which reinforce neoliberal norms. She conceptualises this through the relationships between "endurance" and "exhaust", emphasising how alterative social projects are allowed to persist and endure on their own terms, to a point. While the state does not actively kill (or "make die"), it abandons alternative social projects to the extent that is unlikely they will survive. It does so by making material survival dependent on adhering to social structures based on neoliberal values, which erode the capacity of communities to continue to care for each other and survive in a fashion "otherwise" to mainstream neoliberal logics. We can extend Povinelli's conceptualisation to analyse the trajectories of alternative social projects in vacant space that emerge in response to the crisis. While the scale and timeframes of such groups are quite different to Povinelli's examples, they nevertheless share a concern with attempts to "aggregate life diagonal to hegemonic ways of life" (Povinelli, 2011, p. 30) by placing their projects at a remove from the market and by cultivating forms of internal organisation that support "urban commoning" (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Di Feliciantonio, 2017b). The political and social potentialities expressed through these projects come up against material and temporal barriers, such as rent increases that limit access to space, or being dependent on the voluntary energies of people involved, which may dissipate over time.

Thirdly, drawing on the multiple connotations of "exhaust", Povinelli emphasises the ways in which the "waste" and "excess" produced by capitalism become a resource that is re-appropriated by alternative social projects in order to sustain themselves. But this "waste" is often subsequently recaptured by capital once new value has been identified. Povinelli gives the example of biofuel, which was produced initially out of a waste material from fast food production and intended to enable non-capitalist communities to survive. However, when the market potential of biofuel was identified it was once again turned into a commodity, thus re-inscribing the "waste" material with a new economic (rather than social or environmental) value. Vacant space offers another example of an "exhausted object of capital" that becomes repurposed for alternative, non-economic, uses. This is particularly apposite of post-crisis cities where property crashes have resulted in both a collapse in property values and a visible landscape of vacant buildings and land suddenly bereft of an economic function. In these contexts, various groups have sought to take the "excess" left in the wake of property bubbles and re-value it as a resource through which to create projects not ordinarily given space

within highly commercialised cities. However, as capital interests are always looking for ways to "re-valourise" urban space, "waste" land is always in danger of being re-inscribed with new economic value. Povinelli's conceptualisation is particularly useful to unpack the ways in which these new modes of economic valuation of vacant space can be dependent on the discursive co-option of alternative modes of valuation. In this sense, vacant spaces become a site of discursive and material struggle over what types of alternatives to the capitalist city will be allowed to endure within its interstices.

What we take from the conceptualisations offered by Blomley and Povinelli is the need for critical geographers to be attentive to *how the two trajectories of neoliberal governance and alternative social projects are shaped relationally and recursively*. There is a "dense entanglement" between the types of possibilities opened up by alternative social projects and the emergence of both new urban governance arrangements and discursive rationalities that frame and materially inscribe what is possible in urban space.

Dublin: three perspectives on vacancy

Post-crash Dublin

Dublin offers a particularly suitable case-study to explore the dynamics between vacant space and property, alternative social projects, and entrepreneurial urban governance. From 1993 to 2007 Ireland experienced a period of unprecedented economic growth. Export-led growth during the 1990s was followed in the 2000s by growth largely predicated on a debt-fuelled property bubble. Between 1991 and 2006, 762,541 housing units were built nationally, while house prices on average rose by between 300 and 400% (Kitchin et al., 2012). Although there was a fall-off in demand and development for commercial office spaces in the early 2000s, investment recovered from 2003 and office stock increased by a further 50% between that year and 2011. From 2007 onwards, Ireland's economic boom collapsed along with the global financial system, resulting in a dramatic and severe housing and financial crisis and recession. House prices dropped by 50%, unemployment soared from a low of 4% in 2004 to a peak of more than 15% by 2011 (Kitchin et al., 2012), and the government responded with a series of harsh austerity budgets.

One of the most visible manifestations of the crisis was the landscape of unfinished and vacant residential and commercial developments. The stark imprint of these "new ruins" pushed discussions about Ireland's encounter with neoliberalism to a position of increased visibility in academic, public, and policy debates. Within national and international media debates "ghost estates", in particular, became sites of discursive struggle through which the narrative of the crisis was articulated. The high levels of vacancy that followed the crash became a key focus of attempts to understand the extent and severity of the crisis. Moreover, these "new ruins" encapsulated a burgeoning sense of public anger and frustration regarding the course of the boom, which came to be viewed as a period of avarice and squandered potential (O'Callaghan, Boyle, & Kitchin, 2014). While unfinished estates are an ongoing feature of rural areas, urban centres also retained large pockets of vacant land, partly as an outcome of speculation during the boom. As the extent of urban vacancy was revealed, initially through the dearth of

development activity and later through policy intervention, Dublin's pro-growth model was also called into question in both policy and public spheres. Consequently, urban policy debates in Dublin focused on the issue of vacancy and various groups sought to re-use vacant properties and land (Moore-Cherry, 2015). Urban plans have had to take account of both the material legacies of the crash and the less tangible, but no less real, discursive shadow the failures encapsulated by these ruins cast over future development ambitions.

From 2013, Ireland has undergone a partial and uneven recovery in the property market in specific parts of the country, particularly Dublin. Post-crash Dublin has been characterized by the proliferation of "distressed debt", non-performing real estate related loans for which the real estate collateral has been devalued and the borrower is in default, typically between 50% and 90% (Kitchin et al., 2012). Spaces linked to "distressed debt" become frozen by the problematic nature of that debt.[4] The recovery of Dublin's property market was driven by the "contradiction" between high levels of "distressed debt" linked to vacant properties and a "robust" urban economy, particularly in the Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) sector (Byrne, 2016c). This "contradiction" has made Dublin's property market very attractive for international capital investors, but has also led to investment strategies that privilege high-yield returns such as office and office development sectors and in luxury apartments.

Meanwhile, new housing construction stalled and mortgage availability has evaporated. Furthermore, as part of a series of severe national austerity budgets from 2008 to 2013, exchequer capital funding for new build social housing was cut by 90%. The private rented sector has soaked up the pressure, seeing an increase of 65% since 2013. The unregulated and deeply dysfunctional nature of this sector has led to rents increasing by over 40% nationally since 2011, a chronic supply shortage, 50% of properties not meeting legal minimum standards and frequent evictions. For the first time working families are becoming homeless, the vast majority stemming from rent increase and evictions in the private rented sector. In Dublin, 5,480 adults accessed homeless accommodation in 2015, increasing to 6,314 for 2016 (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2016) and set to rise again in 2017. The number of homeless families has likewise grown exponentially. In March 2016, there were 598 homeless families living in "emergency accommodation" such as hotels. The number increased to 1023 families by November 2016. A reference week of 24–30 April 2017 counted 1,091 homeless families (comprising 1,465 adults and 2,262 children) (Dublin Region Homeless Executive, 2017). As such, within a very short period of time Dublin has experienced a boom, bust, and partial recovery that has brought with it a new housing crisis.

In this sense, we argue, attempts by different actors to govern vacancy relate to wider efforts to reframe post-crash urban governance priorities. Policy actors, financial and real-estate interests, cultural and grassroots organisations, political activists, and academics have all made claims as to the "opportunities" offered by vacant space. However, the types of "opportunities" identified by different groups are often highly divergent (Table 1). Grassroots actors variously seek to claim space for discrete projects or transform access and use of property in a more substantial way. Policy actors pursue strategies that aim to combine alternative uses of space with a wider entrepreneurial development agenda. Financial actors seek to reabsorb vacant properties back into the

Table 1. How different actors frame and address vacancy in Dublin.

Actors	Framing of vacancy	Type of intervention	Impacts
Grassroots: cultural actors	Vacancy as a cultural resource for the "creative class"	Temporary uses for "creative actors" (e.g. temporary gallery and studio space, "pop-up" parks)	Temporary uses increase vibrancy of urban areas but long-term volatility: projects are shut down once real estate values increase
Grassroots: housing activists	Vacancy as an opportunity to highlight the contradictions/failures of the property market	Contentious direct actions (e.g. occupation of vacant buildings to house homeless people)	Actions highlight the paradox of vacancy/housing unaffordability. But difficult to create public consensus to change dominant pro-development narrative, + legal issues resulting from occupation (e.g. use of injunctions against illegal trespass by property owners)
Policy-makers	Vacant spaces need to be "reactivated" to stimulate the market	Entrepreneurial (e.g. introduction of vacant land levy to penalise land hoarding; promotion of temporary uses in urban policy)	Some new policy measures to combat vacancy and encourage cultural use. But policies do not offer a solution to the housing crisis + little consideration of long-term viability of cultural uses
Financial actors	Vacant spaces as "distressed assets"	Connecting local real estate to global finance: restructured loans and property assets sold to international funds	Resolves problem of "distressed assets". But increased real estate prices result in intensification of housing unaffordability + increasing evictions

market. In this section, we unpack three debates around vacant space in Dublin, focusing on how each produces specific material discourses that influence urban governance arrangements.

Grassroots groups

The first set of debates about vacancy concern how grassroots actors and civil society have responded to the crisis by creating alternative uses of vacant spaces. We want to focus on two main intersecting trajectories: the first focuses on how vacancy was viewed as a resource to create space for cultural activities (either on a temporary or more long-term basis); the second focuses on radical critiques that view vacancy as a resource for housing and as a means to challenge neoliberal urban development models.

(i) Vacancy as a cultural resource

Since 2008 various projects have proliferated across Dublin that aim to use vacant spaces for cultural or community purposes. They share a pragmatic approach which marries the skills and passion of those involved with the possibilities, in terms of access to space, opened up by widespread vacancy. These initiatives included a diverse range of organisational structures, such as arts groups (sometimes supported by arts funding) proposing to use vacant spaces for gallery, studio or events space, less formalized "independent spaces" (usually operating within rundown quasi-abandoned commercial spaces rented at low cost) organised by collectives hosting a mix of political, musical, and social events, and community-based organisations running urban gardens and

allotments on land in both public and private ownership (Bresnihan & Byrne, 2015; Guinan, 2016; Kettle, 2014). These projects were largely driven by a bottom-up demand from groups to access spaces lying idle, and enabled by the downturn in the property market and the economy more generally. The rationale was often posited in terms of a dichotomy between the availability of significant amounts of "underutilised" space and the dearth of cultural and social spaces in a highly commercialised city.

There was a cluster of such projects in the area of Smithfield on the North side of the inner city. Smithfield Square had been redeveloped from the late 1990s onwards through an Integrated Area Plan (IAP) based on a redesign of public spaces and the introduction of new residential and commercial elements (Lawton & Punch, 2014). However, the take-up of new commercial space had been slow, leaving many vacant units on the redeveloped square, and the surrounding areas along Benburb Street retained an estimated 90,000 square meters of vacant sites.[5] A notable project in Smithfield – Block T – offers an example of the types of spaces created and their trajectories. Block T was a studio and performance space created in 2010 by seven art graduates, which moved in 2012 to Haymarket House, a 6,553 square meter vacant office building on Smithfield Square. The building had been slated for demolition in 2007, but the crash had halted these plans, at which point the group rented the property for an annual cost of €141,000 (Guinan, 2016). Block T received some funding from both the Arts Council and Dublin City Council (DCC), but the majority of their funding came from self-generated revenue and private partnerships. This model promoted the subsidisation of non-commercial activities through income-generating aspects of the space. During their five years in Smithfield, Block T "facilitated over 500 members, worked with 800 artists and initiated 700 projects" (Guinan, 2016, p. 28). In 2016, the property owner renewed plans to redevelop the site and Block T were forced to relocate to a smaller property in another part of the city. Other art spaces in Smithfield, such as the Art Tunnell and The Complex, followed a similar trajectory.

The visibility of these projects created a wider discourse about the possibilities offered by the crisis to use vacant spaces to enhance the city's cultural vibrancy and infrastructures. In combination with a new policy engagement with vacancy, such initiatives laid the ground for larger "flagship" projects. One of the most high-profile of these was Granby Park, a month-long "pop-up park" in the Dominick Street area of the North inner city (Till & McArdle, 2015). Produced by Upstart, a non-profit voluntary arts collective, Granby Park was granted access to a vacant site owned by DCC in order to create a temporary public space that also hosted a curated set of arts events and engaged in some community and social initiatives in its construction. Upstart highlighted vacancy and re-use of materials as a core part of the ethos of the group and the project: "Granby Park, is an urban, 'pop-up' park in a currently vacant site in Dublin's inner city. [It aims] to inspire and facilitate the development of other creative green spaces across Ireland" (Upstart, 2013).

The overarching narrative that emerged around these interventions viewed vacant space as a resource for creativity. In addition to a perceived abundance of vacancy, there was a "surplus" of young, talented, creative individuals who were willing – due to a lack of employment opportunities – to volunteer their time to engage in the work of producing these spaces. The problem presented, then, was to find ways to break

down the barriers to re-use, and to allow all parties to see the "mutual benefits" involved. Characteristic of this narrative is, thus, the assumption that re-using vacant spaces can be a win-win-win scenario for policy-makers, property owners, and communities.

The set of claims that these projects made on vacant space contributed to both the creation of alternative social projects, which proposed new ways of valuing urban space, and created a rationale for new "relative inclusions" of property. In terms of alternative social projects, the new uses and aspirations for vacant urban spaces produced independent cultural autonomous facilities that operated as spaces for experimentation and direct engagement. These projects created a discourse for valuing spaces for the creative potential they engender, rather than their commercial potential. These potentialities set in motion a range of policy and grassroots experiments that, to varying extents, created cracks in the commercial logics of the neoliberal city. The perceived success of these projects also incentivised policymakers and property owners to adopt new, more formalised, mechanisms for property to "include" such uses. For example, in February 2014 DCC ran an event promoting temporary use projects and advocating new incentives for the re-use of vacant spaces (O'Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). However, these partial inclusions were not radical enough. As the Dublin property market began to recover and sale and rental prices began to grow, many of these projects were shut down. Thus, in line with Povinelli's conceptualisation, these projects took the "exhausted object of capital" and identified new ways of valuing it, in the process animating urban spaces devoid of life. Partly as an outcome of the new life brought by these projects, more commercially lucrative uses were deemed possible and thus the lifespan of projects was cut short.

(ii) Vacancy as a space of political antagonism

As Dublin's property market began to recover, it became apparent that the collapse in construction and the supply of social housing were putting increased pressure on the private rental market and creating a new crisis of housing and homelessness. In response to these conditions, a number of housing activist groups emerged. There have been two distinct, but somewhat overlapping, phases of housing movements in the post-crisis period (Hearne, O'Callaghan, Di Feliciantonio, & Kitchin,2018). During the first phase (2008–2014), housing movements emerged out of pre-existing struggles of disadvantaged communities during the period of the boom, such as community-based opposition to urban regeneration schemes. However, from 2014 a second phase of housing movements began to emerge as the initial period of the crisis gave way to the new housing crisis. These movements explicitly emerged in response to crises in the private rental sector and, in particular, the burgeoning homelessness emergency. The character of these groups was diverse, including groups like Housing Action Now (who attempted to bring together older community-based campaigns with newer groups), and the Dublin Tenants Association (who aimed to create a tenants' union), along with the modest growth in some anarchist groups focused on housing. This period also saw a re-politicisation of the trade union and NGO sectors with regard to housing campaigns. However, we focus primarily here on a set of new grassroots groups that responded

directly to the homelessness crisis, and are grouped together within the Irish Housing Network (IHN).

Formed in 2015, the IHN have been heavily influenced by models developed by the PAH in Spain, which emphasise the importance of those affected by the housing crisis leading struggles (Di Feliciantonio, 2017a). They operate a horizontal network structure of organisation (excluding formal representation of political parties, trade unions etc), and have engaged in direct actions that target particular issues, capacity building among communities affected by housing inequality, and building a counter-narrative on the housing crisis. Groups within the IHN tend to operate on a neighbourhood basis, carrying out support work as well as engaging in smaller actions, while larger direct actions and campaigns are carried out under the IHN banner and involve activists aligned with different groups. As part of these strategies, the IHN have highlighted the contradiction between properties being vacant while families are becoming homeless. Activists used this contradiction to make a claim for the right to decent and affordable housing. On a broader level, activists have also aimed to make vacancy visible as a way to challenge neoliberal and entrepreneurial agendas, which have emerged prominently in Dublin over the last twenty years (MacLaran & Kelly, 2014).

Here we identify three representative strategies. Firstly, housing activists have used social media, along with banners and placards employed in protest actions, to highlight the contradiction between persisting levels of housing vacancy and growing levels of homelessness. A typical example can be taken from the Facebook page of the North Dublin Bay Housing Crisis Committee from 31 August 2015: "1185 Children homeless and houses lie vacant…". These narrations of vacancy were used by groups to illustrate in affective ways how the acute homeless crisis was the outcome of both political choices and structural conditions.

Secondly, activist groups, including Dublin Central Housing Action, have conducted walking tours of the city centre showing the location of vacant buildings. Tours were advertised to the public via social media. After gathering at a pre-determined location, the group would move between a number of vacant spaces in the city centre. Activists used a combination of older semi-derelict properties with empty units in "new ruin" developments. For example, a walking tour in September 2015 followed a route through the North inner city and included sites on Bolton Street, Parnell Square, Smithfield Square, and Benburb Street. At each location, members of the activist group would provide information about the property in question, including its ownership history and how long it had been vacant. These narratives explicitly expressed the role of neoliberal urban policy and speculation in keeping properties vacant while housing need was increasing. Activists would then stick a "site notice" giving specific information on the property and drawing attention to its vacant condition. This discursive strategy entailed at least three components: i) it made vacant properties visible within the city, ii) it situated vacancy in relation to both the specific histories of particular buildings and the wider structural conditions in the property market that produced them, and iii) it pointed towards alternative political and social uses to which these empty buildings could be put.

Thirdly, activists and anarchist groups have engaged in direct actions including the occupation of vacant buildings. While the use of vacant buildings for housing people has been occurring under the radar, there have also been a number of cases

in which occupying vacant spaces was used as a strategy for visibility. We offer the examples of the creation of "The Bolt Hostel" and "Apollo House". During July 2015, activists with the IHN, in collaboration with anarchist groups, occupied a vacant building on Bolton Street, in the North inner city, which was in the ownership of DCC. The building had previously been used by DCC to offer emergency accommodation for homeless individuals, but was vacant when activists entered the premises. Activists set about cleaning and refurbishing the space to make it habitable as a homeless hostel. Renaming it The Bolt Hostel they opened it up to homeless families, with activists involved staffing the premises. While the Bolt Hostel responded to pressing material needs – the growing homeless population in need of emergency accommodation – it was also intended as a political statement. Indeed, the occupation of the building was a public event, the culmination of a protest march that ended with a banner drop from the windows of the building. The activists initially hoped to negotiate a plan to keep the hostel open. However, DCC claimed that the building was structurally unsound and presented a safety hazard to those inside, and thus sought, initially, to convince the activists to leave the occupation. After the group refused to do so, DCC initiated legal proceedings against two of the activists for illegal trespass. The group subsequently opted to leave the premieres. Nevertheless, the political claims made through the vacant space were clear. As later described by one of the activists involved:

> "The act of taking over a building violated the near-sacred role of private property ownership, but we felt a majority of the country would support the action because it was needed… We put the issue of empty buildings in a homeless crisis on the map: which, in terms of housing, is the fundamental contradiction within our society." (Radical Whispers, 2016).

The IHN later staged a larger and more high-profile occupation as part of the Home Sweet Home (HSH) group, which also included trade unions organisers and artists. On 15 December 2016, HSH opened up Apollo House, a vacant office building in the South inner city of Dublin, and set up a functioning homeless hostel. The occupation was announced on national television by musician Glenn Hansard, while HSH also promoted the action via social media, thus giving mainstream publicity and legitimacy to the so-called "citizens intervention" in the homeless crisis. In weeks that followed 40 rough sleepers were accommodated, around 700 people volunteered their time, and €160,000 along with food, clothes, and bedding were donated by the public. The occupation was combined with a series of public events and protests, including marches, demonstrations and a series of "live at the Apollo" concerts performed for crowds gathered outside. While "The Bolt Hostel" targeted DCC's homelessness policy, "Apollo House" targeted NAMA, who controlled the loans associated with the property, and by extension the government's response to the property crisis. This action symbolically claimed vacant space in "public ownership" for common or social good, and aimed to highlight that the housing crisis was a political decision. NAMA, through its receivers applied for injunction against the activists. This was granted on 21 December 2016, but with a stay on its execution until 11 January 2017. During this period, the campaign leveraged their position though both the courts and the media to pressure the Housing Minister, Simon Coveney, to deliver new emergency provisions and address

the crisis. After commitments on improvement basic standards in homeless services, the group left the occupation on 12 January 2017.

These political claims challenged private property norms, i.e. the right to use property on the basis of need rather than for financial gain. At the same time, activists used the "waste" of the property bubble to demonstrate the failures of the neoliberal response to the crisis and the entrepreneurial urban model, and to make claims for alternative ways of valuing urban space.

Urban policy-makers

The second set of debates about vacancy concern how entrepreneurial urban policy should respond to the crisis. Since the crisis there has been an intensification of official policy responses targeting vacancy and dereliction in Dublin. This served a dual purpose: on the one hand, the "problem" of vacancy became apparent during the downturn in that development activity was stalled and thus vacant sites became visible, while on the other hand, the encouragement of creative temporary uses in some vacant sites also fit DCC's design-led approach by investing in "acupunctural" measures (see Mould, 2014) to revitalise the street life. As such, the focus on vacancy both addressed a key problem stemming from the crisis, while also presenting "progressive" and "innovative" urban policy solutions. In doing so, we argue, policy makers have sought to reframe vacant spaces as part of an entrepreneurial urban agenda.

Key actors within Dublin City Council, including Senior Planners, the City Architect's Office, and the former Lord Mayor Oisín Quinn, sought to make targeting vacancy a priority. In 2013, Lord Mayor Oisín Quinn, based on advice from Senior Planners in DCC, made a submission to the Department of Finance proposing the introduction of a "vacant land levy" (Quinn, 2013), which will come into effect in 2019. Previously there had been no tax on vacant land.[6] The land levy was intended as a "penalty for leaving… [land] vacant" (Quinn, 2013). An audit of vacant land in the city centre was published in 2015 (Dublin City Council, 2015), estimating a total of 61 Hectares of vacant or derelict land within its boundaries, equivalent to 4% of zoned inner city lands. The report discursively positioned the "high levels" of vacancy in the inner city as an outcome of speculative land hoarding during the bubble, a point reiterated in various publications and presentations made by senior staff in DCC. These policy debates mirrored both temporary use initiatives and activist campaigns in that they focused heavily on the North inner city. The vacant land levy was, within the context of minimal intervention, a significant challenge to private property owners' rights to leave land vacant. Indeed, it was discursively positioned as such within a DCC document titled "Property has its duties as well as its rights"[7] (Economic Development, Planning and International SPC, 2013).

At the same time, DCC began to encourage and facilitate the temporary use of vacant spaces, often acting as match-maker between artists and property owners. An early initiative was Pretty Vacant, which DCC launched in mid-2010. The scheme sought to make vacant properties in private ownership open to alternative ("meanwhile") uses from the arts and cultural sector. DCC acted as a liaison between owners of property and the cultural sector (who were required to put together a proposal about their plans for the space) while also taking on the insurance liability. This later

transitioned into the Vacant Space Scheme, a more long-term strategy run out DCC's Arts Office. DCC supported a number of other temporary use initiatives, including cultural uses such as Granby Park and The Complex theatre along with a number of community gardens located across residential areas mainly on the outer edge of the city. More broadly, DCC promoted the re-use of vacant space for cultural and sustainability purposes through public events, political speeches and policy statements. As such, DCC policy targeted vacant space in two ways: by proposing to introduce new penalties for leaving property vacant and by introducing softer policy measures to promote temporary use.

These policy discourses, crystallised in the *Dublin City Council Development Plan 2016–2022*, repositioned vacancy within an entrepreneurial discourse as a *threat and opportunity* for the city.

> "[Vacancy] is a great challenge and opportunity for the city. These extensive areas of vacant lands are potentially a great international competitive advantage for Dublin. The City Council will look positively on appropriate temporary uses as interim solutions for vacant land and properties" (Dublin City Council, 2016, p. 45).

This discourse constitutes an attempt to take the "waste" produced by a capitalist property bubble and discursively construct a new rationale for market value within it. In this, vacancy is framed as a negative factor discouraging living in the city and potentially making Dublin less attractive for investment: "Large tracts of brownfield sites remain in the inner city, and whilst not excessive by international standards, they significantly detract from its character and coherence" (Dublin City Council, 2016, p. 24). Importantly, however, this recycling is also dependent on the incorporation of certain grassroots claims about the progressive potential of vacant spaces to contribute ecological, social, and cultural objectives. The plan proposes to support "the provision of community gardens/allotments/local markets/pocket parks" (p. 86), "publicly accessible cultural work spaces, performance venues, art galleries" (p. 104), to "build a sustainable, compact and smart city through the sustainable development of all vacant, derelict, and under-used lands with a focus on areas close to public transport corridors" (p. 5), and to "develop a compact, clean, green, connected city" (p. 109) by infilling vacant spaces in the city centre (p. 33).

Overall, these policy inclusions could be read as a co-option of a range of "alternative" claims made on vacant space by grassroots groups into a mainstream entrepreneurial urban policy agenda. The types of uses promoted by DCC reflect both particular class interests, i.e. primarily middle class concerns with sustainability, green space, and specific types of cultural space, and serve to further pre-existing urban policy objectives such as "creative city" agendas that fold neatly into entrepreneurial models (Lawton & Punch, 2014; O'Callaghan & Lawton, 2015). The remediation of vacancy through policy interventions domesticates diverse claims on urban space in the service of creating a re-packaged, seemingly more progressive, entrepreneurial agenda.

The policy approach to vacancy therefore can be seen to make some concessions to the grassroots claims made on vacant property. By incorporating selective elements of these claims into a newly formed entrepreneurial agenda, the policy narrative recognises vacancy as an urban problem while limiting the potential changes to the economic development model that alterative claims can actually

make. In Dublin, in line with many other cities, new policies (e.g. local authorities taking on insurance liability) and legal mechanisms (e.g. short term leases) have facilitated temporary use by reducing the barriers for property owners and tenants. These new measures have both introduced new temporary *rights* to property use and new *norms* about use.

But the inclusion of new rights and norms of property use is also selective and limited. Most obviously, the radical claims of housing activists are completely ignored. Cultural grassroots claims are included – the land levy notwithstanding – as "soft" policy objectives rather than well-funded policy goals. In interviews with various cultural actors, they often expressed disillusionment with DCC's lack of interest in supporting cultural spaces. While many forms of alternative cultural activity were supported during the downturn, DCC have been either unwilling or unable to intervene to protect non-commercial cultural uses against evictions due to rent increases or redevelopment. In short, policies introduced to support temporary use have been too weak, and subservient to DCC's support of the commercial property market. The tensions demonstrate the problematic assumptions embedded within the approach to vacancy outlined by urban policy makers. These assumptions were further undermined by the increasingly financialized nature of urban development. This shift, we argue, has changed the nature of entrepreneurial urban development in Dublin.

Financial actors

The third set of debates around vacancy concern how financial actors treat vacant properties in response to the problem of "distressed debt"[8] resulting from the property crash. The nexus of distressed debt-vacant space can be seen as "waste" produced by the systemic interaction between the processes of financialization and urbanisation, which cannot easily be reintegrated or re-absorbed by "the market". At a cultural level this is reflected in terms like "toxic debt", which signal distressed debt's role as a noxious waste product threatening to poison the financial system. From the point of view of the banking sector, then, vacant spaces manifest as "distressed assets"; and resolving this problem is as much about resolving and restructuring the debt linked to such assets as it is about the physical manifestation of vacancy in urban space. Given the scale of distressed debt in Ireland it represented a systemic risk to the banking system as a whole (Bacon, 2009). The main governmental response to Ireland's crisis has focused on the financial sector (O'Riain, 2014). This involved three key measures. Firstly, in September 2008, the Irish Government guaranteed all assets and liabilities of the Irish-owned banks.[9] Secondly, by 2012, the Government had directly committed €64 billion in emergency liquidity and recapitalisation programmes for the banking system. Thirdly, in early 2010 the Government established the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). NAMA is a "bad bank" or Asset Management Company tasked with acquiring large scale real estate loans (upwards of €5 million) from five of Ireland's most important banks and disposing these loans with a view to maximizing their value. NAMA has had a significant impact on the built environment of Dublin, quickly becoming the largest player in Dublin's property market (Byrne, 2016a). Since NAMA's property loan portfolio related to a significant amount of vacant property

and land, the operations of the agency have also factored into debates about the ways in which vacant spaces should be valued and used.

In order to examine how NAMA has responded to vacancy in greater depth we focus on the Dublin Dockland's area.[10] The Docklands area, located on the Eastern edge of the city centre, holds the highest concentration of NAMA assets; 75% of development land in the area is held by the agency (22 hectares). The new, and ongoing, phase of development in the Docklands has been presented by both NAMA and central government as a "flagship" example of post-crisis urban redevelopment and a "unique opportunity". Highlighting in particular the area around Grand Canal Dock on the South side of the river, NAMA has presented the Dockland's vacant sites as "Ireland's prime internationally marketable land bank" (Brady Shipman Martin, 2014). The term "internationally marketable" is key here as NAMA's approach to resolving "distressed debt" has been to sell restructured loans and property assets to international funds, in particular US private equity firms and hedge funds.[11] The opportunity represented by high levels of vacancy in the Docklands, then, allowed for the resolution of "distressed debt" by connecting local real estate with global flows of finance (Byrne, 2016a).

Much like the case of policy makers, vacancy here was transformed from a symptom of a financial and property system in disarray to an opportunity to reboot property-led development as part of a wider strategy of inter-urban competition. The Department of Finance and other key stakeholders, in particular the Industrial Development Authority,[12] have argued that this opportunity should be used to develop Grade A office space, the provision of which is central to the state's key economic policy of attracting foreign direct investment (in particular in the technology sector).

NAMA has in some instances clashed directly with the grassroots approaches to vacant space referred to above. In these instances, without exception, NAMA (or firms appointed by NAMA) has pursued evictions, leading to at least five such cases in Dublin alone over the last four years. In the Docklands area, we offer the example of Mabos, one of the cultural independent spaces that emerged after the property crash, as outlined above. It was an underground cultural centre established by a collective of artists in early 2013 in a semi-derelict former bicycle factory in Grand Canal Dock. The building served as a work place for members of the collective as well as artist studios. Mabos operated a number of areas of activity, including one-off events, regular activities and festivals. During 2014, a consortium including NAMA, the Los Angeles based hedge fund Oaktree Capital and the Irish construction outfit Bennett Group sought to redevelop the Mabos building. Mabos argued that NAMA, as a statutory agency, ought to have a social remit and to value the social dimension of urban development. The group submitted a document to DCC outlining the social and cultural contribution Mabos made to the Docklands and the ways in which this aligned with DCC's own planning guidelines for the area. Despite these efforts, the consortium refused to renew Mabos' lease and the project came to an end in the summer of 2014. Mabos noted the contradiction between the reality of NAMA's interventions and the policy and rhetoric of DCC, which has trumpeted the cultural assets and creativity of the Docklands.

NAMA has thus rolled out a form of what Byrne (2016a) calls "asset price urbanism", restructuring urban space in order to resolve the crisis of "distressed debt". This involves initiating a new round of property-led development but also restructuring entrepreneurial urban governance in Dublin by transforming the Irish property finance

nexus in fundamental ways. We argue that this offers a variation on what Peck and Whiteside (2016, p. 240) call urban governance "under financalised rule". Under these arrangements, the ultimate use value of urban space takes a secondary role to its exchange value, both in terms of asset price and rental yield. This is not to imply that exchange value was not of fundamental importance under entrepreneurial models. However, while under previous models exchange value was intrinsically tied to place making, a range of financial instruments developed over the last few decades have transformed the mechanisms through which capital can be extracted from the built environment, making return of investment less dependent on long-term use of space (Byrne, 2016a; Fields, 2017). Moreover, new opportunities for financializing the built environment have been generated through governmental responses to the crisis.

Reconceptualising urban vacancy after the crisis

The three approaches to vacancy in Dublin discussed above call for an appreciation of the manifold ways in which vacant spaces interact with and shape contrasting and competing visions of the post-crisis city. A range of grassroots actors have made a series of claims *to vacant spaces* – regarding how they should be used to best serve the city's needs – and claims *through vacant spaces* – through the occupation of them and through the associated articulation of political or social ideals. However, only housing activists' framing of vacancy as a space of political antagonism is explicitly opposed to the dominant model of property-led development and urban neoliberalism, while framings of vacancy as a cultural resource are more politically ambivalent. This ambivalence has been central to urban policy, which has been characterised primarily by the attempt to marry a flourishing of creative spaces and cultural activity with a renewal of Dublin's property-led development model. If creative and cultural approaches have been crucial to making visible the potentials opened up by vacant spaces, urban policy has sought to instrumentalise this possibility and make it compatible with "business as usual" development. Finally, the "financialization of vacancy" represents a much cruder reassertion of property-led development through the reorganisation of the property-finance nexus and the fabrication of circuits linking global capital and swathes of vacant urban land, notably in the Dockland's area. The speed and scale of this process has far outpaced that of bottom up processes. These shifts have important implications. As our case study makes clear, financialised urban strategies undermine the place-making ambitions of urban policy-makers operating in the entrepreneurial model. This, we argue, potentially creates another legitimacy crisis for entrepreneurial urbanism. Similarly, as Fields (2017) notes, activist campaigns increasingly contest the financialization of urban space through actions targeting "transnational landlords" and private equity funds. This shows how financialised governance shifts the terrain of urban struggles.

Our intention here is not to provide a universal appraisal of vacancy after the crisis. As Blomley (2016a) and others (Ghertner, 2012; Gonick, 2016) show, property regimes and norms emerge in context-specific ways that also change over time. Neither are we claiming that all post-crisis cities follow the same trajectory.[13] However, post-crisis cities have been characterised by commonalities in terms of debates about vacant space. These include, on the one hand an emphasis on temporary use initiatives and the

factoring of debates about vacant properties in new housing movements. On the other hand, these encompass the adoption of entrepreneurial strategies to encourage new uses and development of vacant space and the implementation of financialized models to resolve the "distressed debt" linked to vacant properties. Contestations over how vacant space is viewed, valued, and re-used offers a useful lens to unpack the shifting sets of actors in urban governance and the discursive rationalities through which post-crisis urban development agendas are articulated.

Furthermore, two general tendencies, unevenly distributed, suggest how discourses around vacancy are linked to emergent governance tendencies. First, vacancy has become more visible and politicised in response to a range of events across various cities. Second, post-crisis economic transformations related to the financialization of housing and property have meant that international capital is increasingly looking for investment opportunities in the built environment. For cities, particularly those with high levels of vacant property associated with "distressed debt", this has led to the introduction of international actors such as private equity funds into local housing and property markets (see Fernandez & Aalbers, 2016; Beswick et al., 2016; Byrne, 2016b). The financialized strategies pursued by these actors have moved the emphasis away from locally grounded usage needs and values, and may potentially shift the relationships between vacancy and use. Indeed, Saskia Sassen (2015) has noted the contradiction between new financialized investment strategies that see the "corporate buying" of whole tracts of cities and an associated "emptying" of city properties as spaces of habitation: "This privatises and de-urbanises city space no matter the added density" (no page). If such trends are indicative of a growing prevalence of financialized urban development models that position cities "as a 'corroborator' of financial prospecting" (Simone, 2014, p. 52) for internationalized growth machines (Byrne, 2016b) shaping urban space in increasingly "post-democratic" ways (Peck & Whiteside, 2016), then vacant spaces are going to be key sites of urban governance.

But our analysis also shows that vacant spaces are sites of political contestation and everyday engagements that can shape alternative social projects. The appearance and rehabilitation of vacancy following the crash points to how market-oriented and alternative trajectories can be reshaped towards supporting the agendas of powerful actors. However, new governance arrangements around vacant space do not resolve the antagonisms regarding property as unearthed by the crisis. Blomley's conceptualisation of property as relational and periodically renegotiated is crucial here to appreciate how dominant conceptions of property can be destabilised by mobilisations of vacancy as a political antagonism. Revealing and unpacking the mechanisms through which vacancy is governed in the post-crisis city highlight the continuous remaking of neoliberal modes of valuation in relation to alternative forms of valuation. This reflects Povinelli's understanding of how late liberal forms of governance reproduce neoliberalism by incorporating the progressive claims of alternative social projects. Povinelli's framework draws attention to the need for neoliberal actors to re-legitimise property-led development after the crash. More scrutiny needs to be addressed towards the ways alternative projects and rationalities are bounded and shaped by neoliberal rationality. This does not mean assuming a negative and pessimistic ontology towards change and experimentation: the relational character of property and the continuously emergent

character of neoliberalism offer the possibility for contestation and imagining ´new worlds´. However, it is crucial to be aware of the dynamics of selective inclusion prompted by neoliberal institutions in order to legitimise themselves. In these ways, the governing of vacant spaces may be of key significance to the trajectories of post-crisis urbanisation.

Notes

1. Povinelli defines "late liberalism" as "the shape that liberal governmentality has taken as … a belated response to the challenge of social difference and the alternative social worlds and projects potentially sheltered there" (Povinelli, 2011, p. 25).
2. The paper is informed by over thirty interviews with key stakeholders, drawn mainly from two IRC-funded projects focused on Dublin: one exploring contestations over the re-use of vacant space and the other examining NAMA's impact on the built environment. Interview data is drawn on here to provide detailed description of events and case studies. However, due to word-limit constraints quotations are not used.
3. We employ a loose use of this term. Many of Povinelli's examples of alternative social projects, such as those of Indigenous communities in Australia, are attempting to organise life on a fundamentally different ethical and ontological basis to that of mainstream society. In contrast, the examples we draw on are very "ordinary" by comparison, and have much closer intersection with neoliberal market forces. However, we argue that the term is nevertheless useful to distinguish the ways in which these projects aim to create spaces of everyday "commoning" within the neoliberal city, and to conceptualise how the value claims they make are governed by state and market actors.
4. When the nominal owner of the property asset enters in to default and/or bankruptcy, the creditor gains control over the property and, typically, will be unwilling to simply sell it at its devalued price as the institution will want to resist realizing the losses on their loan book. Vacant spaces can thus become locked in the dynamics of "debt overhang" and left idle until the issue of the distressed debt is resolved.
5. This area along the Red Luas (light rail) line from Heuston Station to O'Connell Street (which includes Smithfield and Benburb Street) was selected as a Pilot Study for a Public Realm Project by DCC in 2014. As part of this study, DCC estimated 90,000 square meters of vacant sites (see http://www.dublincity.ie/sites/default/files/content/Planning/OtherDevelopmentPlans/AreaActionPlans/Documents/LUAsREDLINE.pdf).
6. In Irish law "vacant" property is distinguished from properties that are empty but could potentially be put to use, the latter which are subject to a tax. There are three categories of vacant land: i) vacant land with no evidence of permanent use; ii) vacant land and buildings which are in a state of dilapidation; iii) vacant buildings in such a state of disrepair that their future use is unlikely. A proposed levy of 3% in the first year, and 7% in the second and third year, is intended to remove some of the ambiguity regarding what constitutes vacancy in the Irish context.
7. Quoting Thomas Drummond, under-secretary of Ireland 1835–40.
8. While not all distressed debt is linked to vacancy (capital values of underlying assets and borrower's ability to repay decline for other reasons), it is certainly a significant factor.
9. The six Irish financial institutions covered by the state's bank guarantee included Allied Irish Bank (AIB), Bank of Ireland (BoI), Anglo Irish Bank (Anglo), Irish Life and Permanent (ILP), Irish Nation- wide Building Society (INBS) and the Educational Building Society (EBS).
10. The Docklands area, comprised of brown field former industrial and waterfront sites, has been subject to intense redevelopment as it was transformed into Ireland's financial services and ICT centre during the 1990s and 2000s. However, substantial portions of it, which have almost exclusively fallen under the control of NAMA, remain derelict.

11. 90% of NAMA sales of Irish assets have been to US private equity firms. As the agency itself has stated: "NAMA is keen to attract international capital interested in acquiring loans or property assets" (NAMA, 2013, p. 6).

12. The IDA is a public agency tasked with attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to Ireland.

13. For example, while Spain and Ireland have similar crisis responses at a national and urban level, Spain has been characterised by a more substantial degree of politicisation. Similarly, the pace of post-crisis development in Portugal's major cities has been much slower than either country and, therefore, a deeper embedding of temporary use initiatives has been possible.

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