Martin Butler, Paul Mecheril, Lea Brenningmeyer (eds.)

Resistance

Subjects, Representations, Contexts

[transcript]

Contents

"All Those Who Know the Term 'Gentrification' are Part of the Problem"[1]

Self-Reflexivity in Urban Activism and Cultural Production

Jens Martin Gurr

> *The City is our Factory*—under this banner we might actually be able to finally escape the narcissist trap of the Left, which brands itself or the subculture as the real motor of gentrification and consequently sinks into a protestant discourse of guilt-ethics and self-accusation. [...] If we want to develop a post-crisis urbanisation model, if we want to replace the neoliberal model, we not only need to make the city greener or more social, but more accessible and designable by its inhabitants. Insofar it is no coincidence that artists play a major role in these struggles. (Schäfer, *Die Stadt* 300-1)

There have recently been numerous publications conceptually engaging with what appears to be a surge of anti-gentrification activities and 'right to the city' (*sensu* Lefebvre) movements in the 'neoliberal city' and especially in the wake of the fiscal crisis beginning in 2008. However, while much of the scholarly interest has been concerned with theorizing *about* or *for* such movements, there have been far fewer studies focusing on how these movements themselves conceptually frame their activities. Studying what might broadly speaking be subsumed under 'right to the city' activism, it is worth distinguishing between different aims: Is activism directed against gentrification, against concrete building projects or the privatization of public space, against 'neoliberal' urban

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1 | User comment on Kettcar's "Schrilles buntes Hamburg" video on YouTube; original: "Alle, die das Wort 'Gentrifizierung' kennen, sind Teil des Problems."

growth policies, foreclosure, the housing crisis, or homelessness, or does it more generally advocate the 'right to the city'? Since urban activism has frequently come to crystallize around anti-gentrification movements, the implicit or explicit understanding of gentrification is frequently related to the forms of activism chosen: The emphasis may here be on a demand or consumption-side understanding ('yuppies want to move to the inner city') or the supply or production side ('real estate owners can make more money if they upgrade their property'; for this 'rent gap theory,' cf. especially Smith, "Toward a Theory of Gentrification" and *The New Urban Frontier*). Accordingly, the implications for activism will be markedly different: 'Yuppies' are a far more identifiable target than economic structures and frequently invisible—often corporate—investors. Depending on the concrete target and aim of a specific movement, the types of coalitions will also frequently differ and may involve various constellations of tenants, artists, small shop owners, professionals, or leftist groups, and may be organized in local, regional, national, or even transnational networks. Moreover, we may heuristically distinguish between three forms of commitment: (1) community activism (whether explicitly theory-conscious or not), (2) activist or politically committed scholarship, (3) activist cultural production. As for the degree of explicit engagement with urban theory, we might differentiate between activism and cultural production that (1) appear to make no use of notions borrowed from 'critical urban studies,' (2) that implicitly use such notions or appear to be indebted to them, (3) that affirmatively deploy theoretical concepts, (4) that reflexively and critically make use of such concepts, occasionally with the more or less explicit aim to contribute new facets to theoretical discussions.

This contribution largely addresses the two latter forms as arguably the more common types: Given the demographics of many activist groups and the frequently academic background of many leading members (cf. Liss 257), it is hardly surprising that anti-gentrification and 'right to the city' movements in the US, Britain, Germany, and elsewhere frequently appear to be highly theory-conscious and deploy notions borrowed from Lefebvre, Castells, Harvey, Soja, and other key thinkers in 'critical urban studies.'[2]

2 | For the city as a location central to the formation of social movements and for a discussion of literature on 'urban social movements' (Lefebvre, Castells, Harvey, etc.), cf. Miller and Nicholls.

In a 2008 essay in the *New Left Review*, David Harvey captures the essence of what I take 'critical urban studies' to mean here:

The question of what kind of city we want cannot be divorced from that of what kind of social ties, relationship to nature, lifestyles, technologies and aesthetic values we desire. The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. [...] The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. [...] At this point in history, this has to be a global struggle, predominantly with finance capital, for that is the scale at which urbanization processes now work. [...] Lefebvre was right to insist that the revolution has to be urban, in the broadest sense of that term, or nothing at all. (23-40)

We can thus conceive of 'critical urban studies' as a broadly coherent tradition of leftist inquiry into the relations between the city and capitalism, questions of marginalization, power structures, and sociospatial developments, which seeks to point out strategies for alternative urban communities, taking its cues from leading exponents such as Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Manuel Castells, or Peter Marcuse. In a recent essay, Neil Brenner has conveniently identified four key principles of the tradition of 'critical urban studies': (1) it is interested in theory as such (not just as a tool for practice), (2) it is reflexive and situationally specific in the sense that it is aware of its local and historical positionality, (3) it is critical of merely descriptive (or even boosterist) urban studies that "promote the maintenance and reproduction of extant urban formations" (19), (4) it is interested in the distance "between the actual and the possible," between what is and what might be—the "ultimate goal being a different city as an expression of a different, just, democratic and sustainable society" (19 et passim; cf. also Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 5 et passim and further contributions in their volume). One can observe that many such movements generally seeking to foster a more equitable, sustainable, or democratic society, crystallize around fairly concrete issues such as activities against gentrification, specific building projects, the privatization of public space, 'neoliberal' urban growth policies, or protests drawing attention to housing issues in the city.

It is also to be observed, however, that most scholarly work in 'critical urban studies' and on urban activism tends to theorize *for* and *about*

these movements, an observation one may find somewhat surprising in the context of a movement so centrally concerned with questions of agency, voice, participation, and self-directedness. Take as a representative example the recent rather ambitious collection of essays entitled *Cities for People, not for Profit*, which brings together a number of the major figures in critical urban studies. The editors state as one of their main goals "to contribute intellectual resources that may be useful for those institutions, movements, and actors that aim to roll back the contemporary hypercommodification of urban life, and on this basis to promote alternative, radically democratic, socially just, and sustainable forms of urbanism" (Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2). In fact, in the entire volume, Jon Liss' essay on the nation-wide Right to the City (RTTC) Alliance in the US, largely a report of the organizational efforts and strategies of this group to move beyond traditional Alinsky-style community organizing, is the only one by an activist rather than by a scholar. This essay is also clearly the odd one out in the volume for being large devoid of theorizing. Addressing the issue of voice and agency, Liss states that the "leadership of NWCOs [New Working Class Organizations] is primarily university-educated, 'middle class', and oppressed nationality" and also comments on conflicts between university-educated middle-class activists and members of the class they are supposedly struggling for (257).

The heuristic categories introduced above and the efficacy—or lack thereof—of specific constellations of actors can be illustrated by means of the "Mission Yuppie Eradication Project" (MYEP) in San Francisco (1998-2000), which, because of the aggressive rhetoric of its posters, gained substantial press coverage (cf. Solnit and Schwartzenberg 124-28; Keating). In the years 1998-2000, when, in the wake of the 'dot-com boom,' gentrification became an increasingly pressing issue in San Francisco, protest crystallized in the city's Mission District, traditionally a working-class neighborhood. In this period, a number of pithily phrased posters called for vandalism against 'yuppie' vehicles and restaurants:

MISSION YUPPIE ERADICATION PROJECT. Over the past several years the Mission has been colonized by pigs with money. Yuppie scumbags have crawled out of their haunts on Union Street and [in] the suburbs to take our neighborhood away from us. [...] They come to party, and end up moving in to what used to be affordable rental housing. They help landlords drive up rents, pushing working and poor people out of their homes. [...] This yuppie takeover can be turned back. [...]

VANDALIZE YUPPIE CARS: BMWs—Porsches—Jaguars—SPORT-UTILITY VEHICLES [sic]. Break the Glass—Scratch the Paint—Slash Their Tires and Upholstery—Trash Them All. If yuppie scum know their precious cars aren't safe on the streets of this neighborhood, they'll go away and they won't come back—and the trendoid restaurants, bars and shops that cater to them will go out of business. [...] TAKE ACTION NOW. ("Mission Yuppie Eradication Project")

Unsurprisingly, the aggressive rhetoric of the poster is based on a demand-side understanding of gentrification and identifies "yuppie scumbags" as the targets of activism. While this poster does not make explicit use of any theoretical notion (and, though providing a by-the-book description of the process, appears deliberately to avoid the term 'gentrification'), a later poster from 1999 alludes to a key moment of urban protest and thus suggests familiarity with a tradition of theoretically informed activism. Translating a widely known Situationist graffiti from May 1968, "bientôt des ruines pittoresques," it calls for the destruction of what appear to have been iconic 'yuppie' bars and restaurants:

Soon to be picturesque ruins: During the next major urban riots, we must attack and destroy the following yuppie bars and restaurants in the Mission: [...] Beauty Bar [...] Tokyo A Go-Go, [...] the corporate-types inside make it look like a scene from a bad '80s movie starring Rob Lowe and Demi Moore [...] Blowfish Sushi [...], a nest of cell phone yuppies and upper middle class privilege [...] Circadia, a Starbucks [...] where virtual humans surf the Internet all day while slurping 7$ coffee drinks. [...] There are other places to be targeted—use your imagination. Be creative. Take action. Don't get caught. ("Mission Yuppie Eradication Project")

In a 2007 essay, "A Critique of the Mission Yuppie Eradication Project," Kevin Keating, who identifies himself as having been the MYEP's leading activist—partly, it seems, its *only* activist—engages with what he regards as the achievements and limitations of his professedly radical and revolutionary commitment. He comments on the high visibility gained by the aggressive rhetoric of the posters and regards the lack of a dedicated network as the key weakness of his stand-alone initiative. His highly self-conscious assessment needs to be quoted at some length:

In a de-politicized culture rampaging market forces can't be confronted effectively with conventional political language. So a logical first step in an effort to foment

resistance was to cover the walls of the Mission with a thousand photocopied posters calling for working people to resist the bourgeois invasion by vandalizing yuppie cars. [...] The posters communicated an extremist message in clear, simple language, avoiding Marxist or anarchist buzz-words. I described the process of gentrification without using the word 'gentrification.' As the posters hit the walls working people started fighting back. [...] And I used the global news media attention focused on the gentrification of the Mission as a soapbox for a larger anti-capitalist perspective. [...] The posters succeeded on the basic level that anti-capitalist agitprop efforts should aim at; they helped define a contemporary social problem in clear class conflict terms, and tried to move the fight away from the atomization and powerlessness of the democratic process toward some kind of large-scale direct action. Exactly what form that large-scale direct action would take wasn't clear to me [...] In the face of many decades of failure of a work-within-the-system perspective, and its inability to deliver the goods in both small ways and large, the field is wide open for a wholly different kind of autonomous direct action response, outside of and against the conventional, legitimate decision-making structures of democratic capitalism. [...] My focus was too narrow. I concentrated solely on the Mission District. My anti-gentrification effort happened at the high point of my love affair with the neighborhood I live in, and my passion blinded me to opportunities I might have otherwise taken advantage of. I should have exploited media coverage that came my way to get out more of a city-wide message against rent and landlords and the larger issue of housing as a commodity. Under the best circumstances a subversive effort can have a 'bleed-through' effect. What starts in one collective conflict between wage slaves and capital can spread or cross-pollinate into other everyday life situations, even ones that don't appear to be related to the initial issue. (Keating)

In keeping with these insights, Keating points to the 'dot-com bust' and the recession rather than to any activism to account for the fact that, at the time of his writing (2007), the Mission District was still largely working class and that gentrification had significantly slowed down (for an account of the MYEP, including an interview with Keating, cf. also Solnit and Schwartzenberg 124-28).

A particularly illuminating example of explicit engagement with 'critical urban studies' in urban activism and particularly in what might be termed 'activist cultural production' commenting *on* this phenomenon is to be found in the work of Christoph Schäfer, especially in his *Die Stadt ist unsere Fabrik/The City is Our Factory* an activist pictorial essay

on the history of the urban, detailing especially the 'right to the city' movement in Hamburg. How are theoretical concepts in urban studies appropriated and strategically deployed in these representations? To what extent are urban activism and activist cultural production self-reflexive and aware of their own ambivalence and potential for commodification? I will argue that some of the most theoretically informed exponents of these movements are keenly aware of this ambivalence and time and again ironically portray theory-inflected urban activism as to some extent the pursuit of an internationally connected urban elite failing to address the concerns of those groups most severely hit by gentrification and exclusion.

With the caveat that a discussion in print with only few illustrations is bound to fall short of fully doing justice to the primarily visual format of a large-format pictorial essay, I turn to this case study of activist cultural production of the highly theory-conscious and reflexive type.

Christoph Schäfer is a central figure in Hamburg's 'Recht auf Stadt' ('right to the city') movement, a network of some 25 initiatives working towards affordable housing, the preservation of public space and of urban green spaces, more participation, and a more democratic city. He has been called an "embedded artist" of the movement (moderator in Schäfer, "The City"), and his 2010 book *Die Stadt ist unsere Fabrik/The City is Our Factory*, a pictorial essay in some 160 drawings, is "a rhizomatic history of the urban" (publisher's blurb) from the first cities thousands of years ago to Hamburg in 2009. In the form of exploratory and annotated drawings and in some 15 pages of more discursive text densely printed in five columns per page,[3] it discusses issues such as the origin and development of urban settlements, the production of space, urban anthropology, the connections between social and spatial developments, urban imaginaries and identities, changing forms of work, participation, and bottom-up community organizing, gentrification, squatting, and the struggle against the privatization and commercialization of public space, city branding and marketing, the creative class discourse, or the role of art and artists in urban development.[4] Throughout, the book displays an acute

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3 | Like the entire book, these texts are in both English and German.

4 | The five chapters are titled as follows: "Lefebvre 4 Kids" (3), "Appropriated Space" (69), "1979: The City is Our Factory" (115), "Black Holes" (151), "Hamburg: Surrounding the 'Expanding City' with Projects" (165), "The Evening I Would Like to Have on Film" (272).

theory-consciousness and familiarity with central concepts of 'critical urban studies' in the sense outlined above. Here, as well as in interviews (cf. "Maschinen"), Schäfer very adeptly employs, cites, and alludes to Benjamin, Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin, Lefebvre, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, David Harvey, or Siqueiros and the aesthetics and politics of Mexican *muralismo*, as well as innumerable further directly apposite as well as arcanely related notions and concepts. I can here only discuss a small selection of issues and their negotiation and will do so focusing on those which (1) are most prominent in 'right to the city' movements generally and (2) best illustrate the poetics and politics of Schäfer's approach.

The more explicitly political sections dealing with the recent Hamburg initiatives revolve around the intersecting concerns of city branding and imagineering, the attempt at tailoring the city to the needs of the 'creative class,' and the privatization and commercialization of public space: "Unnoticed at first, something essential began to change in the cities when we started walking around with cardboard cups full of hot milk and coffee. Entire neighbourhoods soon gave you the feeling that you were purchasing a stay permit with your latte" (Schäfer, *Die Stadt* 142).

An impressive sequence of drawings explores the connection between neoliberal urban policies and the loss of urban memory emblematized in the collapse of the Cologne City Archive. On 3 March 2009, the Cologne City Archive, containing millions of documents dating all the way back to the High Middle Ages, collapsed into an open building excavation some 25 meters deep, resulting in the damage and partial loss of invaluable historical documents. The collapse appears to have been the result of criminal negligence and insufficient construction site security in privatized construction work on a new underground line: "Cologne, March 2009: Suddenly the earth opened up and the entire history of the city disappeared down a hole" (152).
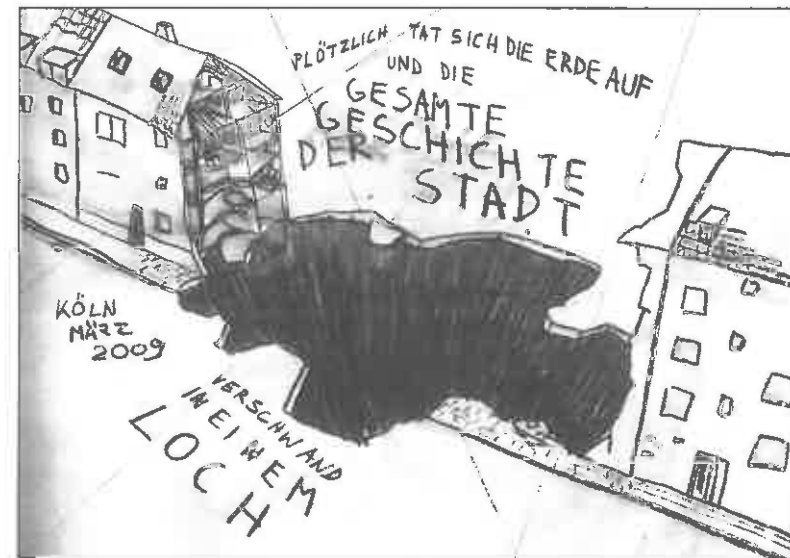

Fig. 1: Schäfer's representation of the Cologne City Archive disaster: "an almost biblical omen."

In an interview, Schäfer commented on the collapse as "an almost biblical omen for the end of the neoliberal city model" ("Biblisches Warnzeichen" 106; translation: JMG).

In a related vein, Schäfer attacks the way in which the City of Hamburg uncritically deployed Richard Florida's widely debated, reductionist 'creative class' policies (cf. Florida) in its urban development strategies in order to target this 'economically desirable' segment of the population. In addition to overstating the contribution of specific forms of culture to an attractive economic milieu, which has led to a socially exclusionist latte-macchiatoization of parts of the city, the concomitant instrumentalization of art and artists, as well as the gentrification associated with these processes have also met with significant resistance from artists refusing to be commodified as mere location factors conducive to the 'bohemian index' of a city.[5] The connection is captured as follows: "In 2004, Senator of Science Dräger hands out books by Richard Florida in the Hamburg

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5 | Cf. also the much-publicized protest of artists in Hamburg against such endeavours: "Kunst als Protest" from 2009.

city senate. Florida holds lectures. Roland Berger develops 'Hamburg, City of Talent'. Artists leave city" (174).

Arguably the central issue in this most topical and specific chapter "Hamburg: Surrounding the 'Expanding City' with Projects" (165-271) is that of gentrification, in response to which numerous projects and initiatives have been launched.
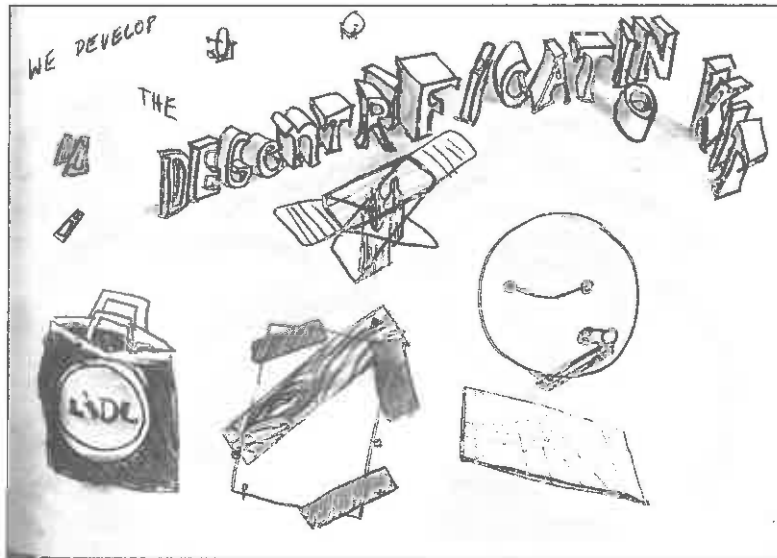

Fig. 2: The "degentrification kit": how to make a neighborhood unattractive to investors.

In addition to the more conventional flyers, protests, public lectures, performances, or squatting, one of the more humorous ideas is the "degentrification kit," a set of items and ideas to "ruin the image of the neighbourhood" so as to scare away investors: "add foreign names to your door bell [...] dry ugly clothing outdoors [the illustration suggests the type of ribbed undershirt popularly known as a 'wifebeater'] [...] [use] broken windows effect foil[6] [...] hang Lidl bag out of your window [...] add satellite

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6 | There is a certain irony here in the reference to Wilson and Kelling's notorious "Broken Windows" essay in that the 'broken windows theory' is usually vehemently attacked by 'critical urban theory'-inflected urban activism and scholarship.

dish (or 2, or 3!)" (183).[7] The caveat "But watch it—don't get too creative [where the creatives are working, rents go up]" (183) is characteristic of the constant awareness of the 'anti-gentrifier's dilemma,' the insight that even (and especially) resistant cultural production can be commodified.[8]

It is not least the ongoing light-hearted reflections on this ambivalence of activist art and the self-mockery in the awareness of a privileged form of theory Sudoku—insights which in no way trivialize the sincerity of the commitment—that makes Schäfer's work so compelling. This is especially prominent in the final chapter entitled "The Evening I Would Like to Have on Film." The book here represents the gathering of a group of—apparently privileged—activist friends engaging in clever 'urban studies talk' in a place none other than the McDonald's in Hamburg Central Station:

The evening I'd like to have as a movie began like this: We had arranged to meet with the Utopia Salon & Spa Group at the McDonald's in the central station. We drank lattes and gazed at the tracks. Only 3 people showed up. The conversation revolved around arcades, urbanity, rambling, the promises of a by-gone age as encapsulated in architecture. After a while we left and went on talking as we walked. The evening was dry and warm. It was August 21, 2009. (274)[9]

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7 | The phrases appear in the drawing, hence in no particular order; the order is mine.

8 | More generally, the 'anti-gentrifier's dilemma' refers to the problem that an awareness of one's own privileged position and even activism against gentrification may not be enough to avoid supporting the process by one's mere presence as someone able to pay higher rents. A pithy literary representation of the issue is to be found in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*: "One evening, Biju was sent to deliver hot-and-sour soups and egg foo yong to three Indian girls, students, new additions to the neighborhood in an apartment just opened under reviewed city laws to raised rents. Banners reading 'Antigentrification Day' had been hauled up over the street by the longtime residents for a festival earlier in the afternoon [...] One day the Indian girls hoped to be gentry, but right now, despite being unwelcome in the neighborhood, they were in the student stage of vehemently siding with the poor people who wished them gone" (49).

9 | Cf. also 284: "We stopped at a cellar restaurant. A place I had never been before. We got hold of a corner sofa and on went the conversation: Lefebvre and the urban revolution, David Harvey and the urban roots of the fiscal crisis, how

The corresponding drawing is highly allusive: three figures at a table perched above the platforms and underneath the steel arches of the station architecture reminiscent of the arches of the 19th-century Paris arcades memorialized in Benjamin's *Passagenwerk*.[10]
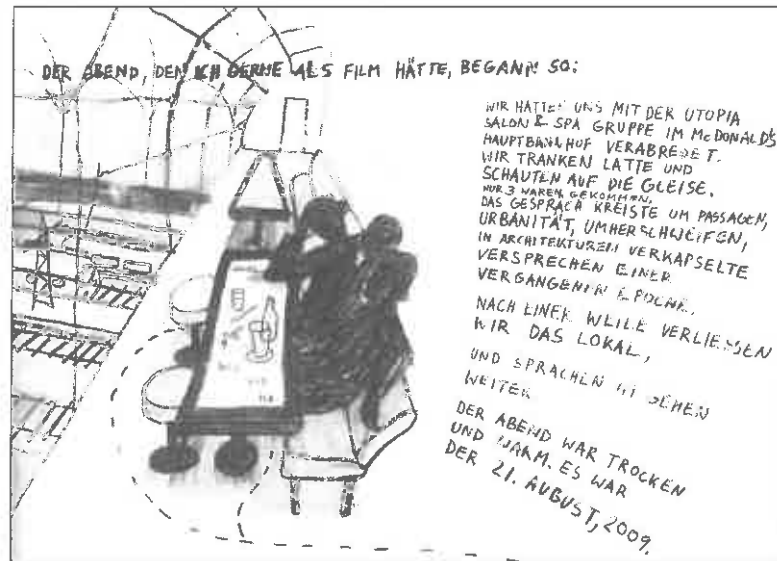

Fig. 3: Schäfer's allusive and self-reflexive mockery of privileged 'critical urban studies' talk in a Benjaminean setting.

The ambivalence of subversion and the awareness of the anti-gentrifier's dilemma directly tie in with the questions raised in my initial discussion of voice, agency, privilege, and the question of who, given the potential for commodification, ultimately benefits from such activism:

It was our most radical gestures that could best be made use of.—To increase the value of real estate, to construct new neighbourhood identities. As soon as there was an illegal club somewhere, a cappuccino bar would open next door,

a post-crisis urbanisation model might look, the invention of the Bohemian and its totalisation today, the 3D printer and Fab Lab ... Hours later we left the pub, poisoned with alcohol and nicotine" (284).

10 | In the Bergermann interview, he explicitly speaks of this as "a Benjaminean situation" (122; translation: JMG).

followed by a new media agency [...] we were management consultants. [...] [W]e had acquired precisely the skills that image capitalism needs—visually literate, consumption-competent truffle pigs. (132, 134)

This is remarkably close to Mayer's thoughts in her recent essay on some of the key issues in 'right to the city' activism:

Even though these coalitions do frequently succeed in preventing, or at least modifying crass neoliberal urban development projects, their struggles often end up saving some oases and protected spaces only for the *comparatively privileged protagonists*, spaces which increasingly become *instrumentalized in creative city branding efforts* in the competitive entrepreneurial urban policy game. The chapter thus raises the questions whether the 'right to the city' movements in the global North need not relate more directly to the struggles of groups that have been excluded from the model of the neoliberal city. (Mayer 64; my italics)

What Mayer here notes about the need to "relate" different types of urban struggles to each other is precisely what Mark Purcell has termed a "well-known problem for left politics [...] [the need] to combine local struggles into something larger without reducing each struggle to a homogenous unity" (562). Here, according to Purcell, "[t]he right to the city [*sensu* Lefebvre] can be useful in establishing relations of equivalence among groups in a broad counterhegemonic urban alliance" (571-72).

This need for a broad range of highly diverse urban social movements to march under *one* banner and the 'right to the city' as a claim with such an integrative potential are also a central and recurring subject in Schäfer's account of urban activism in Hamburg:

Right to the City: appropriation, social questions, counter-projects, international, tenant battles, poverty, solidarity, segregation, self-organized spaces[11] [...] *Unlikely alliance* [...] And there we are [...] a group of left activists, from different ethnical and religious backgrounds [...]. To come together and fight we use the term *Right to the City*. (Schäfer, *Die Stadt* 190)

11 | The terms and concepts appear in a drawing, hence in no particular order; the order is mine.

In search of 'success factors' for urban activism and activist cultural production, in addition to such organizational issues of community organizing, Schäfer in an interview also comments on the political implications of artistic form and the choice of media and genres:

U.B.: Your book is not poly-perspectivist, but functions in a rather linear way from beginning to end, beginning with the history of the city of 'Ur' and ending in the urban present.

C.S.: Strictly pseudo-linear. [...] I like techniques that compress things. It looks linear, fixed, pigeon-holed, but the brevity also opens up associative possibilities of jumping back and forth. Thus, even if universalism has rightly been criticized, such a schematic representation allows me to relate developments on different continents to each other—and thus also to relativize genealogies such as Eurocentrism. My book claims, first of all, to define fundamentally what a city is, what the urban revolution might be and what it aims at. At the same time, the book works against such linearity; there are constant prolepses and analepses. (Schäfer, "Maschinen" 119-20; translation: JMG)

Emphasizing the processuality and openness of drawing, he here speaks about drawing as an activity in which exploratory doodling, the deliberate putting-to-paper of an idea and the making of a product until the last moment do not have to be mutually exclusive: "A drawing can potentially escape goal-directedness and instrumentalization until the last second" (Schäfer, "Maschinen" 116). This understanding is developed further in response to a critical question about de-collectivization and his potential appropriation of drawings originally from and for a political context for his own artistic and economic self-promotion: "I was able to give talks in 'right to the city' contexts with these drawings, using them to illustrate Lefebvre's terms in a different way, thus using them for our exchange. There is no pure form that is entirely free of a potential commodification" (122).

Given this constant exploration of artistic strategies of subversion, the considerable publicity and success achieved by the Hamburg movement, and finally Schäfer's own prominent role in it as an activist, participant observer, and embedded artist, a comment on the intersection of activism and cultural production in an earlier section of the book might well be read as an oblique remark on his own successful negotiation of these issues:

"Some succeeded in connecting their sub-cultural and art practices with the struggles against gentrification" (*Die Stadt* 130).

A few tentative conclusions may be drawn based on the above observations: Strategically speaking, it seems that a success factor in urban activism is to achieve what Purcell calls "networks of equivalence [...] counterhegemonic combinations of differentiated but equivalent popular struggles" (562) and what Christoph Schäfer refers to as "unlikely alliances: *Letting disparities co-exist and emphasizing difference even while acting together*" (*Die Stadt* 236).

As far as aesthetic strategies in activist cultural production are concerned, they frequently appear to be the result of a keen awareness of 'the anti-gentrifier's dilemma.' But the more theory-conscious and self-reflexive artists and activists also appear to be aware that their own brand of urban activism is occasionally an activity of the privileged rather than of those most directly affected by gentrification and social exclusion. It seems that one of the recurring strategies in response to these dilemmas is a highly self-conscious, extremely reflexive, media-conscious form of experimentalism in cultural production, frequently with fairly explicit claims as to the emancipatory potential of this formally experimental form of presentation. In Schäfer's case, his highly self-conscious formal strategies of undercutting commodification appear to work: The drawings have been used in lectures at MIT and elsewhere and thus furnish material for academic discussions, but they also work as posters, flyers, food for thought in community workshops, etc. Thus, without claiming that Schäfer's work was pivotal in this, the Hamburg 'right to the city' initiative has had a number of very remarkable successes; and as long as activist cultural production can thus be tapped into at various levels—and the kind of deliberately open-ended, exploratory process of drawing seems to lend itself to that—, it does have the potential to be instrumental in the kind of urban resistance movement we are concerned with here.[12]

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12 | This essay is a revised version of parts of my earlier essay "Critical Urban Studies and/in 'Right to the City' Movements: The Politics of Form in Activist Cultural Production," which is to appear in *Resistance and the City: Challenging Urban Space*, edited by Pascal Fischer and Christoph Ehland, Brill/Rodopi, forthcoming.

IMAGES

Fig. 1: Schäfer's representation of the Cologne City Archive disaster: "an almost biblical omen."

Fig. 2: The "degentrification kit": how to make a neighborhood unattractive to investors.

Fig. 3: Schäfer's allusive and self-reflexive mockery of privileged 'critical urban studies' talk in a Benjaminean setting.

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