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<http://latabacalera.net/about-la-tabacalera/>.

In the shade of a tree in the patio of la Tabacalera, the only place to hide from the burning sun, she paints the ground with black colour. She follows the movement of the light, capturing the shadows of the leaves. I see her every day. She can not tell, when she will be finished, always working on bits here and there. When I ask her why she is painting the shadow on the floor she explains to me that she loves this tree. In the patio, it is the only one of its kind, breaking through the old concrete ground. When looking closely one realises, that there are two trees, two different species growing into one. It is a symbol of being able to work together, of the fact that we can overcome difference. This is also what characterises 15M, she says. Furthermore, the tree symbolises the power of art breaking through rigid systems and its ability to connect people despite diversity. It is a tree, which did not grow straight, it is crooked and twisted, but it grew big enough to give shade for people to gather below. For her this tree is a symbol for la Tabacalera, and for everything we can achieve collectively through art.

June 2013 - a conversation with Artista Anonimx

(during a collaborative art project with 15M Poesía Plítica, and Toma la Tele)

ABSTRACT

The current crisis of neoliberalism has triggered a wave of social movements over the past years. Critical urban theory examines such movements, and the spaces they produce, as loci of progressive social-cultural forces. Recently, there has been an emphasis on artistic practice, both within research and in contemporary Urban Social Movements. It is argued, that artistic groups produce *Spaces of Creative Autonomy* in the context of social movements struggling with neoliberal economic and urban development. These *Spaces of Creative Autonomy* are positioned in the centre of a tension field between two pairs of poles. On the one hand these are artistic and political activism, and on the other institutionalisation and autonomy. Through an abductive qualitative research approach this analytical framework was both applied to and derived from theory and fieldwork. Two case studies were researched, la Tabacalera in Madrid and the Gängeviertel in Hamburg. The aim was to draw an analytical framework, which enables the exploration of *Spaces of Creative Autonomy* without getting caught in exclusive and excluding categories of either political activism or artistic involvement, of either radical autonomy or conformist institutionalisation.

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Thanks to my family.

To my friends in Vienna.

And to the friends I made on this journey through Europe.

Without you, this would not have been possible.

To all the new friends I made in la Tabacalera and the Gängeviertel.

If you'd recognise yourself, this would be the greatest reward.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Choosing the academic field of Urban Social Movements (USMs) for the master thesis research had two main reasons. Firstly, USMs are of central concern within critical urban theory, as loci of progressive cultural forces producing counter hegemonies and spaces of autonomy (Castells, 1989, Harvey, 2012, Leontidou, 2006, Carroll and Ratner, 2010, Mayer, 2012c, Pruijt, 2003, Purcell, 2009). Secondly, the past years of the global financial and European economic crisis have instigated the birthplace of several newly formed urban resistance movements. In Europe they range from the Spanish 15M or *Indignados* movement, to the Syntagma square in Athens, and Occupy camps in many cities across the continent. Additionally we saw global street rallies on October 15th 2011, which were protest made by the indignant '99%' and occurred in around 1,000 cities worldwide calling for 'Global Change' and 'Real Democracy' (Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013). The crisis of neoliberalism and current urban politics - in many cases fostering neoliberal policies enhancing inequality and deprivation - had been at the core of countless other local and transnational struggles some of them under the slogan of 'the right to the city' based on Lefebvre (Brenner et al., 2012, Mayer, 2012c). This crisis of the neoliberal economic and political order is a breeding ground for different USMs, of which particularly those with *the pursuit of anti-systemic social change*¹ are in focus throughout this thesis.

“[O]nly by analysing the relationship between people and urbanization will we be able to understand cities and citizens at the same time. Such a relationship is most evident when people mobilize to change the city in order to change society.” (Castells, 1983:xvi)

The motivation for this research derived from both theory and practice. In the beginning of the process was the 'Recht auf Stadt' network in Hamburg, the biggest and most active 'Right to the City' movement in the German speaking world during the past years. Within this network the case of the Gängeviertel caught particular interest, not just because it was the first lasting political squat in Hamburg in almost two decades, but also because the squatters in this case seemed to be an unusual group of people. The media characterised the 2009 occupied complex as 'artists-squat'.

¹ It is difficult to label this broad range of social movements, which had at different places been given different names. But the USMs in focus here share a perspective of challenging the legitimacy of the prevalent economic and political power relations. They should be distinguished from conservative or single issued protests. It is an inherent crisis of representation, of liberal representative democracy, which lies at the core of the activists engagement. As suggested by Negri and Hardt (2011) the connecting element is the anti-systemic demand for 'Real Democracy', emphasising the commonalities of different local protests over the past years. Other authors may refer to anti-capitalist, alternative, radical-left, autonomous or counter-neoliberal social movements.

In fact it was a mixed group of people with various interests - artists and others - who initiated the process of this social-cultural centre. Having had the chance to move to Madrid, one of the epicentres of the European crisis, several local projects and groups engaged in the network of 15M were of interest. This movement which emerged out of a popular protest march on May 15th 2011, was followed by the occupation of the central city square Puerta del Sol, and is now manifested in a strong network of neighbourhood assemblies and other initiatives all over Spain. The decision was made to focus on la Tabacalera, a historic tobacco factory complex which came into re-use as a self-managed social-cultural centre in 2010 and has strong relations to the 15M movement.



Fig.1



Fig.2

As a final project of an international and interdisciplinary Master programme, this work resembles different academic approaches, based on a social-scientific footing. Main influences are critical urban theory, critical social and economic geography, but also political and sociological concepts are applied, and the research is further influenced by aspects of cultural studies. The interest in arts and artistic groups within social movement research origins in a ‘cultural turn’ in the academic field during the mid 1990s with a renewed interest in “how people make sense of their world“ (Melucci, 1996:68). This can be related to a more cultural ground in the issues of social movements of this time (Jasper, 1997, Johnston and Klandermans, 1995, McCaughan, 2012). The choice to focus on groups within broader coalitions reflects an interest in movement internal structures and an engagement with social groups as ‘places of cultural enactment’ (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995). It will be argued, that it is within spaces of creative autonomy, that on these testing grounds, people can live the changes they want to see in society, and furthermore, that USMs are closely interlinked with such spaces.

Outline

Following this introduction, chapter II gives answers to two arising questions: Why the focus on artists and what is the relevance of space? Then, the research problem, the ‘puzzle’, will be presented together with the research questions. Chapter IV entails reflections on methodology. The research strategy is introduced, applied methods are explained, the role of the case studies is outlined, and they are presented. It is important to note, that the approach chosen rejects the separation of theoretical and empirical insights and mutually refers to both while engaging with terms, concepts and ideas. Chapter V deals with USMs in the context of the crisis of neoliberalism and outlines the two USMs which are related to the case studies. Then chapter VI discusses the particularities of the artistic sphere within USMs, whereas chapter VII takes a look at the political discourse on counter-hegemony, agonism, and anarchy. Finally, the chapter ‘Spaces of Creative Autonomy’ closes the circle and relates the previously examined to the research puzzle and questions.

II. BUILDING A FRAMEWORK

A. Why artistic groups are interesting

“It remains true that cultural producers may use the power conferred on them, above all in periods of crisis, by their capacity to produce a systematic and critical representation of the social world in order to mobilize the virtual force of the dominated and to help to subvert the established order in the field of power.” (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:252)

Since 1968, or how Wallerstein labelled it the ‘world revolution of 1968’, artists and artistic practice seem natural ingredients of political activism, resistance and also protest research. McCaughan (2012) wrote about the role of artists in the 1968 and following social movements of Mexican and Chicano groups. The research flows from the premise “that art associated with social movements helped to constitute, not simply reflect, the dramatic social and political changes [...]. The social power of activist artists emanates from their ability to provoke movement constituents and other publics to see, think, imagine, and even feel in meaningfully new ways.” (ibid.:6). Moreover are protests of our times often colourful and creative happenings, seemingly artistic interventions and for this he argues that artists enrich the collective toolbox of social change.

“[T]here are also reasons to be hopeful about the prospects for new forms of social movement activism in which artists continue to play pivotal roles.”
(McCaughan, 2012:169)

In Madrid, during the occupation of Puerta del Sol, one of the first and most central tents was the organisational unit ‘Artes gráficas y plásticas’. Also Occupy, which gained biggest momentum in North American cities, brought together several groups related to artistic practice such as OccupyArt,



Fig.3

or OccupyArtists. Important implications are, that these groups are not necessarily artists in the sense of an artistic education or professional occupation, but rather groups of people who get together in support of a social movement and see their role best in creative groups, producing artworks as much as posters, buttons, t-shirts or other utensils for the movement.

Added to this, it is the everyday news reports which emphasise, surely often over-emphasise, the position of artistic and creative resistance. One current example are the protests around the demolition of Gezi Park in Istanbul. Headlines of a German pianist who played in the newly

occupied park or photos of a ballet dancer with a gas mask were much easier distributed in the international press than the complex issues of the USM. In practice the last years have shown, that it is often the artistic and creative expressions of a USM which determine its broader representation in our visual society.

It will be discussed in depth afterwards what role artists and cultural production take in current USMs reacting to the crisis of neoliberalism². It is within a critical academic approach, that different theorists see artists within a USM in a particularly important position. Artists and cultural producers have important linkage potential across different movements and outsiders, as well as having often proven special media and publicity skills (Harvey, 2012, Harvey, 2000, Novy and Colomb, 2012, Mayer, 2012a). At the same time it is important to notice, that artists and other cultural producers are being exploited and co-opted in the current neoliberal system³ in an extreme way, which causes alienation among them, because they realise the “first-hand appropriation and exploitation of their creativity“ (Harvey, 2012: 110). Further there is a notion in philosophy and critical thought, that the artist takes a special stance in society (Foucault, 2008 [1983-1984], Mouffe, 2007). In the words of Foucault, artists are ‘truth-tellers‘ in our social world, who articulate feelings and notions which are inside our society, but can not be articulated with the means and symbols of the dominant culture.

“The consensus of culture has to be opposed by the courage of art in its barbaric truth.“
(Foucault, 2008 [1983-1984]:189)

² “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. [...] There has everywhere been an emphatic turn towards neoliberalism in political-economic practices and thinking since the 1970s. Deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision have been all too common. [...] Neoliberalism has, in short, become hegemonic as a mode of discourse.“ (Harvey, 2005: 2-3).

³ When referring to the ‘neoliberal system‘ of a city, it seems important to point out, that the view argued in this thesis is that the current economic system is dominated by neoliberal policies. It does not mean that all political decisions made within this system are per se neoliberal. In the words of Scharenberg and Bader (2009: 327) I “would emphasize that there are many actors and movements influencing urban development and politics, and that cities are characterized by frictions and contestations. Therefore, we prefer to speak of a city dominated or governed by neo-liberal concepts rather than using terms like ‘neo-liberal city’, because the latter leaves little analytical space for the frictions and contestations within a city,“ Especially in Western European cities welfare regimes established by social-democratic politics in times of Keynesianism and economic boom are - although prevalently weakened - still dominant factors in the urban society as well as the cityscapes (Burgers 1996; Hamnett 1996).

B. Why space matters

In the first draft the idea was to focus on ‘artistic groups’ within USMs with a person-centred approach looking at artists. First contact with the field led to a reconsideration of this, since this selection criteria did not match the idea and neither the research problem in focus. It would have put the emphasis too much on what McCaughan researched, the artistic individual, and not the broader phenomena of the creative and artistic elements of current resistance. The focus on spaces of creative autonomy marks a different way. Researching locally rooted, in a certain way autonomous, self-organised, artistic cultural centres allows to engage with a group of people within a USM who are reachable around a locality. Furthermore it allows to engage in the discourse on the co-optation, institutionalisation and commercialisation of artistic-cultural spaces in today’s cities.

“Places are inhabitable sites where the values of life in resistance can be reinforced by daily experience.” (Hollon and Lopez, 2007:61)

In critical theory several authors point out the amplifying of multiple local and lasting spaces within social movements, as the spaces where movements emerge out of and disperse into⁴. Particularly in ‘B-phases’ of social movements, after periods of mass mobilisation and large protests, liberated spaces and neighbourhood struggles gain importance for their continuation. Similarly, McCaughan (2012) reports about the Mexican and Chicano movements of 1968, explaining that when the movement groups disbanded during the 70s, just those groups lasted, who had established sustainable, community-based organisations around local spaces. Mayer theorises a similar process for the ‘movements of the squares’ of the past years. After popular occupations are evicted or ended in another way, the movements “powerful resistance energy has [...] in many cities turned to urban neighborhoods and community struggles” (Mayer, 2012a: 558). Routledge (2003) argues, that within contemporary globally networked USMs, place-based spaces still exist and are important alternative articulations to the current neoliberal system. Another aspect is the dynamic of co-optation of autonomous spaces in today’s ‘creative cities’ addressed just briefly at this point. Anti-systemic, and more or less radically anti-capitalist, groups find themselves in a constant struggle for achieving and keeping liberated spaces for the USM. Most often the local authorities use coercive forces against squatting and other forms of occupations. Artistic-cultural spaces often engage in some kind of institutionalised and legalised process, and end up as places of exploitation of cultural and social work, and moreover through co-optation they are turned into assets of the local state (Harvey, 2012, López, 2012, Mayer, 2012c, Novy and Colomb, 2012).

⁴ Compare for example Harvey, 2012, Leontidou, 2010, Mitchell, 2003, Marínez-López and García Bernardos, 2012.

III. 'INTELLECTUAL PUZZLE' AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mason (2002) calls for 'intellectual puzzles' as the essence of the project enquiry, being central to all qualitative social research. In this case the puzzle described below is the outcome of an abductive and cyclical research process, which will be explained below. At this point it is necessary to state, that just towards the end of the process the research problem and questions were articulated in the following way, but had been put to the front to increase readability. The structure of the text is chosen in a way that here all relevant terms and ideas are introduced and set in relation to each other, while their meaning - in theory and practice - will be discussed after the methodological chapter.

Focussing on artistic groups in current USMs there can be two frontiers identified which are specific challenges to everyday practice of the social actors. The distinction between radical autonomy and forms of institutionalisation is the first. Since the USMs in focus here take a critical stance towards the state and public institutions, questions of autonomy arise. This is particularly important regarding the spaces they occupy⁵. Lasting physical spaces, in which people can gather and effectively organise themselves, face the question of what degree of autonomy they are aiming for and whether they should engage in a process of institutionalisation or legalisation. Squatted social-cultural centres can create spaces of radical autonomy from the state, but are usually in threat of eviction and coercion and thus in a constant fight. Some forms of institutionalisation may improve this situation of uncertainty, allowing more or less temporary 'security' of the appropriated spaces. Within current USMs there is an ongoing debate about the varying degrees of autonomy and institutionalisation. The opposition between extra-institutional movement culture and the institutionalised moderate left had been identified as very relevant cleavage (Flesher Fominaya and Cox, 2013). Having a contract with local authorities is often interpreted from radical autonomous groups as betrayal and enough reason to boycott a centre. But the constant threat of eviction does not allow the development of projects, which is particularly necessary for artistic production and creativity. This results in dilemmas for social-cultural or artistic centres.

The second frontier is one between artistic and political activism, or short between arts and politics within USM. Without arguing for a dichotomous picture, this research identifies a field of tension between these two poles. No clearcut borders are given, but there is a different way of working at hand and a different logic of aims and tactics can be observed. While artists often follow a radical lifestyle and take clear political positions, they primarily

⁵ Online, this results in software solutions in order to code and hide organisational structures. In the urban public space, for demonstrations and manifestations, the decision needs to be taken to ask for permission or to expect strong coercive state power, which in many cases happens either ways. But - without denying their importance - neither cyber-space nor temporary mobilisations and street rallies are in focus here.

produce art, for intrinsic or other reasons⁶. It is obvious, that there are all kinds of in-between social practices of engagement, still it seems a useful frame for analysis.

Both of these frontiers do not mark some kind of radical dichotomy. When Melucci (1996:4) writes about the “the crisis of such polar distinctions“ he refers to classics such as ‘state’ and ‘civil society’. He expresses a change in our ‘conceptual universe’ which had been introduced through the changes in the forms of collective action which social movements realise nowadays. In the past decades of neoliberalisation different social movements groups went in



Fig.4

some kind of institutionalised state, and can not be distinguished strictly from the ‘state’. Since the core of the argument relevant to the setting of the concept spaces of creative autonomy is placed right in the ‘in-between’ of those two pairs of terms, charting them as two tension fields seems useful⁷.

Layering the two frontiers on top of each other, opens four spheres. The graphic lines which represent the frontiers are not to be mistaken as sharp distinctions, more should they encourage a discussion of the spheres between the poles which are issued. The outer circle represents the framing of the discourse within the field of USMs.

The upper left field is characterised by a certain level of institutionalisation and artistic production, it will be called ‘sphere of co-optation’. An artistic organisation could be categorised, which acts within public institutions or/and is publicly subsidised. If such a group engages in a protest or forms of resistance within a USM their artwork can be easily co-opted by the establishment in forms which will be explained below. On the upper right side there is an institutionalised political field which will be called ‘sphere of political reform’.

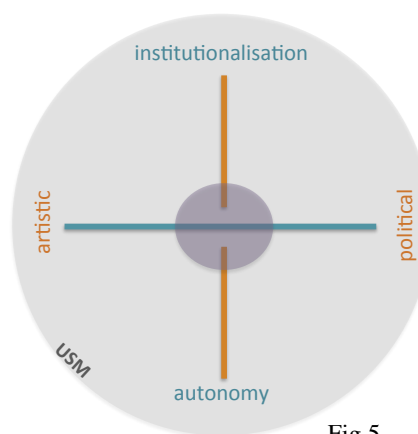


Fig.5

⁶ Political activity seems to be differently motivated, although, this statement should not mean that political activism has no underlying individual or social purposes and effects. Psychological research deals with the motivation and personal benefits of activism (e.g. Klar and Tasser, 2009), but this exceeds the framework of this thesis.

⁷ Movement internal tension fields of that kind are nothing new, as can be read in McCaughan, where he quotes from an interview held with Mónica Mayer, a critical feminist Mexican artist. She described her situation during the social movements of the 70s as follows, “if in the Left it was considered bourgeois to discuss feminism, within the feminist movement it was considered bourgeois to discuss art“ (McCaughan, 2012:65).

An example for a group within these schemes could be an oppositional political party or labour organisation, which may have emerged out of a USM, but imagines the possibility of change through - although probably radical - reforms of the current political institutions.

The lower left corner marks the ‘sphere of the autonomy of art’. As it will be discussed more in depth, this is the sphere of artistic groups and artistic practice which acts in the spirit of what had been labelled ‘art for art’s sake’. This school of thought embraces the necessity of art being autonomous, and not guided by a clear purpose or commissioner. The lower right corner will be called ‘sphere of radical autonomy’ and contains politically active groups within USMs which embrace the ideals of radical autonomy and engage in autonomous spaces.

This is the scheme which frames the ‘intellectual puzzle’ dealt with in this research. Graphically the puzzle lies right in the centre of the framework outlined above. Groups which are part of USMs, but find themselves in the middle of the two outlined tension fields. On the one hand they combine interests of artistic autonomy with such of political radical autonomy. Seeking for spaces which allow artistically free working conditions to realise creative potentials but at the same time engaging in a radical political sphere. In order to create lasting artistic and cultural projects, there is a big interest in keeping the used spaces, which is often achieved through a form of institutionalisation and contractual situations with public authorities. This is what will be called ‘spaces of creative autonomy’, which often lay the grounds for artistic groups engaging in USMs. This research puzzle was developed together with evolving research questions.

Research Questions

“Research questions [...] are those questions to which you as researcher really want to know the answers, and in that sense they are the formal expression of your intellectual puzzle“ (Mason, 2002:20).

Research questions usually mark the beginning of the process, but research circumstances may lead to a revision of the questions. Especially in abductive qualitative research - as explained below - the researcher is involved in “a learning process, of discovering questions as well as answering them“ (Blaikie, 2010:66). Emancipatory social research is not merely about answering questions but should report what is happening under a constructive and insightful framework, since the “job of most [...] social science is to summarize, codify, and otherwise “package“ important social movements [...], to make them legible and understandable“ (Scott, 2012b:162). During the process of researching and writing this thesis the research questions have adapted to the input from both the theories and the empirical world.

The central research question, outlined in January 2013, is: *What is the role of artists and artistic practise in current USMs fighting neoliberal economic and/or urban development?*⁸ Around this question academic theory had been acquired, related reports from the empirical world had been followed and searched for, and fieldwork was carried out. Implementing all this the main question can be linked to the 'intellectual puzzle'.

The final research questions includes aspects, which moved into focus after the first draft had been outlined. They transform the research puzzle in a set of questions. Considering the current state of the USMs in focus here, which are in a what will be called 'B-phase', brought up a particular interest in the implications which occur in a time after mass mobilisation and hype.

What is the role of spaces of creative autonomy in current USMs fighting neoliberal economic and/or urban development?

- (1) What is the relation between the group and the USM they are connected with?*
- (2) What is the relation between the groups and individuals creative work and their political activism?*
- (3a) What are the positions of the group towards the autonomy of the space they are active in?*
- (3b) To what extent does some form of institutionalisation influence the spaces of creative autonomy?*
- (4) In what way does the current "B-phase" of the USM impact on the spaces of creative autonomy?*

Aim of this thesis is to be able to give replies to this set of descriptive questions. Additionally there are two further aspects which are discussed implicitly throughout the text. *Why are groups active in spaces of creative autonomy giving up some degrees of their autonomy to engage in processes of institutionalisation and legalisation. And further, why do they decide to relate their artistic practice to political activism, engaging in spaces of creative autonomy?* Even if it will not be possible to give answers to those questions based on this research, there is a tentative answer, which was an essential motivation for this research: *Spaces of creative autonomy serve as points of entrance into struggles of USMs.* Admittedly, this is as much a hope or cry from some critical academics (Harvey, 2012, Harvey, 2000, Novy and Colomb, 2012, Mayer, 2012a), as it is a personal one. It is an expression of the question of critical theory of 'What is to be done? And who the hell is going to do it' (Harvey and Wachsmuth, 2012).

⁸ Additionally the preliminary focus of the research subquestions can be found in the appendix.

IV. METHODOLOGY

IV.A. Research Strategy

When introducing the research strategy it seems necessary to be aware of the perspective taken by the researcher in relation to ‘the researched’. Mason uses the term ‘active reflexivity’ (2002:7), advocating for the researcher’s need to constantly remind oneself of questions such as: ‘What is my role in the process of data collection?’ and ‘What is the purpose of my research, what am I doing this for?’. The social researcher, particularly in qualitative research, can never be a neutral data collector. This makes it necessary to provide the reader with information which allows to evaluate the adequacy of the research strategy, as exposing one’s motivation (Dubois and Gadde, 2002, Mason, 2002). Because an author’s subjective position together with the personal history has an impact on the gathering and interpretation of data (McCaughan, 2012).

The motivation of this Master thesis was more than just curiosity, but an attempt to solve a personal problem, pursuing personal commitment. During the past years critical movements and urban uprisings arose across the world, but I always happened to be in a somehow distant-observer position. The only bigger movement in my native city Vienna happened in Autumn 2009, the largest student protests and occupation since 1968, just during my semester abroad in Aarhus, Denmark. I turned into an affirmative, but always outside standing follower of revolutionary potentials and mobilisations. During my journey through four European capital cities, living in each just for several months over the past two years, I started asking myself how I could get engaged in a local struggle in solidarity with others in a transnational network? I experienced, that social-cultural centres and critical-artistic practices often serve as entrance point to USMs. This was the point of departure for a self experiment of which this thesis is the outcome.

“We all write and speak from a particular place and time, from a history and a culture which is specific. What we say is always ‘in context’, positioned. [...] It is worth remembering that all discourse is ‘placed’, and the heart has its reasons.” (Hall, 1990:222-223)

Following Blaikie’s (2010) classifications, the researcher’s position was most closely to a ‘faithful reporter’ and influenced by the critical position. The first emphasises that no detachment between researcher and researched can fully be reached, rather should “the participants speak for themselves and the researcher reports their way of life” (ibid.:51). This position is based on Weberian ‘verstehen’ but with an emphasis on a sociology of the everyday life. Added to this the critical position rejects all ‘objective illusions’ breaking with

the Weberian aim of reaching some kind of objectivity⁹. Subjectivity is to be seen as an ‘essential element of understanding’ (Stake, 1995:45), which is dialogical between the researcher and the researched. The emphasis was put on a process of learning while researching.

“Verstehen is an approach to knowledge that calls for empathy, compassion, and understanding. In line with an anarchistic approach, it involves a deep commitment to and involvement with those under study, as well as an attempt to connect with the intentions, passions, and lives of those in the margins.” (Fernandez, 2009:99)

Research Paradigm

In a final step of abstraction as part of the research strategy, Blaikie (2010) suggests to outline the stance towards research paradigms, meaning a broader theoretical position. As mentioned in the above this thesis is to be seen in the context of Critical theory. As explained by Blaikie (2010:100) it implies “an emancipatory interest in human autonomy“, and emphasises the importance of describing social crisis in order to identify ‘what needs to be done’. It combines an Idealist ontological position, posing that shared interpretations built social reality and those interpretations are re-produced in the everyday life of social actors, with a Social Constructionist epistemological perspective. As mentioned above meaning is something which is produced in a dialogue, the social scientist is reinterpreting everyday knowledge into her/his technical language, and “all social enquiry reflects the standpoint of the researcher“ (ibid.:95).

IV.B. Methodological Approach

In order to connect the research strategy to the research questions, a more concrete methodological approach is needed. Following the principles of abductive research Dubois and Gadde (2002) developed a research method which they call ‘systematic combining’. It is a dialectic process of combining and entwisting theoretical knowledge and the social world of the actors which are investigated, with an emphasis on a bottom-up approach. In abductive research, “the original framework is successively modified, partly as a result of unanticipated empirical findings, but also of theoretical insights gained during the process. This approach creates fruitful cross-fertilization where new combinations are developed through a mixture of established theoretical models and new concepts derived from the confrontation with reality“ (Dubois and Gadde, 2002:559). Concepts are used as in- and output of social research

⁹ When building upon the sociological tradition of ‘verstehen’ in a critical analysis it is important to distance oneself from any form of ‘intellectual arrogance’, which sometimes had been the outcome of such research (Ferrell, 2009).

within an ‘evolving framework’. The aim is to achieve a balance between a comprehensible research design but not depending on too rigid prior structuring. This might blind the researcher to features found in the field or adaptations to theoretical inputs (Blaikie, 2010, Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Qualitative research should be “strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual” (Mason 2002:7).

Point of departure is both academic theory and the social actors everyday life. The aim is to enter their world and to further “re-describe these motives and meanings, and the situation in which they occur” (Blaikie, 2010:19). Despite dealing with activist groups the approach chosen is not a militant or activist research (e.g. López and Fernándet, 2012), it is not an ‘insider’ position. The intention is, to understand the situation as a not ‘native’ person in a social setting. As Blaikie (2010:90) describes the “techniques available to a researcher to learn a way of life are the same as those available to any person who wishes to become a member of a group”. The aim is to abstract this everyday practice for more systematic accounts and the generation of concepts. Mason (2002) calls for a qualitative research which aims at understanding and cross-contextual generalities - or ‘limited generalization’ (Blaikie, 2010:83) - rather than mere descriptions, which is why she suggests to work with research puzzles.

The ‘preliminary analytical framework’ provides preconceptions but is developed further through discoveries of both empirical observation and theoretical interpretation and reflection. This ‘evolving framework’ guides the accumulation of empirical data (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Applied to case study research, they emphasise that a standardised and planned process of different research phases - first theory then empirical work - cannot realise all the potential advantages. This is why Dubois and Gadde suggest a research process which interrelates four, often separated, research phases into one. Their approach was adopted to the particular setting of this research.

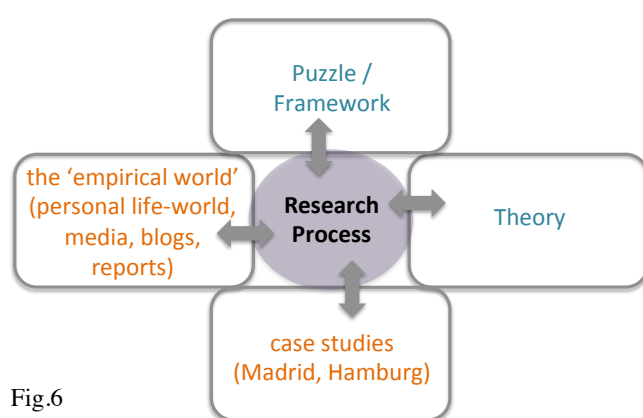


Fig.6

Abductive Research Spheres

Own layout based on
Dubios and Gadde's
'systematic combining' (2002:555)

The research puzzle frames the guiding direction of the research, while it is also influenced by the other fields. It is built upon the theoretical inputs and the ‘empirical world’, and further it

stands in a dialogue with the experiences from the case studies. The case studies are the ‘testing ground’ for the framework. The ‘empirical world’ means the lifeworld of the researcher as much as mass-media news, reports in social media, blogs or publications. Since the topic of USMs, particularly during the past years, is represented in the everyday life, the daily news and casual conversations, it is part of the personal lifeworld of the researcher and can not be seen separately.

‘Systematic combining’ delivers a fruitful practical interpretation of an abductive research process, but there are also important adoptions in relation to the specific research topic addressed here. Dubois and Gadde (2002:556) try “to match theory with reality” in their single case study research on industrial outsourcing. When researching social groups in USMs there is not ‘one reality’ which can be matched with an applied theory. There is a different aim, characterised by trying to describe and understand theoretical concepts in relation to the lifeworld of the social actors of the case studies, and vice-versa.

The two case studies, La Tabacalera in Madrid as well as the Gängeviertel in Hamburg, were visited at different times throughout the research process, with first exploratory visits to Hamburg in November 2012 and February 2013 and to Madrid in March 2013. This had a major impact on the ‘evolving framework’ as it is outlined now. The intensive fieldwork in Madrid was carried out during June 2013, which lead to the ‘research puzzle’ as it is presented in chapter (3). During July 2013 intensive fieldwork was carried out in Hamburg. At that point the research puzzle as it is now was settled and the aim was to apply it to the case study. This marks a slight shift to a more deductive final stage of the research. The abductive approach as ‘systemic combining’ is also reflected in the structure of the thesis, with no clear-cut separation of an theoretical part and a empirical part, which is also related to the applied research methods as will be explained below.

Applied research methods

A combination of qualitative empirical social research methods were applied. The influential ‘empirical world’ is captured through secondary sources such as reports from other USMs or potential cases in books, blogs and social media, as well as mass-media reports. Though, no structured media-analysis has been conducted.

“To understand why and how people organize themselves to protest against things they dislike, we need to know what they care about, how they see their place in the world [...].” (Jasper, 1997:12)

The case study research combines guideline interviews during the exploratory phase and with individuals representing other initiatives with the local USMs, non-participant to participant observation including informal conversations during the intensive fieldwork phase. The latter

more ethnographic methods represent a cultural approach, which aims at understanding rather the particular than the general focussing on the subjective instead of seeking for an objective view¹⁰ (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). This approach brings together the observation of the focus group, engaging within the local space of creative autonomy, as well as individual conversations in the natural setting of the social actors. The aim is to “build narratives from personal stories” (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith, 2002:200) and connect them to the insights gained during the observation. “[T]he everyday life within a movement - as the loci of cultural production“ is of interest, since just the daily interactions enable the researcher to investigate the subcultures which are created (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995:11-12). There are different approaches to participant observation and in particular the position the researcher takes in the field. If the aim is to look at group-internal specificities one needs to be different from the studied social setting, since otherwise the ‘special’ behaviour cannot be spotted (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). The aim should be to see the social setting from different members of the group. Just through the participant observation one can shed light onto the movements internal culture being among the people, and get insights which would not be seen in one-to-one interviews. The research draws from personal relations which had been established during the participant observation, from journal notes and informal analysis (Hollon and Lopez, 2007). In addition - and sometimes contrast - to classical social research methods the fieldwork was influenced by a critique of these methods. In line with Feyerabend, paraphrased by Ferrell (2009:74), it contains a “healthy disrespect for the rules by which it [the discipline] defines itself“.

“From the start, I rejected traditional notions of science and objectivity. Like most of us in the social sciences, I was trained to look for probability, to make predictions, try to falsify hypotheses, and to be objective.[...] In direct opposition to objectivity and neutrality, these other anarchistic alternative methodologies call for self-awareness and interpretive knowledge. [...] Rather than detachment and objectivity, we therefore should seek connectivity and compassion, values that dovetail well with anarchist sensibilities such as cooperation and mutual aid.“ (Fernandez, 2009:95)

This thesis it interested in the movements internal culture, looking at the everyday life of a social community or group, their collective ‘culture-making-process’ (Hart, 1996:99). It contains elements of cultural analysis influenced by a cultural turn in social movement research¹¹. Without aiming at realising social-psychological methods to interpret culture at the

¹⁰ In the formulation of Scott (2012a) “An anthropologist goes in and tries to have as few prejudices as possible and be as open as possible to where the world leads you, [...] whereas a political scientist would go in with a questionnaire.”

¹¹ The cultural turn in social movement research was informed by two dynamics. Generally was a shift of social movement issues and tactics to more cultural ground, meaning away from class struggles about the means of production towards struggles in the fields of ethnicity, equality, cultural representation, sexuality, and different ways to live ones life (Jasper, 1997, Johnston and Klandemans, 1995, McCaughan, 2012) as well as a shift in the academic interest in movements internal culture (Jasper, 1997, Melucci, 1996, Hart, 1996).

individual level¹², the approach chosen puts an emphasis on observation of and participation in the collective actions, which is discussed and reflected in individual conversations.

For the purpose of analysis all relevant encounters were documented during the intensive fieldwork with people from the focus group and in relation to it. Additionally, particular situations such as assemblies, working group meetings, or events were listed in an analysis table. It collects the core parts of the conversations and a description of the situation as transcription of the fieldwork notebook. In a second step the information was - as far as possible - restructured along the topics of interest and research questions. This helped to resemble the experiences and conversations in order to incorporate them into the discussion of terms and concepts. It is not possible to always distinguish the researchers position from the insights of the fieldwork, since these views got blurred. Moreover it would in most cases not be possible to mention the names of activists, which lead to the decision not to mention any names besides the ones from the guideline interviews.

Case study research - lessons from the field

The case studies are as one method of data collection an integral part of the applied abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2010, Dubois and Gadde, 2002). The aim of the case studies is not to draw generalisation understood as “representative sample, in the sense that any other sample would have been more or less the same; it is representative only in that, though it is unique, it is part of a greater whole“ (Bennett and Shurmer-Smith, 2002:200).

In Madrid several self organised cultural centres or similar projects were visited and researched in the early phase. In contrast to Hamburg, where the Gängeviertel gave an important input to the initial research interest, in Madrid a case study was actively searched for, which could serve as fruitful ground to test and develop the arguments of this research. Guideline interviews were held with activists and people involved in different emancipatory practice in Madrid¹³. One further guideline interview was held with an activist from La Tabacalera to clear some general questions about the internal organisation and current situation of the space. In addition dozens of informal conversations with activists from other collectives¹⁴, as well as colleagues and friends in Madrid helped to grasp the local current situation and ongoing struggles.

¹² On top of all this imprecision of terms, there are - at least - two common understandings of culture in social research. Social-psychological approaches find culture in the individual's set of values, beliefs, and motivations. The second is approach is to “think of culture as the whole way of life of a human community“ (Hart, 1996:88). The previous had been criticised convincingly in Wuthnow (1987) for it neglecting the collective dimension of culture.

¹³ The loosely structured guideline interviews are used to explore the local setting, to find the most interesting space of creative autonomy in the context of this research and understand the relation to the local USM.

¹⁴ Mainly with people engaged in Patio Maravillas, La Dradona, ROR Madrid, the asamblea Lavapiés, and el Campo de Cebada.

Interview partners Madrid*		
Laura	G.I.L.A.	02/04/2013
Rita	Juventud Sin Futuro / student	10/04/2013
Roberto	okupa movement / researcher	12/04/2013
Alex	independent photographer / Diagonal Periodico	07/06/2013
Marta	coexistence working group La Tabacalera	15/06/2013
*names had been changed as a request of the interviewees		

La Tabacalera was approached in the first place through passive participatory strategies. Meaning, being in the same place, having short informal conversations, and observing what is happening. A fieldwork diary was written including observations, attempts to make sense of these, and feelings related to the situation (Bennett, 2002). Within two weeks 10 days and/or evenings were spent at la Tabacalera, with a daily stint between 3 and 10 hours. After the first visits, individuals were approached more actively, always introducing the reason for the conversation for the sake of thesis research. Then the social actors started introducing more people from their group, and finally invited me to participate in group activities informally and actively. During the last days, long informal conversations were held with several people from Nave Trapecio, the artistic focus group, and others engaged in la Tabacalera as well as visitors. Since the aim was to experience the everyday life of the social actors, I tried to fit into the situation in the best possible way. This included that in several cases no notes were taken during the conversation, in order to keep up the informal and free-flowing character. In other situations important aspects and quotes were noted down. After a conversation there was always a moment to write down the main topics of interest and the opinion of the person. These tactical decisions were made on the spot. Although a more structured approach with notes, recordings or even more structured interviews might have been useful, it seemed inappropriate.

Researching groups in anti-systemic USMs has some specific implications to participatory social research. As mentioned above there is a rich tradition in activist research, where scholars who are engaged in social or autonomous movements also research their groups activism (López and Fernándet, 2012). The ‘insider position’ in USM research has several implications which will not be discussed here, but one aspect. When the researcher is actively contributing to the movement, the community, or the project enables her or him to ‘ask something back’ from the other social actors, not just because they are friends or ‘comrades’. In social groups, which are based on non-capitalist principles of solidarity, mutuality, and reciprocity, a researcher who respects the groups lifeworld can not ask much more than she or

he is able to give back.¹⁵

“In exchange for the product of your effort, I offer you mine. You receive it and we stay on hand for each other. If, on the contrary, it does not satisfy you, if you don’t consider it equivalent to that which you’ve given, well, in that case every one keeps what’s theirs and we look for someone else with whom we might come to a better accord. In this way, none of us become debtors.” (Armand, 1926 [2004])

In Hamburg the first contact with the case study happened during a conference visit between the 29-30th of November 2012¹⁶. After this initial contact another visit took place from the 27th of February until the 4th of March 2013. During this time I attended the general assembly of the Gängeviertel and held a preliminary interview with a Gängeviertel activist and the chairperson of the association (Gängeviertel E.V.) Christine Ebeling. Furthermore I deepened my understanding of the local setting, spent time in the ‘Viertel’, at the bar and exhibitions. In July 2013 the intensive fieldwork phase was carried out, additional to the participant observation in the Gängeviertel further actors engaged in the Recht auf Stadt network were interviewed following open guidelines. Similar to the la Tabacalera case an analysis table was filled in afterwards out of the fieldwork journal.

Interview partners Hamburg		
Christine Ebeling	Gängeviertel e.V. (1. Vorsitzende)	03/03/2013
Micheal Ziel	Leerstandsmelder / Gängeviertel 2010 e.G. (Aufsichtsratsvorsitz)	26/07/2013
Fabian Eschkötter	Frappant e.V. (Vorstandsmitglied)	29/07/2013
Christoph Twickel	Not In Our Name, Marke Hamburg! / journalist and author	01/08/2013
Tina Fritsche	Recht auf Stadt’ network (e-mail interview)	11/08/2013

¹⁵ The researching position taken for this thesis implies a problem with reciprocity. What am I able to give back to the group, and the space of creative autonomy? In my personal view it is not enough to think that writing an academic work about this group is giving something back, since by writing this thesis in the best case it will be just me who benefits, with the final step for achieving a graduation. This is the reason why there were no in-depth interviews held. In Madrid it was particularly difficult to ‘exchange’ something, since I do not speak the language well enough.

¹⁶ The visit was organised and financed by Givrum.nu, engaged in the implementation of temporary uses based on bottom up tactics in Denmark. The Gängeviertel organised a tour, a talk, and a peoples kitchen. During this two day visit other initiatives within the local Recht auf Stadt network had been visited, such as Frappant, Hafenstrasse, Park Fiction, Centro Sociale, NoBNQ. Brief descriptions can be found in the appendix.

Participant observation - a conflictual process¹⁷

Participant observation is based on the belief that there are aspects of group's internal behaviour which can not be understood through individual interviews and documents (Frey, 2009). Following Flick (1995) participant observation is in a twofold manner to be seen as a process. Firstly the researcher is becoming more of a participant or part of a social group during the fieldwork. Secondly is the observation concretising towards the research aims with time passing. While doing fieldwork in the Gängeviertel in Hamburg both happened partially. Since it is a relatively open and heterogeneous group which does not differ much from my lifeworld I could connect to the activists on a informal and personal level. Moreover, since I was always making clear the fact that I was researching, people started asking for my topic and a discourse on the concepts and approaches I was using occurred organically several times. But, as Blaikie (2010) notes, while engaging in participatory research one should not underestimate the unavoidable impact of the observation on the situation.

Fieldwork output and method of analysis

In order to integrate the fieldwork an analysis-table as explained above was prepared. For Madrid, the analysis table of the intensive fieldwork phase includes 26 personal encounters, of which 9 people were from the focus group, the Nave Trapecio workshop. The rest were engaged more or less intensively in other activities in La Tabacalera, 8 people were visitors. Some of the encounters were just one-time brief conversations, other were long and personal but also interview-like conversations with a loose guideline structure. The analysis table from Hamburg includes 39 people who are engaged in the Gängeviertel. With almost half of them a longer conversation has happened at least once, in many cases it was repetitive encounters,

¹⁷ Additionally to the theoretical explanations above, I want to describe situations from the Gängeviertel fieldwork which show my position during the research. Two things occurred in relation to the kitchen, which was probably due to the fact that the main kitchen responsible had recently stepped down his function and left a vacuum of responsibility. Once, I was sitting outside the kitchen with some people from the Viertel in the evening, when someone came by quickly to drop food donations for the refugees which were temporarily staying there. It was one of these moments in which nobody felt responsible for taking care of the food, bringing it inside and informing the refugees. I felt the urge to take care of these things, but on the other hand I did not want to interfere too much in the situation, but chose to observe the people's reactions. A few days later, it was a Thursday which is people's kitchen day, again nobody took action to start cooking. I was sitting in the courtyard with some others. I had the feeling that some of them were waiting, but somehow expecting someone else to start. When a young woman, she was not directly involved in the Viertel but a regular visitor and a helping hand for the people's kitchen, took the initiative to go and get food and start cooking I decided to support and help her. I was relieved when she initiated this, since again I felt stuck in the position of the observer. In the end some others joined, we prepared a nice dinner and ate all together. Moreover I was asked several times from people in the Gängeviertel 'What are you observing now?' and 'How are you interpreting this now?'. Logically, it was not always and by everyone appreciated to have me around, but luckily many people did not care much what the reason for my presence was.

discussions and joint activities throughout the fieldwork phase. Additionally I met 15 visitors or ‘first timers’ of whom I also asked about their impressions and experiences.

The analysis tables with the personal encounters were used to reconsider the experiences during the fieldwork and as a help to interpret the different positions and opinions towards the relevant issues for this research. In order to ensure anonymity and to protect the personal rights of the activists those tables will be used just implicitly throughout the thesis.

IV.C. Introducing the Case Studies

This section contains an overall introduction to the case studies, their history and current situation and how they are embedded in their local setting. It should lay the foundations for the following parts, where theory and concepts are presented interwoven with the lifeworld of the social actors and the insights during in the fieldwork (Dubois and Gadde, 2002).

La Tabacalera and Nave Trapecio, Madrid

La Tabacalera¹⁸ is a former tobacco factory in Lavapiés, Madrid, and was constructed between 1780 and 1792. When the production slowly shifted to hand rolled cigarettes, most of the employees were women. Being one of the largest employers in Madrid, la Tabacalera and its *cigarreras* became symbolic for the classic image of the working class women.

The location in Lavapiés is characteristic. Situated in Calle de Embajadores, one of the lifelines of the working-class industrial South of the city. In ‘The City and the Grassroots’ (1983) Manuel Castells based a part of his study on the citizen movement engaged in neighbourhood struggles during the end of the Franquist Era in Lavapiés, re-appropriating public space for gatherings by the means of popular traditions. He describes Lavapiés at that time as “one of the oldest sectors of Madrid, a labyrinth of seventeenth century streets populated by the elderly, craftsmen, small merchants, grocers, bars and cafés, petty bureaucrats, manual service workers, and, more recently a handful of students and young professionals. It constituted a neighbourhood with its own community life built around its physical charm and folk culture, as well as its poverty and dilapidation“ (Castells, 1983:251,253).

¹⁸The name is related to the previous use as tobacco factory (Antigua Fábrica de Tabacos de Embajadores; Old Tobacco Factory of Embajadores). It will be used in the context of this work as the short form of ‘Centro Social Autogestionado La Tabacalera’, (CSA La Tabacalera, a Self-Managed Social Centre). In another context it may also refer to ‘Tabacalera, Espacio Promoción del Arte’, an exhibition space managed by the Directorate General for the Promotion of Fine Arts of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, which develops an ongoing program of temporary exhibitions and activities around photography, contemporary art and visual arts. The ‘Espacio Promoción del Arte’ is located in the northern part of the historic complex and operates independently and separately from the CSA la Tabacalera.

In more recent years the labour intensive economic growth in Madrid¹⁹ brought many immigrants to the city, of whom plenty settled in Lavapiés, mingling with the traditional Spanish working class population. “Slowly at first, and then on a massive scale, Lavapiés became one of the destinations of choice for immigrants arriving in Madrid. The existence of a rental market greater than in other areas of the city and prices that were clearly lower attracted these citizens” (Orueta, 2007:187). This combination led to a stigmatisation of Lavapiés during the past decades by the media and influenced by public authorities as “dangerous ghetto in urgent need of cleansing” (ibid.:188). In addition there is a range of artists and cultural professionals among the residents, which are attracted by the central location, historic character, nightlife, and cultural diversity of the neighbourhood. This combination of stigmatisation, neo-bohemian touch, working class image, and the association with marginal populations fuels vital activist traditions (Feinberg, 2013b).

Since the 1990s, the area around la Tabacalera has been undergoing a large urban renewal project, which caused responses in forms of social movements against gentrification and displacement. As an extension of the ‘Golden Triangle of Art’ (*Museo de Prado - Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza - Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Renia Sofía*) this central neighbourhood should change to a tourist-welcoming cultural quarter focussing on a consumption interested upper middle-class. Several cultural urban projects had been carried out²⁰. The renewed urban development plan of 2004 intended to push Madrid at the forefront of the European leading cities, showing a significant focus on investors and tourists interests rather than those of the local population (Feinberg, 2013a, Orueta, 2007). These competitive strategies aiming at international investment mark a shift towards entrepreneurial strategies in the urban development of Madrid, a city which joined the race of global cities in neoliberal capitalism late but developed rapidly during the late 1990s and early 2000s. “Above all, the city has to appear as an innovative, exciting, creative, and safe place to live or to visit, to play and consume in” writes Harvey (1989:9) and emphasises the importance of cultural-atmospherical assets of central urban spaces.

¹⁹ The Madrid Region (Comunidad Autónoma) showed a strong labour intensive economic growth, particularly during the early 2000s before the financial crisis. The employment rate rose from 62,2% to 70,8% between 2001-2007, despite the boom in regional and foreign immigration. The region of Madrid grew in this 6 years from 5.37mio inhabitants to 6.08mio, the municipality of Madrid - after a period of suburbanisation and slight population decline, gained 170.000 inhabitants. This had been fuelled by international migration, the number of non-spanish nationality residents almost tripled in this period, and was 866,910 in 2007 for the region, despite active immigration policies. Just in Madrid 115 thousand new citizenships had been given between 2005 and 2010 (source: INE - Spanish National Institute for Statistics).

²⁰ Such as the Casa Encendida (a gallery run by the Caja de Madrid Bank), the Instituto Nacional de Artes Escénicas y de la Musica, the Centro Dramático Nacional Teatro Valle-Inclán, and the remodelled Teatro Circo Price.

“With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities, the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge.” (Zukin, 1995:8)

In the middle of all this, la Tabacalera lost its industrial function with the turn of the century and was declared national heritage in 2000. The original plan by the owner, the Ministry of Culture²¹, was to develop it as the site of a new *Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales* following the entrepreneurial urban rehabilitation strategy in the area based on cultural projects (Feinberg, 2013a). Parallel, neighbourhood activists started demanding the space. The *Red de Colectivos de Lavapiés*²² started various actions to gain access to la Tabacalera. The networks aim was to pose a “critique of the overall transformation of Madrid, seen as excessively oriented towards the middle class” (Orueta, 2007:183) and “one of its principal objectives to utilise a number of unused publicly owned buildings as its Social Centre” (ibid.:189).

The image of the women-workers history had been applied to this struggle, holding *Cigarrera* parades, announcing ‘Las brigadas cigarreras seln de nuevo’ which means, ‘the cigarrera brigades return’. One very engaged group was el Laboratorio²³, part of the local squatters movement. The struggle about the re-use of la Tabacalera became a symbolic battle ground opposing the global city development model in favour by the public authorities, neglecting local needs and projects (Feinberg, 2013a). Because of its enormous size of over 28,000 sqm, 26,000 just the main building and 2,300 the two annexes, not including the two patios, la Tabacalera was a space to dream about its future usage for both the local authorities as well as the activists (Orueta, 2007:191). The future of la Tabacalera became a crucial point in this discourse.



Fig.7

“Are we faced with ideas intended to create a picture city, a sightseers’ city, utterly indifferent to the needs of the city’s inhabitants, aimed solely at attracting money from tourists and investors and filling the pockets of promoters and construction companies?” (Red Lavapiés, 2005 quoted in: Orueta, 2007:191)

Under the growing impacts of the financial and economic crisis on the Spanish economy the Ministry for Culture agreed on an allocation of the buildings, allowing community groups and activists to use 9000 square-meters for self-managed projects. The final development plan for the complex agreed on in June 2009, a project for a museum costing 30 million euros, was

²¹ Which is by now integrated into the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport.

²² Often called by its short name: Red Lavapiés; translated: Network Lavapiés. This network was in the first place a cooperation of various activist groups ranging from traditional neighbourhood groups like La Corrala, diverse organisations of the local immigrant population, environmental and cultural NGOs and associations, as well as activists and groups from the locally rooted squatters collectives.

²³ A brief explanation of the groups activities can be found in the Appendix.

never realised and is still out of reach. Just one part of the building is used by public authorities as exhibition space. In the first arrangement between the ministry and the community groups, the Centro Social Autogestionado (CSA) La Tabacalera manages the cultural programming, the use and daily management of the space including a bar and canteen space. The Ministry keeps the overall control of the building and regulates the core opening hours, pays the bills for light and water and hires private security personal (Feinberg, 2013a).

“Despite being a legally sanctioned ‘squat’ (and thus not really a squat at all), the social centre’s emphasis on horizontality, inclusiveness and autonomy makes it yet another iteration of the anti-hierarchical collectivist tendencies of the okupa movement in the neighbourhood” (Feinberg, 2013a:24).

The organisation of the la Tabacalera is strongly influenced by anarchist values of collective self-management, autonomy and commitment to direct action. This reflects its roots in the local squatters movement. Using the title CSA underlines this, since it refers to previous social-cultural centres which had been squats.

The first agreement over the space would expire in February 2012. But the engaged activists and collectives wanted to stay. Fuelled also by the energy of the country wide wave of protest and indignation, individuals associated with La Tabacalera produced a 150 page heavy *Dossier de Renovación* (Dossier for Renewal), explaining the future objectives and importance of the social-cultural centre and the achievements of the first two years (Feinberg, 2013a:34). This, together with the tense social situation in Madrid due to the deepening of the crisis, the strong social mobilisations, and the continuous lack of financing, the ministry agreed on an extension of the contract with some new implications such as no use of the canteen. La Tabacalera can be seen as “one of the key sites where Lavapiés ‘articulates’” (Feinberg, 2013a:22). Lavapiés, “a district in which to observe the conditions under which a fragmented neighbourhood can organise itself and deal with social mobilisation” (Orueta, 2007:184).

In la Tabacalera there are 30 to 40 active political and cultural collectives using the space ranging from music, computer and software, dance, sports, gardening, ecological local food-corporations to a bike workshop and the Nave Trapecio, a workshop for artists with all kinds of machines and equipment as Marta explained in the interview. Since she is part of the internal working group ‘co-exist’ she is engaged in improving the internal conflicts and atmosphere. In the first years, particularly after the emergence of 15M, which will be referred to in the next chapter, there was a intensive use of la Tabacalera. But about a year ago an internal conflict brought a large part of the activists to break with the space which left the rest and some newcomers in a phase of re-orientation. To put it simple, the conflict was between more political activists and the deprived of whom many are immigrants. For the previous the non-commercial and autonomous state of la Tabacalera was of highest importance, while the

latter used the space for informal economy. Overall it was mentioned repetitively, that the character of la Tabacalera had changed a lot, that the crowd which is here for a special big event now was the everyday usual in the first years. When it used to be a very vibrant spot before, it is now very much oriented towards the inside and the collectives are concerned with their own activities.

Nave Trapecio was chosen as the focus group, since it is the most explicitly ‘artistic’ when having visual arts in mind. It is mainly sculptures, furniture design, and paintings which are created there, and approximately 15 people use Nave Trapecio regularly. It is a space where people can work on individual projects, also for their academy, or commercial purposes, but also where collective projects are carried out, often in relation to groups from 15M. Both la Tabacalera and Nave Trapecio ‘represent the utopic dream of generating free culture, which allow us to organise ourselves in a more direct form’ as one of the group members stated. The explicitly political engagement is dependent on the individuals standpoint. While there are people working in Nave Trapecio mostly for their own artistic production, there are others for whom their artistic work is predominantly political and who are working on collective cultural production, free cultural production and trying to follow an alternative life style.

Gängeviertel, Hamburg

Gängeviertel was historically the name of a large area of the inner city. Over centuries the displaced poorer populations settled there, due to restructuring processes, resulting in a very high density. This lead to their characteristic inner corridor structure, constructing new parts in the courtyards of the old. It used to be a large area of working class and handcraft population, but most of the historic Gängeviertel disappeared. The very dense and poor living conditions lead to several epidemics, but also to a strong web of working-class political organisation. Two good reasons for the authorities to dismantle the areas and rebuild them, pushing their population to outer city areas (Donsbach, 2012). Today's Gängeviertel is the very last of its kind.

In 2009 the 12 buildings, with round 7,500 sqm, were squatted by a group of artists, cultural producers, political activists and others. This ensemble of historic buildings has not experienced any investment since 1945, despite a public renovation entitlement in 1986 which lead to the rehabilitation of only one building, a half-timber house. Until 2001 they got buried in oblivion again, when the change in the local political climate lead to the idea of selling the old quarter to a private developer (ibid.) In 2006 the Dutch real-estate investor Hanzestav handed in a development project which had been approved in 2009. The plans were to keep just a few pieces of the old facades but completely re-develop the space, assimilating it to the by now very upscale and business focussed neighbourhood. However, with the financial crisis

Hanzevast delayed payment obligations which made way for alternative concepts (Ziel, 2012).

Before the occupation most spaces in the Gängeviertel were vacant, while some inhabitants still resisted the call to leave for the renovation and in some of the ground-floor spaces the owner tolerated atelier uses. Prepared long in advance during secret meetings in a small cellar of the complex among Gängeviertel users and outsiders, the day of the occupation unfolded as a big art and courtyard festival (Stillich, 2012). Mayer (2012b) called this first weekend a form of ‘squatting with performance character’. It was the first squat in Hamburg since the 1990s which had not been evicted immediately. No one expected to ‘survive’ the first 24 hours without being evicted, but four years later they are still there (Ebeling, 2013, Schuller et al., 2012).

Gängeviertel ‘advertisement’

at one of the facades:

“10.000sqm unrenovated housing and working quarters - Has been vacant for you for years! Starting from 0,- Euros per sqm.

Already 80% creative use!“



Fig.8

The Gängeviertel quickly gained prominence in local and national Media²⁴. The overall quite positive reaction of the media and support of the local population was based on the heterogeneity of the activists, which were very open to everyone who wanted to visit or engage with the project during this early phase (Mayer, 2012b). An activist told me, that he visited the Gängeviertel during the very first days. It was crowded and very lively, almost overwhelming. But he came back a day after, because there was also something intriguing. Then he saw lists pinned up on a wall asking for people to engage depending on their interests and abilities. He thought to himself, *I am not an artist, neither a craftsperson, nor an architect or planner, but well - I can cook*. This was four years ago and he is still in the Viertel.

After the surprise and chaos in the beginning the Gängeviertel organised quickly and found a fast way to creative bodies of horizontal organisation which enabled them to engage in tactical negotiations with the owner and the local authorities. The pressure on the city was

²⁴ The press review on the homepage of the Gängeviertel lists 36 news reports just from the first week, ranging from local newspapers to country wide weekly newspapers and TV reports ([Online] <http://das-gaengeviertel.info/medien/pressespiegel.html>, Accessed 20th of August 2013)

high, both from the public and cultural scene but also from a group of professionals who - roused by the occupation - called for a heritage protection of the Gängeviertel. The Senate of Hamburg bought the buildings back from the investor in December 2009 (Gabriel et al., 2012). The status of the occupation was legalised, although today they are not permitted to use all the spaces, or to use spaces for all functions, which it is not followed by the people too strictly. Through tedious and complex negotiation with the local state, the spaces are still run by the Gängeviertel collective and are going to be renovated step by step. In order to do so, the Gängeviertel E.V. (an association) was founded and further in November 2010 the Gängeviertel eG. (a cooperative). The aim is to let the development agency of the city renovate the buildings following the ideas and suggestions of the current inhabitants. In the future, they plan to buy the whole Gängeviertel from the city with the money they have collected through the cooperative²⁵.

Since four years now, the Gängeviertel has been embracing its processual state. The organisation works in a horizontal, consensual, and decentralised manner through working groups and building collectives, while the main body is a weekly general assembly open to the public. There have been endless functions, events and initiatives taken place in the past years, cultural, artistic and political ones. More than 200 people have joined the association and about half of them see the Gängeviertel as their everyday living space. The Viertel today is as much a working and living place, as it is a cultural venue, an experimental zone, a political centre, a public space, a party location, tourist attraction and much more. Despite its very different users and activists backgrounds the common thread is to see the Gängeviertel as a social cultural free-space. How the future of the Viertel will be like is relatively open.

Comparative research?

As a last remark to the methodology it seems important to clarify, that this case study research does not apply a direct comparative approach. Throughout the text both cases will be used as examples for the struggles, terms and concepts that will be referred to, without aiming at a conclusion which points out the similarities and differences. They are seen as individual cases, both as unique as characteristic, and realisations of the discussion drawn here.

What they have in common is a central position in the urban fabric, a clear orientation towards cultural and artistic practice and a legal status, what makes them comparably open and accessible autonomous spaces. Furthermore, both la Tabacalera and the Gängeviertel have a long working-class history. As Castells states, it is “the struggle of old neighbourhoods to take charge of the future on the basis of past” (Castells, 1983:255).

²⁵ For a detailed chronology and description of these process read (Gabriel et.al.,2012).

V. THE FIELD OF RESEARCH: URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter serves to outline USMs as framework for this research and introduces the USM related to the case studies in the light of the crisis of neoliberalism.

V.A. Urban Social Movements

After 1968 the field of social movement research has been established as an autonomous sector of social research. The traditional forms of organisation and conventional channels of political engagement did not any more encompass the ways in which social groups organise and act collectively (Melucci, 1996). Social movements can be seen as self-conscious collective action of citizens or social groups who organise themselves around specific issues, or world-views aiming at changing the social structure. If historically large mobilisations emerged around class conflict and were based on different ideological positions, New Social Movements - a term informed by Jürgen Habermas (1981) - are conflicts which arise in the sphere of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialisation. They are further characterised through non-institutionalised forms of protest outside institutionalised political bodies. This term evolved in relation to the crisis for Fordism and the wave of protest and unrest around 1968. Problematic in the usage of the term is that its popular application leads to oversee ideological positions and class components in social struggles²⁶ (Johnston et al., 1994, Melucci, 1996).

Sticking to the tradition of the term USM, means emphasising the movements aim at changing society and the form of political organisation rather than pointing towards the ‘new’ in social movement variety and diverse identity politics, which emerged over the past decades. USM marks a tradition of distrusting established political institutions and believing in the potential in autonomous political action (Pickvance, 2003) ²⁷. In addition, putting the term ‘urban’ ahead of social movements gives reference to the importance of the urban contradiction as being central to current social struggles. In a tradition of Lefebvre and his 1968 published *Urban Revolution*, and Castells, it is argued that “urban space continues to serve simultaneously as the arena, medium, and the stake of ongoing struggles regarding the future of capitalism“ (Brenner et al., 2012:9).

²⁶ Please conduct the appendix for an elaboration on the history and application of the terms USM as well as New Social Movements, under ‘Urban Social Movement - the history of a term in question‘.

²⁷ As Pickvance (2003) pointed out, also the term USM has been used in all other possible contexts. The usage of the term does not always imply just social mobilisations which are anti-systemic or anti-capitalist, pro social justice, against neoliberalism, or acting under any other ‘alternative’ idea, but may be NIMBY (not in my back yard) conservative bourgeois actors resisting changes in their privileged urban environment.

“Contemporary movements are prophets of the present. [...] They announce the commencement of change; not, however, a change in the distant future but one that is already a presence. They force the power out in the open and give it a shape and a face. They speak a language that seems to be entirely their own, but they say something that transcends their particularity and speaks to us all.” (Melucci, 1996:1)

USMs towards the crisis of neoliberalism

Mayer (2012c) sees the early 2000s as tipping point for neoliberalisation, a time of climax as well as the start of its crisis. While the integration of the financial markets profiting from the deregulation and flexibility of national economies has fostered a debt-financed urbanisation process which has gone global, a particular new wave of protest movements arose: the anti-globalisation movement or Global Justice Movement. These movements, despite emphasising the global dimension of the struggle, were also always based and rooted in local resistance, usually urban ones. They used popular slogans as ‘Another world is possible’ as much as ‘Another city is possible!’ (Mayer, 2012c:68). Emerging out of a critique of neoliberalism, the locality as well as the networked movement structure are central to the current wave of USMs (Arampatzi and Nicholls, 2012, Leontidou, 2010). “The city is increasingly important for New Social Movements as their forms, demands and strategies broaden” (Leontidou, 2010:1190). Major impacts of neoliberalism and economic globalisation on the urban fabric and inter-urban competition have been argued by sociologists, geographers and other scholars over the past 30 years (Brenner and Theodore, 2005, Castells, 1989, Harvey, 2003, Sassen, 1991). Furthermore is the crisis tendency of current neoliberal capitalism articulated in today's cities, as Harvey (2008:39) has formulated “crises repeatedly erupt around urbanization both locally and globally, because the metropolis is now the point of massive collision”.

Nodes in a network

Latest since the 1990s there is a significant discourse on the networked structure of social movements. Already the 1968 social unrests in different places were very well aware of each others existence and connected (McCaughan, 2012). But these more recent waves of protest brought up not just the recognition of each other and the common demands, but what has been labelled ‘cross movement activists’ (Carroll and Ratner, 2010), ‘cosmopolitan protest’ (Leontidou, 2010) or ‘rooted cosmopolitans’ (Martínez López, 2012). Hand in hand with such recognition of the global connectedness, there had also emerged an emphasis on the local rootedness. It is the physical spaces in USMs which are the meaningful nodes in the network.

“This is what remains crucial: the amplifying of space for a broad culture of reflection and debate for the movement itself.” (Köhler/Wissen 2003:950)

For building lasting ‘cultures of resistance’ (Hollon and Lopez, 2007:60) it is not just inevitable to build upon the local social dynamics and history of struggles but also its physical spaces. Those nodes both result from and also enable collective human agency and allow the construction of alternatives, spaces to experiment, learn and fight collectively²⁸.

“Autonomous space does not exist until it is constructed.[...] Given the intensity of connections between urban lifestyles and grids of capital investment and social control, it is necessary to create the physical and relational spaces for enacting our radical struggles at the level of the everyday.” (Holloway, 2013:62)

The squatter’s movement

Squatting as a term refers to occupation of empty buildings, houses and other spaces, mostly through a violation of property rights, and is one radical form of spatial autonomy establishing such nodes in the network of USMs. As a tactic to fulfil housing needs or establish centres for social activity, squatting had been widespread over Europe during the past four decades and identified as a USM or new urban movement in the academic discourse (Martínez López, 2012, Pruijt, 2003). Without aiming at a broader discussion of the history and the specifics of the squatter’s movement, which can be found in the recently published *Squatting in Europe* (Squatting-Europe-Kollective, 2013), some characteristics relevant to the concept of spaces of creative autonomy will be pointed out.

On the one hand, squatted social-cultural centres have been key nodes in USMs. During the 1970s in Italy, a phase of extreme economic restructuring marking a very fast shift from an industrial to a service society, self organised social centres were founded by radical left-wing groups. A decade later this form of autonomous space-making had flourished all over the country and they adopted a number of collective and shared practices which have been followed by local activists in many other places in Europe. Firstly they introduced the acronym CSOA, ‘Centro Sociale Occupato e Autogestito’, for squatted spaces and CSA, Centro Sociale Autogestito if they had permission from local authorities (Mudu, 2004). Secondly they introduced weekly public meetings as the body to decide on the programme, which was self-managed and self-produced cultural, social and political events. “Social Centres revolutionized the political map” (Mudu, 2004:918). Latest during the anti-globalisation protest in Genoa, it became clear that social centres play a great role in mobilising people for street protest. Additionally this social hubs “allow communities to

²⁸ Hollon and Lopez draw from their experience with the Zapatista movement, but this is also relevant for current urban movements, also since the Zapatistas are an important inspiration for struggles around the world.

explore ways of meeting their own needs, outside of the circuits of the state and corporate forms.“ (Brophy, 2007:2).

On the other hand, different generations of squatters have influenced the discourse as well as practice on autonomous urban politics (Katsiaficas, 2006). Especially the high and often coercive pressure due to the illegality of squatting in Europe²⁹ lead to processes of legalisation and institutional arrangements for autonomous cultural centres (Martínez López, 2012).

“One major watershed [for self-managed social centres] is that between “pragmatic-minded” groups and groups not prepared to strike any compromise with institutions.“ (Mudu, 2004:934)

Overall the USMs addressed here can be labelled differently, but share distinct characteristics. They show a declared commitment to grass-roots organisation and democratic self-management and are - to varying degrees though - informed by autonomous movement culture. It can be said, that the neoliberal model of urban development is provoking social responses in form of protests and social mobilisation to a growing extent (Orueta, 2007). Because “neoliberalization has had a corrosive impact on cities and urban life, and democratic movements are a particularly promising way we might resist it“ (Purcell, 2009:141). There is a coherence among critical theorists about the fact, that the current phase of economic crisis is not just in its core an urban crisis, but also that the USMs which are occurring are also directly related to this fact (Brenner et al., 2012, Mayer, 2012c).

“[I]t is the profoundly antidemocratic nature of neoliberalism that should surely be the main focus of political struggle.“ (Harvey, 2007:42)

V.B. Current Urban Social Movements

The current profoundly antidemocratic ‘dictatorships of international finance’ as Stiglitz (2002:247) has described it, is determining the USMs of the past years. Since the early 2000s the neoliberal model displayed ‘cracks’, such as the dot com crash of 2001, leading towards the current financial and economic crisis which took off 2007/2008 (Mayer, 2012c). While hitting the core of the ‘financial dictatorships’ significantly in the early stage, this crisis still has major impacts on the European economy and led to harsh social-economic restructuring, the most distinct in the Southern European periphery and Ireland.

“Different regime types and different forms of repression generate different kinds of social movements with different tactics and internal cultures.“ (Swindler, 1995:37)

Already before the crash, old and new USMs concentrated mainly on two fault lines. Firstly

²⁹ With the UK and the Netherlands being the last to pass strict anti-squatting laws during recent years, now there is legally a rigid zero-tolerance atmosphere towards squatting in Europe.

they are aiming at resisting the strongly competitive growth model of neoliberal policies, challenging the entrepreneurial³⁰ ways of city development and marketing strategies and large scale urban development projects (Mayer, 2012c). Secondly they continue to struggle against the further dismantling of the welfare state, the rights of precariously employed and unemployed, and for social and environmental justice.

“Against the neoliberal orthodoxy of property rights and rights to accumulation, such movements come together to claim other rights: to inhabit urban space, to maximize use-value rather than exchange value, and to play a central role in decision-making [...]. They claim, in Henri Lefebvre’s [...] words, a ‘right to the city’. [...] They are creatively resisting neoliberalization and insisting that another city is possible.” (Purcell, 2009:160)

Triggered by the so called ‘Arab Spring’ in 2011 protests, strikes, popular street marches and the prominently reported occupations of public squares occurred in many cities worldwide. Several authors emphasise the commonalities between these very different USMs (Aguiton and Haeringer, 2011). Different local USMs such as the Spanish 15M or Indignados, the occupation of Syntagma square in Athens or the Occupy movement, are not just inspired by each other but also connected.

“ ‘We wont pay for your crisis’ has been the allying cry at protests across Europe, from Athens to Copenhagen, from Reykjavik to Rome, from Paris to London, from Riga to Kiev.” (Mayer, 2012c:69).

It can be referred to ‘common spirit’ (Leontidou, 2010), or ‘master framings’ (Carroll and Ratner, 2010). These underlying relationships of locally specific crises of hegemony are at the moment triggering a debate among activists as much as researchers (Shihade et al., 2012). Further were those movements preceded by the previously mentioned Global Justice Movement and networks which had been created already before the spark of the current crisis, in particular the local squatters movements (Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012).

“The financial and economic crisis of the past years has been a tipping point in this process of indignation, but the social movements which arose react to “deep-seated conflicts at the heart of European societies.” (Observatorio-Metropolitano, 2011:37)

As Holloway (2013) has formulated it is becoming clear that more and more people feel the ‘distance of the state from society’. This is particularly true for Spain or Greece, which make politics under the doctrine of the Troika³¹. But also elsewhere many political decisions are being made not solely based on the people’s demand but influenced by not-democratically

³⁰ Urban Entrepreneurialism is the “pattern of behaviour within urban governance that mixes together state powers [...] with a wide array of organizational forms in civil society (chambers of commerce, unions, churches, educational and research institutions, community groups, NGO’s and so on) and private interests (corporate and individual) to form coalitions to promote or manage urban or regional development of one sort or another.” (Harvey, 2012: 101)

³¹ The Troika is an international governance constellation consisting of the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission.

elected international institutions, people question politics and democracy. The state authorities find themselves in a 'we will not negotiate' position towards pressuring demands on the streets of their cities in order to fulfil requirements for international money flows. This is contributing to a new orientation among USMs towards non-state oriented politics and the creation of alternative ways, not just to protest but also to live (Holloway, 2013).

After the evictions of the occupied public squares, this movements did not disappear. As Graeber³² (2013) describes, it is similar to the social movement of 1968, which was a short spark of protest and unrest but caused far-reaching changes in society which happened very slowly. What the current USMs managed, was to put the state protected international finance business and systematic inequality in income and beyond, on the agenda of a wide ranging public and private discourse (Graeber, 2013).

“I think there is an accumulation of experience, and also an accumulation of growing awareness that spreads from one country to another, that capitalism just isn't working and that it is in serious problems.” (Holloway, 2013)

This recent - and as we see for example in Turkey now still ongoing - 'movement of the squares' needs to be seen not just in strong transnational relations but also in connection to local USMs. It marks a new cycle of mobilisations applying a combination of tactics such as demonstrations, occupations, squats and other forms of resistance to engage for collective social change (Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012). What unites these different movements is a cry for a new, a real democratic organisation of the political-economic sphere. This is why the recent protest waves have also been labelled 'Real Democracy Movement'³³ (Hardt and Negri, 2011, Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013). In this way a 'positive' title has been found for what otherwise was called anti-systemic, anti-political, anti-hierarchical, anti-state, anti-capitalist, or simply alternative USMs³⁴.

Finally is this 'movement of the squares' or 'Real Democracy Movement' marks a renewed emphasis on the urban, since they are occupying inner city spaces. Returning to Castells, he saw as one characteristic for USMs the fact that they would address the local state. This can

³² While Graeber is emphasising the Occupy movement in his book, where he was personally involved, this can be said for the broader context of this recent waves of USMs in Europe and North America.

³³ 'Real democracy' is used to distinguish from what is understood as democracy in the 'Western world' of more or less the past 200 years, a representative form of government based on free and general elections bringing political elites into office that rule on the citizens' behalf.

³⁴ The current movements are no homogeneous groups of radical-left, anti-capitalist, or anarchist activists - as had been often the case in squatters movements - but are founded in broader coalitions of activists from different political and personal backgrounds. Despite this, there are still elements of all this 'anti' categories in the aims as well as forms of organisation, but it became difficult to use them as labelling terms. And as Graeber noted for the initial Occupy camp in New York, it was essentially based on organisational knowledge from local anarchist groups (Graeber, 2013). Similar anarchist rootedness can be stated for the 15M movement in Spain as can be seen below (Castañeda, 2012, Martínez López and García Bernardos 2012, Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013, Taibo 2012).

be seen as a major difference to current movements, but at the same time a renewed connection. These current movements are both addressing prominently international organisations and the globalised financial market rule, as well as the repercussions those have in local urban development and city spaces. In turn they are still in many cases accusing the local state as much as they are referring to other levels of politics. The city becomes increasingly important for social movements and this is why the label USM is still appropriate (Leontidou, 2010, Harvey, 2012). What follows are brief descriptions of the USMs in Madrid and Hamburg which are related to the two case studies. Both are in their way influenced by the current crisis, for a more comparative approach to this aspect conduct the appendix: Excursus: ‘Spain and Germany - the European divide’.

“The crisis now is as much an urban crisis as it ever was“ (Harvey, 2012:53)

Forms of current activism - 15M

La Tabacalera existed before the outbreak of the 15M movement in May 2011. But since the beginning it was one of the internal difficulty to combine local struggles and resistance on other political scales. During the occupation of Puerta del Sol Tabacalera served as one of the logistical centres contributing in many ways to the 15M movement (Feinberg, 2013a).

“[T]he fact is that activists in the neighbourhood have had places to meet and organize, which facilitated other kinds of protest that have allowed La Tabacalera and Lavapiés to become a node that articulates with broader circuits of protest in Madrid, in Spain, and even globally. This conceptualization of the CSA Tabacalera as a highly articulated node was perhaps made most explicit when protesters set up an extended acampada (encampment) in the Puerta de Sol in May 2011.“ (Feinberg, 2013a:36)

The 15M movement occurred after a street demonstration on May 15th 2011, where several protesters were detained by the police. This encouraged a group of activists, to stay at Puerta del Sol over night, inspired by the occupation of public squares in Egypt and Tunisia. 15M can be seen as a response to the financial crisis, neoliberal policies and austerity. It quickly spread from the occupation of Madrid’s central square to other cities in Spain and beyond³⁵ (Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012). It was argued, that its popularity fundamentally drew on two aspects. Firstly it was built upon a tradition of autonomist or alternative USMs, as the Spanish experience with the Global Justice movement (Flesher Fominaya and Cox, 2013), but also the local squatters or *okupa* movement and it applied

³⁵ The occupation in Madrid started the 15th of May, just one week before the local and regional elections, and had swollen to approximately 30.000 people in and around the central city square on election day, May the 22nd (BBC-News, 2011). One particular aspect of its quick dispersion was the extensive social media use. Different social media channels were of high importance for 15M, This is one characteristic of the movement which can not be addressed here, but is discussed elsewhere (Anduzia et. al., 2012, Berkhout and Jansen, 2012, Vallina-Rodriguez et. al., 2012).

anarchists forms of organisation from the very beginning³⁶ (Abellán et al., 2012, Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012). This articulated in horizontal structures and regular popular assemblies which were held in the occupied squares (Taibo, 2012). Secondly the movement was realised also through a renewed force of youth activists. Keeping in mind the fact, that in the summer of 2011 45% of the Spanish youth were unemployed, a total number of round 650,000 between the age of 16 and 29 (ibid.). Groups such as ‘Juventud Sin Futuro’ (Youth without Future) helped to mobilise this group as mainspring of this occurring USM (ibid.). Interestingly, already in 2007 Orueta diagnosed the youth as a crucial thing to achieve for USMs in Madrid. As well he postulated that “urban movements consider lack of democracy as a prime motive for concern and protest” (Orueta, 2007:192). The label ‘Real Democracy Now’ was used, which was also the demonstrations initial label on May 15th, chanting “no somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros”, meaning ‘we are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers’ (Castañeda, 2012:309). This search for a ‘real democracy’ referring to the crisis of representation is also expressed by ‘no nos representan’, you don’t represent us, which is still a popular chant two years after (Hengst, 2011).

The most relevant aftereffects of this movement is the revival of popular assemblies in many Madrillian neighbourhoods and all over the country³⁷ (Mayer, 2012a, Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012, Taibo, 2012). Further it is highly important not to underestimate the connective and bonding power of the days of the encampment, since local movement connections are built on personal contacts and joint activities (Orueta, 2007).

In the midst of all this la Tabacalera played a controversial role. It is popularly labelled ‘neurological centre’ of the 15M movement by the media (Feinberg, 2013a). Besides this simplification tendency of mass media la Tabacalera did play a role in facilitating the occupation, as well as received back the movements dynamics in the months afterwards, as much as did other social-cultural centres, neighbourhood centres and squats. After leaving Sol 15M returned to spaces of local struggle, often engaged in anti-gentrification or anti-neoliberal urban development struggles it can be said that “15-M is, culturally and socially, an urban movement” (Taibo, 2012:158). Moreover, it brought new strength to such struggles, as well as new social-cultural centres were founded. In La Tabacalera it gave rise to a phase of very high activity during and after the occupation in 2011 and the first half of 2012. At this time representatives from the ministry stated, that even if the museum project which is currently on hold, would be realised in la Tabacalera, the self-managed social centre would

³⁶ Martínez (2012) describes how the M15 movement was not just influenced by the local okupa but also triggered a renewed wave of squatting, famously articulated through the Hotel Madrid, a short lasting squat just next to Puerta del Sol, which was born out of the occupation (Abellán et. al., 2012).

³⁷ This was also expressed when after the self-eviction of Sol, the movement ‘returned’ to the neighbourhoods in June 2011 in a symbolic way marching towards local neighbourhood centres.

not be affected (Steiger, 2011). Today, two years away from this large mobilisation phase of 15M, the activists do not know if their contract to use the historic factory will be prolonged this winter.

Forms of current activism - Recht auf Stadt - Hamburg

Hamburg has a rich tradition of autonomous movements within Germany. In 1981 a squatting movement took off and several buildings have been occupied ever since, the so called Hafenstraße. Since 1995 these squats have a legalised status as a housing project (Mayer, 2012b) resulting from extensive struggles in the years before including street barricades and large mobilisations. Another radical autonomous space is the in 1987 squatted Rote Flora, which acts as an autonomous neighbourhood centre. These experiences have triggered a strict urban policy rigidly enforcing the eviction law in Germany, which states that squats are to be cleared by the police within the first 24 hours. Following Mayer (2012b) this local history leads towards a situation in which autonomous groups tend to be aware that some negotiation with public authorities are necessary.

During the 1990s and 2000s the city showed very strong economic development, accompanied by strong local inequality and high social-segregation (Friedrichs and Triemer, 2009). Further did the economic prosperity lead to a strong increase in rents and housing prices (Kholodilin and Mense, 2012), which, together with a reduction of public housing spendings since the mid 1990s, made the city difficult to afford for vulnerable social groups. In 2009 local activists groups united to resist the development of an old neighbourhood near the port, an area under restructuring by neoliberal urban projects which also has a rich tradition of local struggles. The 'No BNQ' initiative in 2009 together with the foundation of a new local community centre the Centro Sociale lay the foundations for the 'Recht auf Stadt' network Hamburg (Twickel, 2013). Today the network connects round 50 local initiatives, ranging from anarchist and autonomous groups to citizens-organisations, from social purposes to anti-gentrification issues. It is not a USM in the classical sense as described above, rather it serves as a platform to join forces and create an overarching voice of different smaller movements. The strength of the network is, that all initiatives are involved but everyone can keep the individual approach or attitude (Ziel, 2013). Recht auf Stadt Hamburg could be described as an example for what Nicholls (2008) called the productive combination of weak and strong tie social relations for USMs. It works internally through online communication but also many personal contacts and bonds which among the different initiatives. Furthermore there are regular monthly plenary sessions and workshops held. When the network calls out to the different initiatives they often manage to mobilise 3,000 to 5,000 people for

demonstrations (Fritzsche, 2013). Using the name ‘Right to the City’³⁸ as this label can be understood as a political statement. Despite the very different local initiatives which come together under this label, it inherently holds a critique to capitalist urban development, in recent years it subsumes groups critically towards neoliberal processes in the city (Holm, 2009).

“The claim for the right to the city has turned into a viral slogan across Europe, North America as well as Latin America, because it fuses and expresses a variety of issues that have become highly charged over years of neoliberal urban development and even more through the effects of the financial and economic crisis.” (Mayer, 2012c:63)

Mayer calls for a critical analysis of right to the city movements in first world metropolises. Often built on a broad coalition of leftist and alternative movements, creative professionals and artists as well as other neighbourhood based organisations and indignant citizens initiatives, they mobilise against urban development or restructuring processes. They sometimes succeed in repelling crass neoliberal urban projects, but their struggles tend to end up saving just “some oases and protected spaces only for the comparably privileged protagonists, spaces which increasingly become instrumentalized in creative city branding efforts in the competitive entrepreneurial urban policy game” (Mayer, 2012c:64). This critique will be picked up again below.

The occupation of the historic Gängeviertel in Hamburg in August 2009 was closely related to the local ‘Recht auf Stadt’ network. Both, the networks formation fuelled the strength of the Gängeviertel movement and vice versa. The Gängeviertel and the extensive public interest which accompanied it since the beginning, were seen as a symbol for the struggle against neoliberal urban development in Hamburg, against gentrification, but for liberated-spaces and auto-organisation and the ‘self-help’ of cultural producers (Gabriel et al., 2011).

V.C. Artists, creativity and the neoliberal city

Policy strategies which relate urban growth to creative economies and cultural production have spread rapidly during the past decades, a ‘New Metropolitan Mainstream’ rose. City branding and urban marketing became part of a neoliberal urban policy tool-kit next to social

³⁸ “Right to the City” is a notion based on Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 publication “Le droit à la ville”. Embedded by the ideas of its time in the 1960s it had been interpreted and re-used by critical scholars and activists ever since. In the words of David Harvey it entails “To claim the right to the city [...] is to claim some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade, and to do so in a fundamental and radical way.” (Harvey, 2012:5). Today it is important to note, that there is not one concept which can be referred to as ‘Right to the City’ rather it became a slogan (Brenner et.al. 2012), it “is less a juridical right, but rather an oppositional demand” (Mayer, 2012c:71). “It must be seen not as a completed solution to current problems, but as an opening to a new urban politics, what I call an urban politics of the inhabitant” (Purcell 2002:99).

housing and public transportation - sometimes even instead of it. The 'Political Economy of Place' (Molotoch, 1976) had been re-animated through new urban growth policies focussing on the creative economies and the culture of cities, mainly influenced by Landry's "The Creative City" and Florida's "The Rise of the Creative Class" (Krätke, 2012). Culture is no longer a separate sphere from economy, the focus shifts from production to consumption (Cruickshank et al., 2013).

"With the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities, the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge" (Zukin 1995: 1-2).

Urban growth agendas and urban development under neoliberalism is "framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption, and place marketing." (Peck, 2005: 740). While historically often "the urban [was] equated with creativity" (Hessler and Zimmerman, 2008:12) it is more and more 'local authenticity' (Zukin, 1995) or 'geographical specificity of culture' (Scott, 2012b) which is the focus of current urban policies. It seems, that the new 'things to have' for a successful urban economy are sub-cultural spaces and a good marketing strategy. But empirical evidence shows that cities can not solely rely on their local cultural industries' growth to sustain the urban economy (Krätke, 2012, Peck, 2005, Theodore et al., 2011). Furthermore, the overall positive connotation of creativity is said to sometimes veil the exploitation which is taking place. On the one hand, there is an army of low payed cultural producers in precarious labour situations and just a very few who can profit from such 'creative milieus'³⁹ (Krätke, 2012). On the other hand are the spatial qualities which are created in the urban fabric likely to contribute to displacement of the urban poor and increasing local real-estate prices. This poses new questions in the debate on the commodification of housing - a discourse centred around the buzz-word gentrification⁴⁰. This 'New Metropolitan Mainstream' had been questioned in research and practice during the past decades, and the recent financial and economic crisis is adding new dynamics to this critical opposition.

"The crisis runs deep and is remarkable because it is not the last gasp of the industrial political economy of space but really the first embarrassment of the 'new metropolitan mainstream', much of which is lauded by Florida and others as the creative core of the new capitalism." (Keil, 2010: 649)

The crisis is contributing to the already previously sparked attention of USMs and local resistance to 'creative city policies' (Mayer, 2012c). Since neoliberalisation has brought the

³⁹ For a closer read on creative milieus see: Meursburger et.al. 2009.

⁴⁰ For a brief definition of the term conduct the appendix: 'Gentrification'.

pressure of profitability under the doctrine of economic growth also to the sphere of cultural production (Harvey, 1989, Peck and Tickell, 2002), the pressure on alternative cultural spaces has also reached a peak with this crisis. Autonomous social-cultural spaces started considering their own role in a process of upgrading or gentrification (Uitermark, 2004). Aims of local political authorities to include autonomous spaces and movements as assets into a location-based competition within a ‘creative city doctrine’ can be called co-optation. As Bourdieu (1996 [1992]:216) noted, “there are also economic conditions of access to symbolic profits - which are themselves capable of being converted, in the more or less long term, into economic profits“. This explains the co-optation tendencies of local authorities and economic actors, trying to include all symbolic producers or creatives in Florida’s terms, also those of alternative or autonomous spaces, into their aim of economic growth.

The category of ‘creativity’ within this popular approach is highly fuzzy and in the original based just on the educational level of individuals and their professional occupation (Markusen, 2006). An emancipatory aim would be to give content back to the word creative, leading towards “a society where all people can be creative in the true sense of creativity“ (Marcuse, 2012: min. 20:10) and where creativity⁴¹ would entail something essentially social and collective (Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

⁴¹ Additional elaborations on the term creativity can be found in the appendix: ‘Creativity, a fuzzy category’

VI. ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

The discourse introduced as ‘New Metropolitan Mainstream’ above is marked by “an extraordinary vague and imprecise use of terms” (Hessler and Zimmerman, 2008:14). The category of the ‘artistic’ is usually embedded in the cultural⁴² or creative. In the concept of Florida he insists that his ‘supercreative core’ made of scientists, managers, engineers, and also artists, “is really the driving force in economic growth” (Florida quoted in: Peck, 2005:757). In order to deal in a meaningful way with artists in regard to the struggles in our cities the concept of ‘cultural producer’ by Bourdieu will be applied and explained below. Within this framework an emphasis is put on the autonomy of art before the question will be answered whether artists are good or bad political activists.

Artists, a sociological category? On cultural producers

The term ‘cultural production’ had been shaped by Bourdieu, who had a broad understanding of culture, in line with the tradition of classical sociology⁴³. His approach is based on the critical tone in tradition of the Frankfurt School dealing with ‘cultural industries’ and ‘cultural economies’. In the light of today’s discourse though, these terms have lost their theoretical clout and “now simply denote the production of ‘cultural products’ [...], products that have a symbolic value, products that function as signs [...], they] refer to culture that is consumed” (Hessler and Zimmerman, 2008:14-15). Returning to Bourdieu’s concept in the light of current analysis should reanimate the terms critical tradition.

The interpretation of Hesmondhalgh (2006) is central to a usage of the notion of cultural producers here. The figure below is taken from Bourdieu’s ‘Rules of Art’⁴⁴, the figure is adopted to this, as well as graphically changed for better readability. In the theory of Bourdieu the different fields are constituted by a struggle over their position and defined by variables.

⁴² For a brief discussion of the term culture conduct the appendix: ‘Defining Culture’.

⁴³ This understanding of culture includes science (including social science), law and religion, as different forms of art as expressive-aesthetic activities, literature and music. Bourdieu used the term ‘cultural production’ mainly in his work “Rules of Art” (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]), where he focussed on expressive-aesthetic: literature and art as a subfield of cultural production. In his words it is important to note, that “Readers may, throughout this chapter, replace writer with painter, philosopher, scholar, etc., and literary with artistic, philosophical, scientific, etc. [...] cultural producer - a term chosen, with no particular pleasure, to mark the break with the charismatic ideology of ‘creator’” (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:214-215). It is not to understand in a way that the difference between the fields are being ignored, Bourdieu acknowledges that the intensity of the struggles varies according to genres.

⁴⁴ It is to be found under the subchapter ‘Art and Money’ and is titled in the original ‘The field of cultural production in the field of power and in social space’. Bourdieu’s conception of cultural production is embedded in his much broader social theory, but not all aspects can be dealt with here. The following interpretation will focus solely on the field of cultural production.

He positions the field of cultural production within the field of power, moreover he sees the economic and political field interlinked with that of cultural production (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]).

The two basic variables are economic and cultural capital⁴⁵. Within the field of cultural production there are two additional variables, namely autonomy and symbolic specific capital. The degree of autonomy defines this field into two subfields. While the side closer to the field of power has low autonomy - the subfield of large scale production, the very left side has a high degree of autonomy - the subfield of small-scale production. Within the subfield of small scale production there is

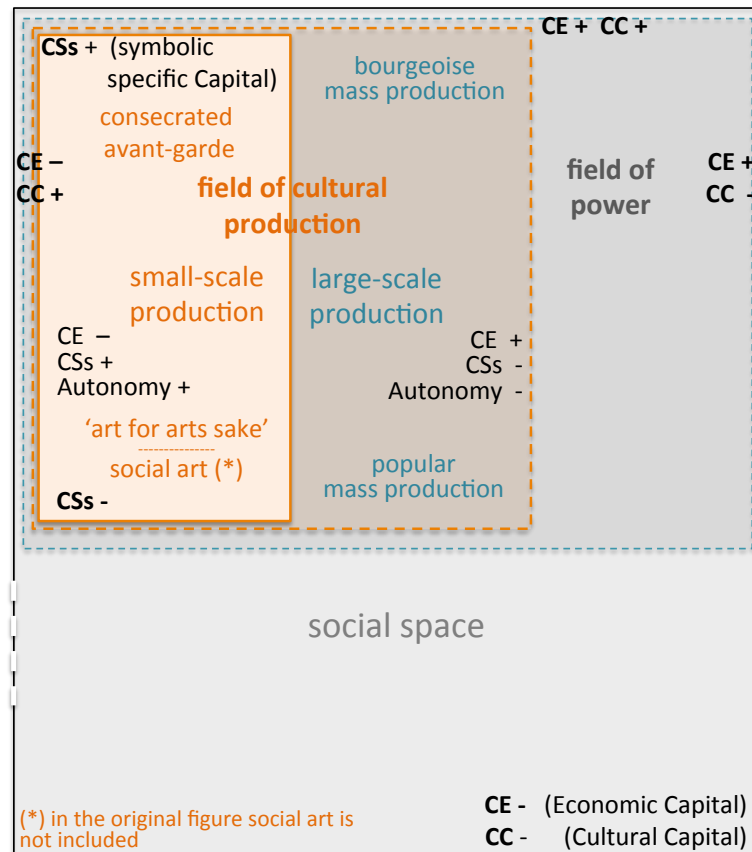


Fig.9

high symbolic specific capital on the top, which is low on the bottom. This symbolic specific capital stands for “accumulated prestige and honour“ (Thompson, 1991:14), within the field of cultural production and beyond.

Despite the obvious imprecisions of such a far reaching concept, the differentiating categories of the suggested fields imply great meaning for further analysis of artistic groups in urban social movements. Particularly the subfield of small-scale cultural production ‘art for arts sake’ and social art⁴⁶. This subfield is defined by high cultural capital and a high degree of autonomy while showing a low economic capital. Added to this it is within itself

⁴⁵ Economic capital is what is measurable in monetary or exchange value, the “material wealth“, while symbolic capital includes “knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications“ (Thompson, 1991:14). Whereas the top of the field of power, tangent to the field of cultural production, has both high economic and cultural capital. The general social space, the very ground of this social figure is characterised by low economic and low cultural capital. But there is not just the bottom to top gradient but also one from left to right, whereas the right side, the side of the field of power, has low cultural capital and high economic, it is the opposite way around for the very left side of the field of cultural production.

⁴⁶ In the original figure Bourdieu had just put ‘art for art’s sake’ in the subfield of small-scale production, but further on in the text he describes ‘social art’ fitting in too.

differentiated by parts of high symbolic-specific capital. The distinctive aspects of this subfield within the field of cultural production are the high degrees of autonomy and the lower economic capital compared to large scale cultural production and the few outstanding artists who reach a very high level of symbolic-specific capital, that further can be turned into economic capital (Thompson, 1991).

“As liberated as they [the subfields] may be from external constraints and demands, they are traversed by the necessity of the fields which encompass them: the need for profit, whether economic or political. It follows that they are at any one time the site of a struggle between two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, which favours those who dominate the field economically and politically (for example, 'bourgeois art'), and the autonomous principle (for example, 'art for art's sake')“
(Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:216-217)

VI.A. Sphere of the Autonomy of Art

“Like the routes of domination, the routes of autonomy are complex, if not impenetrable.“ (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:52)

Historically for a long time the production of artworks was dependent on financial backers or the allegiance to a patron, resulting in a structural subordination. Cultural production was closely related to the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]). Adorno described the development of autonomous arts in Europe in the late 18th Century, when artists emancipated themselves from patrons, such as the church or court, and started offering their work for sale for buyers whose identity was not specified in advance. Through this they started working in a market logic, but at the same time their produced artworks embodied their own more of their values and ideals, thus artists produced in greater autonomy (Hamilton 2009). Bourdieu (1996) compares this to the emancipation of the family servant to market labour, its a process of liberation as much as domination by a ‘new master’.

“It is not such a paradox that capitalism emancipates, as Marx of course recognized. It emancipates from feudalism, but forges new chains of its own.“ (Hamilton 2009:291)

This process helped constituting the field of art as a world which is subject to its own laws, as much as dependent on the rule of the market. The autonomy and commodity status are in constant tension as much as they require each other, creating a dialectic situation. Modernity brought about the notion of ‘art for art’s sake’⁴⁷ informed by Kant’s philosophy of aesthetics. In the words of Oscar Wilde ‘art has an independent life, just as thought has’ (Hamilton, 2009).

Adorno brings together the Aesthetic theory of Kant (art as autonomous) and Marx (art as commodity) and sees art aesthetically as autonomous and sociologically as product at the

⁴⁷ Commonly known as phrase in French ‘L’Art pour L’Art’.

same time (Hamilton, 2009). Arts and cultural production became vulnerable to exploitation and co-option by the capitalist marketplace, since - to relate this back to Bourdieu's cultural production - cultural capital and also symbolic specific capital can be turned into economic capital through the market. It is precisely at the frontier of the two modes of hierarchisation described above, the need for profit and the autonomous principle, where art becomes politicised in critical manner. Art can choose to bear a social or political function through a critical engagement with these contradictions. In the terms of Adorno, autonomous art holds emancipatory potential, because "art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art" (Adorno, 1976:209, quoted in: Hamilton, 2009). The argument of Holmes (2004) goes further, since politics in a democratic sense implies a certain degree of freedom, all political art must be autonomous art.

This relates to the field of social art in Bourdieu's scheme, being characterised by the absence of a distinction between the political and the artistic field. It is connected to 'art for art's sake' by its radical challenge to worldly or commercial success, but is also differentiated from it due to social art's external function (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]). Mouffe (2007) states that today's art is not like the modernist avant-garde able to - pretend to - offer a radical critique⁴⁸. But this does not end its political function. In many cases cultural producers "feel the right or the duty" to not just ignore temporal political powers but to "invoke against them their own principles and norms" (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:221). Within the current crisis of hegemony art can contribute to the construction of new subjectivities subverting the dominant order. Because "we can see that critical artistic practices represent an important dimension of democratic politics" (Mouffe, 2007:5). Especially if art is not seen as the achievement of outstanding individuals. Cultural production can be read as a social process, since "art is part of a much broader social terrain" (Ley, 2003:2532).

VI.B. Sphere of Co-Optation and Exploitation in the 'Creative City'

"The autonomy of the worlds of cultural production [...] is increasingly threatened. The reign of 'commerce' and the 'commercial' bears down more strongly everyday." (Bourdieu, 1998:37)

Following this derivation of the autonomy of art and its relation to commercialisation there are two phenomena to be discussed, co-optation and exploitation. This seems particularly relevant in relation not just to the logic of the neoliberal market, but to the interests of political authorities and city governments when applying creative city policies.

⁴⁸ In her understanding it was the modernist illusion of the privileged position of the individual outstanding artists which lead to this understanding (Mouffe, 2007). There is a broad discussion within the theory of art and sociology of art whether creative or cultural production is an individual or collective process.

Pruijt (2003) describes co-optation as a process where a movement external organisation or institution embraces certain ideas while redefining the movements issues and problems in such a way that it is not a threat to the stability of its own system. It can also be called ‘selling-out’ of alternative ideas or as a manipulative strategy. This stands in close relation to both artistic practise and the creation of autonomous spaces, since “squatters’ movements create breeding places where artists can work [and] innovation in informal space contributes to the vitality of the city“ (ibid. :136). It is often public institutions, through fundings and programmes of urban revitalisation, who ‘instrumentalize’ community-based cultural production, and through this disarm the radical potentials through co-optation (Pasternak and Ashford, 2006). Also the fact that artists are increasingly deployed in public and private development processes undermines their autonomous position (Boomgaard, 2006). This is the ‘sphere of co-optation’ within the research puzzle, cultural or artistic production engaged within more institutionalised practice.

“In a society that seems to have abandoned most of its values in favour of untrammelled market action, returning to artistic autonomy could have its merits. Autonomy allowed art to make the idea of a different and possibly better society seem credible.“ (Boomgaard, 2006)

Harvey (2012) declares artists as cultural producers being exploited and co-opted by the current neoliberal system in an extreme way. Through that, and their particular skills, they are possible key actors in USMs. It is in the interest of ‘monopoly rents’ that capital does not fully destroy the uniqueness of urban places, allowing for some kind of local authenticity and divergence. In relation to creative city policies, which emphasise the competition between cities, such local specifics gain importance. Co-optation then means that transgressive cultural practice is tolerated or even supported by local authorities and local businesses, since it helps to create an original space, surpassing others in the international urban competition. This leads to alienation among cultural producers, at least among those opposed to the commodification of their ‘product’⁴⁹. They experience “first-hand the appropriation and exploitation of their creativity and their political commitments for the economic benefit of others“ (Harvey, 2012:110).

From the very beginning the Gängeviertel asked itself how it would be possible to on the one hand make use of the neoliberal urban politics in Hamburg embracing Florida’s creative class arguments, without becoming nothing but an advertisement for the city. “In Europe, hardly any other city has relied on Florida as heavily“ as Hamburg did (Oehmke, 2010). It was just

⁴⁹ Based on this argument some authors draw the conclusions that there is a class struggle within the creative class, to again mobilise this terms critically against themselves (Novy and Colomb, 2012). “[T]he creative professionals of the real-estate business are organizing the dislocation of the original population of low-income artists and “creative periphery“ firms by the upper strata of the “supercreative core“ (yuppies, bobos, and upscale firms of the “creative industries“)(Krätke, 2012:147).

very much planned that the Gängeviertel would challenge the local authorities with their own weapons appealing to their aims for the creative city Hamburg⁵⁰. Even Florida himself publicly announced his appreciation of the Gängeviertel and called on the city to realise this chance of setting an international landmark of how to deal with creatives (Chilewski, 2012). This tactical play and prominent support probably helped the Gängeviertel not to be evicted and is one of the contributing factors to the state of negotiations until today (Holm, 2010). But at the same time there is a vivid discourse against this co-optation within the Gängeviertel. In its everyday practice people try to always find a balance between pushing forward the collective interest to keep the Gängeviertel in the hands of the activists and at the same time not becoming a tool in the city's marketing tool-box. As an example, they try to avoid commercial activities such as guided tours for tourists, but at the same time they consider their backyards and corridors as public space and do not want to exclude people from it. It is a constant struggle within the Viertel and its inhabitants of how to deal with such questions. Facing the obvious of a collective which is as heterogeneous as the Gängeviertel: there is not one answer, but almost as many opinions as there are people in the Viertel. Generally the approach is to be as open and 'public' as possible while being the least commercial as possible. Moreover, to defeat co-optation as much as possible in order to not get trapped in a vicious circle of self-exploitation.

In Madrid the situation is different. While the local authorities are currently renovating the Gängeviertel together with the collective, la Tabacalera's existence seems to be terminated by the realisation of the museum project as soon as the local economy would recover. The activists there are exploited in the aspect, that they keep up the buildings and create a vibrant cultural atmosphere until the site would be developed. Then the future use could probably co-opt the authenticity of local culture which had been established by the cultural centre and benefit from it for commercial use. But at the same time even the two years terminated contracts the CSA la Tabacalera gets help to develop longer-term projects which is most often not possible in squatted spaces.

⁵⁰ As an example did the Gängeviertel host the press conference of the Not In Our Name - Marke Hamburg' initiative shortly after the occupation, and also supported it (Twickel, 1st of August 2013). The starting line of this open letter to the public policy responsible for of pushing forward the 'Brand Hamburg' is: "A spectre has been haunting Europe since US economist Richard Florida predicted that the future belongs to cities in which the 'creative class' feels at home". The whole text is a clear and to-the-point refusal of creative-city policies in Hamburg and beyond. It continues in refusal of cultural production and festivalisation targeted towards upper middle classes and tourists. "We say: ouch, this is painful. Stop this shit. We won't be taken for fools. Dear location politicians: we refuse to talk about this city in marketing categories." And it concludes: "We say: a city is not a brand. A city is not a corporation. A city is a community. We ask the social question which, in cities today, is also about a battle for territory. This is about taking over and defending places that make life worth living in this city, which don't belong to the target group of the 'growing city'. We claim our right to the city — together with all the residents of Hamburg who refuse to be a location factor." (NION, Brand Hamburg, 2010).

VI.C. Artistic groups: good or bad political activists?

Modernity at the turn of the 20th Century was a time when artistic groups formed around radical political ideas. Despite the claims of post-modern art, which often called for a strict separation of art and politics or the negation of purposeful arts, there still remains the idea of the connection between arts and revolution. The neo-marxist approaches during the 1970s saw arts created outside the context of radical political movements too easily commodified and co-opted (McCaughan, 2012). Also Bourdieu calls for artists as cultural producers to not follow “the temptation to remain in their ivory tower“ (1996 [1992]:348) and put their struggle for artistic autonomy ahead of political claims. Cultural producers should join the fight “over the instruments of production and consecration and [...] to assert the values associated with their autonomy“ (ibid.). It is critical art that can foment dissensus and is able to give a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony“ (Mouffe, 2007:4-5).

Art can be the “vehicle of social movements and social conflict“ (Lo et al., 2006:78) in manifold ways. There is a great variety of artistic activism emerging in the past decades⁵¹. It can be considered as oppositional attempts to what Zukin has called the current ‘artistic mode of production‘ (Zukin, 1995), a form of “artistic mode of revolution“ (Rosler, 2012). Confronting the discourse on authenticity and local creativity among creative-city akin policy makers, counter-cultural activism engages in ‘real authenticity‘ and self-management (Mouffe, 2007). Artistic practice can help to disrupt the dominant aesthetics and cultural politics and “unmask the hegemonic regime by unfixing meanings attributed to [...] symbols“⁵²(McCaughan, 2012:26).

Additional to the ‘symbolic work‘ artists can add to movement activism other specific skills, resources, and assets which - especially in recent USMs - are of high importance. It is mainly the media contacts and connection to local elites together with their familiarity with communication strategies and media networks which help movements to find broader support in society (Novy and Colomb, 2012). The Gängeviertel is one very good example of this. They initiated an ‘advertisement campaign‘ before the occupation of the buildings oriented at the most recent marketing strategies. They chose a logo, a red circle, and a slogan (‘Komm in die Gänge‘) and created something like a brand Gängeviertel. Plenty of large red circles with

⁵¹ During the Global Justice Movement tactics of creative resistance had been developed, in most cases creative non-violent resistance, and artists formed a group within the political activists (Bell Yank, 2010, Holmes, 2004). Similar has occurred in more recent movements (e.g. Occupy) where many authors report the strong presence and important role of artists, who are overcoming the boundaries of their disciplines (Graeber, 2013, Holmes, 2012).

⁵² In relation to this it would be fruitful to engage with the Mythologies of Barthes, in particular with the discourse on demystification in Barthes and also Lefebvre as can be found in Kelly (2000).

this slogan and the date had been spread in Hamburg prior to the occupation (Stillich, 2012). It seemed like a professional guerilla marketing campaign and people did not know what to expect. Almost a year later when they published a 'Zukunftskonzept' as their vision for the future development of the Viertel they reused the red squares and adjusted the slogan to 'Komm in die Zukunft', come to the future. Also now, that they are running a campaign to promote shares of their cooperative, they make very professional advertisements.



Fig.10



Fig.11

Mayer (2012b) states clearly, that squats in the context of the neoliberal city have higher chances of not being evicted if they manage to create a link to the cultural-upscaling processes pushed forward by urban policies.

Another approach to the relation between artists and political activism is what Markusen (2006) has argued, that many artists participate actively in politics, it is a social group who votes in high numbers and is believed to be politically 'left' to a large extent. "Artists are often supported by elites, [...] but are, nevertheless, frequently opposed to the elite's values, aesthetic and political. They remain a powerful source of articulated opposition to societal status quo and a major force for innovation." (Markusen, 2006:1922). It is often those ties to elites or also public institutions which make artists a strong support for USMs. In many cases without being politically militant or tied to activist organisations (McCaughan, 2012). It is the conflict between the autonomy of their art, the freedom of their cultural production, both from market or public funding, as well as from political purposes, which makes up the core of the argument here. As Ashford argues, arts engaged in civil disobedience or radical political activism limits the freedom of artistic production as much as instrumentalisation or co-optation of cultural production by the market or the state (Pasternak and Ashford, 2006). Oppositional Mouffe argues, that arts and politics are not two separated fields, but that there "is an aesthetic dimension in the political and there is a political dimension in art" (Mouffe, 2007:4). Since within the theory of hegemony, artistic practice either helps constituting the given symbolic order or it challenges it.

To conclude, it had been argued widespread that cultural producers and especially artists are in one way or another part of the alliances of USMs⁵³. It is their particular position cutting across different backgrounds, which makes up their specific role (Mayer, 2013). As Peter Marcuse (2012) argues, there are two basic groups within USMs, the discontented and the deprived. While the previous see the possibilities of different utopias or disagree with the unrealised potentials of society from their viewpoint, the latter struggle for social justice. Since most artists are - against the common idea - among the most deprived citizens and not favoured in society, they belong to both the discontented and the deprived group. They can struggle for change both as artists with all their symbolic power, but also as citizens in a deprived position (Marcuse, 2012). And it is the co-optation and exploitation those cultural producers experience, amplified by the impact of neoliberal ‘creative city’ policies, that leads to alienation among them.

“Because it does seem to be the case that, even in times and places when there is next to no other constituency for revolutionary change, the place one is most likely to find it is among artists, authors, and musicians; even more so, in fact, than among professional intellectuals.” (Graeber, 2009:110-111)

Arts and radical politics - a possible alliance?

Today, when referring to activist artists or creative resistance it is not merely the artist as outstanding individual. Such critical famous artists can draw attention to struggles⁵⁴ but they will not be the ones making change happen. Different academics and theorists have agreed to this, that “this fight must be collective” (Bourdieu, 1996 [1992]:348) and it won't be artists alone, but an alliance of different groups (Mouffe, 2007) who can bring about change. Further, it is less about the arts, in the narrow sense, but about creativity - seen as a collective potential or ability - which can support such processes. Artists can play their role, but it is not outside of political struggle that artistic engagement within USMs is powerful.

Also from the field it was reaffirmed, that there is something inherently different between artistic and political activity, although it might not always be easy to define. Roberto, a political activist engaged in *okupas* in Madrid said, that artists are important to the M15 movement, but that there is a different way of working at hand. One artist from Nave Trapecio explained, that she uses her name when she produces artwork from an intrinsic motivation or for university, but that she contributed to the creation of ‘artistas anonimas⁵⁵’ as a name which

⁵³ Mayer (2013) lists the following groups as usually represented in such local movement formations: radical autonomous, anarchist and alternative groups; middle class urbanites (concerned with their quality of life); disparate groups sharing a precarious existence; local environmental groups; the marginalised, excluded and oppressed; and finally artists and other creative professionals, who cut across other groups backgrounds.

⁵⁴ As did Daniel Richter during the first phase of the Gängeviertel occupation.

⁵⁵ Also *artistas anonim@s* or *artista anonimx*, which linguistically includes also males in the term.

can be used for collective and political projects, and the final aim is to contribute to a struggle and authorship can be set aside.

In the Gängeviertel it was a common ground of discussion to say things like ‘because of all the Gängeviertel activism I am not devoting any time to my artistic practice’. This makes clear, that it is not the same, although it is not completely separable either.

Often political artistic activity is referred to as ‘counter-cultural’ or ‘counter-hegemonic’, in relation to the thoughts of Gramsci and the academic discourse on hegemony and counter hegemonic movements (Brophy, 2007, McCaughan, 2012). Mouffe (2007) also refers to ‘counter-culture’ but embeds her approach to artistic activism in the radical political thought of Agonism. Furthermore, some of the authors mentioned above are related to anarchist thought⁵⁶, as are some of the USMs which have been discussed (e.g.: Graeber, 2009).

⁵⁶ There are strong intellectual ties, but also practical similarities related to the a way of living and thinking, which connected the artistic avant-garde positions to anarchism, and such connections are still relevant today (Graeber, 2009, Bell Yank, 2010).

VII. COUNTER-HEGEMONY, AGONISM, AND ANARCHISM

Before returning to the research puzzle and questions, this chapter captures the side of political activism, discussing different approaches to radical politics with a focus on the in-between of institutionalisation and autonomy and leads towards the conception of spaces of creative autonomy.

VII.A. Gramsci, Hegemony, and countercultural space

To introduce the thoughts of Gramsci briefly, he defined the state as political society together with civil society. What is holding together a society is cultural hegemony paired up with coercion (Gramsci, 1999 [first engl. translation 1971]). Based on Marx, he added cultural hegemony to the explanatory elements of class domination (Carroll and Ratner, 2010). This cultural hegemony is reproduced through social institutions such as schools, universities, arts, media, and the church. Gramsci helped to approach culture as instrument of power, contributing to the establishment of consensus and legitimation. When reaching hegemony, the interests of the ruling class appear as universal interest of a society. But Gramsci also emphasises the duality of culture. In addition to stabilising current power-relations, culture entails emancipatory force.

“For Gramsci [...] counterhegemonies, capable of challenging in an effective way the dominant hegemony, emerge out of the lived reality of oppressed people’s day-to-day lives.” (Crehan, 2002:5)

Current positions based on Gramsci’s thought emphasise the changes within society. Nowadays, processes of commercialisation and co-optation of culture are related not just to national politics but to an international competition among cities. Still today, a lot of counter-cultural work deals with dismantling of concepts, which are seen as universal within the hegemonic order, such as citizenship, equality, freedom or alike. Since hegemony - and with it political economy - are supported by people conforming to this schemes in everyday life, social movements are offering counter-hegemonic attempts, which entail unfixing potentials (Carroll and Ratner, 1994). This is precisely where artists can play an important role, in this process of challenging hegemonic schemes and meanings (McCaughan, 2012).

In this theoretical framework it is fruitful to go back to the term neoliberalisation, and identify it not just as a coherent policy framework dismantling the welfare state and making way for urban agendas as ‘creative-city policies’, but also as an ideological project establishing neoliberal assumptions of market logic and minimal state facilitation to assist capital as dominant, as hegemonic order (Harvey, 2005, Purcell, 2009). It is through the ‘naturalization

of neoliberalism' (Harvey, 2007) allied with the 'end of history' argument of Fukuyama⁵⁷, that the current hegemony stabilises. It is through counter-hegemonic movements, that the cracks and contradictions within such a hegemonic 'common sense' can be made visible. Counter-cultural projects are not just possible, they are inevitable (Purcell, 2009).

Neoliberalisation as hegemonic project has successfully integrated such counter-hegemonic attempts and through that stabilising its legitimisation, as Mayer (2012c) examined. Purcell (2009) describes participative or communicative urban planning projects as one way to affirm processes of urban restructuring and let them seem in the interest of everyone - while in many cases they are increasing urban inequalities. In the field of cultural production counter-cultural spaces and movements are often undergoing processes of co-optation - as described above - defusing their critical potentials. Such processes follow the logic of Habermas'ian deliberative democracy, stating that a rational and equal discourse can be realised. Although in fact, this did not turn out to match reality very often and this is why current critical positions, based on Gramsci'an thought, emphasise the antagonistic nature of conflict in society and oppose the idea that power relations can be neutralised (Purcell, 2009). There is no such thing as 'neutral ground' - as assumed by the theory of deliberative democracy - but all space is shaped by previous hegemonic practice. Furthermore there is no such thing as the 'naturalisation of neoliberalism', since politics can not be reduced to a set of technical moves and neutral procedures, but always stay antagonistic, and need to be challenged by radical counter-hegemonic practices (Mouffe, 2007).

VII.B. Agonism, 'Radical Democracy', and public space

Following the critique above, Laclau and Mouffe (1985 [2001]) have developed the approach of Radical Democracy. It focusses on the argument that antagonism can not be erased from politics, that it is inherent to the political. In the comment to the 2001 edition they call for 'the Left' to start elaborating alternatives to neoliberalism instead of trying to "manage it in a more human way" (ibid.:xvii). It is through enforcing the antagonist positions and fractions - and not by diminishing them following the promise of deliberation - how radical democracy can be approached, as an alternative to the current democratic deficit. Not just in the public sphere but also within USMs there are always antagonistic positions. As Twickel (2013) describes for the *Recht auf Stadt* network in Hamburg, there are various interests and aims among the different initiatives, it would not be possible to all agree all together on every issue, the network is based on a mutual agreement that allows coexistence of interests.

The 'end of history' Western liberals are characterised by an approach which is based on

⁵⁷ Fukuyama postulated at the end of the Cold War that Western liberal democracy marks the end of antagonistic positions within the social-cultural human evolution.

principles of rationalism and individualism. Following Mouffe, this view is unable to grasp the pluralistic and antagonistic nature of the social world. Moreover, it is public space which is the battleground for the “struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally“ (Mouffe, 2007:3). Particularly in the later writings, Mouffe enhances the importance of space, public space, for the project of radical democracy. Below she argues how the thoughts of Doreen Massey have influenced her in this point:

“Massey has insisted that space is a dimension of multiplicity. She has always insisted that space and multiplicity are co-constitutive. Space poses the question of how we are going to live together. This is a crucial question, of course, for democratic politics. Second is the idea that space is the product of relations and practices and that we need to acknowledge our co-constitutive interrelatedness, and that implies a spatiality.“ (Mouffe, 2012:22)

The idea, that an agonistic public space can become the ground of emancipation in an counter-hegemonic struggle (Springer, 2011), had been partially and temporary realised in the ‘Real Democracy‘ movement with its occupations of public squares in 2011. Such moments of large mobilisations then move back into local struggles and counter-cultural groups, as had been argued above, but are also fuelled by such groups in their emergence. Since the dominant hegemonic order will do much effort to clear their public space from such radical, counter-hegemonic struggles, there is the need for autonomous spaces, their breeding grounds.

VII.C. Anarchism, ‘Real Democracy’, and autonomous space

There is one particularity about academic anarchism, it hardly exists. “There are thousands of academic Marxists, but no more than a handful of well-known academic anarchists“ (Graeber, 2009:105). However, there are scholars applying anarchist methods as there are anarchist groups out there in the world of social struggle⁵⁸ (Routledge, 2009). This is of particular importance to the current struggle of reacting to the ‘naturalisation of neoliberalism‘ where the dismantling of the hegemonic knowledge regime is at the core of both critical theory and practice.

Similarly, it often happens in current USMs that anarchist principles are applied but the

⁵⁸ In recent years there had been a cautious increase in a discourse about anarchism which does not preliminary disqualify anarchism as ‘a stupid joke‘ (Graeber, 2009). In fact many well known scholars worked in an anarchist perspective (May, 2009), a famous example is Michele Foucault, who prominently discussed the fact that there can not be one truth or the knowledge but these terms should be used in plural, the qualified knowledge and the plurality of the disqualified knowledges, and it is there where critique is located (Foucault, 1999). It is precisely this critical dismantling of the state and the production of knowledge which is central to academic anarchism, and in this sense “various forms of force and authority reinforce and reproduce each other but the knowledge regime is the most insidious. Truth sits at the peak of knowledge the same way a king sits at the head of a state“ (James Martel in an interview, In: Plaetzer, 2013).

movement refuses to be called anarchist (Graeber, 2013, Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012, Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013). When referring to anarchist principles it is difficult to set up a list of practices checking whether a USM is anarchist or not. Since anarchism is a differentiated theory and practice with various traditions, such a classification will not be possible. However, current research has argued, that many social movements occurring in recent years (Amster et al., 2009) are anarchist praxis and often influenced by anarchist-autonomous groups. The key principles are self-organisation, direct democracy, horizontal decision making processes, voluntary association, autonomy and mutuality (Graeber, 2009, Scott, 2012b). Those current USMs referred to as ‘anti-systemic’ are in many cases rejecting to draw lists of demands, because they are doubting the state as agent of change (Gibson, 2010). The ‘Real Democracy’ movement is one of these examples, and through its occupation of public squares they temporarily established oppositional public zones of resistance (Plaetzer, 2013). But since those large encampments could not be kept up for long, they returned to - or created new - autonomous spaces. It is usually here, in such autonomous zones, where anarchist groups make their principles become social practice, since outside of such liberated spaces the hegemonic order is different. These are spaces where “lasting forms of self-organisation“ materialise (Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013) and people are trying to build something new in the shell of the old (Graeber, 2013). It is everyday resistance to the T.I.N.A. and the ‘end of history’ dogma, stating that ‘There Is An Alternative’ (James Martel in an interview, In: Plaetzer, 2013). These lived alternatives are full of imperfections and contradictions but function as a challenge to structural power and anti-capitalist practice (Graeber, 2013, Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013).

Both within the discourse on anarchy and within autonomous practice there are different approaches towards the state and institutions. Some anarchists would argue, that the state needs to be abolished to realise a free society, others do not agree on the state being always the enemy of freedom (Scott, 2012b). Most would agree though, that the current democratic institutions do not seem to be able to reduce the inequalities of our society (ibid.). “The State is part of the problem, not part of the answer“ states Castoriadis (1991:219). Furthermore, history has shown that structural change happened through non-institutionalised struggle (Graeber, 2013, Scott, 2012b). In social-cultural centres there is a division, between those aiming at radical autonomy from all state institutions, and those who see some forms of cooperation or institutionalisation as a fruitful way to support their struggle (Martínez López and García Bernardos, 2012, Oikonomakis and Roos, 2013). It can be said, that there are different degrees of autonomy. Ranging from radical autonomous movements, who do not accept any negotiations with local authorities or property owners. Others are willing to negotiate and have contracts which legalise their status. Then there are groups within USMs which cooperate with political institutions, such as left-wing parties, labour organisations or

alike, and form lasting institutional and legal organisations themselves. In any case it is a great challenge to autonomous spaces to define their relationship with the ‘outside’ (Brophy, 2007). De Sousa Santos argues, that USMs of today can not afford to decide whether to struggle in- or outside the state, but that it is necessary to fight at both grounds, “we have to struggle with the legislator and we have to occupy houses” (2012: min. 3:00).

VII.D. Sphere of Political Reform versus Sphere of Radical Autonomy

Pruijt (2003) describes the channelling of movements into stable rules and laws as institutionalisation, when behaviour becomes expected and sanctions are regulated. Referring to Castells (1983) he supports the thought, that movements lose identity through institutionalisation. In relation to squatting this is most evident in the form of legalisation (Pruijt, 2003). Many authors emphasise the importance of autonomy from such political institutions, but this does not imply the absence of any links or permeability, because each group has to decide for itself to find a way to defend its existence (Martínez López, 2012, Mayer and Boudreau, 2012, Taibo, 2012). There is the argument, that institutionalisation transforms radical potentials into reformative critique. In the context of the framework of this thesis, it marks the frontier between the sphere of radical autonomy and the sphere of political reform.

It is necessary to distinguish between two interlinked forms, first there is the question whether and how to engage with political and state institutions and the second is whether USM groups become institutions themselves. The latter is often demanded in negotiations with public authorities (Swindler, 1995). It is an inner contradiction to make a - more or less - stable institutional form out of a movement, which is ever changing, what is not just implicit to the term ‘movement’, but also the practices of current USMs.

“We have to think in terms of disrupting, bubbling movements rather than thinking that it all depends on whether we can perpetuate the movement in one place.” (Holloway, 2013)

The term institutionalisation implies that the repertoire of action is changing from disruption towards convention (Pruijt, 2003). Usually it is also described as movement life-cycles, meaning that after a disruptive social mobilisation some groups aim at more institutionalised settings in order to keep on going. “The danger is that we start thinking in terms of institutionalization at the point at which movements are beginning to fail” (Holloway, 2013). There are also cultural differences within this discourse. Leontidou argues, that social movements in the Mediterranean countries are historically more radical opposed to the state and that those “movements seeking integration into EU, state, local state and dominant structures cannot create alternative cultures in civil society” (Leontidou, 2010).

As an example for the relation to state institutions the approach to policing in the two case studies is explained briefly. While la Tabacalera as part of their allowance to use the building had to agree on private securities protecting the entrance, discussions in the Gängeviertel showed that this would not have been possible there. In Madrid, the activists did not seem bothered by the security - any more after the years probably - but on the other hand they would not tolerate the police entering the premises. In opposition to this the Gängeviertel has a different tactic to deal with the police. The closest police station, which is right around the corner, was usually informed when more substantial activities were about to happen. Through this, the activists established a trust relation to the officers there and vice versa. When recently a new head of the station came into office, he first started fining the cars of the activists. They were surprised, and even more surprised when - together with the first fines - a letter arrived asking them for a visitation of the Gängeviertel for the new police-officer. In a general assembly they discussed how to deal with this situation. They prefer not to having anything to do with the police in general, but they also profited from the calm situation they had created with the previous head of the office. So they decided to invite them for a visitation. They came and visited the Viertel. Since then there have been no more complaints, and even more, the new head of the office was very impressed and interested into the project and he was so happy with the tour that he invited back a delegation from the Gängeviertel to visit the police office in order to show his appreciation. It is those kind of decisions and actions which make the Gängeviertel so unpredictable, so successful but also so conflictual, inside as well as for other groups in the Recht auf Stadt network and beyond.

Another problem is the self-institutionalisation of such spaces, when they become organisations themselves, found associations or cooperatives, in order to engage with state-institutions. Talking to an activist from the local *okupa* movement in Madrid he made clear, that there has been a big struggle over the contractual situation of la Tabacalera, it felt like a betrayal he said and was enough reason to boycott it for some. For anarchists all negotiations with the state imply a recognition of leadership, and it is exactly such leadership what is to be transcended by autonomous movements. Legalisation or institutionalisation as well as engagement with political institutions does, besides the above mentioned drawbacks, still have one crucial feature. In most cases they help to stabilise precarious situations, prevent harsh coercion and give - despite mostly temporary - security to spaces and its users or inhabitants. The constant 'waiting position for eviction' does not allow to develop bigger projects, but such a longer timeframe is essential for cultural production (Ebeling, 2013). From the activists perspective it is important to note, that many people who engage in such spaces of creative autonomy are not only doing this as a political action but also have motivation out of personal financial restrictions (Pruijt, 2003). This is true in many cases, not just when it is about a place to live and work as in the Gängeviertel, but also when people and

artistic groups need rooms to come together, to practice, and also work like in la Tabacalera. Nave Trapecio for instance, is a workshop fully equipped with machines, it would be very risky to establish something alike in an illegal place that the police could evict at any time. During its years of existence Nave Trapecio managed to collect and arrange all the tools it contains today, and it would be hard to accept that all this would be gone by tomorrow. There is a certain need for institutionalisation, as much as there is some kind of fear towards it. It is the ‘fear of a disappearance of the (temporary) autonomous zone Gängeviertel’ (Kowalski and Weiß, 2012), the fear that with institutionalisation the creative and political force which made everything possible would be lost.

VII.E. Approaching a Sphere of Creative Autonomy

In a nutshell it can be said, that there is a tension between counter-hegemonic projects and non-hegemonic approaches related to anarchism and autonomy within USMs. Purcell (2012) argues, that those two approaches to radical politics should not be seen as something oppositional but should aim at inclusive relations, in the best case resulting in a productive tension. His argument states, that many radical thinkers have not only avoided to relate their thought to anarchism (Graeber, 2009, May, 2009), but also that many anarchists push forward an ‘either-or’ narrative towards other radical political approaches. But ‘anarchist instincts’ are well represented in radical geography and politics as well as in radical practice, although often not declared as anarchistic. The aim should be to emphasise the linking elements between a antagonistic theory of Laclau and Mouffe and anarchist, autonomist terrain, instead of classifying USMs as either counter-cultural or anarchist. It seems more fruitful to read different forms of resistance as “upwelling of experimental initiatives [...] who are producing all sorts of new ideas about a politics to come“ (Purcell, 2012:516). And it is such a more curious and experimental position, instead of an ever lasting theoretical quarrel and positioning, which has guided this analysis.

Those frontiers do not simply cut across academic discourse but also the practice of current resistance. In the process of opening la Tabacalera for social-cultural uses it was an autonomous group - el Laboratorio - who engaged strongly in this discourse, after having been evicted from squatted places before. They entered into negotiations with the local authorities, which caused discontent with more radical groups of the squatters movement. Also the 15M movement, which particularly during the phase of mass mobilisations in 2011 was difficult to put into any political box, was exposed to such struggles over definition. It is often a process initiated from outside the social movement as well, since this fight over degrees of autonomy and radical positions is often splitting up and harming USMs (Taibo, 2012). Similar processes have occurred before, as Orueta (2007) describes for the Lavapies

Network. Some of its members accepted subsidies from the city which lead to internal conflicts. It is also a strategy to weaken USMs through selective policies and subsidies (ibid.). The Gängeviertel was from its very beginning confronted with a ‘war of position’ towards other autonomous movements in Hamburg and also with collectively deciding on the position the occupation wanted to take itself. Taking off as a squat, the early days were marked by a lack of unity when activists from the Gängeviertel took position towards ‘outsiders’ in media interviews or similar. Things like ‘we are different’ from previous radical movements such as Hafenstrasse or Rote Flora were said probably to improve the stance the Gängeviertel had towards the authorities, but they caused strife within alternative movements. Probably also related to the occurrence of the Recht auf Stadt network about the same time, those disputes did not last for long. It was also due to the experience of the ‘older sisters and brothers’ in other social-cultural centres in Hamburg, who continued to claim that the Gängeviertel is one of their kind, that the struggle is a shared one (Kowalski and Stillich, 2012).

However, not just their positioning towards radical politics is problematic. Also the label as an artists-squat, that was often coined by outsiders, led to internal frustration and discussions from the very beginning of the Gängeviertel onwards. It was soon after the occupation, which was accompanied by a intensive media footage and public discussion, that the Viertel published a list of their activists occupations as a way of fighting the simplifying artistic labelling.

“Wo we are: painters, urban planners, graphic designers, illustrators, cooks, designers, social workers, gold- and silversmiths, unskilled labourers, photographers, architects, web designers, ivory sculptors, upholsterers, carpenters, gardeners, poets, social-welfare benefiter, project-developers, geriatric nurses, violinists, teachers, event managers, scientists, movie directors, restaurateurs, authors, psychologists, plumber and heating installers, camera-men, performance- and conceptual- artists, hedonists, remedial teachers, DJs, street artists, scene designer, glassblower, musicians, programmers, lighting technicians, wood-, stone- and metal-sculptures, massage therapists, dramatic advisors, saddlers, educators, light-artists and no-artists [‘Licht- und Nichtkünstler’], film-makers, media artists, students, stand builders, sinologists, bookbinders, scholarship-holders, retail dealers, fashion designers, singers, kindergardeners, and ecological vegetable sellers.“ (Schilling and Haupt, 2013 [original version in German])

Today, the Gängeviertel’s future is very uncertain. The people in the Viertel are concerned about the process of renovation and how much commercial pressure there will be in the future on ground-floor shops and galleries but also in the atelier-flats. It is a big question how to keep people involved and active in community projects while at the same time having long-term rental contracts and a very secured overall working and living situation. Some people fear that one day the Gängeviertel will be another clean and neat artistic urban space and they will have to question themselves why they had put so much time, passion and energy into it. So far they see their ‘work’ in the Viertel as self-exploitation for the collective, but there is an

awareness of the moment when this turns into exploitation. Particularly the more radical-political activists question how much ‘politics will be left after the renovation’. By now they understand ‘institutionalisation as performative condition’ and constantly try to resist co-optation, but the Gängeviertel stays an ‘endangered space of possibility’ - a ‘Möglichkeistraum’. Because, if the goal is to realise spaces of creative autonomy, then ‘its easier to ask for forgiveness, than to ask for permission’.

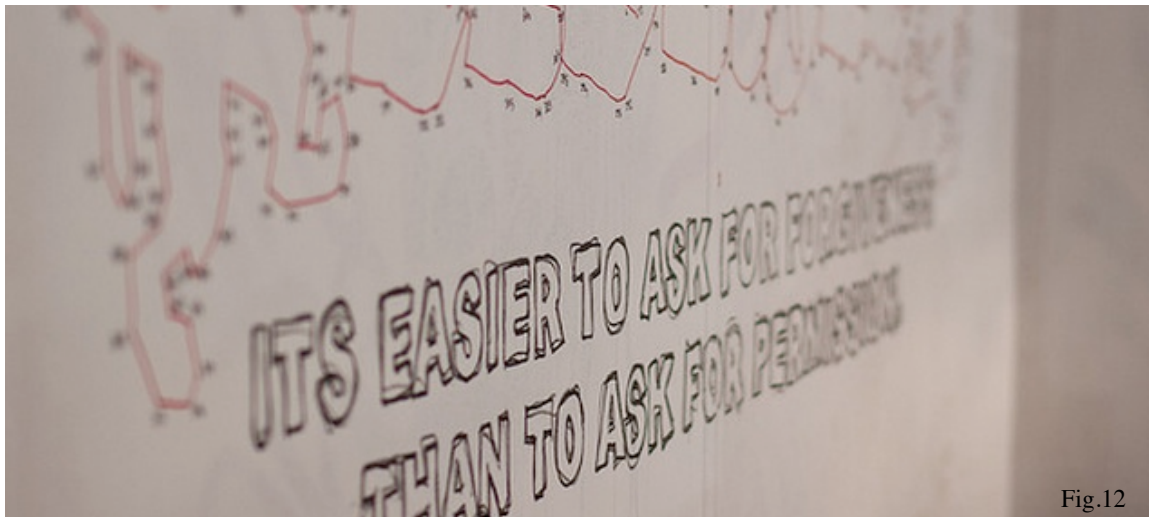


Fig.12

VIII. SPACES OF CREATIVE AUTONOMY

It seems to me that there are spaces in our cities today, which are artistic and political, which are as much parts of USMs as they stand for themselves. Moreover, these spaces - as much as they are caught up in questions of autonomy and institutionalisation - should not be looked at from the perspective of exclusive categories. Autonomy means giving yourself your own law (Castoriadis, 1991), and this should be seen as a creative process, it becomes a collective adventure. It is fruitful to focus on the creative aspect in the expressions and uses of such counter-cultural spatial production. Moreover, it is critical and emancipatory practice to engage in such spaces of creative autonomy.

“Indeed, it is exactly with regard to art and its reception, or better, its uses, that freedom appears fundamentally as an open strategy among the multitudes, because the dynamic of expression and use can never be directed by the one – that is, by any single, sovereign instance of decision.” (Holmes, 2004:548)

Spaces of Creative Autonomy - nothing new?

When reflecting upon the particularities of certain spaces at certain moments in time one should take a step back and look at it from a distance. It is not the particularity of the researched spaces and groups which should be put in the spotlight. Rather are spaces of creative autonomy to be seen as a kind, with a multitude of manifestations, from other times and other places.

McCaughan (2012) describes about the Chicano and Mexican social movements in 1968 and afterwards, that artists affiliated with those movements created counter-hegemonic autonomous spaces informed by the collectivist and participatory practices of democracy. They challenged the state, market, and elite art-world of that time, but also lead to conflict within the movements and their allies on the left. They got caught in similar disagreements over whether and how to engage with existing art institutions and more fundamentally if there could be any kind of autonomous art which would serve the revolutionary vanguard. Some of the initiatives which were founded in the peak of the mass movements over time transformed into institutions themselves having to engage with smaller-scale interventions and a diminishing impact.

This is all very similar to the struggles and frontiers today, which are described here. However, it is due to such lasting forms of organisation and the documents they produce, that initiatives, radical projects, and autonomous groups of today can learn from the past. And it is through a history of struggle and resistance that revolutionary ideas evolve (Birke, 2013a, Scott, 2012a). Now, the time of the crisis of neoliberalism does pose new challenges to alternative USMs, but at the same time it is still an anti-capitalist struggle, and it is ongoing.

VIII.A. Returning to the Research Puzzle and Research Questions

The abductive research process is circular, the research puzzle introduced in the very beginning of the text was drawn just in the last phase of the research. Since it represents the analytical core of the thesis, it is discussed in the conclusions. To recapitulate, the research puzzle states that there are spaces in current USMs which are characterised by their position in tension fields between two pairs of poles. The artistic and the political forms of activism within USMs is the first pair of poles, while institutionalisation and autonomy is the second. To be reminded, after the methodology, chapter V dealt with USMs building the frame of the research. Followed by chapter VI, which engaged with the side of artistic theory and practice, looking at the ‘sphere of the autonomy of art’ and the ‘sphere of co-optation’. Describing the side of political theory in chapter VII allowed to confront the ‘sphere of political reform’ with the ‘sphere of radical autonomy’ under the challenges of institutionalisation. It all leads up to the argument, that there is a ‘sphere of creative autonomy’ which lies in-between. It is the place to localise, in a theoretical argument, the practical experiences from the case studies, and beyond.

Before returning to the research questions it is important to emphasise their inter-linkage with the puzzle. Research question (1) deals with the relation of the case studies embedded in the central sphere and the surrounding USMs, the grey circle and is treated in Chapter V. The second one asks for the orange division between artistic and political activism in relation to the spaces of creative autonomy. Questions (3a) and (3b) are geared towards a description of the central bubble with both autonomy and institutionalisation. Question (4) adds a time component to the observation of the relation between the spaces and the USMs.

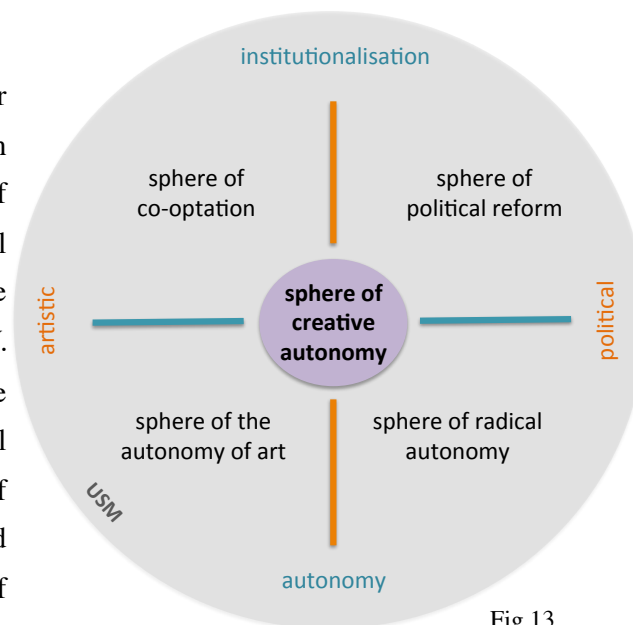


Fig.13

What is the role of spaces of creative autonomy in current USMs fighting neoliberal economic and/or urban development?

Overall, Spaces of creative autonomy are to be seen as nodes in local as well as global movement network. They are places out of which movements emerge in phases of strong mobilisations and great activity and where they return to in so called ‘B-phases’. Due to their creative and artistic appeal they can establish a more secure position within the urban fabric

through negotiations with local authorities, then radical political autonomous spaces. Beyond this, they constantly work on dismantling of hegemonic concepts through their alternative cultural production. Moreover, as a whole they serve as realisations of a world to come, if just as testing grounds for an indeterminate future.

(1) What is the relation between the group and the USM they are connected with?

Every USM needs spaces it articulates in and spaces of creative autonomy are one of this kind. The movement and the space help one another, since the movement strengthens the position of the space towards authorities and also the local population, spaces of creative autonomy help social movements with ‘material and human resources’. Further, it is a situation of mutual learning, since experiences gained in a space of creative autonomy are, influenced by the exchange and enrichment of a broader USM, but also fuel into the movements organisation and practice. It is a reciprocal relation without direct dependency. It is cooperation without hierarchy. In short, it is a relation which is based on anarchist principles, and in the best case it mobilises forces out of the “confidence on spontaneous cooperation and reciprocity” (Scott, 2012b:13).

(2) What is the relation between the groups and individuals creative work and their political activism?

It is clear, that the individual positions have a wide range. One might not be personally interested in politics, counter-politics, or anti-capitalist positions and may see the personal cultural and artistic production detached from such questions. Another person might see a great potential in political artworks and probably put large efforts in producing art for USMs. It is the dynamic of the whole group acting in a space of creative autonomy which relates to political activism. Engaging in such a space is a political act. By working and/or living in a collective in a space of creative autonomy, one is sacrificing some degrees of the individuals arts autonomy. Not only because the organisation of the space takes up a lot of time and energy. The collective process conditions mutual learning, interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation and, what is even more than this, it is a learning process about a different form of politics.

(3a) What are the positions of the group towards the autonomy of the space they are active in?

Despite the fact that there are many ways of paraphrasing autonomy, such as self-organisation, self-management, freedom, or independence from state institutions, it is an essential aspect of the spaces in focus. They are constituted by this autonomy, it is what differentiates them from other creative collectives and spaces in the city. The individuals may have different intrinsic motivations for engaging in a space of creative autonomy, but as a group they relate to this autonomy as one main linking and defining element. It creates an ‘us’ and ‘them’, an in many cases even an ‘us’ against ‘them’. This autonomy is constituted in a constant struggle, it has to be constantly defended and constructed. It is the dynamic aspect of

spaces of creative autonomy and is through that directly related to the USM they are part of.

(3b) *To what extent does some form of institutionalisation influence the spaces of creative autonomy?*

The processes of institutionalisation are explained in chapter VII.D., and the specificities of co-optation of artistic groups in chapter VI.B. To sum it up, institutionalisation can lead to a more stable and lasting situation of spaces of creative autonomy. It enables the people involved to create projects with future perspectives and frees them - at least temporarily - from having to struggle with coercive pressure. But the drawbacks can be a loss of the creative and spontaneous character which constitutes them in the first place. Moreover, there is a fear of diminishing involvement with raising security, since it is the collective struggle, which takes a lot of energy, but also is the essence that keeps the group together in its core.

(4) *In what way does the current “B-phase“ of the USM impact on the spaces of creative autonomy?*

As described above, social movements have phases of high mobilisations and others, in which they retrench, as described in chapter V.B. for current USMs, particularly the 15M in Madrid and the Recht auf Stadt network in Hamburg. Additionally it is of great relevance to consider different movement structures. Recht auf Stadt is a solidarity network which connects and helps the initiatives and serves them as platform for exchange. 2009, the year of the occupation of the Gängeviertel, was a time where several initiatives in Hamburg joined force under this label of ‘the Right to the City‘ which brought them great attention in the media and society. The structures which were created back then are still relevant today for the organisation of joint campaigns and to keep other initiatives updated on the individual struggles. 15M in Spain was different, since the time it occurred it was anticipated by local activists as revolutionary moment. Through the occupation of Sol and the great wave of mobilisation it lead to a very active and lively atmosphere in the self-managed social-cultural centres in the city. After the activists left Sol, they ‘returned‘ to those spaces which resulted in another period of very high activity. With time the good dynamics faded and internal contradictions overruled the collective ideals. La Tabacalera went from a phase of hype, to a phase of decline and is currently trying to re-animate a positive climate among the remaining users. Similar can be observed for the 15M movement as a whole. It poses challenges to the spaces of creative autonomy if they are closely related to USMs, since the moments they decline are felt most strongly in their collective spaces. This is the essential difference between social movement and spaces of creative autonomy, the latter is where the USM is retreating to. In the best case it offers a fertile ground to rest and to bring life again to the movement.

Finally it should be emphasised, that la Tabacalera and the Gängeviertel are extraordinary cases, which caused great impacts on their local environment and beyond, but they are *just* examples of what is argued to be *Spaces of Creative Autonomy*.

VIII.B. Conclusions

I want to conclude with some critical remarks towards the concept of spaces of creative autonomy, which could be of interest in future research. Commercialisation is a very relevant dynamic which is too narrowly considered in the concept but is of high relevance in the lived practice of spaces of creative autonomy. To a certain extent it can be seen as part of processes of co-optation but still would need to be examined more deeply. Often it is not mainly the engagement with state institutions, which makes more radical groups sceptical towards spaces of creative autonomy, but the position they take towards commercialisation. Economic profitability is rejected by radical autonomous groups with anarchist principles.

Today, both la Tabacalera and the Gängeviertel are not making profits and are solely based on unpaid voluntary labour. However, in the Gängeviertel a process of professionalisation of more commercial spaces such as the café, the teahouse, or the bar are related to the future plans to buy the whole complex through the cooperative after the renovation. This would mean, that residents would have to pay rents and - at least the ground floor spaces - would need some kind of profitable usage. By now this is still an uncertain future, but the discussions and fears towards this are present in the Viertel.

Moreover, there are tendencies that events taking place in spaces of creative autonomy are commercialised. They often attract a broader public and are used by many people who are not engaged in the project or other autonomous social-cultural initiatives. This makes it is very difficult to decide whether such 'outsiders' should be able to use and consume on the same basis of solidarity as those who invest great parts of their time and energy into the project. Though, if spaces of creative autonomy ask for market level charges they become profitable and commercial and thus oppose their own underlying principles and critical stance towards capitalist society.

Autonomous social-cultural centres "can be ripped apart by discussions over how to relate to the people who attend cultural events but are not otherwise involved in the protection or organization of the space. [...] Social centres can become no better than affordable versions of nightclubs, circulating up-and-coming cultural forms for general consumption." (Brophy, 2007:3)

Although such commercialisation is problematic, the fact that spaces of creative autonomy attract all kinds of people is the very reason for which they are of such high importance. Because, additionally to the value they add to USMs and the fact that they are living and/or working spaces for the collective, they are to be seen as points of entrance. There are people, who would not participate in events the events of radical political squats, but they would visit la Tabacalera or the Gängeviertel. And maybe, just maybe, they would be inspired and get active in the struggles of today's cities and society.



source: <http://blog.occupiedlondon.org/2008/12/26/>

*If to critical theory you've aspired,
But in abstraction have gotten yourself mired,
Link your theory with action,
Help theory get traction,
You'll get clearer, be useful - and tired.
(Peter Marcuse, 2012b)*

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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X. APPENDIX

In order to avoid repetition all references and sources referred to in the appendix can be found in the bibliography above.

I. Excursus: Terms and Concepts - Additional Clarifications for the Main Text

Urban Social Movement -the history of a term in question

The term USMs was coined by Castells, first in his comprehensive work ‘The Urban Question’ (1977) and later in ‘The City and the Grassroots’ (1983). The definitions he gives in his earlier and later writings contain considerable contradictions (Pickvance, 2003). Here the focus will lie on his later description in *The City and the Grassroots*. His approach is based on the observation that in advanced capitalist societies the state became involved in consumption processes to an increasing extent pressured both by businesses as well as the population (Pickvance, 2003). It was at the crisis of Fordism that goods of general interest or collective consumption entered in sociological research as well as grass-root mobilisations (Mayer, 2012c). USMs are defined as collective actions mobilising around demands for collective consumption, cultural identity and political self-management which aim at transformations of the urban structure (Castells, 1983).

The concept of Castells “emphasized the potential of urban struggles to express structural contradictions“ (Pickvance, 2003:103). He sees three common themes in USMs which are: a focus on goods of general interest and collective consumption, a defence of cultural identity in connection to a certain territory, and the political mobilisation happens in direct relation to the state. Advocating a strong Marxist tradition, Castells is concerned with the particularity of USMs in the tradition of social mobilisation and working class struggle. Particularly in his later usage of the term USM, Castells focusses on the creation of what he calls ‘reactive utopias’. He sees structural changes in the established power relations more and more out of reach for urban mobilisations (Pickvance, 2003).

Mayer (2012c) deals with USMs reacting to the ‘roll-back neoliberalism’ during the austerity politics of the 1980s. Her argument is, that this time marks a shift towards the neoliberal paradigm and caused retrenchment of the state from public goods and different degrees of cut-back of welfare policies. Neoliberalisation is understood “to mean the ongoing project to install market logics and competitive discipline as hegemonic assumptions in urban politics and policy-making.“ (Purcell, 2009:140). The phase of ‘roll-back’ neoliberalisation transformed into an ‘roll-out’ model of the 1990s in the terms of Mayer (2012c). During this phase the neoliberal imperative developed particular strategies to deal with the short comes of

its early phase, mainly focussing on competitive local activities, fostering public-private-partnerships, and a reliance on civic engagement. Formerly progressive goals of self-reliance and autonomy transformed into an individualising competitive direction. Both, ‘roll-back’ and ‘roll-out’ neoliberalisation were phases of splitting up local movement coalitions into some groups which professionalised and cooperated with municipalities and other political groups, and those whose interests and needs were not addressed by such an alignment, and who in turn radicalised. It was at this time when previously rather antagonistic relations between movements and municipalities or urban developing agencies often transformed into deliberate processes integrating certain forms of participation (Mayer, 2012c).

The term New Social Movement was influenced by this shifts. It is essentially based on the deliberative believe rooted in the theory of communication of Jürgen Habermas. This marks a crack, not just within social movements, but also in academic theory, between the tradition of Habermas and more radical critics who see the future in “radical counter-hegemonic mobilizations whose goal is not to neutralize power relations, but to transform them“ (Purcell, 2009:140). The usage of the term New Social Movements also refers to changes in the composition of movement activists, building more strongly on coalitions with or within the middle class, also students, unemployed and migrants. It further emphasises the resemblance of individuals alongside their specific issue such as environmentalism, feminism, ethnicity (Della Porta and Diani, 2006 [1999], Offe, 1985). Added to this a further ‘new’ aspect of social movements is seen as the focus on the right to certain lifestyles and forms of life, to culture, peace and equality instead of access to material or social goods (Pickvance, 2003).

Contradictory, the term had been applied to mark a distinction between the state and political institutions and the social movement, to point out the non-institutional form of politics, the autonomy of the social mobilisation, and radical position towards the state (Offe, 1985). This applies particularly to what has been called New Urban Movements (Martínez López, 2012). Katsiaficas (1997) subsumed the characteristics of new social movements as different forms of identity politics. He describes a contradiction between being critical towards singular or even conservative identity politics in social movements and at the same time believing in their radical potentials. Struggles around identity politics are not simply shattering the underlying class struggle, but are vehicles to enact freedoms in the individuals and collective condition of living, which can lead to the formation of new categories of societal everyday life.

Emphasising the ‘new’ in these movements can be interpreted as a way to open up traditional terms and discourses. Various forms of social mobilisations had been subsumed under this term, widening its meaning to a state of fuzziness which includes almost everything, from singular issued protests, over conservative ‘not in my back-yard’ or NIMBY issues, to radical autonomous forms of political squatting. Using the term USM instead is a way of overcoming this contradictions, which are related to the differences between Marxist and Postmodern

approaches. While the previous often fails to embrace the breaks between modernity and postmodern time and the latter tends to overlook the context of local history, which leaves little space for future visions (Katsiaficas, 1997).

Excursus: Spain and Germany - the European divide

The argument brought forward here - and elsewhere - is that there is a relation between economic crisis and USMs, as explained above. It needs to be noted clearly though, that there are differences between a city like Madrid and Hamburg. While the previous is considering the social and economic consequences of the current crisis at the core of the affected localities, Hamburg is a economically successful city in Germany, the exemplary crisis-manager within the European Union. To put it more clearly, the two case studies chosen here are part of the two categories of countries within Europe who had been put in an oppositional position during the crisis: the inner-European periphery or debtors and the creditors (Birke, 2013b). This is to be considered as one of the factors why USMs in the past years showed much higher mobilisations in Madrid than it had happened in Hamburg or other German cities. As an exception to this can be seen the resistance to the railway station project Stuttgart 21, which, at the peak of the movement in 2010, mobilised 63,000 participants (police number) to 150,000 (number of the organisers) people (Spiegel Online, 09th of October 2010).

But also in economically strong Germany the crisis lead to an - at least - threefold dynamic. Firstly some people have more time since they are unemployed or have less work to do for example in freelance or self-employment situations. Secondly, and this has to do particularly with the current crisis being in the first place a crisis of the real-estate market, which lead investors in this sector to react to this highly insecure situation and to slow down their activity or similar. The last dynamic is a more abstract one. It is the crisis in peoples minds, an imaginary constructed by a mixture of everyday experience of the effects of the crisis together with news and reports by mass media news. Even in the 'Northern' European countries the economic crisis had been an popular topic highly represented in daily news (Boomgaarden et al., 2011). This has an effect on the subjective feeling for the crisis being related to individual an group actions. Not just in Madrid, where almost every single conversation about activism and political engagement is currently related to the economic crisis. Also in Hamburg it is seen, that "without the crisis back then this here would not exist, and there also would not be a squat here" ("Ohne die Krise damals gäbe es das hier nicht, und es hätte ohne sie auch keine Besetzung gegeben") as Michael Ziel states about the Gängeviertel, since the Dutch Investor had gone trough financial troubles at the time of the occupation of the historical buildings (Kowalski and Stillich, 2012:179).

Birke (2013b:365) suggests to differentiate between crisis-protest in the narrow sense where resistance is targeted towards the real social implications of the ‘proletarianisation’ and those protests which relate to the crisis in a broader sense or specific issues. Similar it had been formulated in an article in *El País*, that an economy based on fear about the uncertainty and economic insecurity, has in Spain morphed into an economy based on suffering through unemployment and impoverishment (Estefanía, 7th of May, 2013). This can be seen in the Gängeviertel in Hamburg, where the discourse about the current crisis and economic situation is a latent underlying issue in many of the conducted conversations, connected with the political demands related to the high rent theme and the exploitation of creative potentials of the city and its cultural producers. It is argued, that within such larger USMs as the 15M movement in Spain or the Recht auf Stadt network in Hamburg, specific ‘spaces of creative autonomy’ play a crucial role.

“Despite their problems, these spaces of autonomy are precious reminders of alternate ways to live a life, of the very real moments where resistance to constituted power generates subversion and new democracies. “ (Brophy, 2007:4)

Gentrification

The term gentrification had made its way into newspapers as well as policy papers and is losing its intended critical meaning. Gentrification was initially a term used for housing which was passed from lower to higher income residents (Short, 2011). Nowadays in its broader terms it can be - very basically - defined as “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area in a city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use“ (Slater, 2012:173). The assumption of the important role which cultural producers and sub-cultural spaces play in this process has been valued to very different extents, but rarely disqualified (e.g. Markusen, 2006). It had been pointed out that today’s ‘commercial gentrification’ is in many instances fostered by urban policies (Zukin, 2011).

Culture

The term culture originates in the Latin verb “colere” which has two meanings; one dealing with the natural environment, the other with the human environment. This distinction is essential to the definition. Everything created by humans becomes part of culture, which points culture towards being rooted in civilization. This connection was made during the Enlightenment and has remained in the English and French use of the term, linking culture to society. It is important to see the evolution of the term in the German tradition. German Idealism of the late 18th century narrowed down the term ‘Kultur’ to describing solely arts and science,

leaving out other spheres of human cultural evolution like engineering and labour. This caused a differentiation of the terms culture and civilization, they have contrasting meanings in today's German language which also leads to problems in the use of terms (Knapp 2005). As can be seen in the definition of culture by the UNESCO 'World Conference on Cultural Policies' 1982 in Mexico City, there are collective efforts to agree on a broad conception of the term culture: "that in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO 1982).

Creativity, a fuzzy category

Controversially, the approach of Florida is influencing urban policy makers at least as much as it had been often critically dealt with in academia (Martí-Costa and Miquel, 2012). Besides the missing proof of a correlation between the 'creative class', 'creative industries' and economic wellbeing of cities in the works of Florida (Krätke, 2012, Peck, 2005), the category of 'creativity' within this popular approach is highly fuzzy and in the original mainly based just on the educational level of individuals and their occupation (Markusen, 2006).

"It is simply incorrect, and indeed dangerous, to label people in large lumpy occupational groupings such as managers and professional workers as creative, and all production and service workers, for instance not creative. "(Markusen, 2006:1924)

But still, the discourse around "The cult of urban creativity" (Peck, 2005:768) can be seen in recent years as central concept in urban development (Merkel, 2010). The notion of creativity was central to Modern art. The creative artist is the kind who radically breaks with the past ideally achieving a zero point of artistic tradition (Groys, 2008). Creativity in modern art was produced by being different, through the reduction and negation of tradition. Creativity as a notion also has an emancipatory appeal. In Becker's sociology of art, it is postulated, that creativity entails something essentially social and collective (Hesmondhalgh, 2006).

There is a controversial usage of terms as creativity and cultural production. It is not just a factor in the current, competitive logic of capital valorisation in an urban discourse (Holmes, 2004, Peck, 2005), but there are other meanings. In the interview with Laura from the group G.I.L.A. in Madrid she formulated what is meant in such a different understanding of creativity. The group is known for an artistic form of activism, but neither of them is 'an artist' in the sense of an artistic education or occupation. "The word creativity is better" she stated, "because everyone has creativity". It is a creativity of the everyday. At the same time it is important in the group's view to apply creative actions and humour to serious political resistance for five reasons: its one way to analyse reality, laughing about power makes it less

strong, creative guerilla of communication is a way to play with the power of mass media, if people have to resist and fight hard together it is more fun to fight in a creative way, and finally, power uses fear and creative humorous action alone can stand against this.

If the label of creativity can be turned into something referring to collective action against the established power relations, it can turn in a conceptual opposition to commerce (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). The aim is to give content back to the word creative (Marcuse, 2012), leading towards “a society in which all people can be creative in the true sense of creativity“ (Marcuse, 2012: min. 20:10). Creativity and artistic critique have become elements of capitalist productivity (Mouffe, 2007), and this is why creative resistance needs to address the “terrain of production of knowledge towards new practices of living, consuming and collective appropriation of common spaces and everyday culture.“ (Gorz, 2004, quoted after and translated by Mouffe, 2007).

II. Adoption of the Research Questions during the process of abductive research

The first draft of the research outline contained further research subquestions, focussing on the following fields:

- (1) effects of the financial and economic crisis on the groups in focus,
- (2) self-understanding of the groups in focus with the USM,
- (3) the relation between these groups and the movement
- (4) the issues of the groups protest in relation to the issues of the USM,
- (5) the relevance of ‘free spaces’,
- (6) and the relation between the produced artworks by the group to the USM?

The process of research has put some questions more into focus, others were crossed out due to methodological or strategic reasons, and some have been adopted during the carving out of the more precise research framework.

Due to the structure of current USMs and the repeatedly articulated problem of a ‘lack of demands’, or a too great variety of issues and demands of protests, the question (4) was put in the background. Due to the adopted core research question and changes in the framework of the thesis the subquestion on the relevance of ‘free spaces’ (5) has turned immanent, and will not be dealt with specifically. The subquestion (6) would be of great interest, as also McCaughan shows in his book, but would require a very different approach than the one taken in this thesis.

“Artwork produced in the context of social movement mobilization is often ephemeral, undocumented, and poorly preserved. [...] Moreover [...] there is relatively little published information about the context in which artists [...] produced and shared their work, their relationships to other movement activists and to one another, or about their understanding of the significance of the work.” (McCaughan, 2012:xvii)

The decision was made to focus on a sociological research dealing with social groups rather than implementing a separable part of an analysis of artworks. Some artistic projects or products are interwoven with the way social actors explain their thoughts and lifeworld, and will be included in such a way.

III. Description of the Relevant Initiatives in Hamburg

Gängeviertel Genossenschaft eG (the cooperative)

The cooperative plays a particularly important role with respect to the ongoing revitalisation of the historic buildings. In its capacity as a project cooperative, it collects capital to be used to buy the buildings from the owner (the municipality) in order to manage them autonomously once the renewal project is finished (Ziel, 2012).

Gängeviertel e.V. (the association, 'der Verien')

The Gängeviertel e.V. decides on the program and usage. It is the official organ to be responsible for works to keep up the buildings, for the event programming, and represents the Gängeviertel in negotiations with the city (Ziel, 2012).

Frappant

Today located in the Victoria Kaserne in Hamburg, Frappant is a collective of creative people, artists and others, who share a building as working and atelier space. They are currently around 150 people who work - full or part-time - in the historic military base, for which they have a temporary rental contract. Additionally they have spaces for exhibitions and events. They are part of the Recht auf Stadt network, and see themselves as political insofar they are active in the struggle for affordable spaces in the city. At the moment the rents are approximately half price of the market rent, already counting in subsidies they receive from the city. The organisation is run voluntarily, the aim is to negotiate with the city for either a long term contract or the option to buy the whole building and to run it self organised in the future (Eschkötter, 2013).

Centro Sociale

It is an autonomous neighbourhood meeting place which is the result of a struggle of local residents during 2008/2009. It should mark a counter-element against the gentrification of the area in St.Pauli. The spaces are used to discuss, construct, celebrate, play theatre or repair bikes on a non commercial ground. It is organised solely with voluntary work and fundraising, to pay the bills to the municipality who is the owner of the building they use. The Centro Sociale is organised as a cooperative (Genossenschaft), is self-organised without public funding (compare <http://www.centrosociale.de/>). The activists are caught in a circle of self-exploitation, actually doing social and cultural work for the city. They wish - at least- not having to pay rents and struggle for this aim within the Recht auf Stadt network.

Not In Our Name, Marke Hamburg!

It was a manifesto published in 2009, written by a handful critical artists and cultural producers from Hamburg it found broad support in the population and had been signed afterwards by hundreds of people. It attacks the local government for selling out the creative and artistic practice for creating the 'Brand Hamburg'. Furthermore it is a solidarity declaration to various struggles and initiatives in the city and part of the Recht auf Stadt network. The full text had been translated to English and had been published in the journal *City* issue 14 (Nion, 2010).

(Gezi) Park Fiction

Today it is a park at the river bank of the Elbe right opposite of dock 10 in Hamburg St. Pauli. The creation of the park was a bottom-up process of artists together with residents which dates back to the 1990s and had been realised in a long struggle and negotiations with the local authorities. The plans of the municipality for this high priced piece of waterfront land were to let a private developer construct another business and up-scale housing tower. But the initiative could resist this plans together with the help of other local initiatives and managed to reclaim the space and design a park following their ideas (compare <http://www.parkfiction.org/>). In June 2013 the park was (temporarily?) renamed to Gezi Park Fiction in solidarity with the struggles in Turkey triggered by the attempted destruction of the Gezi Park in Istanbul.

Hafenstrasse

Today the Hafenstrasse is a complex of 12 houses which are self-organised and owned by a cooperative which is made up of the residents. This is the result of a struggle which dates back to 1981, when the first buildings in the Hafenstrasse were squatted. 10 years later the city made clear that they wanted to clean the anarchist squats to partially destruct and refurbish the water-front location for more lucrative users (Mayer, 2012b). This, and the assumption that the Hafenstrasse was in close relation to the RAF, resulted in strong police coercion and the threat of eviction, which the inhabitants, with the help of German and international anarchists, resisted with street barricades and fights.

Rote Flora

In the heart of the gentrifying Schanzenviertel in Hamburg there is an old theatre building squatted since 1989. The radical autonomous social cultural centre rejects till today direct negotiations with the city and is since almost 25 years without legal status (Mayer, 2012b).

No BNQ

No BNQ is an initiative in St. Pauli against the urban development project ‘Bernhard Nocht Quartier’, which combines 15 sites and aims at a large up-scale development. It is an initiative against displacement and neoliberal urban development which originated in 2009, at the same time as the emergence of the Recht auf Stadt network, the Gängeviertel, and the NION manifesto (compare: <http://www.no-bnq.org/>).

IV. Description of the Relevant Initiatives in Madrid

Coralla

La Coralla is a neighbourhood organisation from Lavapies which was active during the 1970s USM in Madrid, taking up issues such as water supply, deprivation and displacement and urban decay (Feinberg, 2013a). It is mentioned by Castells (1983) and is an important actor in the Network Lavapies.

El Laboratorio

Is a group of nomadic squatters in Lavapies and became a major focus point of autonomous social activity in the neighbourhood (Orueta, 2007). They had occupied four different houses, and had been evicted each time, over the past decade. Now they act as ‘El Laboratorio en el exilio’, without a physical space. Their aims are the creation of real and imaginary spaces, both symbolic and material and to open a discourse on the power relations which are shaping the city. El Laboratorio tries to reveal speculations, but is also aiming at producing a culture and lifestyle of freedom in the city. Its a group of investigation and research as well as social action.

G.I.L.A - Grupo de Intervención Lavapiés

The group is named for the Spanish comedian Miguel Gila whose pioneering black humour in a series of iconic 1950’s monologues exposed the absurdities of Spanish life after the Civil War. The group strives to revive that “mixture of humour and crisis” that characterised the postwar years. Their actions are under the slogan “Our vengeance is to be happy” (Blitzer, 2012). They are closely related to the Lavapies asamblea and also 15M. Despite the fact that none of the inner group members is an artist in the sense of having an artistic education or occupation, they are considered to embrace forms of artistic activism.

<http://latitude.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/12/humor-on-the-rise-in-spain-in-the-midst-of-economic-woes/>

Asamblea Lavapies

It is the local weekly assembly of Lavapies which meets in different locations in the neighbourhood. In the past years it also used la Tabacalera as meeting place, but not any more. It is in direct relation to 15M and sees their aims to horizontally organise local problems and struggles in a non-capitalist way and to contribute to not just the local but also the national movement. It is the point of exchange among different activist organisations and initiatives in Lavapies.

V. Impressions from the Field - Gängeviertel, Hamburg



Gängeviertel from the neighbouring office building (source: <http://das-gaengeviertel.info/>)



Schierspassage, Gängeviertel during the screenings of the Kino Kabaret Hamburg 2013
(source: http://hamburgerkino.de/?page_id=3607)



Kupferdiebehaus, Gängeviertel July 2013
(source: Author)

VI. Impressions from the Field - La Tabacalera, Madrid



Navetrapecio in la Tabacalera, June 2013 (source: Roberto Bolaños, Toma la Tele)



La Tabacalera, June 2013
(source: Roberto Bolaños, Toma la Tele)



Navetrapecio in la Tabacalera, June 2013
(source: author)

VII. Interview Guidelines

The guidelines below were always adopted to the specific interview partner, the initiative or group she/he belonged to and the local setting.

- What is your role within the initiative/group ____ ?
- What are the aims of the initiative/group?
 - How is the current state of it?
 - What are the future aims/pans?
- How do you see the USM (Recht auf Stadt/ 15M) right now?
 - How is the relation between your initiative/group and the USM?
 - What have been the developments of the USM in recent years?
 - How did the relation between the USM and your initiative/group evolve over time?
- How do you see the Gängeviertel/la Tabacalera? (personal standpoint, standpoint of the initiative/group?)
- How would you describe the local discourse on free/autonomous spaces?
- What are the relations between arts/culture/creativity and political activism? (personal standpoint, standpoint of the initiative/group?)
- How do you see processes of institutionalisation for your initiative/group?
 - In relation to the Gängeviertel/la Tabacalera?
- What is the meaning/relevance of autonomy for you? (personal standpoint, standpoint of the initiative/group?)
 - In relation to your initiative/group?
 - In relation to the Gängeviertel/la Tabacalera?
 - In relation to the USM?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Personal Data

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Education

Sep. 2011 - Sep. 2013

4CITIES UNICA MA in Urban Studies

1st Semester

Vrije Universiteit Brussels (VUB)
Department of Geography; COSMOPOLIS
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Centre for Urban Research; Department of Sociology

2nd Semester

Universität Wien
Institut für Geographie und Regionalforschung

3rd Semester

København University
Institut for Kunst- og Kulturvidenskab

4th Semester

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
Department of Geography
Universidad Complutense de Madrid
Department of Sociology

March 2010 - Nov. 2012

BA Political Science

Universität Wien

Bachelor Thesis II

Policies of Heterotopia - An (un)solvable apposition?

Bachelor Thesis I

Gegenwärtige Chinesische Medienpolitik. Chancen und Gefahren des Internets für die autoritäre Herrschaft der Kommunistischen Partei Chinas.

Sep. 2006 - Aug. 2010

BA Journalism and Communication Science

Universität Wien

Bachelor Thesis II

Journalismus Online - Konkurrenz oder Ergänzung?
Aktuelle Entwicklungstendenzen des Verhältnisses
zwischen Journalismus und Online-Kommunikation

Bachelor Thesis I

Drohung als Strategie politischer Kampagnen. Auf der
Suche nach Gemeinsamkeiten der beiden Konzepte
'Fear-Appeals' und 'Negative Campaigning'

Aug. - Dec. 2009

Erasmus exchange (Media Studies)

Aarhus Universitet

2001 - 2006

Polytechnic High School (Building Engineering)

1997 - 2001

Gymnasium

1993 - 1997

Primary School

Academic Research

Oct. - Nov. 2012

Research Assistance at the ISRA (Department for
Sociology), Technical University Vienna
(Contribution to a report for the City of Vienna on urban
vacancy uses in Copenhagen in a comparative
perspective)

March - June 2011

Research Assistance at the Department of Government,
University of Vienna
(Politization of Europe - POLEU, an international
research project; media analysis in the field of European
Integration and protest)

Language Skills

German

native language

English

excellent

Spanish

basic knowledge

