

Haben und Brauchen

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Editorial

After two years of discussion with the Berlin Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs, *Haben und Brauchen* (To Have and To Need) organised an internal weekend workshop in February 2014 in order to draw up a blueprint for a long-term, coordinated dialogue with the Senate.

This dialogue procedure is intended to stabilise the creative potential of Berlin and support those who are simultaneously nurtured and endangered by the diversity of living spaces, cultural dynamics and large social fluctuations. We, the *Haben und Brauchen* activists, are convinced that better understanding will be fostered on both sides through information sharing and a continual process of debate between politics and art. This would lead to the agreement of a decision-making framework in which concrete problems of art and cultural policy can be addressed more effectively and productively than the way it has until now.

During the weekend workshop, working groups for three main areas of focus were established [*AG Kunstbegriff* (Definitions of Art), *AG Arbeit* (Work) und *AG Stadt Raum* (City Space)] and the baselines for a working and research process lasting several months was determined during which information was to be gathered, expectations clarified and positions formulated. After months of work, *Haben und Brauchen* was able to produce a plan, as in a so-called “charrette” procedure, which lays out how the three themes were to be treated and how not just the cultural administration but also other important departments (such as the urban planning department) would be incorporated step by step.

[The plan](#) was presented publicly in September 2014 at *Z/KU (Centre for Art and Urbanistics)*. The culture secretary of Berlin, Tim Renner, was only able to enthuse about *Stadt Raum* though. For *Haben und Brauchen*, however, the three thematic areas are integrally linked together if a discussion is to be had about reaching another understanding of art in politics. A cherry-picking of just one sub-category was not acceptable if ultimate goal was to be achieved.

The Berlin Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs set aside an annual amount of 30,000 Euro – without obligation – for 2015 and 2016 for the implementation of the proposed dialogue procedure. The decision of the administration to confine the implementation of the dialogue to the theme of *Stadt Raum* and only award 10,000 Euro would only have meant that artists, alongside their unpaid artistic work would have to undertake unpaid political work as well. Because the precarious position of artists in Berlin is one of the fundamental problems the dialogue process was to address, *Haben und Brauchen* was not able to accept the decision.

The idea of a long term dialogue between art workers and the politicians of Berlin, the establishment of which was the reason the weekend workshop was organised, has failed for the time being.

The present publication therefore only documents the thoughts, questions and resolution methods that were examined under the topic *Stadt Raum* during the weekend workshop.

The work began with a plenum which included 'external' inputs and presentations by Katja Diefenbach, Felix Ensslin, *Kotti & Co* and the *Koalition der Freien Szene* (Independent Scene Coalition), before continuing with the three working groups. On the evening of Friday 14th February there was a public event with artists and activists from Hamburg in the Flutgraben e.V. project space.

During the workshop weekend the *AG Stadt Raum* received inputs from Sophie Goltz and Andrej Holm. The text by Ina Wudtke and Dieter Lesage, "The short way to the *Stadtschloss*. Forum and Form. The Hegelmachine", takes up narrative from the chronology of the resistance by visual artists to the *Stadtschloss* (City Castle) introduced by Sophie Goltz and reflects on the current City Castle debate and the 'Prussianising' of the city centre of Berlin.

Andrej Holm has summarised his lecture in a text on the resumption of the social housing programme in parallel to the development of the people's rental referendum movement. Of particular interest is Holm's explanation of the faults in the previous social housing programme and the significance of his suggestions for a draft bill for a public referendum on rental conditions in Berlin.

A good example of how matters were discussed is the extract of a debate in the *AG Stadt Raum* working group on 15th February 2014, which refers to Katja Diefenbach's lecture reflecting on the "Haben und Brauchen Manifesto" of 2011 from her point of view from the outside.

We would like to thank all of those who took part.

Haben und Brauchen, Sonja Augart, Kerstin Karge and Ina Wudtke on behalf of *AG Stadt Raum*, Berlin, Autumn 2015

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The Short Way to the Stadtschloss. Forum and Form. The Hegelmachine

Ina Wudtke & Dieter Lesage

I. Forum and Form

There is a democratic vision, in which Berlin needs a forum, so that its citizens can not only express themselves in the middle of this wonderful metropolis but also celebrate their multiplicity and their diversity, making themselves visible to one another and to the outside world. There are historical moments and opportunities where the people of a city, a country, celebrate their democratic multiplicity and diversity. In these moments they celebrate the political meaning of their multiplicity and diversity and they celebrate the political orientation shown by this multiplicity and diversity. The *Palast der Republik* (Palace of the Republic) would have been, as many were well aware, an especially well suited structure in this regard, if only as the indoor counterpart to the great outdoor demonstration space of Alexanderplatz. And that is exactly why, we suggest, the *Palast der Republik* had to go, while at the same time – not coincidentally – Alexanderplatz has shrunk to provincial proportions through the reactionary placing of structures that one can barely describe as buildings, so clearly do they exclusively embody their expensive A1-Location-Space-On-Alexanderplatz-Itself. *Alex* has been normalised and with it every multitude that could have met there, if *Alex* wasn't already so full. *The content of the political programme that has decided all these developments in Berlin's Mitte district can be described as the de-politicising of the city centre. The aesthetic form of this programme is Prussianising.* Given all this, it is logical that de-politicising through prussianising can only work if you can either create an apolitical or an advantageous but highly questionable political image of Prussia.

What has taken place in recent years on Alexanderplatz and the neighbouring *Schlossplatz* should first be understood politically before its results can be viewed and judged aesthetically. The new Berlin Republic (*Berliner Republik*) was clearly afraid that an institution could be founded in its centre that would be for ever seen as more democratic than the Bundestag with its chosen representatives of the people. Just imagine that the *Palast der Republik* was not torn down but became that very forum in which citizens of this city and this state could express themselves. It wouldn't have taken so long before one started asking oneself where the true Bundestag, the real house of representatives actually was. The recent debate about the *Schlossplatz* was

primarily a violent argument about (this) representation. Above all, there should not be a place created in the centre of the Berlin Republic that could be celebrated by the population as their *actual* forum. And so that such a place would also not be found somewhere else centrally, after the *Palast der Republik* had already been torn down as a precaution – lest it be proclaimed as a forum – the word ‘forum’ would also have to be occupied as a preventive measure and claimed for its own purposes.

It is no accident, therefore, that the *Stadtschloss* (City Castle) is called the *Humboldt-Forum*, even while refusing to offer a forum for its opponents. It is also helpful that for civil liberty activists in the former GDR, the word ‘forum’ has positive connotations because of the great historical importance of the *Neues Forum* (New Forum). With the label *Humboldt-Forum*, the Berlin Republic pretends that the city castle is itself the long-awaited location in which the citizens of this city, this state, will be able to express themselves. In this way this place actually serves above all to stop the citizens of this state, this city to be in a position to express themselves in a central location. The Berlin Republic seems to suspect and to fear the revolutionary potential of large spaces which is why Alexanderplatz has had to contract and the huge, empty *Schlossplatz* in the middle of Berlin had to disappear, because *Schlossplatz* actually disappears under the City Castle. The City Castle is the permanent occupation of *Schlossplatz* by the consolidated institutions of the republic. The City Castle is agoraphobia in building form even if they like to claim that the City Castle is itself an *agora*.



II. The Hegelmaschine

In the debate about the City Castle, it was apparent that its advocates systematically presented it as the realisation of its opposite. You don't want a castle, but you want a forum? But the castle *is* a forum! You don't want a castle, you want an *agora*? But the castle *is* an *agora*! The castle is a castle *and* its opposite, it overcomes all antitheses, the castle is the absolute. The castle shouldn't actually be named after von Humboldt

nor after Leibniz but rather after Hegel who of course lived nearby on *Kupfergraben*. The castle is a Hegelmachine and the art historian Horst Bredekamp is the most competent operator of this dialectical machine.

Of course the castle will be an *agora* for the accredited. There won't be any need for accreditation for shopping and feasting in the castle of course, which is something Horst Bredekamp is looking forward to enormously. The castle won't be elitist of course – quite the opposite – it'll be popular! With this, Horst Bredekamp, one of the three founding directors of the *Humboldt-Forum*, makes the city castle palatable: "I imagine a summer night and how the people come to the City Castle after the opera or a party, wander through its arcades, go into its bars and restaurants, like in the times of the Weimar Republic. Even Schinkel wanted a lively commercial centre next to the City Castle and now the City Castle itself will be that." ('Kolonialismus? Die Werke sind nicht bezähmbar', *Tagesspiegel*, 7 July 2015, p. 19). A shopping centre *next* to the City Castle? But the castle *is* a shopping centre!

The *Humboldt University*, the *Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation* and the Berlin State are intended to be the users of the specified form. It would be astounding, however, if the City Castle *a priori* was the appropriate container for what those institutions plan to do in this central location. But however astounding it may seem, these institutions work in exactly this way since they saw the opportunity to (re)present themselves in this centre: first comes the form (of the castle), then the content (of the forum). Who knows if there is a Humboldt that would think this is the right way of thinking. Both Humboldts are the patrons of the patrons of the *Humboldt-Forum*, or aren't they?

Just to be clear, we are not fanatical, ideological City Castle opposers. If there had been a City Castle left in need of some repair here and there, we would probably not have demolished it. It seems more ecological to grant an old building a new lease of life provided that one gives up the idea of insulation with polystyrene sheets. But the wish to reconstruct a hyper-expensive building that has already been torn down and replaced by another, not because of its indispensable social importance – which in the case of the City Castle is non-existent – but rather because of some line of sight or supposed coherence of a completely disparate ensemble of buildings is evidence of the complete absence of any urban or architectural education. If, with this forum named after Wilhelm von Humboldt, you wanted to encourage the German intelligentsia – who always love referring to von Humboldt – then one could have at least considered basic principles of architecture and urban design so that our society could finally rid itself of its infantile obsession with facade and historicism. If the *Humboldt-Forum* should be – as Horst Bredekamp in all earnestness claimed in an interview – a sort of *Centre George Pompidou* in the centre of Berlin, then you could think that the wrong building has been built after all. But not for the Hegelmachine! Matthias Lilienthal once said that you would not have needed to build a city castle there, what Berlin needs is something more like a *Centre Pompidou*. But where's the problem? The castle *is* the *Centre Pompidou*! And so you hear now how the Hegelmachine operator Bredekamp skillfully states, "But it should be a *Centre Pompidou* of course – a meeting place for the entire population. That is the whole point, it shouldn't be a governmental palace. That's what the population misunderstood." (*Deutschlandradio Kultur*, 8 April 2015)

At other times, Bredekamp does not find it at all embarrassing to say, “I was radically in favour of a new building and I brought the Secretary of Culture of the time, Michael Naumann in contact with Frank Gehry who was willing to build the City Castle on a pro bono basis. But in the meantime I’ve done a u-turn. Wilhelm von Boddien decided the question in 1993/4 with the mock-up in front of the *Palast der Republik*. This performance tipped the scales: Berlin was delighted, hosannas were raised to the reconstruction. But I also had reservations at first about the Stella design, above all about the east facade. I thought there was already enough Italian rationalism in the city. Now I think the building is terrific.” (*Tagesspiegel*, 7 July 2015, p. 19). It is a just coincidence of course, but in the meantime Bredekamp has become a member of the powerful founding directors of the Humboldt-Forum. If Bredekamp continues in this way, we have to worry that he will forever be remembered as the Gundling of the Berlin Republic.



III. The somewhat different Prussia

In his 1977 work *Leben Gundlings Friedrich von Preußen Lessings Schlaf Traum Schrei. Ein Greuelmärchen* (Gundling’s Life Frederick of Prussia Lessing’s Sleep Dream Scream: A Horror Story), Heiner Müller was already, in Honecker’s time, turning against the prussianisation that was already beginning to develop. He depicted the life of the academic Jacob Paul von Gundling, employed by Friedrich Wilhelm the Great and the continual humiliation he had to suffer under the education-despising military male court society of the *Soldier King* from which, due to his lifelong position, he was unable to leave. For fun they let animals bite him while talking in front of one of their drinking parties dressed as a hare or had him thrown through the ice and watched from the bank laughing as he fought for his life. This was the sort of entertainment for torturers that took place in the cabinets, ballrooms and grounds of the City Castle.

If it was really about the social and historical meaning of the city castle, then there would be very many reasons *not* to reconstruct this castle. Bredekamp, however, likes to argue that the ethnological collection that is due to move into the *Humboldt-Forum* had its origins in the collection of the great Brandenburg-Prussian Kurfürst that was housed in the City Castle from the 17th century. This is indeed interesting, but would Bredekamp's beloved Leibnitz also accept this as *sufficient* reason to reconstruct the City Castle? It is also worth mentioning the fact that this ever-growing ethnological collection needed rehousing again and again because of lack of space and for which buildings were constructed. Part of the collection moved to the *Alte Museum* and later into the *Neue Museum* as well. In 1874 the ethnological collection moved on to the *Ethnological Museum* and later into the newly built museum complex in Dahlem. Are the countries where the objects in the ethnological collection come from not the *original* locations to which they should now be returned? And if the intention of the Wilhelmine, urbanist City Castle enthusiasts was really to display the ethnological collection of Berlin in centrally situated, Wilhelmine rooms, why did they not lobby to rebuild the *Ethnological Museum* which was destroyed during the Second World War and then demolished. Its location *still* lies vacant: the wooded car park next to the Martin-Gropius-Bau on the corner of Niederkirchnerstraße and Stresemannstraße stands ready, perhaps for ideas such as this and would certainly boost the Wilhelmine glamour of the neighbouring building. And lastly – what sort of decadent history of countless building project has it already been: making more and more storage for collections of objects that don't even belong to us?

Bredekamp would love to repudiate all connections between the city castle and colonialism, even if the margrave and elector of Brandenburg himself financed colonial projects, like the one of Otto Friederich von der Gröben and others in Africa. We can perhaps understand his reasons. The whole effort of wanting to undertake to rebuild a castle that was also the epicentre of the earliest Brandenburg-Prussian colonial politics cannot be justified by the intention to show the non-European collection in this very castle. That is why Bredekamp, in a *Tagespiegel* interview, would rather talk about a 450 year "enthusiasm for foreign cultures" with only "34 years of colonialism" (between 1884–1918). The things that happened outside of this time frame cannot be thought of as colonialism, according to Bredekamp. In this way, Bredekamp tries to make the greatest academic contribution to ideological criticism of the last decade comprehensively ideologically suspicious itself, namely postcolonial studies: "Of course you can dismiss all of this under the general accusation of orientalism. But we should overcome ideologising of this sort. There is a certain type of postcolonialism that can bear traits of self-righteousness". But Bredekamp's worst rhetorical trick yet is a certain metaphysics of the exhibited objects which he would like to use for his own ends. According to Bredekamp, it is ontologically impossible for objects to have anything to do with colonialism anyway: "The art historian Aby Warburg was already convinced that objects cannot be tamed, they travel around the world as carpets, as pieces of clothing, as etchings, films or photographs and detach themselves from their addressees as well as their recipients. They play their own game." Are there no perpetrators, no thieves, no collectors, no consumers, no owners and no artists in Bredekamp's world? The objects play their own game? No one is playing with them? In this way an academic can preemptively brand many problematic issues as irrelevant. And so there is a

castle in the centre of Berlin. This castle has no political meaning, it is simply terrific and in this castle are displayed objects with no political meaning at all, objects that simply have their own 'radiance'.

But what does the world renowned art historian Bredekamp think about the image of the City Castle that is now being built and will be deciphered worldwide? It is particularly curious that an academic such as Bredekamp, who has written and researched so much about images and has contributed so much to art history has dedicated himself with such powerful commitment to the castle, producing political and institutional meta-images – images about images – that are so unable to be justified academically. It is as if a higher aim is being served here. As if the academic knowingly speaks in an un-academic way, only in these un-academic speeches, lending the impression of academic knowledge through his world renowned status as academic and thereby strengthening his argument, not to say placing it above question. The academic Bredekamp sacrifices himself to a higher socio-political goal, as if in the end he admired Machiavelli even more than Leibnitz. Could Bredekamp's higher goal perhaps be, together with the Chancellor, the President of Germany and the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, to demonstrate the *cosmopolitanism of this Republic*? Is it now solely dependent on Bredekamp that this plan works? And if you're so cosmopolitan, what do you think your fellow black and non-black citizens are doing across the street, opposite the City Castle entrance, supposedly for some reason or other, protesting against the castle? Can the art historian Bredekamp possibly be interested in artists that are still alive and what they have to say about the castle? Or is he disturbed that these artists – certainly not the ones he has dedicated large monographs to – *can* contradict him? Perhaps that is the one catch in the entire *Humboldt-Forum* project – that it has given the impression that it would actually be possible to discuss something there.

The artists' group *NoHumboldt 21*, whose core members Brigitta Kuster, Regina Sarreiter and Dierk Schmidt cooperate with Ute Klissenbauer and *AFROTAK TV cyberNomads* (Michael Küppers-Adebisi) were formed partly out of the *Alexander-Technik* group and dedicate themselves to exactly these issues that arise from the inheritance of the collection of plundered objects. Andreas Siekmann designed the logo as well as making other contributions. They have conceived an exhibition in a suitcase, loosely based on Marcel Duchamp's initiative, that has been shown at various institutions to date (the *August Bebel Foundation*, *Scriptings* and the *House of World Cultures*), raising the issues with additional flyers and informational material. On the evening before the roof-raising ceremony of the building on 12 June 2015 the artists projected a changing display of the pillage as well as addressing the planned display of the plundered objects from the collection in Dahlem. On the ceremonial day itself many activists gathered in the *Lustgarten* to present their criticism of the castle to the public over an open mic.

The only sensible thing to do with this castle that now exists is to denounce Germany's colonial past. That is the only thing left that would work. Just as the *Reichskolonialehrendenkmal* (Imperial Colonial Celebration Monument) of 1932 in Bremen was re-dedicated as an Anti-colonial Monument in 1990, so should the Humboldt-Forum be transformed into a forum for Anti-colonialism. Now that we have this castle and given that it is so large, one can no longer avoid this issue in the

centre of our society. It is somehow appropriate, that this collection of plundered art – the so-called *Ethnological Collection* in Dahlem – finds a home in the City Castle. They are after all, mostly souvenirs of the aforementioned torturers that frequented the old City Castle, and who later transformed African countries into German colonies. Here they slaughtered entire peoples, burned their palaces to the ground and had tons of plundered art objects transported to Germany. If these torturers met someone who had an interesting tattoo, that body part would be swiftly removed and collected in baskets. This is how the *Ethnological Museum* came to have diverse human remains and skulls, some of which were measured and studied by racist scientists for their research. Now there is an idea to present a part of the ethnological collection in the City Castle as a tourist attraction – regardless of the fact that there are many descendants of those who were stolen from, who now demand the return of certain items of their property from Germany.



IV. Postscript. The City Castle as Honecker's Heritage

There is a certain political irony in *Prussianising* that is rarely mentioned because it doesn't sit well with the self image of the city castle supporters. With the *Prussianising* of the centre of Berlin, some want to send a political message – without ever stating it so clearly – against socialist modernity and avant-garde that is thankfully still visible in the other parts of the centre of Berlin. The *Prussianising* of Berlin did not begin after the fall of the wall – it was already a part of the programme of the GDR government under Erich Honecker. An interest in Prussian heritage began to develop during that time, departing from the early GDR under Ulbricht, which viewed the Prussian emperor, crown princes and their wives as the direct supporters of Hitler. It was Honecker who had the statue of Friederich the Great moved to Unter den Linden in 1980 from the *Schlosspark* in Potsdam where it had been languishing since the end of the war. Shortly before, the restoration of the Gendarmenmarkt had begun under Honecker's direction. Even if some would doubtless congratulate themselves

that they had torn *Erichs Lampenladen* (Erich's Lamp Shop – nickname for the *Palast der Republik*) down, they are actually (just) carrying out Honecker's programme for the centre of Berlin: Wilhelm von Boddien has proved himself to be Honecker's worthy urban executor.



Ina Wudtke, *The 360,000-Euro-View*, 2014, material: 4,60 m wooden fist with built in video screen, loud speakers, exhibition view xhibit Vienna.

Old Wine in Old Wineskins

Notes on the Return of Social Housing

Andrej Holm

Berlin has an aid programme for social housing again. Under the lovely title „Verwaltungsvorschriften für die soziale Wohnraumförderung des Miet- und Genossenschaftswohnungsbaus in Berlin (Wohnungsbauförderbestimmungen 2014 – WFB 2014)“ (Administrative Provisions Concerning the Support of Social Housing Promotion of Rented and Cooperative Housing Construction in Berlin), the Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development and Environment has laid out the legal framework for the re-institution of subsidies for social housing construction.

The initial rent in subsidised newbuilds is to start at an average of 6.50 EUR/m² (without tax or heating) which is then guaranteed for 20 years. The administrative provisions further state that the rent is to be raised every two years by 0.20 EUR/m² and that the tenant is protected against the housing being purchased and subsequent eviction through owner occupancy for a further ten years after the initial support period is over.

A protected rent for many years, the guarantee of staying in the area and protection against eviction for owner occupancy afterwards sounds fantastic at first sight, but the devil is not in the details of the small print of the provisions this time but in the overall aspects of the political housing and general framework and in the architecture of the subsidy itself.

Limited period and...

The endowment of the new aid programme of 64 million Euro a year is absolutely miserly in comparison to earlier programmes. Around 1,000 subsidised homes should be built from this budget. In comparison, between 1952 and 1997, a total of about 28 billion was spent on the building of social housing. That amounts to an average of over 600 million Euro of aid a year. Almost 430,000 apartments were built in Berlin as part of its social housing programme – on average over 9,500 social homes a year. This has meant that almost a third of all apartments in Berlin are the result of subsidy programmes. The old support programmes were structured so that the rent price and right to stay in the area for social homes was guaranteed for a limited period of at least 30 years. The Austrian housing researcher Christian Donner rightly described

the logic of this social housing support programme as „temporary social use“ (Donner 2000:200).

Over 300,000 of the socially supported apartments in Berlin have long ago reverted to their market cost and only around 130,000 subsidised apartments still have their rent cost and location rights protected. In the following years the protected status of up to 10,000 apartments a year will run out.

The 1,000 apartments from the newly-planned subsidy programme will therefore not even compensate for the loss of subsidised homes from the older programmes. In other words, the Berlin Senate will spend 64 million Euro every year and have less social homes at the end of the year than they started out with. It is as though there would be talk of having to extend the new Berlin Brandenburg airport before it was finished: simply absurd!

...expulsion from the housing stock

The guarantees that are running out in the areas of the old social housing projects are not simply a problem of shortfall. A series of examples from recent years show that rent increases and the dangers of expulsion are not just a problem that limits itself to the areas of Berlin with housing stock built around the beginning of the 20th century. Even the former social housing stock in the inner city boroughs have become veritable objects of speculation. This is especially clear in the 28,000 social homes in Berlin that had their so-called aid extension stopped in 2003:

In the *Fanny-Hensel-Siedlung* in Kreuzberg, despite the poor condition of the housing, the tenants have faced rent increases of 30 to 50 percent. All this despite the fact that the homes endured the sad fate of being labelled 'mould-houses' in the local Berlin press in 2007 (Schmidl 2007). Now the rent per square metre is due to rise from 5.33 Euro/m² to 9.62 Euro/m² (Englert 2010).

In Akazienstraße 6 / Belziger Straße 13 in Schöneberg the tenants faced a rent increase of around 30 percent at the end of last year making their rent, excluding rates and heating, between 7 and 8 Euro/m². If they default on their payments – the housing management threatens – their rent increase will be backdated to 1st January 2008 (*Aktionsbündnis Sozialmieter* 2010).

In 70 flats in Pohlstraße 43–53 in Tiergarten, the new landlord tried to push through a 60 percent rent increase. The homes in Pohlstraße were built with social housing subsidy as part of the International Architecture Exhibition in 1984 by the *Groth-Gruppe*, which is still very active in Berlin. After the subsidy ended and bankruptcy proceedings ensued, the houses were purchased in July 2010 by the property developers *Erste D.V.I* (Eitzel 2011).

Rent rises in mould-houses? Rent increases well above the 20 percent allowed by the rental laws? Backdated rental demands? It sounds like Manchester Liberalism and property owner despotism only played out here and now and in social housing of all

places, or put another way, in homes that have been supported with public funds for decades. Many current tenants will not be able to afford the new rents and will have to move out. That is exactly what the investors, who have sent out these increases in recent years, count on. Empty flats can be renovated and sold off as property to own or put onto the rental market for much more money. It is a classical effect of gentrification: that speculation over future earnings can only proceed through the expulsion of current tenants. What is new however, is that this pressure from expulsion does not affect the inner city stock of turn of the century buildings but rather the social housing of the more recent past.

The paradox of 'cost rents'

In order to understand why social housing especially has become the new playground of gentrification in Berlin, we have to look at the systems of subsidy. The building subsidy in the social housing programme followed a simple principle. Rather than the public purse being used to build, private, cooperative as well as local community stakeholders should be encouraged to invest in the building of social housing. Because the rent guarantees that were part of the subsidy were not particularly attractive to the investors, the so-called *unprofitable costs* were taken on by the state as part of the subsidy programme. In other words, the owners had all costs that were not covered by the social rents paid by public funds. The monthly sum of these actual expenditures are called *Kostenmiete* (cost rents). For most programmes the difference between the social rents the tenants pay and these *cost rents* have been paid out over 15 years.

The founding concepts of social housing has been thoroughly orientated to the business interests of the property owners and the *cost rent* system has stimulated market conditions that would not have been possible without state intervention. Originally conceived of as a mechanism which would limit profits (that is the income over the actual expenditure), the *cost rent* system in Berlin has resulted in a huge spiralling of costs. Protected by the promise of subsidy, there was no motive for economic building or business practises in social housing. Property developers and the banks that financed them have profited greatly from this system (Rose 2004). The *cost rents* of social housing projects in the 1980s were already equivalent to 13 Euro/m² (prices that weren't even realistic in the luxury housing sector). By 1992 they had risen to a phenomenal 19.80 Euro/m². In the end it was the state that paid – the owners, property developers and banks were the ones who profited.

So far, so bad. But this rip-off mentality paid out double for the owners that were involved. After the subsidy ran out, the rental price didn't orientate itself to the level shown in the rent index for that area but rather the *cost rents* that were still in effect. Landlords – if the market allowed – could raise the rent to these *cost rent* prices after the end of the subsidy programme. The social housing subsidy programme had not only filled the pockets of the property developers and bankers for 15 years, it had subsidised an incredibly and unrealistically high rent increase at the same time (the *cost rent*).

The principle described above as ‘temporary social use’ is not the least ineffective because a lot of money is spent on an effect that only lasts for a certain time. From the perspective of the property development business it is start-up financing in order to reap profits later. Property developers and home builders know: the high costs of initial investment in house building result in a high pressure to recouping the investment, especially in the early years, as the money laid out for buying the land, planning and building can only be raised from the eventual rental income. Later, when the loan is paid off, even an average rental income is significantly higher than those costs for the maintenance of the property, repair and any modernisation work that might have to be carried out in the future. The social housing programme supports the property developer over this initial, cost-intensive phase with aid money and then, when the house is above a certain age – calculated by the property industry – in which even low rents would generate a surplus income, the apartments are released to the free play of market forces. Often the buildings that have just been paid off are sold straight away. This is a catastrophe in terms of housing policy because the logic of paying the initial investment off has to start again from scratch and the new owners try to get their investment back through as high a rent as they can possibly charge.

The example of the *Fanny-Hensel-Siedlung* shows that after the aid programme period expires, not only are rent increases levied from a purely economic calculation but unwelcome tenants are deliberately driven out. Sebastian Jung, a tenancy activist who lives in the *Fanny-Hensel-Siedlung* recently warned that the rents of migrant tenants especially are being targeted for increase. The technique to accelerate expulsions and get new solvent tenants from attractive, in-demand sectors who can pay higher rents is becoming more and more widespread. According to the *Turkish Federation in Berlin-Brandenburg (TBB)*, 17 families have left due to rent increases, 13 of whom have Turkish or Arabic backgrounds (TBB 2015). The fact that the property owners have had to pay out 30,000 Euro damages after court cases for discrimination in the Berlin law courts (Dernbach/von Törne 2015) has not reversed the massive rate of evictions in their properties.

Sebastian Jung has publicly stood up for his neighbours, later becoming an annoyance for the property management himself. Together with an offer to purchase his flat he had the honor of receiving, on 1 April 2014, the first rent increase to the value of the *cost rent*. The rent for his 50 m² apartment will increase from 5.38 Euro/m² to 13.32 Euro/m². Because of the structure of the *cost rent* agreement for social housing that favours the property owners, the rent increase can even be backdated so that now the tenancy activist is faced with a rental arrears demand of over 9,000 Euro.

When expulsions become the norm

A recent study by students of the *Humboldt University* in Berlin now shows that the examples above are not isolated cases. An examination of the living conditions in social housing projects in which the extended support period is now running out has uncovered a horrifyingly high rate of expulsion.



Ina Wudtke, *Entmietung*, 2014,
material: anonymised case files of
a seven year lasting eviction trial
pasted on 15 paper rolls on both sides,
exhibition view xhibit Vienna.

15 buildings were examined in Kreuzberg, each containing more than 40 apartments and a total of 83 interviews with tenants took place. The goal was to obtain information about the individual housing conditions (rental costs, length of tenancy, level of satisfaction etc.) as well as the expulsions in each property (change of landlord, modernisation activities, tenant turnover rate etc.). The results of the study point to an enormous amount of expulsion in social housing:

- In the properties that were part of the study, the majority of old tenants have moved since the basic support programme ended.
- The rents in the properties in the study were between 9 and 14 Euro/m² (including rates and heating) which is much higher than the usual rent in Kreuzberg
- Even the rents identified as more reasonable: the 9.09 Euro/m² level is above the assessment threshold for living costs and above the housing support limit for people on long term unemployment (*Hartz-IV*)
- 80 per cent of the properties examined have changed ownership in recent years.
- Almost a quarter of the properties in the study have been completely turned over to owner occupier use or offices.

An employee of a property management company in Berlin who was interviewed for the study formulated the consequences of these developments in the following way:

“...even the people that the social housing was built for are being driven out by the job centres at the moment. It is called a rent reduction process: they get a friendly request to reduce their rent. [...] and then they have half a year to find an appropriate apartment that is not actually available in the current market [...] And then they get their welfare payment reduced to the level that they are sooner or later homeless because they simply cannot pay their rent any more – when you're hungry, food comes before rent. And then it happens: they're out. [...] You have to imagine: you have two children at school and kindergarten and you should move out to Spandau... Can that be right?”

In social housing in Kreuzberg after the aid programme ends, the rents are too high for families on long term unemployment support. The majority of tenants have changed already and parts of the property has been converted to luxury properties. In Kreuzberg at least, the ending of the aid programme has increased the expulsion rate in the area. It is no surprise, then, that one study states: “the replacement of residents is in full swing at the moment” (Frühauf/Rieder/Schneck/Stoutness 204: 37).

Conclusions

The social apartments of the past are today's objects of speculation. This situation is no accident: the limited time periods, the *cost rent* agreements and the uncontrolled spiralling of costs have transformed social housing into the perfect scenario for exclusion and expulsion. We have to see the old aid programme for social housing in

its effect over a long period of time as the co-production of speculation and expulsion by the state. If income from rent was initially subsidised by the aid programme, the income projections after the aid programme runs out have to be maintained with new tenants. The new aid programmes only correct some of the mistakes of the past. Even though upper limits have been set to the available subsidies in order to encourage a reduction of costs, the fundamental principles such as taking on unprofitable costs and the guarantee that goes with it of private profits has changed little. Particularly exasperating is the lack of willingness to learn from the mistakes of the past in terms of the limited period of the support programmes. Social housing is still conceived of as a temporary status on the way to its proper usage and we can now guess where the objects of speculation will be in 20 years. Instead of obtaining time-limited obligations through an expensive system in homeopathic doses, it would be more effective for the city's social housing provision to apply money and laws to secure a long term solution to the last 130,000 apartments from the old social housing stock.

When a 'temporary social use' is discussed as an alternative to aid programmes, the term 'revolving funds' is not far. The idea is instead of private profits from the excess earnings from properties that have been paid off, the income from the old properties should be used to replenish the funds for future aid programmes. A self-nourishing finance concept like this would socialise the long term effects of property industry calculations.

A long term solution such as this is not going to come from those currently in charge as the concept has been available for a long time (*Kotti & Co* 2014) and until now been completely ignored in the drawing up of the new aid programme. The government's attempt to prove their competence in terms of housing policy to the current protest movements has turns out to be a dead-end and we can only hope that this arrogant political style cannot prevail in the long term in Berlin.

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HH & B

Hamburg
&
Berlin

HABEN und BRAUCHEN
und BBK BERLIN
LADEN EIN

Freitag
14. FEB 2014
19 UHR

PROJEKTRAUM
des FLUTGRABEN e.V.
Am Flutgraben 3
12435 Berlin

Geschichten aus
HAMBURG über
**KUNST
ARBEIT &
STADTPOLITIK**

Mit: Andreas Blechschmidt (Stadtaktivist), Christine Ebeling (Künstlerin + Gängeviertel-Sprecherin), Britta Peters (Kuratorin), Christoph Twickel (Journalist und Autor)
Moderation: Kathrin Wildner (metroZones) + DJ: J-INA Darling

Alternative Plan for a Pseudo-Hegemonic Project

Haben und Brauchen | AG Stadt Raum

In 2014 *Haben und Brauchen* were asked to submit a concept for a long-term dialogue with the cultural affairs department of the Berlin Senate. The goal was to analyse the reasons for the increasingly precarious working conditions for artists in Berlin and to formulate a concept of how to convey their precarious situation through discourse with the decision-making political representatives, changing their understanding of art and thereby improving the working and living conditions of cultural workers. To these ends, on 15th and 16th of February, *Haben und Brauchen* invited different cultural producers to the *ExRotaprint* in Wedding for a weekend to generate concepts, exchange ideas with each other and formulate approaches. This weekend was preceded by the initial public event *HH & B – Geschichten aus Hamburg über Kunst, Arbeit und Stadtpolitik* in *Flutgraben e.V.* which focussed on the situation of activists and cultural producers in their cities.

Following this working weekend, three working groups were formed around the topics, *Kunstbegriff* (Definitions of Art), *Arbeit* (Was ist künstlerische Arbeit?) [Work (What is artistic work?)] and *Stadt Raum* (Berlin) [City Space (Berlin)]. The following text contains excerpts from the discussion of the *AG Stadt Raum* on the 16th February 2014 in order to document the emergence of the first idea sketches.

The names have been anonymised.

A: ...a short summary of yesterday: Andrej Holm presented his input on the rental politics of Berlin. If we add together the number of people that are being pushed out of reasonable places to live (through modernisation of their homes and overpriced rent increases), to the people who also don't have much money and are currently in need of housing, that would give us the need for approximately 120,000 apartments under 5 Euro/m² which Berlin does not have. If we then take the 1,000 affordable apartments that the Senate is proposing to build each year, you'd have to wait 120 years to be housed! The dilemma is clear and this will become a permanent state if a very serious change in policy is not instituted right now. So our question has to be, what can we do ourselves?

B: What we haven't yet addressed, is that the police have undertaken a massive mapping project on the theme of 'unpredictable' squares. They have employed an urban planner especially for this who's developing a programme to restructure these areas.

A: I think it's started already in Wedding – the '*Trinkerspringbrunnen*' (Drunk's Fountain) has gone...

B: It's been going for two or three years already, you know. It affects all the parks as well. Where we are in Moabit, it's the *Kleine Tiergarten*. Exactly the same thing's happening there...

C: It's happening all over Berlin...

B: Aren't these things we can do something about?

A: Where the drunk's fountain was, there's now a drunk's table tennis area. The same people are still there of course. They took one area away from them and they've taken over another – actually, I find that great (laughs)...

B: It's even got a name – it's called *Aktive Stadt* (Active City)...

D: And there's money from the EU in it...

E: The interesting thing about it is the understanding of common property. It's not just the police, it's also a lot of citizens who – partly legitimately – go along with it... If you start to look at public space and its reconfiguration, you should also articulate why that partly takes place with so much support. It's not only a police state, after all – it also has to do with a need for cleanliness, security etc. ...

F: Yesterday I found Andrej's slogan "Berlin stays a risky investment" very interesting. I mean to think about strategies for devaluing certain things instead of endorsing them. You said that the process of redesigning public space has already begun. That's going to get used for marketing and so what possibilities do we have to create risk?



A: So that would be a threat of course? You want to devise a threat?

F: Yes, actually I do. We're being threatened after all... That's why it's a defensive position for a start... Art seems very pacifying after all, because it seems to be about dialogue.

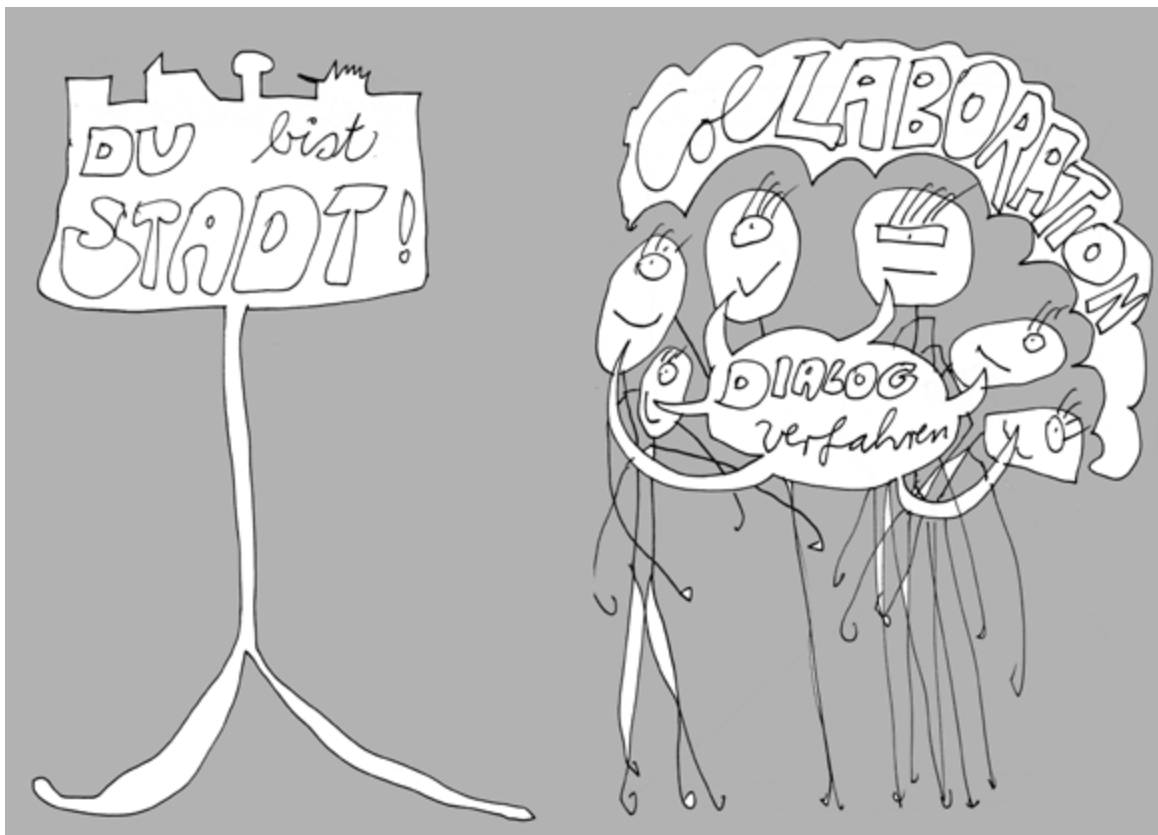
A: You want to use the image of art to be employed to devise a threat?

F: Yes, exactly.

A: I think that's interesting. You mean art as refusal, as a conduit, as you said yesterday... But how can you do something like that without it instantly being instrumentalised?

E: Katja Diefenbach talked about it in her text didn't she? She raised the general question of how *Haben und Brauchen* should continue. You get involved in a situation and at the same time you're resistant... it can work particularly. It's a question of attitude. It really depends if you are doing a job for the district government and then you reconfigure a park and think everything is great or if I know that isn't a solution. You just give it all another condition and this condition is contradictory...

F: It's a matter of energy too of course. I mean how much you can take on and how much energy you're willing to invest in a process like that...



A: Yeah, we all know the revolution is a long way off (laughs).

G: I just want to add that in Hamburg, it was texts like Henri Lefebvre's *Right to the City* and David Harvey's *Rebel Cities* that prompted discussions just like this

one. Lefebvre's is actually an old text but it's still highly relevant. And that's exactly what Harvey says too, you're in different states and it's also a doubling. On the one hand you're the agent of expulsion and yet you too are being expelled. Even Katja Diefenbach said at some point, there is no correct way because there are simply contradictions in this community and it is important to hold on to these contradictions. Because it makes you more critical and able to accept criticism yourself. I find this changing relationship very important. And it's perhaps a reason that it sort of works in Hamburg – we can overlook that we approach it from different directions.

But this recurrent theme is very important in order to let all this sensitivity die down a bit. It'd be important to work on it a bit and develop it.

H: We won't manage to develop this collective ground today, we just don't have enough time.

A: What's so difficult about it? Berlin belonged to us once. I don't have that feeling any more...

H: There are international players that came to Berlin with big pockets... There's just not a lot of time. I advocate that other than talking about how to deal with the Senate, we plan concrete – small, straightforward – actions. We should be able to appeal to the majority of Berliners – after all the majority are still renters and not property owners. It would be a way of addressing lots of people. That's why the defiant stance is super important – provocation – because we've only got limited means.

E: This might be a diversion, but if you don't see *Haben und Brauchen* as a long-term structure, you can plan short-term things and carry them out. But you could link both things strategically and plan long-term work and short-term action to run alongside each other. It would be really important to have some sort of road map in order to sort it out, so that we could just see what topics we've covered. Such as topics which affect the whole city, like housing. Another topic, if you want to go into it, is space for production and another topic is places for presentation and/or negotiation and of course public space.

(Showing everyone a diagram on the blackboard)... down here you could list actual spaces we've talked about. Now it's a structure that we can vote about, what the priorities are and what is secondary. Here for example is the topic of housing because we all need that. We are all agreed that there are still deficiencies in the knowledge about housing. Some say they want to look at the public benefit of housing and its failure. Others say no, I want to join *Kotti und Co* in some quick campaigns. That would be a split between discourse and activity. You could also say theory and practise... A third level – one I find incredibly important for time management – is the question of who we actually want to reach. Is it about informing yourself, working on initiatives more, or is it about a process of dialogue with the government, the politicians and entrepreneurs? That's how you strategise the language and the relevant actions.

I: Why is it about a dialogue with the Senate and what Senate are you talking about?

A: With the Senate for Cultural Affairs...

I: Not with the Senate for Urban Development?

A: No, with the Senate for Cultural Affairs, so actually with the government.



I: But you should actually speak to the Senate for Urban Development...

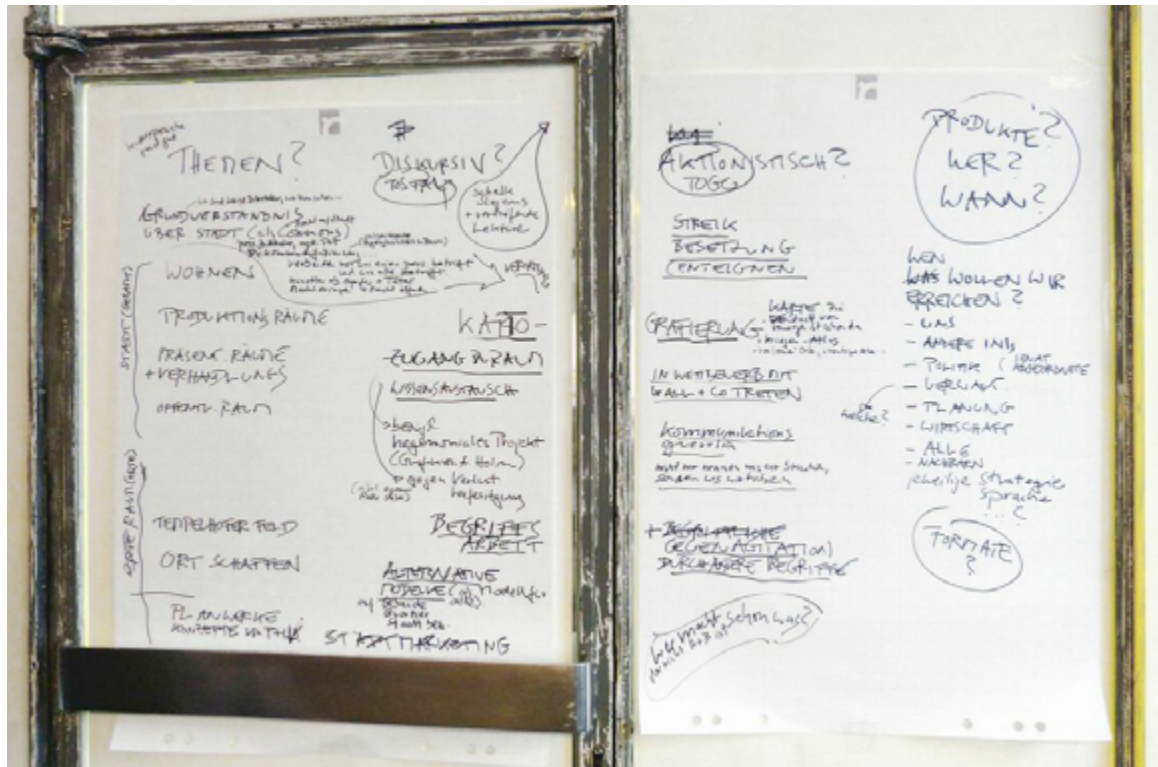
A: The thing with the Senate for Urban Development is the marketing of the city through culture. They have a big role in that and will continue to do so in the future. What's happening now is that culture is being cemented into a position of pure tourist attraction for the city or even something that makes a fertile ground for innovation in industry... The Senate for Cultural Affairs is almost powerless against this because everything is prescribed by the Senate for Urban Development.

I: And so it's completely different if you talk to the Senate for Cultural Affairs or with Urban Development. They have a totally different approach.

A: What we're talking about now is not something many people think about at all. There is an urban development project called 2030. Culture, for example, plays no part in it at all. It didn't appear at all. The city peddles its cultural image round the world but as far as the future is concerned it doesn't come up at all.

We introduced it afterwards with Herbert Mondry from the *bbk*... In one sentence they bundle culture in with the creative industries and tourism. And that's handled culture! That's the situation at present – that's what we fight against like windmills...

J: I'm interested in the idea of cartography.



E: Do you mean academically or practically?

J: It's both for me (agreement from the group)... Therefore I'd like to list terms like meeting, picnic, eating and drinking. It's important to me because I don't want people to think they have to make a banner for a demo or organise something. It can also be that you just meet one another – regularly, like organise a bar where everyone could meet...

K: I think that the subject of free space is important. To think about what was there that has disappeared, to reflect on access to space...

E: (Writing it all down in a table on the paper on the wall) I've written a few things down here: the artist as victim and perpetrator, pessimistic thought and optimistic action, Harvey, Negrie and Hardt's commons, unlimited access to space. I think these are overarching topics that can't be quantified – I mean can't be measured in space...

L: I would be interested to find out how to make the know-how of everyone sitting here fruitful and productive. The other thing would be a downgrade or upgrade of the idea of a strike or occupation. I thought it was great – I heard about the occupation of a theatre in Spain to make it available for all...

I: I would go a step further and write expropriation underneath occupation (loud smirking in the group), because what is occupation? It means expropriation...

M: But I have a feeling of loss. For me it's now about how can I make it productive – and not just for me but for others too? It's not just that the spaces have gone – the property market has become even more consolidated. And that makes me mad too... And about this term expropriation – I didn't know it before but I did have the feeling that I could do something and now that feeling is gone.

H: I wanted to say something about the feeling of loss too. It's quite clear of course when it's taken away from us. Exactly when investment security was extended to the east of Berlin. At the start of the 90s, when all the property lapsed out of the protection from repatriation. We had the feeling then that we could do something about it. But since the capital has come, the possibilities for getting directly in contact with the hegemonic project have, in principle, been watered down.

The interesting thing about *Haben und Brauchen* or in loose formations such as *Haben und Brauchen*, as far as I see it, is that internally, it's incredibly diverse but from the outside, it has a visibility which you can fall back on at certain times. Like Christoph Knoch said before, suddenly the press called him and wanted to know what the independent scene thought.

I'd find it great if we could unpick the hegemonic project and then knit our own hegemonic project together that we use as a sort of plan. Like what happened with the manifesto, where we say, okay, *Haben und Brauchen* recommend this or see things like that. I think that it is something that can be sensibly presented to the outside. To try and put concepts into writing or visual form. Our desire to get in direct contact with the hegemonic project again can only be reached on a visual or sound level. At the moment everything is dependent on realising profit potentials. It's like a compulsion. We can see, when we stand in front of a poster, where another new building is being marketed. We can then see how they always use the same words in their marketing. They can do that because they have the power and get it sold, realise their profits and take them into the next round. But in all the other areas where they are helplessly behind, this is where we can piss up their legs...

We need to refine the concepts a bit more so that we can use it as an alternative plan for a pseudo-hegemonic project.

A: ...we've now been using the term hegemonic a lot with not much reflection. So – I always wanted to be anti-hegemonic... (laughs), (all laugh)...

G: ...hegemony is a world view that the political opponent thinks they have to take it as it is, because this term is seen as so strong. That's why this term is also positive term because it is about setting something politically in such a way as it also gets pushed through... You can also be popular and from the left.

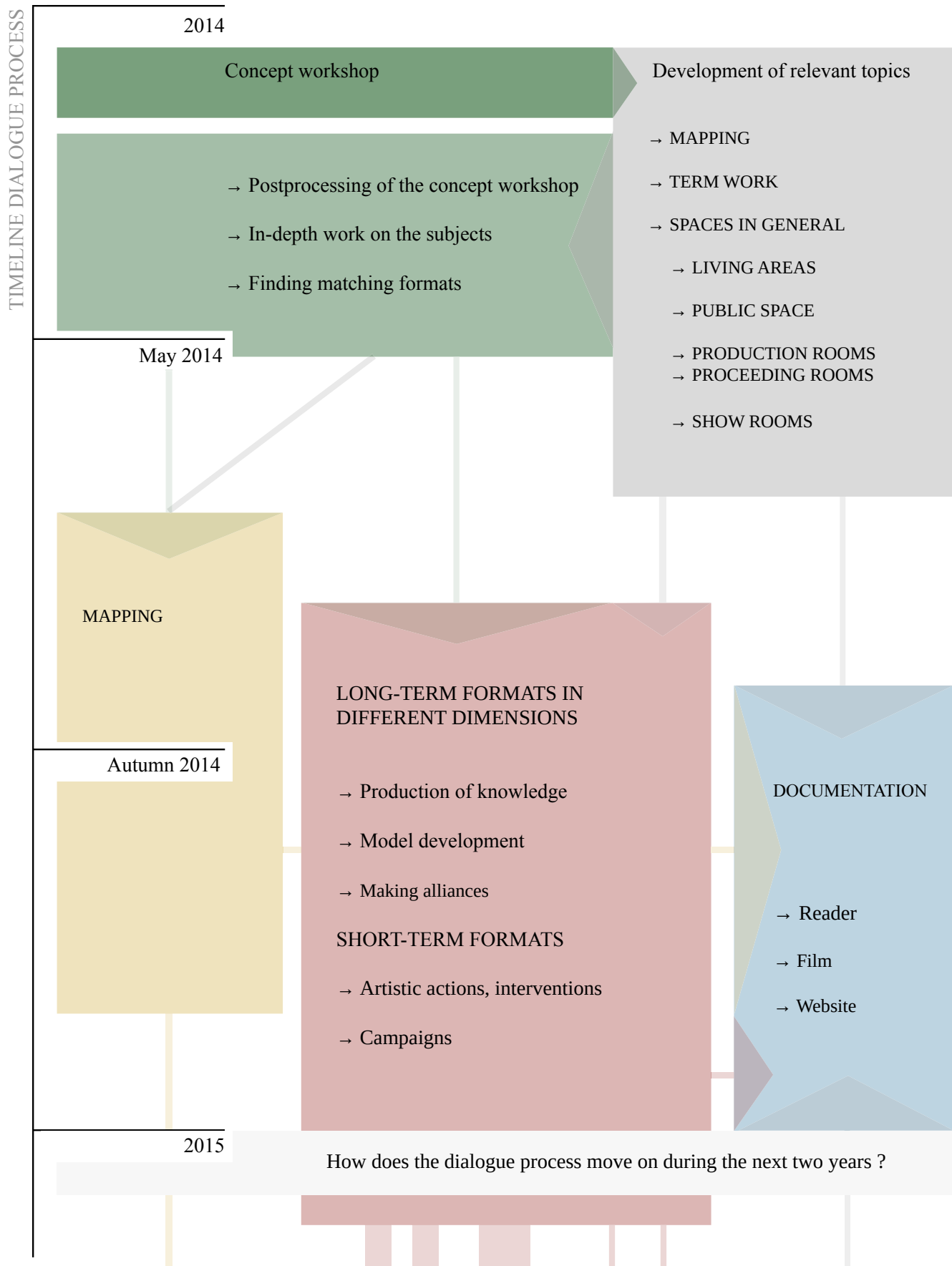
A: It's good that we all agree that the term is already a provocation in itself. I think we now need a comparison with the term culture, because there's a huge crossover here with urban development... We have to use the way art is perceived in this city and how it is instrumentalised politically and completely correct it!

H: And perhaps not just in the small areas but in larger associations as well because, apart from the consultants who always present the same shit in exactly the same way in every urban development meeting, there have to be people, for example in universities, who are examining alternative economies, of housing for instance...

At this point the debate ended and the participants came back to a wider discussion with the other working groups, Kunstbegriff and Arbeit.



Summary : Results of the work group Stadt Raum (topics, tags, possible forms of implementation)



MAPPING

- Idea → Presentation of places:
 - Crises map collection for Berlin
 - Problematic places (for us) in the city
- Places, that already set courses (*The City of Tomorrow is Already Here* in response to the *Smart-City*-project in 2030)
- Places, that have something
- Places, that need something
- Places, we have (or get), but we do not need
- Places, that are felt as a loss (How can you represent this without nostalgia ?)

TERM WORK

In exchange with the work group Kunstbegriff

- Sharpen your own terms
- Communication guerrilla
- Counter-agitation

SPACES / ROOMS / AREAS

→ IN GENERAL

→ VALORIZATION BRAKE !

- Senate : Shut down or divert investment incentives (the senate has many unused (!) opportunities for action)
- Senate : Reintroduction of the tax-advantaged charitable purpose
 - Act on general conditions and change them
 - The whole city counts — not only the inner districts !

→ LIVING AREAS

- Since 2010 : „There is a housing problem !“
- Comprehend living again as a social infrastructure
- How are socially acceptable rents achievable ? (inexpensive construction, progressive taxation ...)
- Alternative models ? (building, district, city)

→ PUBLIC SPACE

- Access to space
- Loss of open space
- We need to enroll us in the space / reconquest

→ PRODUCTION ROOMS / PROCEEDING ROOMS

- Alternative models ? (building, district, city)

→ SHOW ROOMS

- Alternative models ? (building, district, city)

→ OPEN SPACES

- E.g. 100% Tempelhofer Feld
- Create a fictional place yourself

Fundamental grasp of city and space as a common good

Loss of open space / When did normalization of Berlin by valorization ?

Projection surface for all aspects of discomfort

How do you broach the topic Valorization Brake well ?

2014

Action / education :

MAPPING-WORKSHOP
Which methods, examples
exist ?

Education :

Term collection

Action :

Action table to go

Education :

David
Harvey-
reader circle

With
political
representa-
tives

Action /
campaign :

Valorization
brake :
Tunnel under
valorization

Venture capital
Activate Berlin

Action :

Posters : compete
with WALL and
Co

The HEGEMONIAL PROJECT

Think the project first —
then the investor

Cooperation with
Kotti & Co

Action :

Strike,
occupation,
dispossession

Activation of
investment
critical mass

Projects network

Find / develop
models

Analysis:

Marx-Engels-Forum

Stadtschloss-new
construction

What is happening
there ?
Scrutinize Phantom
City Prussia

Knowledge
sharing

Knowledge
sharing

Knowledge
sharing

TO HAVE Congress
with politicians and actors of art

- 1-2 day conference for the purposes of common self-improvement
- Becoming aware of what exists
- Term collection :
 - disassemble general principle (mixed city, creative industries, Smart City ...)
 - Image production Berlin → where does it lead?
 - Criticize instrumentalization (tourism vs. concept of culture)

TO HAVE and TO NEED Congress
(1-2 weeks after the To Have Congress)

- The brake !
- A following conversation between politicians and actors of art
 - What is needed ?
 - How can it be accomplished ?
 - Examination of the concept 2030 → Smart City

Bonus:
The Golden
Valorization
Brake
:)

2015

5-Topic Think Tank
Public summit meeting (e.g. within the Study House)

On topics such as :

- Usage of general principle and the conceptualization in society (using the example of Berlin)
- The current (social) housing situation in Berlin
- Alternative urban models (including models of society) beyond valorization policy
- Address a central theme of the work group „Arbeit“
- Address a central theme of the work group „Kunstbegriff“

Addressees :

- IN GENERAL
 - The city
 - The urban society
 - The urban space in general (we, our neighbors, other initiatives ...)
- IN THE DIALOGUE PROCESS
 - Berlin's Senate Chancellery for Cultural Affairs, and (!) Senate Department for Urban Development and Environment (legislators and administration)
 - The mayor (!)
 - Public authorities responsible for public property and rent politics (among them — so far neither curious nor coexistence overlap)
 - Other initiatives working in the urban environment

Conclusion of the work group Stadt Raum so far :

- There is already a lot of knowledge about the city, its city and valorization politics, the urban space and its utilization opportunities. Therefore, one question is rather how to put this knowledge together and make it accessible to politics. Another one is how to substantially sustainable with relatively little time ?
- Term work to the outside is urgently needed : Already used terms need to be scrutinized
- Broader contexts should be established : global crisis, values, refugee movement
- In all, It is also important to find a language, which is understandable for a broad public.

Other key points on which we need to think in this context are :

- Irrationality
- Unpredictability
- Radicalness

And :

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, KNOWLEDGE SHARING ...

2016 , 2017 , 2018

Beyond Ownership and Use – Against the Politics of Special Interests

Statement to kick off *Haben und Brauchen* Berlin's concept weekend,
February 15, 2014.

Katja Diefenbach

In your *Haben und Brauchen* 2011 manifesto, you address a paradox symptomatic of societal relationships that comes into particularly sharp focus in Berlin. The paper pointed out that even as the city uses the freelance art scene to boost its own image, profiling Berlin as a creative hub and a metropolis of aesthetic heterodoxy, the working and living conditions for artists become more and more tenuous in the face of the city's neo-liberal bent and its business-oriented real estate policies. In your conclusions, you universalize that paradox: "Artistic work is the focal point of a contradiction applicable to all of society."

In doing so, you come back to a question much discussed in the last 30 years, namely to what extent the freelance, independent artist has been turned into the new model of *homo economicus*. The issue is whether the artist can serve as an ideological and governmental test case for the new economic man, who is required to own his or her own critical and creative skills. By turning art into an economic venture, those skills are expended with the requirement that over time, they will yield returns that increase one's "property" in the dual meaning of "properties" as characteristics and "property" as belongings, even if only at the symbolic level of accumulated significance. This model is founded on the hypothesis of individual ownership that posits that time can be personally acquired. You infer from that method of subjectification that those producing culture or knowledge are prepared to manage their own skills, up to and including the point of burnout and depression. In that scenario, the irony of Berlin – from a western view of the city, mind you – would be that at the moment that the economic conditions that helped bring about Berlin's subculture between the 1970s and 1990s disappeared, minority ways of existing were activated and mobilized as, quasi, the naked margins of entrepreneurialism. Berlin is thus recognizable as one of the global laboratories where people are urged to see their unpredictable lives as a privileged detour on the road to success, a temporary and risk-embracing break from the means-end path that is an investment in later recognition by institutions or on the open market. That government and self-governing mode, which has been debated since the 1990s using terms such as minority mainstreaming, dissidence as an economic venture, or homonormativity, has the effect of dampening minority lifestyles, while at the same time the fear arises of getting lost, which in the modern

age is linked to existential excess. The subjective desire to be both opposed to something and a part of it is articulated in near synchronicity. We look back on the Berlin of the late 1970s and the 1980s, the squatters, punk, the height of the “autonomous” movement, the nightlife in the hip dive bars “Kumpelnest” and “Ex,” the option of doing horse without and yet not being viewed as leading a completely fucked up or failed life, is if that were all the unpredictable past. It has become inaccessible and thus is celebrated.

But is it right to relegate it to a time period? Can the government strategy of placing its eggs in the business basket and governing via the high degree of freedom that uncertainty and risk enjoin be dated to the era after 1989? Foucault suggests an alternative interpretation. In his lectures on biopolitics, he posits the theory that regulation in the post-Fordism era, meaning the type of government action that became hegemonic in the course of 1970s economic restructuring, can at its core be traced back to the ordoliberal model developed in the 1930s. As a counter to Keynes, in the 1930s, the Freiburg school developed a model that centered not on state regulation of the volume of investment, but rather on regulatory policies that operated in the middle level of society, below the level of industry and large-scale urban planning projects. Its stated goal was “to multiply and expand entrepreneurial forms within the body social.”¹ Compared to the demand-side economics of Keynes, the ordoliberal government strategy, which elevated corporations to an “informing power in society,”² was no less active or interventionist. Therefore, economists such as Röpke or Rüstow described their project as “sociological government,” “vital politics,” or “politics of life.”³ In other words, the ordoliberal government technique was actively self-limiting. Instead of the classic maxims of laissez-faire and “there is constantly too much government,” they maximized legal and administrative measures in order to guarantee the free interplay of the power of competition, cost reduction, and the global exploitation chain. Instead of spending public money to increase demand in industry and the consumer goods sector and compensate for the negative effects of the market on society – particularly falling wages and increasing unemployment – the idea is to ensure the free functioning of capitalist rules with basic commercial regulations, as well as with demographic measures and by fostering education. According to Foucault, therefore, the neo-liberalism of the 1970s is the progeny of the ordoliberal program because it believes in government by policies that boost society’s self-activation of market logic. Particular to ordoliberal governmentality is that it is subject to internal rules of maximizing commercialization and not only generalizes the competitive dynamic of mid-sized companies to society, but also personalizes it to individuals. So in Foucault’s view, ordoliberalism is rounded out by the micro-economic theories of human capital, such as were developed in the somewhat anarchistic-capitalist Chicago school of the 1960s and 1970s by people such as Gary Becker or Theodore W. Schultz. They renew the idea of the economic person, who no longer embodies – as in the Adam Smith model – a participant, controlled by his or her needs, in an exchange process, but rather as the inventive producer of his or her own capability to act, the owner and operator of his or her facilities and skills.⁴ So what Foucault considers to have been brought up to date at the micro-economic level in the neoliberal government program is the entrepreneur who was described at the start of the 20th century by Schumpeter, Weber, or Sombart as the inventor of new combinations and possibilities. The theories of human capital uncouple that idea of innovation from the capital theory and psychological context, in which

the entrepreneur is identified, particularly by Schumpeter, as a charismatic leadership figure with a creative will for power. In the Chicago school, by contrast, innovation is considered simply the cumulative 'output of the total investment made at the human level.'⁵

I mention Foucault's lectures because they put post-Fordism regulation and the commercialization of the self into long-term perspective. This opens up the discussion of how the heterogeneous and coexisting mechanisms of utilization, government, and law have entered into an alternating relationship in the capitalist form of society in order to guarantee the reproductive context of society. From that point of view, Foucault's work is in some ways a continuation of Marx' research; Foucault adds to what Marx analyzed only tangentially and in a simple basic-encroachment model, namely the issue of how the mechanisms of government and utilization are mutually stabilizing by accessing the forces of work, language, and life. In *Capital*, Marx showed how competition for extra profits between individual capitalist undertakings in the overall reproduction scheme of society leads to increased socialization of production relationships and a constant acceleration of capital turnover. The introduction of new technology shortens production time; labor time is intensified by a scientific organization of its processes; expansion of the credit system accelerates circulation. With the production and realization of added value independent and separated from each other, those abbreviations and concentrations of parallel and serial loops of the industrial, commercial, and financial capital lead to more and more ways in which reproduction in the overall process can be plunged into crisis. While Marx' dialectical point of view assumes that, in the end, the capital mechanism will self destruct, Foucault removes that historical-philosophical moment of Marxism from his thinking. In doing so, he breaks with the idea that can understand a society by generalizing its most advanced tendencies or by expounding on a contradiction that expresses historical truth, which would lead, via many detours, via the bad side of history and the pain of the negative, to its dissolution, to the "dispossession of the dispossessor." In this, Foucault is inspired by Althusser's model of a whole with a complex structure and no closure. In keeping with that, in the first part of his biopolitics lectures, he shows that in a security society, the anticipation of discipline is not replaced by that of security, but rather only the correlation or internal order of legal, administrative, and economic mechanisms.⁶ In a security society oriented to static controls and those based on probability policies, disciplinary and imprisonment measures can increase – as the current explosion of emergency legal measures and the expansion of the prison complex proves – leading to growing polarization. It exacerbates not only the pressure on individuals to commercialize, but also the exclusion of any commercialization option by means of increasing over-exploitative, more intense work that destroys any existential or poetic articulation in life. Foucault arrives at that structural analysis by leveling the term opposition that preserves the historically unnecessary and the politically non-primary status. For him, a contradiction is a specific and unlikely configuration in a diagram of the balance of power; for Marx it was the other way around – the balance of power was a strategic moment in the logic of an historically evolving contradiction.⁷ From a Foucauldian perspective, the basic gesture that characterizes the *Haben und Brauchen* manifesto is impossible. There is no quasi-universal position at the heart of the polity. And not only because Foucault breaks with the organism and communitarism of the polity model, but because at the heart of society is the shifting correlation of the balance of power,

which – in the inverse argument – cannot be adopted or incarnated. From this perspective, politics is generating coalitions in a space, in which experiences are shifted back and forth and separated from each other; their relationship must first be invented in a coalition of conflict and is always provisional and incomplete.

That is why when I re-read your manifesto, I wondered why you wanted to oppose an economic rule in life, subjectification through uncertainty, with an alternative economy of community, of the polity, of responsibility, participation, and self-regulated value, which historically has been loosely affiliated with the *lebensreform* movement, the cooperative movement, and in the recent past, with the various positions of the movement against the restructuring of cities, whereby your arguments remain consistently economic and utilitarian. Basic tenor: we have bestowed upon the political sector an upgrade in image and attractiveness, we produce criticism and invention, we embody the general intellect of the city, we raise property values in entire neighborhoods with our cooperative sociality, so therefore we demand safeguards for our living conditions, the portion to which we are entitled. As if the conflict over practical values, productivity, over the organism that is subject to the idea of a community bond fostered by meaningful activity, was not hashed out in the left wing. Your criticism is not directed at the structures of capitalist exploitation and biopolitical government, but rather at individual, excessive forms of expression of privatization, monetization, at speculative, so-called lighthouse projects resulting from urban policies. It's plain to me that political debates are always triggered by individual effects, but eschewing structural criticism seems to me to be like choosing to diminish a liberating position. Directing translating professional interest into a demand for recognition formulated simultaneously in political, economic, and ethical terms runs the danger of redoubling the problem you're pitting yourself against. It is not every life whose reproduction should be safeguarded for its pure power to act and to express itself, but rather qualified life its aesthetic productivity, distinguished by its critical attitude and societal responsiveness. That is equivalent to a counter commercialization, in which an intellectual and innovative milieu protests the social value of its own achievements. There has to be a return on what is expended.

In the wake of the racist pogroms in Rostock, Mölln, and Mannheim, there was an attempt, as part of an anti-national and anti-capitalist position, to minimize the division between thematic, interventionist, and syndicalist practices, while at the same time alluding to the struggles of migrants and refugees. Under the umbrella of “public safety committees” or as part of campaigns like “inner city action,” the point was to re-politicize the art and music scenes, as well as inducing the autonomy movement to reject identification with its own radicalism. The prospect was to strengthen the interaction between political and artistic subcultures, and expand the contact zones for discussion, from which one is distanced by his or her subcultural habitat, for instance with the unemployed in connection with demands for basic welfare funds, or with refugees and migrants in connection with anti-racist work. One of the hoped for strategic effects was to use cooperation to disrupt the hardened attitudes of the political and artistic scenes respectively, meaning a fixation with militancy on the one side, and bohemian narcissism on the other. Twenty years later, it's clear that it has come to a renewed, deep fissure between thematic and interventionist criticism, and that even in the context of the time, the process had begun whereby processing political issues was ever deeper interlaced with personal careers, and summed up

with the expressiveness and name of individuals. Thus in universities, and artistic and pop culture institutions, critical work coexisted unobstructed with social conformity. A conference or an exhibition might have addressed the issues of capitalist exploitation or the long history of European colonialism, but they would in all probability leave intact all the divisions of labor and norms of the institutions within which they acted, and have no reinforcing effect on the societal conflicts in their surroundings. I found the French movement of the “intermittent du spectacle” interesting for a while, in which those freelance and intermittently employed workers in the cultural sectors fought for unemployment insurance to bridge their periods of idleness between productions.⁸ The “intermittents” did not initially seek dialogue with politicians, but rather made their concrete demands in combined action with strikes at the big festivals and working together with other workers in precarious situations, such as McDonald’s employees.

In closing, I would like to speak about the debate on biopolitical free enterprise and cooperative self-exploitation in workerism because it is close to your position on collective potential and skills. There was also an attempt in workerism to invert individual ownership into a collective acquisition movement, in which the meaning of time was adopted not privately, but jointly. In the 1960s, Mario Tronti posited that the working class became political by extracting itself from its economic function by refusal to work, passivity and so on; it had to negate its own productivity, its status as valuable capital in order to transform from a power for economic productivity to a power for political destruction.⁹ The empirical example used for that position was Olivetti’s labor structures, which were examined by Raniero Panzieri. The company was considered paradigmatic for integration of the working class into capitalist society, as well as the degree to which workers’ knowledge, and the improvisation and innovation capabilities of the production workers were incorporated into manufacturing processes. Adriano Olivetti, a communitarian and reform businessman, saw the factory as a human manufacturing community. Some of the company’s facilities in Ivrea – including kindergartens, health centers, and housing complexes – were built by the progressive, rationalistic architects Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini. Olivetti hired leftist intellectuals and writers for its research division, and its in-house publishing arm produced texts such as the study *Où va le travail humain?* (whither human work?) by Marxist sociologist Georges Friedmann.¹⁰ Following Panzieri’s analysis, Tronti described that form of democratization of production as a new form of planning power, with procedures depending on two opposing poles – authoritarianism and pluralism. Decision structures are centralized upwards and decentralized downwards, creating a “tendency to unity of authority and pluralism, of central leadership and local autonomy.”¹¹ Unlike the Italian communist party and the trade unions, Panzieri and Tronti stressed that the developments in productive power, its increasingly cooperative nature, its foundation in science, its collectivization, were not catalysts for a transition to socialism. Tronti defined the working class that rejected the model of “integration through participation” as political entrepreneurs. “We are happy here,” he wrote, “to see Schumpeter’s figure of the entrepreneur inverted with that of the innovator in the permanent battle initiative of the great workers’ mass.”¹² Between the mid 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, there were a series of breaks and divisions within Marxist workerism. One of the points of conflict was Tronti’s Leninism and the fact that he eventually re-joined the Italian communist party. His position was that the party must provide the working class with organizational footing and a strategic direction, so that it was not damned for all eternity to motivate capital only with purely spontaneous campaigns to anticipate

its opposition and undertake the corresponding modernization of production. Negri, on the other hand, as part of the *autonomia operaia* movement, formulated the concept of communal work, which would no longer be limited to the factory, but would act across the entire social spectrum by subsuming society under the reproduction cycle of capital. Negri avoids the problem raised in various forms by theorists from Tronti to Foucault, that government operates through the mobilization of life, with the theory of making the capacity of work autonomous, which he traces back to the fact that the most progressive means of production – knowledge, attentiveness, affectivity – are found inside the bodies of the workers. “Historically,” Negri writes, “capital provided the worker with the instrument of labor; as soon as the human brain re-appropriates this instrument of labor, capital loses the ability to articulate the command by means of the instrument.”¹³ With that diagnosis, Negri can portray utilization and governing mechanisms as external practices of extracting value and of emergency legal control, achieved above all via measures resembling expropriation, such as land grabs, or a “working process far distant from the level of abstraction”¹⁴ (of financial speculation or pensions). According to Negri, that means we have arrived at a kind of historical last moment, in which “capitalist societies can <only> <...> remain alive by articulating elements that anticipate communism.”¹⁵ In that, he retains the early Marxist hypothesis that the content of communism (meaning the evolution of creative work capacity) is already present in the developmental forms of capitalism, and the utilization of that capacity gives meaning, truth, and an historical goal. From that angle, Negri in the 1990s conceived of an ontological entrepreneur figure, which he portrays as a prerequisite to the neoliberal entrepreneur distributing scarce resources for alternative purposes. “One must distinguish between an inflationary and a deflationary biopolitical entrepreneur,” he wrote, “between a biopolitical entrepreneur, who continually creates new and bigger desires and wishes in the society he organizes, and the entrepreneur <...> who ‘re-disciplines’ the forces in play on the biopolitical field.”¹⁶

In comparison with that position, I would like to close with the theory that the problem of politics consists of precisely the interaction of those processes that arise from the inner differential of the capacity to act, the dynamics of which opens up an interval between emancipation and being governed. The price that Negri pays for his idea of a biopolitical entrepreneurship is the automation and substantiation of a vital force that has separated from the mechanisms of government and capital; in doing so, in my opinion, he has negated politics in the strict sense of the term. History then records only the payment, the exchange, the intensified use of an existing power to act. Long before Nietzsche and Foucault, we find an alternative position in Spinoza, who was actually very important to Negri. He assumes that the forces that pull people through – imagination, affect, knowledge – are catalysts of both liberation *and* anchorage points for power. So for Spinoza, politics’ problem is not the ascent of wealth, its intensification, but rather the thresholds where a certain amount of the power to act acquires a new level and is actualized in active or reactive acts. The production of society from the capacity for action of the many is then strung between two poles and their endless transitions – between the construction of a free society from below *and* the failure of that process in generating new power mechanisms. Only in that way does the problem of politics even arise. It is one and the same differential capacity to act, Spinoza explains, which leads humans to be called “active on the one hand and ailing on the other,” to raise their existence or to fight for their servitude

“as if it were for their salvation.”¹⁷ That outlook requires that we give up the idea of politics as a process of radical liberation in favor of the idea that politics represents an experiment conducted by many to try, in the liberation process, to shut down the recurrence of new forms of exploitation and government. I wanted to open that thought up for discussion with you. How can one argue, from the position of a producer of culture, for the basic rights of existence and reproduction, without reinstating the double-edged qualification of artists as enhanced life and poetic resource who have earned the right to be supported.

Endnotes

- 1 Michel Foucault, *Die Geschichte der Gouvernementalität II. Die Geburt der Biopolitik. Vorlesungen am Collège de France 1978–1979*, Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2004, p. 210. (Citation in English in Lemke, Thomas *The Birth of Biopolitics* Michel Foucault's lecture at the Collège de France on neo-liberal governmentality, Taylor & Francis, 2001, p. 195.)
- 2 Ibid, p. 211.
- 3 Ibid, p. 210.
- 4 For more on the human capital theories of the Chicago School, see *ibid* p. 314–316, p. 349–355 and p. 367–420. Ulrich Bröckling addressed this theoretical problem at length in his work, see *Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform* (The Entrepreneurial Self: Fabricating a New Type of Subject), Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 2007.
- 5 Ibid, p. 322.
- 6 See Michel Foucault, *Geschichte der Gouvernementalität I. Sicherheit, Territorium, Bevölkerung. Vorlesung am Collège de France 1977–1978*, Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp 2004, p. 22f.
- 7 For this argument, see Étienne Balibar, “Foucault und Marx. Der Einsatz des Nominalismus”, in *Spiele der Wahrheit. Michel Foucaults Denken*. Frankfurt/M., Suhrkamp 1991, p. 58f.
- 8 See, among others, Antonella Corsani, “Wissensproduktion und neue politische Aktionsformen. Die Erfahrung der Intermittents in Frankreich,” *eipcp.net* 2006; and “Was wir verteidigen, verteidigen wir für alle. Spuren einer Geschichte in Bewegung,” *eipcp.net* 2007
- 9 See Mario Tronti, *Arbeiter und Kapital*, Frankfurt/M., Neue Kritik 1974, pp. 218–225
- 10 For more detail, see Pier-Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy. Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism*, New York, Princeton Architectural Press, p. 25f.
- 11 Tronti, *ibid*, p. 55.
- 12 Ibid, p. 177.
- 13 Antonio Negri, “Zur gesellschaftlichen Ontologie. Materielle Arbeit, immaterielle Arbeit und Biopolitik,” in Thomas Atzert et al (pub.), *Empire und die biopolitische Wende. Die internationale Diskussion im Anschluss an Hardt und Negri*, Frankfurt/M., Campus 2007, p. 21.
- 14 Ibid, p. 156.
- 15 Michael Hardt und Antonio Negri, *Die Arbeit des Dionysos*, Berlin und Amsterdam, Edition ID-Archiv 1997, p. 138
- 16 Antonio Negri, *Ready-Mix*, Berlin, b_books 1998, p. 36.
- 17 Baruch de Spinoza, *Ethik*, E5p4, Hamburg, Meiner 2007, p. 539, and Theologisch-politischer Traktat, Hamburg, Meiner 1994, p. 6.

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