



PARK FICTION: DESIRE, RESISTANCE, AND COMPLICITY — 4

It's awful. The men with the fancy suits have always been our enemies, and now suddenly they're supposed to be our friends. I can't deal with that. I'm afraid they tricked us somehow. That's what capitalism is all about.

A LOCAL ACTIVIST FOLLOWING THE AGREEMENT IN 1996 THAT ALLOWED THE HAFENSTRASSE SQUATTERS TO PURCHASE OCCUPIED BUILDINGS FROM THE CITY OF HAMBURG AT A FRACTION OF THEIR MARKET VALUE

The story of Park Fiction begins in the autumn of 1981, long before the park itself was imagined, when squatters occupied several vacant city-owned buildings in Hamburg's harbor-front neighborhood (on St. Pauli-

Hafenstraße and Bernhard-Nocht-Straße). Like cities elsewhere in Europe and the United States, the recession of the 1970s, combined with the forces of suburbanization, left large areas of downtown Hamburg derelict. During the 1980s the Hafenstraße squatters consolidated their control over the occupied buildings, organizing an alternative institutional network that included a daycare, school, cafe, soup kitchen, library, legal aid clinic, and even a radio station. The area became a center for leftist organizing in Hamburg, hosting numerous political demonstrations and fending off regular attacks from fascist gangs. It also became an organizational hub for the larger "Autonomia" movement, which originated in northern Italy during the 1970s and soon spread to France and Germany, as well as Greece. The Hafenstraße squatters formalized their occupation in 1982, receiving a temporary contract from the city council that protected them from eviction. Nonetheless, they faced ongoing police harassment (conservative political leaders claimed they were harboring fugitives from the Red Army Faction), arbitrary arrests, forced inspections, and the interruption of electrical service.

In 1986 the squatter's temporary contract expired and the city attempted to remove them, leading to an extended period of militant conflict (the so-called "barricade days"). While the Hamburg police were able to clear several of the buildings by force, the squatters retained a base of operations in three larger buildings. Historian George Katsiaficas describes the next stage in the conflict:

In response to these attacks, the movement unleashed its own counter-offensive, marching more than ten thousand strong around a "black block" of at least fifteen hundred militants carrying a banner reading "Build Revolutionary Dual Power!" At the end of the march, the black block beat back the police in heavy fighting. The next day, fires broke out in thirteen department stores in Hamburg, causing damages estimated at over \$10 million. Over the next months, while the city government floundered, the movement kept the pressure up. On "Day X," April 23, 1987, small groups of Autonomes again retaliated, attacking houses of city officials, court buildings, city offices and radio Hamburg. In all, more than thirty targets were hit in a fifteen-minute period.⁸³

Following several more days of street battles, Hamburg Mayor Klaus von Dohnanyi proposed a compromise that would turn control of the

buildings over to a corporation composed of squatters and sympathetic city council members, thus giving the squatters legal status. The corporation would then lease the buildings back to the squatters. This agreement remained in place for six months before conservative politicians, led by Henning Voscherau, refused to honor it, leading to Dohnanyi's resignation and years of protracted negotiations and sporadic police harassment. Throughout this period, the city was never able to fully remove the squatters, in large part due to their own well-organized resistance as well as the broader public sympathy they had gained both in Hamburg and internationally, which made a violent confrontation and removal unacceptable. Finally, in 1996, now-mayor Voscherau agreed to a new compromise which allowed the remaining squatters to purchase an entire block of occupied buildings for one and a half million dollars, or about a third of its market value. The squatters contributed 10 percent of the cost, while the Nuremberg-based Umwelt Bank, which invests in environmental projects, provided the balance in the form of a loan.⁸⁴

While the Hafenstraße has survived, and many of its alternative institutions (schools, etc.) still exist, the community remains one of the poorest in the city, with a high percentage of Turkish *Gastarbeiter*.⁸⁵ At the same time, it is under increasing pressure from the development process in surrounding downtown neighborhoods. The very visibility and centrality of the Hafenstraße has increased its vulnerability, as it is located in close proximity to some of the city's most expensive hotels and a large public market. According to Park Fiction member Christoph Schäfer, "Things that might be tolerated in other places as interesting alternative flavors are automatically confronting power and the dominating ideology in this location. Every step you take is symbolic."⁸⁶ As early as 1983 mayor Dohnanyi began promoting urban development "enterprise" zones in the city's downtown and waterfront areas. Today even the notorious Reeperbahn red-light district in St. Pauli is becoming fashionable, as the artists and musicians originally attracted by cheap rents are being displaced by luxury apartments, advertising agencies, and nightclubs catering to teenage drinkers.⁸⁷ The work of Park Fiction grew out of this complex urban space, poised between a militant and contentious past and a future increasingly ordered by the imperatives of real estate speculation and the cultural proclivities of Hamburg's well-compensated cadres of immaterial labor. Their work can be seen in many ways as a hinge between these two moments.

In my analysis of Dialogue's work in India I focused primarily on what might be termed the micropolitics of collaborative practice: the protocols developed by Dialogue to facilitate intersubjective exchange and the various forms of resistance, distancing, accommodation, and engagement awakened by their presence in Kopweda. In my discussion of Park Fiction's work I will frame my analysis more broadly in order to address the macropolitical nature of collaborative work at the level of larger institutional and social formations. The point of crisis that initially catalyzed Park Fiction came in 1994 when the city sought to build high-rise office buildings and apartments on a small piece of land in St. Pauli overlooking the Elbe River. The development would have effectively barricaded the Hafensstraße from the waterfront. A diverse group of residents, including activists, musicians, artists, social workers, teachers, and priests (many of them associated with the protests of the 1980s) formed the Hafenrandverein (Harbour Edge Association) to oppose the development process. Hamburg-based artists Christoph Schäfer and Cathy Skene developed the initial Park Fiction proposal, which evolved through ongoing discussions with the Hafenrandverein. The project team, which expanded and contracted over the years, eventually grew to include Simone Borgstede, Margit Czenki, Dirk Mescher, Thomas Ortman, Klaus Petersen, Ellen Schmeisser, Sabine Stoevesand, Axel Wiest and, a bit later, architect Günther Greis.

Schäfer, Skene, and Czenki, a filmmaker who taught for many years in one of Hafensstraße's experimental schools, had a particular interest in the development of new forms of cultural and artistic practice.⁸⁸ As Schäfer has written, "After eighties style militant activism had lost its momentum, after the squat had been legalized, after the former fighters had retreated into their houses, after private had become private again, we had to find different ways, if we wanted to open public space as a field of dispute."⁸⁹ This "different way" involved the facilitation of a parallel planning process that undermined the bureaucratic hierarchies of conventional planning while retaining a sufficient level of organizational and political coherence to operate within existing circuits of public policy and decision making. The members of the Park Fiction collective visited hundreds of Hafensstraße residents in their homes to solicit their participation, gave numerous presentations to school and community groups, and staged film screenings, musical performances, exhibitions, raves, and other public events designed to mobilize community involvement and provide venues

in which residents could describe and articulate their wishes and proposals for the park site (see plates 13 and 14).⁹⁰

They reinvented the planning process "like a game," according to Schäfer, constructing a "planning container" out of an old shipping container filled with various planning "tools." These included a "clay modeling office," a phone hotline "for people who get inspired late at night," a "wish archive," and a mobile planning "Action Kit" replete with "questionnaires, maps, a dicta-phone, an un-foldable harbor panorama, and an instant camera to capture ideas." In each case, an ironic or whimsical reinstantiation of the methods of conventional planning was used to demystify the authority and technical complexity of the planning process and encourage their collaborators to visualize their own desires for the park.⁹¹ By producing a "little parallel knowledge universe" and creating at least the appearance of a strong community consensus in support of a clearly elaborated alternative use for the site, Park Fiction was able to disrupt and redirect the orderly flow of the official planning process.⁹² As Schäfer writes, "For a short moment in time, we had made the rules of the game, had a complex, lively idea of what we were doing, firm ground under our feet—and they [city officials] were in the stupid position, and looking boring and just like what they are: people who just block things."⁹³

This sense of playfulness is evident in the proposals generated by the Hafensstraße's residents, which ranged from a strawberry-shaped treehouse to a "Pirate Fountain" featuring images of female pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read (a sly reference to Hamburg's historical associations with piracy, symbolized by the skull and crossbones, the unofficial symbol of the St. Pauli football team). The Park Fiction collective held a series of community forums to select a final set of projects and organized the design and construction process in further meetings with residents, administrators, an architect, and Park Fiction team members. By 2003 several key features of the park had been completed, including a "Palm Island" (with lifesize metallic palm trees) encircled by a long bench from Barcelona, a field of grass laid over an undulating concrete foundation to create the appearance of a vast, green "flying carpet," a large mosaic, a tulip-patterned synthetic rubber field (which references the "tulip period" in early modern Turkey, when the Ottoman Empire began a rapprochement with the West), and a dog park complete with poodle-shaped hedges and gates (an homage to the Pudel Club, an important experimental music club located

nearby), along with a boule field, community gardens, and play areas for children (see plate 15).

The experience of coming upon the park in the midst of Hamburg's gentrifying waterfront is revelatory. After passing through blocks of chic cafes, marble-clad office buildings, and banal street furniture, the park appears like an exuberant mirage, emerging incongruously from the bland, homogenous landscape of urban redevelopment. It is both literally and figuratively an island, but at the same time it remains linked to the urban space of Hamburg, and the broader context of globalization. Its towering metal palm trees echo the looming industrial cranes of Hamburg's nearby docks. The Alhambra-inspired mosaic, the Barcelona bench, and the flying carpet lawn all reference the city's long history as a major port (dating back to the Hanseatic League) and a crossroads of cultural and commercial exchange with the rest of the world. Moving further east from the park, along Bernhard-Nocht-Straße, leads one past the remaining buildings controlled by the Hafensstraße occupation. The park is thus poised between encroaching gentrification and the embattled remains of the "old" St. Pauli of political insurrection and the sex trade. It acts as a spatial equivalent for the practice of Park Fiction itself, serving simultaneously as a domestication of this militant past (violent protest is transposed into play) and a monument to its survival and ongoing reinvention. The park is heavily used by local residents and is often filled with skateboarders, dog walkers, families, musicians, and flirting couples. It has helped to transform street life in the Hafensstraße and provides one of the few joyful public spaces in an area in which space is increasingly privatized and constrained.

Perhaps the most significant effect of the park is the sense of ownership and identification that it provides for Hafensstraße's residents. Political change is produced and sustained in three ways: transformations in institutional protocols (expansion of the franchise, new forms of public policy, legislative or judicial regulation, structural reorientation of the relationship between public authority and the private sector, erosion or outright elimination of conventional market systems, etc.); the inculcation of new belief systems or value systems within a broad social network (the normalization of new notions of racial- or gender-based equity, e.g., or the production of new forms of solidarity); and, finally, through claims of spatial autonomy which result in the literal physical occupation and control of space (through the transfer or redefinition of ownership, the

creation of new boundaries or borders, new spatial identities, etc.). All of these forms of change begin, of course, with the transformation of individual consciousness over time, and each overlaps, and intersects, with the other. As with Dialogue's work in Kopaweda, Park Fiction is constituted around a deliberate, collectively realized, claiming of space. The park was created as an island, a physically discrete zone of play, action, and coming together, against the grain of the dominant development paradigm (which would have instead used the space for an office building). It thus stands as a constant reminder of the difference (and survival) of the Hafensstraße, and an informal monument to the creative and improvisational nature of the occupation itself.

The process of creating the park required the ability to shift between an expressive modality, mindful of multiple subjectivities and desires, and a tactical modality which would allow the Park Fiction team to negotiate effectively with the city (the process of "being in bed with bureaucracy," as they describe it). The capacity to shuttle between these two modes was crucial to the project's success. Park Fiction was extremely sensitive to the complex and idiosyncratic conditions necessary to solicit creative participation. They thus sought to multiply the points of access and modes of expression available to residents, using everything from modeling clay to answering machines to cameras to interviews and questionnaires. Rather than reiterating the familiar call-and-response cycle of demonstration and police counterattack, Schäfer, Skene, Czenki, and their collaborators sought to reconfigure resistance through a process of cultural displacement. The "fiction" of a park, in place of the looming reality of a banal office building, was produced by a lateral movement. Instead of proceeding from a moment of negation (demanding that the city simply stop its planned development), Park Fiction began with a gesture that was positive, productive, and indeterminant: imagining something new and unexpected in its place. As Schäfer notes, "We developed a parallel and approachable planning process for a real place, connecting arts and social movements, without falling into the trap of taking the 'legal' path of limited participation suggested by the bureaucratic system."⁹⁴

Their work proceeded neither through a direct, frontal confrontation with the state in the public space of the street, nor through full complicity with existing bureaucratic channels, but rather by working in the space between overt activism and formal state protocols (existing systems of plan-

ning and consultation, e.g., that inevitably privilege the development community and political elites). At the same time, the implied threat of direct conflict or violence provided the ground against which Park Fiction's ongoing negotiations with municipal agencies unfolded. As part of its development plan, the city was preparing to demolish the *Hafenkrankenhaus*, a popular hospital that served the *Hafenstraße* community and was only a short distance from the park site. Schäfer describes the community's response:

After the government had cleared the first wing of the hospital, to their surprise, the empty building was squatted by activists. The squatters were strongly supported in the neighborhood, there were weekly demonstrations, and for the first time ever, even a strike in the red light district during those demonstrations. The movement was getting out of hand, '97 was an election year, and suddenly the government was ready to negotiate about the hospital and all the other problems in St. Pauli.⁹⁵

It was in part the proximate danger of renewed militancy and the formation of new solidarities in the *Hafenstraße* that provided the Park Fiction collective with the political leverage necessary to enact their plans.⁹⁶ The city was clearly anxious to defuse the unrest aroused in St. Pauli by the hospital protests. By supporting the park, city officials could demonstrate their generosity and beneficence to the community at relatively little cost. From this perspective the park could be seen as a way to buy off the *Hafenstraße*, and the Park Fiction team could be accused of acting as middlemen in the process of redirecting the community's potential for resistance into a safely cultural form.

We encounter here an inverted (and equally disabling) variant of the reform/revolution dynamic I outlined in my discussion of May '68 in chapter 2, in which withdrawal into a semi-autonomous zone of cultural production was seen as the only way to preserve the purity of a revolutionary vision tainted by the reformist compromises of party politics. This analysis can easily enough be reversed. The only way to avoid complicity with the existing (and implicitly monolithic) capitalist system is to abjure merely "cultural" interventions and instead to pursue direct, revolutionary action (street demonstrations, attacks on property, etc.). Anything less will only serve to legitimate the system (showing that it can respond to appeals for greater equity or social justice without altering the underlying distribution

of political and economic power). This logic can be extended back to the original purchase of the buildings occupied by the *Hafenstraße* squatters. While this action effectively gave legitimacy and permanence to the occupation, some activists nonetheless viewed it as a "trick" designed to co-opt resistance (transforming militants into property owners rather than challenging the principle of private property itself). Thus, the "authentic" political foundation upon which the cultural action of the park depended (the existence of a network of activists able to live, work, and organize in the occupied houses without the threat of eviction or displacement) was itself initially perceived by some as a reformist compromise (releasing political pressures that might have otherwise led to demands for more substantial change).

What is missing in each of these analytic frameworks is a sense of the necessary interdependence between "cultural" and "political" action, and a more complex understanding of cause and effect in the production of social change. Significant transformations in the distribution of power or resources in a society only come about in response to forms of social or political instability that threaten the legitimacy of the state apparatus or the market system (organized violence or insurrection, massive demonstrations or work stoppages, or the emergence of new forms of solidarity and new emancipatory narratives). But this instability in and of itself is no guarantee that the resulting changes will be progressive or egalitarian rather than authoritarian and conservative. There is a complex interrelationship among the three modes of transformation I outlined above (changes in institutional structures and protocols, changes in values and belief systems, and new claims of spatial sovereignty). Political change occurs across these various registers and is oriented by a diverse, and contentious, group of individual and institutional actors (political representatives, activists and militants, newly mobilized communities, NGOs, etc.). Each of these actors, in turn, can be situated along a continuum of positions, ranging from those who advocate an absolute overturning of existing structures of power, to those who support more gradual or piecemeal change, to those who reject change entirely and seek instead to turn back the clock to some earlier moment of ostensibly greater social stability, hierarchy, or cohesion.

There is a perennial tension among these positions, and a necessary interdependence between the discourses of revolutionary and reformist

political action. Moreover, the parameters of change available at any given historical moment are always partially determined by the political narratives and institutional conventions set in place during earlier periods of transformation. Park Fiction's success (its ability to sustain a several-year-long process of negotiation leading to the appropriation of city property and the mobilization of significant public resources for the construction of the park) was not only due to the militancy surrounding the Hafenkrankenhaus demolition; it was also due to the fact that some form of public consultation or participation has become a normalized component of the development process, even if it is now largely symbolic. And the fact that an obligation exists to consult with the communities targeted by planners in the first place is the product of an earlier moment of political resistance and contestation, now enshrined (or reified) in the conventions of urban development. Participatory planning approaches emerged out of the political ferment of the 1960s as activists sought to gain greater control over their own communities and the decision-making processes of metropolitan governments (in opposition to the top-down, hierarchical nature of conventional urban and regional planning in the 1950s).⁹⁷ These gestures gained currency against the background of widespread political militance among the urban poor and working class that was especially pronounced in the United States and western Europe. Park Fiction was able to reactualize this participatory tradition through playful and improvisational techniques ranging from beer-fueled *charettes* in the "Planning Container," to raves, to workshops with school children. As a result, they could confront Hamburg's planning authorities with the desires of the Hafestraße community, formalized in a specific set of counterproposals. As Schäfer notes, "When the politicians entered the scene, they found themselves in a complex field, where they had difficulty moving."⁹⁸

We discover here a temporal parallel to the capillary movement of political change that I outlined earlier (in which calls for more thoroughgoing change, while not fully realized, nonetheless exert pressure on those holding more moderate positions, and who are often more capable of producing actual institutional change). Here, the political conflicts of the past achieve a kind of partial victory when they force the accommodation of new standards (of consultation, participation, political representation, etc.). These are, inevitably, eroded and compromised over time (and they can just as easily be conservative as liberal, or radical), but they retain a

latent power that can be remobilized (and even expanded upon) during subsequent moments of crisis. In this context, the avant-garde tendency to define each new mode of practice, each new "movement," as constituting an absolute break with, or supercession of, the compromised or failed conventions of the past is a particular liability. Dialogical practice requires a more nuanced understanding of the temporal, as well as spatial, interdeterminancies that produce political transformation.

While Schäfer describes Park Fiction's approach as a form of parapolitical subversion (bypassing the "'legal' path of limited participation suggested by the bureaucratic system"), the fact remains that the park was brought into existence via formal channels of public arts funding. It was supported by Hamburg's Municipal Culture Department, which invited Schäfer and Cathy Skene to submit a proposal to their Art in Public Space program. They requested funding for the Park Fiction project, which was already generating enthusiastic support among the residents of the Hafestraße. Once the city decided to finance the project, Park Fiction began an extended process of negotiation. Perhaps the most symptomatic element in this process was a "round table" installed near the park site, which featured seating for neighborhood residents on one side and city authorities on the other. It was at this table that the members of Park Fiction were able to win a key concession from the city, when officials from the Municipal Culture Department agreed to give the collective direct control over the finances allocated by the Art in Public Space program for the construction of the park (a move that had previously been blocked by the conservative Senator for Urban Development).⁹⁹

"Round tables are a dangerous thing," Schäfer writes, "as their name suggests an equal power balance that conceals the unequal status of the participants. Also, speaking with bureaucrats means to half-accept their dominant way of thinking and negotiating."¹⁰⁰ Both literally and figuratively, then, the table represents the movement from indeterminant desire to determinant action. This is the point in a conventional analysis at which the ostensible autonomy of aesthetic creativity (embodied in the singular "wishes" of the Hafestraße's residents, unconstrained by the propriety of bourgeois taste or technical practicality) is sacrificed on the altar of instrumental action and bureaucratic appropriation. Schäfer himself is not immune to this formulation, insisting that Park Fiction's work was "opposed to the principle of consensus."¹⁰¹ As we saw in chapter 2, the concept of

consensus or agreement has become an almost reflexively pejorative term in contemporary art theory and criticism. The complex processes involved in reaching even a provisional form of consensus have been collapsed into a hypostatized caricature, co-extensive with the most authoritarian forms of coercion and hierarchy. But the “wishes” or “desires” of the Hafenstraße residents, while exuberant, were hardly transgressive or revolutionary per se, and their facilitation certainly required a degree of formal cooperation (among the residents, within the Park Fiction team, and among representatives of the team, the community, and the city). At the same time, this cooperation can't be reduced to the simple denial or conferral of consent, but, rather, depended on a complex technics of collaboration.

Park Fiction's work requires an analysis that is less reliant on a simple opposition between (aesthetic) play and (instrumental) work, between a realm of pure “collective desire” and the impure world of bureaucratic compromise and consensus, or between an absolute revolution or overturning and mere reform. As with the other dialogical projects I've discussed, there is another mode of labor that unfolds at the intersection of the creative and the practical. This labor is, by necessity, multivalent and contradictory. Just as Park Fiction was obliged to “half accept” the “dominant way of thinking” embodied by city officials, so too the city's Municipal Culture Department was forced to accommodate the demands and modes of expression articulated by the members of Park Fiction and the Hafenstraße community. The result was a subtle but not insignificant re-coding of the political apparatus assigned the task of regulating public space in Hamburg. And, despite the compromises and exclusions implicit in the very notion of the Hafenstraße as a “community,” Park Fiction did manage to create a concrete and sustainable space that embodies the collective power and singular imagination of the residents and continues to serve as a stage for ongoing resistance and organizing. During the most recent anti-gentrification protests in St. Pauli, in response to attempts to develop Bernhard-Nocht-Straße, the park functioned as a model of creative dissent. It is necessary here to recall both the tactical and the affective significance of enclosure and spatial sovereignty, whether in the sanctuary of a Pila Gudi in central India, the occupation of an abandoned building, or the incongruous sight of a vast green carpet of grass unfurling toward the cranes and derricks of Hamburg's docks.

From his fifth-floor office, Garnet Coleman can almost see the gleaming new urban lofts lapping at the edge of Houston's Third Ward. . . . Yuppies, empty nesters, childless couples—mainly white and Hispanic people with enough money to drop \$250,000—are starting to move in. And Coleman, an intense, chain-smoking power broker who represents the neighborhood in the Texas legislature, isn't happy about it. “You can tell a neighborhood's turning,” he says with dismay, “when you see them out at night walking their dogs.”

JOHN BUNTIN, “LAND RUSH: GENTRIFICATION IN HOUSTON”

Notwithstanding the success of Park Fiction, the most recent plans for the development of Hamburg's waterfront (under the rather unimaginative theme of “HafenCity”) call for over six million square feet of new construction, ranging from condos and apartments to corporate offices and retail. HafenCity's projected cultural amenities will include the Elbphilharmonie concert hall, HafenCity University, and the obligatory specimen of celebrity architecture (a “spectacular” science center designed by Rem Koolhaas and OMA).¹⁰² Against the formidable array of corporate, financial, and governmental resources devoted to this undertaking, the ability of the St. Pauli community to carve out a small zone of autonomy can seem both heroic and quixotic. Despite the colorful anti-gentrification marches and unconventional planning techniques, the flying carpet lawn and the tartan field, is Park Fiction's work simply another “lesson in futility,” gesturing vainly toward a never-to-be-realized utopian future? Are we back, again, to Francis Alÿs's college students shoveling vainly in the dunes of Ventanilla?

The goal of *When Faith Moves Mountains* was to present a visual corollary for the odd combination of joyful abandon and Sisyphean resignation that Alÿs associates with Latin America's resistance to modernization. Its temporary nature, the fact that the wind would soon return the dune to its original state and that nothing fundamental in the environment would be altered, is part of its meaning. In the same way, the labor of Latin America is destined to be swallowed up and made invisible by the forces of uneven development. While the park was never meant to perform a purely symbolic function (as its ongoing use as a site of both recreation and resistance suggests), it does serve to represent the agency of the Hafenstraße community in claiming space (while also echoing the original occupations of

the early 1980s). However, its symbolic or representational significance is based on the durability of the park; the fact that it is *not* temporary or ephemeral, but rather, marks a permanent or quasi-permanent concession of space (and power) extracted from the state and development community. Its continuity over time, its status as tradition, is key to this meaning, and to the meaning of the performative interactions that have unfolded subsequently within it.

As I've already noted, all modernist art practice makes some claim of political efficacy, even if this claim lies in the refusal or negation of efficacy itself (which is assigned a compensatory or symbolic value). The salient question concerns the nature, scale, and locus of this efficacy. Is the work intended to transform the consciousness of an individual viewer, a group, or a hypothetical viewer-yet-to-be? Does it originate in the imagination of a single artist or out of the intersubjective weave of a larger collective? Is its effect immediate or graduated, ephemeral or sustained? While the park did play an integral role in the ensemble of social forces that successfully opposed gentrification in St. Pauli, it can hardly be expected, on its own, to halt or defer the broader process of capitalist redevelopment in Hamburg. Its significance doesn't lie in a simple calculation of political efficacy—a sudden and absolute revolution, or a single, seismic, shift in political consciousness—but in its contribution to an emerging mosaic of oppositional practices that is both local in effect and international in scope. Although these practices remain largely uncoordinated and situational, they are nevertheless framed by a similar set of concerns. What does political resistance look like when there are no guarantees? When there is no assurance that any given action or event is destined to succeed simply because it follows a single emancipatory telos or revolutionary *grand récit* (whether this narrative ends with the freeing of desire or the freeing of the proletariat)? In the absence of an imminent overturning of the “system,” change becomes sustainable and extensive only through a *cumulative* process of reciprocal testing that moves between practical experience and reflective insight.

For many of the artists under discussion here, this process begins with the experiential knowledge generated through collective or collaborative practice and an increased sensitivity to the complex registers of repression and resistance, agency and instrumentalization, which structure any given site or context. It also entails an ongoing commitment to the creation of

new relationships and affiliations with other collectives, activist organizations, and NGOs, in order to develop a more formal and coherent understanding of the specific insights generated through practice. Thus, Park Fiction has convened a series of international symposia and meetings related to urban activism, establishing connections with groups from Maclovio Rojas in Mexico to Sarai Media Lab in India. NICA's work in Myanmar was centered around residency and exchange programs, and Amadou Kane Sy of Huit Facettes recently helped establish a new art center in the coastal village of Mbodiene devoted to intercultural exchange. As I noted in the introduction, while these projects are oriented by the forms of creative praxis that unfold in a given situation, their very ubiquity, from the streets of Yangon to the villages of Bastar, from Senegal to Germany, suggests the global emergence of a new paradigm of artistic production.

For Park Fiction and Project Row Houses, the groups under discussion here, this paradigm focuses on questions of spatial sovereignty and the discourse of redevelopment. Project Row Houses (PRH) in Houston, Texas, provides a revealing counterpoint to the work of Park Fiction. In each case, an urban neighborhood was faced with the threat of gentrification and a literal negation or removal of its population. And in each case, instead of responding to this threat with a gesture of refusal, the artists involved began with an action that was creative and indeterminant. They began by visualizing something new and unexpected through an act of appropriation that was both physical (the assertion of control over real property) and discursive. Thus, each group was able to reclaim and reinvent the language of urban regeneration or renewal that is so often used as an alibi for the outright destruction of working-class communities (implicitly defined as broken, pathological, or degenerate). Project Row Houses was produced in Houston's Third Ward, a historically black community just south of the city's downtown area. This once-vital neighborhood has deteriorated over the past thirty years as city and public services have contracted and middle-class African Americans have relocated to the suburbs (an unintended consequence of desegregation). Insurance-based arson became so common that one resident, Benjamin Benson, began bicycling to local fires with his saxophone to play a requiem as the houses went up in flames. At the same time, the neighborhood's proximity to the city center has recently placed it in the path of gentrification. According to a study by the Institute for Regional Forecasting at the University of Houston, as-

assessment values for property in five Third Ward neighborhoods increased at the rate of 10 percent per year between 2000 and 2005.¹⁰³

Project Row Houses was founded in 1993 by Rick Lowe, a young artist who moved to Houston from Alabama in 1985. In the early 1990s Lowe worked with a Third Ward community center named *SHAPE* (Self Help for African People Through Education), which was conducting a survey of deteriorating or unsafe buildings in the area as part of an urban triage plan intended to arrest blight and improve the neighborhood. They identified twenty-two abandoned homes in one block as among the worst in the area and encouraged the city to tear them all down. The buildings were primarily "shotgun"-style cottages, an architectural form that originated in New Orleans but is common throughout the southeastern United States. Built between the post-Civil War period and the 1930s, shotgun cottages are narrow, with each room lined up after the next on an axis extending back into the lot. They typically have high ceilings to dissipate heat and are built on raised piers to prevent flood damage. Lowe viewed the houses not as symptoms of decline, but as physical links to the past history of the Third Ward, and he argued for their preservation. The shotgun house came to function as both a heuristic and mnemonic device for Lowe, who sought to reactivate it through an unusual rapprochement between the work of African American painter John Biggers and Joseph Beuys, whose concept of art as a form of "social sculpture" Lowe found appealing.

Biggers's canvases and murals commemorate African American life during the 1940s and '50s, with a particular focus on the shotgun house neighborhoods of the American South (he grew up in Gastonia, North Carolina). While Biggers's images are tinged with nostalgia, they also capture something very important about black culture in the Jim Crow era. One of the effects of segregation was the creation of tight-knit, diverse, and self-reliant black communities. As Elmo Johnson, a pastor in Houston's largely black Fourth Ward notes: "This neighborhood had everything it needed. We were our own little self-contained community." This compulsory autonomy, the extended kin networks, the solidarity and diversity of people thrown together by racist exclusion and violence, helped provide the social foundation for the emergence of the Civil Rights movement.¹⁰⁴ For Lowe, Beuys's work sanctioned the imaginative leap from the representational world of Biggers's canvases to "real time."¹⁰⁵ As he recalls:

We passed these little shot-gun houses, and that was the first time I started to think about the houses—you know, the scale of the houses, and how as artists we could utilize those houses as a way of reflecting something to the community. . . . We were talking about tearing them down and we all agreed that this would be the correct course of action. But maybe after looking at John Biggers work and really thinking about it, driving to that corner again one day and looking and all of the sudden I thought, "Ah-ha! Wow! Look at that."¹⁰⁶

Lowe met with Biggers, who taught for many years at Texas Southern University in Houston. Biggers explained the history of the shotgun house to Lowe and described the way in which its formal structure—a series of interconnected rooms terminating in an enclosed back courtyard—facilitated a division between the public and private spaces of the home, while also creating a deliberate opening from the home into the public space of the sidewalk through the inclusion of a large front porch. For Biggers, the vitality of a shotgun house community depended on a combination of factors. In addition to the architectural program of the house itself, these included a tradition of mutual assistance that created a social safety net within the community, a respect for education, a vibrant culture of music and story telling and a spirit of creative necessity and bricolage, and a level of economic sustainability based in large part on a network of locally owned businesses and service providers.¹⁰⁷

Lowe sought to transform the shotgun house from a sign of the neighborhood's deterioration into a focal point for its reinvention. Using seed money from the National Endowment for the Arts and private foundations, he was able to purchase the original twenty-two houses slated for demolition. He worked with students at Rice University's School of Architecture to renovate the structures into prototypes of affordable housing, preserving key elements such as the front and rear porches, the pier-and-beam construction, and metal roofs. He set aside seven renovated houses to serve as transitional homes for single mothers in the Third Ward, who were provided with training, education, and assistance for a one-to-two-year period. Another eight houses were used to establish an innovative artist-in-residence program. Artists and writers such as Sam Durant, Julie Mehretu, Quincy Troupe, Alice Walker, Fred Wilson, and Chen Zhen spent up to six months living in the Third Ward. Due to the dearth of pro-



FIGURE 14 *We Are the People*, installation by Sam Durant, Project Row Houses, Houston, Texas (2003). Courtesy of Project Row Houses.

grams for children in the area, the artist-in-residence houses became a magnet for neighborhood kids, leading to the creation of a mentoring program with artists and writers that now serves fifty local children a year.

Project Row Houses eventually grew to involve numerous local churches, schools, community groups, and individual residents. In the process, Lowe's perception of his own function as an artist began to change (his previous work had been primarily painting and installation-based). He came to see his artistic practice as a way to "uncover the meaning of the place and create opportunities for people to give that meaning a place to live."¹⁰⁸ The institutional relationships that Lowe established, both in the Third Ward and within the city of Houston more generally, were paralleled by engagements at the level of individual subjects and subjectivities. Lowe worked with Eugene Howard, who moved back to the neighborhood after twenty years of incarceration, helping him to establish and brand a barbecue catering business. Another resident, named Kenya, functioned as the neighborhood's "one person black power movement," according to Lowe.¹⁰⁹ Dressed in black army fatigues, beret, and gloves, he took on the task of patrolling the neighborhood on his bike, watching over local kids on their way home from school. While many residents viewed

Kenya as an eccentric, to Lowe he represented a contemporary expression of the tradition of mutual assistance associated with the old shotgun house communities. Lowe created a public banner featuring an idealized image of Kenya to acknowledge his importance to the neighborhood and to help shift perceptions of him among Third Ward residents. Lowe cites many similar gestures of initiative and conviviality, such as Cookie Love's Wash n' Fold, a service created by a local woman who uses a grocery cart to pick up laundry from residents in the morning, take it to a laundromat for cleaning, and return it to them at the end of the day. Although each is relatively modest, when taken in the aggregate these actions help to define the community and ensure its resilience and integrity.

Even as Lowe was working to preserve and commemorate the living traditions of the Third Ward, local developers began eyeing the area, having successfully initiated the gentrification of the nearby Fourth Ward (another historically black downtown neighborhood). PRH inadvertently abetted the gentrification process via the publicity that the project generated for the community, which effectively reinforced the traditional role of the arts in making black or working-class neighborhoods seem safe or inviting to middle-class whites. At the same time, as Lowe contends, "the neighborhood would have been earmarked for gentrification because of its central location. . . . Before we came in the Planning Department had already replanned the property as if the houses were gone. So something was going to happen with or without our intervention."¹¹⁰ If Lowe and his collaborators were going to prevent Project Row Houses from being swallowed up in a sea of loft-style condos and dog-walking yuppies, they would have to effect a scalar shift in their thinking. They established a Community Development Corporation (CDC) and began buying and renovating additional homes to create a larger stock of affordable housing. This marks a key transition in the trajectory of PRH, reflecting a more ambitious and strategic understanding of the forces at work in urban redevelopment.

Lowe was certainly not alone in his concern about gentrification in downtown Houston. A number of political leaders with links to the city's African American community were alarmed after seeing the displacement that occurred as a result of redevelopment in the Fourth Ward. Lowe and PRH found an ally in Texas State Representative Garnet Coleman, who developed his own unorthodox approach to challenging gentrification.¹¹¹ Coleman, whose family has lived in the Third Ward for over a century, uses

"tax increment financing" (TIF) to buy up property for use as low-income rental housing. TIF zones typically funnel the increased property tax revenues brought about by gentrification in a given neighborhood into infrastructure improvements that will attract additional investment. Coleman, who controls the board of the Midtown TIF district (which includes parts of the Third Ward), has instead directed ten million dollars into the purchase of property over the past five years. He plans to turn control of the land over to local churches and CDCs, with deeds requiring that it be used only for affordable housing. "We can give tax abatements out the wazoo for lofts and condominiums," Coleman argues. "The question is what are our values and whether or not we are willing to spend the same money on people who need a nice, affordable, clean place to live."¹²

Lowe's effort to link the present-day Third Ward to a set of vital cultural traditions was an essential component of this broader process of resistance. In order for the mechanisms of traditional redevelopment to function effectively (the exercise of eminent domain, razing of existing housing, etc.), it is first necessary to define the targeted area as irredeemably blighted or derelict. This is an essentially cultural and discursive process that allows developers to create an implicit linkage between the physical or material decline of a given community (deteriorating housing stock and infrastructure, reduced economic base, etc.) and the character of its inhabitants, whose removal or displacement is thereby rendered less objectionable. Houston developer Larry S. Davis employed precisely this tactic in justifying the removal of poor and working-class residents that occurred as a result of gentrification in the Fourth Ward, which was spearheaded by his own development company. "When you look at what they were being displaced from," Davis argues, "the houses were totally run-down; they should have been torn down. . . . The only culture displaced was a culture of needles and syringes."¹³ Davis's ironic notion of "culture" is used here to reinforce the traditional conservative view of the poor and working class as an amoral rabble. Lowe's commitment to reframing the meaning of the Third Ward through the celebration of its cultural and architectural history and its traditions of mutual assistance challenges this perception.

In reacting to the threat of gentrification the PRH team could have engaged in what Lowe defines as a conventional "horizontal" form of resistance, barricading the neighborhood against external threats defined along

class and race lines. And, in fact, local residents did launch an informal protest campaign under the slogan "The Third Ward Is Not For Sale." At the same time, Lowe felt it was necessary to supplement this approach. Rather than taking a stand against "any kind of change," he advocated a form of redevelopment that both sustained and enhanced the neighborhood's diversity. "I just felt that seeking diversity was the right thing," Lowe states, "in the sense of trying to instill a community based on desegregation culture."¹⁴ Lowe's notion of a "desegregation culture" is complicated by the diffraction patterns of race and class. Segregation had the effect of confining people on the basis of their race, not their class. In fact, the class diversity of black communities in the Jim Crow era (in particular, the presence of a middle class) was often seen as exercising a positive, stabilizing influence. At the same time, de facto and de jure forms of segregation and redlining insured that property values remained relatively stable despite this class diversity (the black middle class didn't have the option of moving elsewhere). Thus, segregation-era neighborhoods were economically diverse but racially homogeneous.

"Diversity" today, in the context of the Third Ward, must be understood differently. If the gentrification process were allowed to move forward it would entail the gradual displacement of a relatively homogeneous working-class population by an equally homogeneous population of middle- and upper-middle-class homebuyers, many of whom would also be white or Hispanic. Here an initial class diversity (represented by the incursion of new homeowners) is divisive, because their presence would increase property values and housing costs, eventually forcing working-class residents out. The effect of gentrification today is to produce neighborhoods that are economically homogeneous while allowing for some nominal racial diversity. The result is a kind of informal segregation of the poor and working class in conditions of deteriorating housing and limited social services. As in the Third Ward, this class homogeneity is frequently reproduced and reinforced along racial or ethnic lines.

We typically associate the concept of diversity with attempts to challenge hegemonic cultural formations, defined through exclusionary categories of racial or ethnic identity. Here incidental differences of race or ethnicity are assigned fixed and prejudicial value within an artificial hierarchy. Social justice is achieved by attempting to overturn or erode this hierarchy, returning these differences to merely incidental status, with no

bearing on the general determination of one's worth, freedom, or opportunity. As I've noted above, to speak of class "diversity" is an altogether more ambivalent matter. Class-based identities carry meaning in a fundamentally different way. Unless one subscribes to the conservative belief that class differences simply reflect the unbiased verdict of the market pronounced on the individual, class differentiation in and of itself is necessarily symptomatic of an underlying inequality, whereas racial or ethnic difference is only contingently so. The "problem" of racism isn't the actual racial identity of the individual (understood as the genetic attributes of skin color, hair type, etc.), but the fact that a given society has chosen to use these attributes as an (arbitrary) marker for discriminatory practices. The "problem" of class difference resides in class identity itself, which reflects and reproduces a systematic form of economic domination that is often, although not always, inflected by racial or ethnic differentiation.

In the absence of a fundamental reorientation of the broader system of neoliberal capitalism, how do we define and articulate political resistance? Is class diversity tolerable if we can mitigate its local effects (rather than the global fact of its existence) via some form of ameliorative or compensatory action by the state or other non-market actors? Or, to be more specific, would gentrification in the Third Ward be less objectionable if it was possible to prevent the displacement of poor and working-class residents? And what kind of "community" would result? This question would appear to be central to Lowe's notion of diversity. Lowe accepts the inevitability of some middle- or upper-income housing in the area, but he also insists on the importance of a large pool of rental housing for low-income residents, as well as programs to assist homebuyers from the neighborhood.¹¹⁵ However, in trying to cultivate this diversity (and in challenging the "culture of needles" rhetoric of developers like Larry Davis) PRH risks replicating certain problematic patterns we've already identified in the history of urban reform. Here the exemplary Third Ward residents—the convict-turned-caterer, the diligent laundry woman—demonstrate their fidelity to the entrepreneurial spirit demanded by the market rather than engaging in organized resistance directed at the broader system of exploitation that defines the Third Ward as "working class" in the first place.

Is this yet another moment of repetition? Are the participants in Project Row House any better off than Jacob Riis's pencil-selling beggar, reassuring his benefactors of his willingness to abjure charity and "earn" his way

in the world? Has the sympathetic passerby on the streets of New York been replaced by the fellowship panel of the NEA or the Ford Foundation, only too happy to fund art programs that promise to transform the impoverished into productive workers? And what are the implications of Lowe's effort to replace the absent black middle class of doctors, lawyers, and accountants with artists and poets? From this perspective, PRH could be viewed as a modern-day settlement house seeking to inculcate properly bourgeois values among its poor and working-class neighbors.¹¹⁶ But surely this criticism misunderstands both the limitations and the possibilities of dialogical, collaborative practice. The PRH team can only work with the cultural conditions that exist in the Third Ward at this historical moment. They can inflect these conditions, sometimes in a quite profound manner, but they can't transform the Third Ward of today into the Hafenstrasse of the mid-1980s. The more pertinent question is whether these practices challenge the imperatives of urban redevelopment in ways that are reflective, sustainable, and generative. By this standard, PRH's capacity to resist both the economic and cultural movement of the gentrification process is significant. As with all of the projects under discussion here, PRH seeks to remain open to the creative potential of practice—its capacity to disclose new possibilities, new modes of political and cultural transformation—while at the same time coming to terms with the existing forces and historical preconditions in place at a given site.

In the absence of the binding force exercised by segregation on the shotgun house neighborhoods of the 1950s, how is community defined in the Third Ward today? What kinds of community, what forms of solidarity, are possible without the threat of an external determinant that functions only to subsume (gentrification) or sequester (segregation)? This is the question that PRH's work raises, and it returns us, finally, to the issues of collectivity and identity with which this book began. In the case of both Park Fiction and PRH we can observe a process of sovereign expression, a claiming of space and collective identity, that is by necessity defensive (each community faces the possibility of removal or displacement) but that nonetheless seeks to preserve internal differentiation and diversity. It is the capacity to shuttle between these two modalities, to define community diachronically, that I find distinctive in so many of these projects. Community here is founded on neither an immanent, quasi-metaphysical substrate nor on the paradoxical revelation of our existential singularity,

but on a series of relational encounters that require the ongoing negotiation of difference as well as identity.

The goal of resistance for PRH is not to halt or arrest redevelopment in its entirety, but to insure that the improvements that come with redevelopment (increased jobs, improved infrastructure and services, etc.) benefit everyone and not just the white and Hispanic middle class seeking an "urban" lifestyle in the Third Ward. They mobilized the anodyne discourse of redevelopment ("renewal," "regeneration," etc.), taking advantage of an obligation for participatory involvement that was extracted through past political struggle. We are left, then, with a final question. What is the relationship between the kinds of local or situational action we see in the projects of PRH and Park Fiction, and the pervasive system of neoliberal capitalism that has been a subtheme of the work discussed throughout this book? What possible threat does it pose to global capitalism if a small community in Houston or Hamburg is preserved from the wrecking ball, or a few villagers in central India are able to talk together at a water pump? From one perspective, it could be argued that the work of such groups actually sustains the ongoing existence of a larger system of economic exploitation that would otherwise collapse if only these "contradictions" (poverty, homelessness, unemployment, gentrification, etc.), and the social suffering they entail, were allowed to continue and intensify. Here the goal of political resistance is to publicize and even exacerbate these tensions in order to provoke a heightened critical consciousness among the poor and working class, who are the potential agents of true revolutionary change.

This is a tactical position akin to the view, common during May '68, that by provoking the police through arson, property damage, and open confrontation, it would be possible to "expose" the hidden propensity for violence lurking beneath the benign facade of the liberal state.¹¹⁷ The street performances of barricades, occupations, police truncheons, and tear gas were intended in part for a hypothetical, yet-to-be-politicized viewer, whose outrage at such an open display of savagery by the forces of order would catalyze their support for a general overthrow of the state.¹¹⁸ We can see as well in this analysis the significant epistemological and behavioralist overlaps between the discourse of political and artistic vanguards. The political activist is charged with awakening the working class, multitude, or proletariat to its revolutionary mission by revealing the hidden contra-

dictions of capitalist power and the systemic roots of what are otherwise perceived as merely individual or epiphenomenal forms of suffering or injustice. The avant-garde artist also seeks to disclose that which was hidden, through the revelatory power of an aesthetic encounter that awakens the viewer to the operation of hegemonic forms of power, identity, or community.

Chantal Mouffe, in her essay "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," reiterates this view. In a formulation that should by now be familiar to us, Mouffe contrasts a naive, Habermasian notion of public space based on "consensus," with an "agonistic" notion of democracy in which "public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation." "Critical art" practices, according to Mouffe, "foment dissensus," seeking to "unveil all that is repressed by the dominant consensus" (the only possible kind) and thereby making "visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate."¹¹⁹ What is strangely absent from this veritable orgy of unmasking and exposure is any meaningful account of the actual reception of the initial revelatory gesture. It is as if the "truth" of capitalism were a simple objective fact, like a new species of animal or a recently discovered planet, the existence of which could be proven to a skeptical viewer through the presentation of previously unseen evidence. Here the complex process of representation is reduced to a kind of unmediated, theophanic epiphany. Once having received this truth, the viewer will naturally and spontaneously feel compelled to take up revolutionary struggle. But, as we saw in our earlier discussion of images of poverty and suffering, the ostensible self-evidence of any representational gesture can never be assumed.¹²⁰

This discourse is apparent in the writing of artists as well as theorists. A recent manifesto by the architectural collective BAVO bemoans the "blackmail of constructive critique" ("Either you offer constructive criticism with concrete solutions to go with it or you shut up!"), which they associate with the proliferation of a naive, accommodationist "NGO" art, in which "commitment is understood as the constant production of innovative micro-solutions—so-called 'pocket revolutions'—to the real, everyday problems people encounter in their immediate life world." Such work is antithetical to "deep criticism" and a repudiation of a properly "critical art practice that throws fundamental questions at the ruling order

and tirelessly confronts it with its inconvenient truths." A truly "radical" critique, according to BAVO, "cannot immediately be made productive within the existing order *since the latter is radically put into question*" (italics in original).¹²¹ Such a critique begins "from the premise that there is something so fundamentally wrong with the existing order that every attempt at making it better, however well intended, will always be perverted by it, and that one should aim for nothing less than the radical subversion of that order."¹²² BAVO simply inverts the terms of the blackmail; precisely in trying to improve existing conditions, the artist becomes complicit with the dominant social order.

Here the capacity for a critical epistemological distance (from which one might grasp the interconnected totality of the capitalist system) is collapsed into a literalized notion of political distance or withdrawal (from the "real, everyday problems" of life). "Deep" criticism is, by definition, unproductive, unable to function within the existing institutional and discursive circuits of capitalism because its very depth constitutes a kind of scandal, intolerable to the ruling order, and because the ruling order's capacity to blunt, assimilate, and disarm resistance is absolute. Therefore, BAVO insists on a quasi-hygienic separation between merely reformist institutions and what they term "radical social resistance movements." But here, again, we face a dilemma. Who determines which social resistance movements are sufficiently "radical" and which are not? And what precisely would constitute the "radical subversion" of the "existing order" at this historical moment? How, in fact, do we define the "ruling" or "existing" order in the first place? What are its constituent elements? How do they interrelate and synchronize? Are there moments or locations at which these elements are permeable, discontinuous, or open to intervention, or are they entirely fixed, static, and unchanging?

BAVO returns us, yet again, to the Manichean reform/revolution dynamic I discussed earlier in my analysis of May '68. And am I not, in my own way, simply reaffirming this division with my presentation of projects that are so clearly grounded in the local and the situational? Do these projects offer nothing more than "pocket revolutions," isolated moments of transgression or resistance that will never coalesce into a coherent whole capable of toppling the vast apparatus of neoliberal capitalism? I would suggest that this interpretation is belied by the efforts toward global

exchange among practitioners that I outlined above, and by the capacity of groups such as PRH, Ala Plastica, and others to initiate significant scalar shifts in their practice. It is true, however, that I have tended to concentrate on projects that have been generated out of very specific situations and contexts (the condition of water pumps in Kopaweda, the creation of an art center in Yangon, resistance to gentrification in the Hafenstrasse). It's necessary here to differentiate between a rhetorical mode of critique (which seeks to mobilize viewers or readers via the enunciative reiteration of an a priori truth claim, judgment, or accusation) and forms of practice in which critique and critical distance are produced a posteriori, through reciprocal engagement with a specific network of social forces and actors.

Here the orientation and trajectory of critical insight aren't predetermined, but rather, depend on the collaborator's response to the contradictions, possibilities, and points of resistance thrown up by the problem-at-hand (the bureaucratic systems of the Burmese government, the social ecology of water collection, the cultural politics of urban renewal). All of these elements are subject to engagement and transformation. While these projects clearly presuppose an underlying set of ethical and creative values (a commitment to the collaborative process, a resistance to the hierarchies of neoliberalism, etc.), they also generate an important second-order form of knowledge as these abstract criteria are tested against the pragmatic demands of social transformation at a given site (cf. Böhler's "dialogical action," Scott's notion of *métis*). Certainly this approach can lend itself to a naive faith in technical problem solving, or a tunnel vision that attempts to resolve problems rooted in the broader system of global capitalism with initiatives that suggest that both the cause and solution of these problems are somehow purely local and even individual in nature. I would contend, however, that what makes many of the projects I've examined here distinct is precisely the dual consciousness of both the local and the global implications and interconnections of a given site and situation. In each case, we encounter a clear rejection of a neoliberal discourse that would locate the cause of poverty or suffering in the moral character of the individual, along with an equally clear understanding that resistance to this discourse must begin with individual action.

This doesn't mean that each project openly espouses the immediate overthrow of world capitalism (here, again, we encounter the difference

between rhetorical and pragmatic approaches). In fact, one of the most important aspects of this work is its unorthodox and often indirect relationship to conventional forms of political struggle. The members of Dialogue didn't begin their work in Kopaweda by announcing their intention to transform gender relations in the village, and Park Fiction didn't launch their experiment in "desiring production" by blockading access to the contested land in the Hafenstrasse. However, the global synchrony of neoliberalism remains a central frame of reference for this work. This is evident in Park Fiction's linkages with urban activist groups in other countries; in Huit Facette's commitment to "south/south" organizing; in Ala Plastica's attempts to challenge the IIRSA at the regional level; and in Dialogue's promotion of Adivasi solidarity in the context of the corporate penetration of central India. While it is certainly necessary to remain cognizant of neoliberalism's remarkable capacity to co-opt political and cultural dissent, BAVOS instinctive distaste for "the problems of daily life" remains problematic. It is symptomatic of certain lacunae in current Left cultural theory, which continues to depend on a teleological orientation to political transformation, defined as the absolute overturning of a monolithic ruling order or undifferentiated capitalist system.

As I've already suggested, the conventional navigational markers for political resistance (and critique) have been transformed over the past thirty years by the vicissitudes of "actually existing Communism," the increasing adaptability of neoliberal capitalism, and the emergence of New Social Movements and new models of class (e.g., the Autonomia movement). Nevertheless, a simplistic and totalizing notion of revolution continues to function as a kind of phantom limb for many artists, theorists, and activists. I would contend that there is much to be learned from the ways in which people respond to, and resolve, the struggles they confront in everyday life. In fact, our most meaningful engagement with the pressures exerted by capitalism occurs precisely through our daily experience at the intersubjective and even haptic level. Unless we can grasp the complex imbrication of the local and the global, of individual consciousness and collective action, which frames this experience, our understanding of political change will remain impoverished and needlessly abstract. The creation of new knowledge regarding political and social transformation, and the specific role that art can play in facilitating this transformation, requires a process of both learning and un-learning via practice. This must,

of course, be combined with an acute consciousness of historical precedent and existing theoretical paradigms, but it is equally necessary to recognize the specific insights generated by practice that might challenge or contradict both. It is this slow process of learning and un-learning that is unfolding across a range of collaborative art projects today.

80. Matarasso was appointed to the Arts Council of England as East Midland Chair in 2005.
81. This transformation is not unique to the U.K. As I discuss at some length in my *Conversation Pieces*, concepts of "participation" and "empowerment" that first emerged in more deliberately egalitarian contexts during the 1960s and '70s have also been appropriated in the United States by conservative political movements to justify the withdrawal of social services and state obligations and to reinstate a traditional, Victorian, notion of poverty as a sign of individual weakness or moral failure.
82. This bureaucratized model of "community art," particularly prevalent in Ireland and the U.K., has been deservedly criticized by writers such as Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, Stewart Martin, and others (see Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics"; and Neshitt, "The New Bohemia"). *Variant* magazine in Scotland has provided some of the most consistently thoughtful coverage of this issue; see <http://www.variant.org.uk>.
83. Katsiaficas, *The Subversion of Politics*, 125–26. Katsiaficas continues: "The city then declared the occupied houses 'Public Enemy Number 1,' and the squatters braced themselves for fresh attacks. Steel doors were installed, bars were mounted in the windows, and barbed wire was hung on the sides and roofs of buildings. In early November, the city promised to clear out and tear down the houses within fourteen days. The squatters painted a new slogan on the side of one of the houses—Don't count our days, count yours!—and barricaded the houses. . . . Netting was hung on the second stories of the houses to ward off the use of ladders, and patrols on the roofs guarded against helicopter landings. Four thousand police arrived from all over Germany."
84. Stephen Kinzer, "Hamburg Journal: Squatters Victorious! (A Checkbook Did It)," *New York Times*, January 5, 1996, A-4.
85. According to Schäfer, the influx of East Germans following reunification led to an increase in anti-immigration rhetoric and in the deportation of Turkish immigrants. Hamburg emerged as a center for organizing by the German Nationalist Party (NDP). Neo-Nazi skinheads traditionally exercised a strong influence in the brothels of the Reeperbahn red-light district in the St. Pauli area.
86. Schäfer, "The City is Unwritten," 41.
87. Travel writer William Cook describes the conventional trajectory of gentrification in the Reeperbahn: "What has happened [in the Reeperbahn] is what has occurred in lots of Red Light districts worldwide. The sex trade drives prices down, drawing in artists, writers and musicians, who do not mind living somewhere seedy and cannot afford to live elsewhere. These outsiders make the area chic, attracting mainstream creative industries, such as advertising and film-making, and more prestigious leisure outlets, such as upscale restaurants

and hotels. Like London's Soho, the Reeperbahn is still a Red Light district, but nowadays it is also the most fashionable part of town" (Cook, "Turn Off the Red Light," 27).

88. Czenki's film, *Park Fiction: Desires Will Leave the House and Take to the Streets* (1999), provides detailed documentation of the creative process involved in bringing the park into existence. For more information, see the Park Fiction website, <http://www.parkfiction.org>.
89. Park Fiction's work was also influenced by Hamburg's underground music scene, reflecting the permeability between art and adjacent zones of cultural production characteristic of contemporary collaborative art practice. As Schäfer continues: "The same year, silently, a new mode of operating appeared, a shift towards a different way of moving. Probably it was to be felt and practiced first in cultural fields not recognized as political at all. What started then feels like a turning point, a change of paradigm, and we are in the midst of it now. For me, it started with music, and that came from Chicago and Detroit. Acid House . . . More than probably any music style before, House, for a decisive moment in time, was more about mixing (so basically: playing records) than about bands. When punks questioned the band-audience relation by storming the stage, house was more about people dancing, and not about people being the audience in the first place. Consumers became producers, irreversibly. What also started with Acid was the conscious idea and ability to create situations—Ambient carries that quality in its name, chill out zones sprung up everywhere, and with Rave, the temporary and unauthorized use of empty buildings, factories, hangars, farmland, banks—became a mass activity. Maybe it was the use of m.d.m.a., that gave everybody the sudden ability to trust each other, and to see oneself as a person or part of a collective, that has the power to construct situations, now, and in-a smooth way." (Schäfer, "The City is Unwritten," 40).
90. Schäfer describes a typical example of the interactions involved in this process, in an unpublished interview from 2005: "With the 'Action Kit' I visited a meeting of Turkish women in the Community Center. It has an un-foldable harbor panorama, and all kinds of materials and examples in it. It's a bit like a parody of a salesman's suitcase. Before it was my turn, an Avon lady was presenting her make-up stuff. So we both had our presentation kits with us, a very funny situation. It was so funny, that talking about the park became of course much easier." (Noel Hefe, unpublished interview with Christoph Schäfer, August 2005, conducted in conjunction with the exhibition *Groundworks: Environmental Collaboration in Contemporary Art*.)
91. The preceding descriptions are taken from the Noel Hefe interview. Schäfer provides another example of Park Fiction's working process in the Hefe interview: "A young woman, Nesrin, came to a colleague with a sociological back-

ground with a drawing of a 'sky mirror.' A device that would allow the sky to be mirrored into the park—I was told. I asked the colleague: "That sounds like an interesting idea—can you show it to me?" But the drawing never showed up. We noted down the idea anyway. Later I went to see Nesrin myself and tried to find out what her idea was. We had a long and complicated talk. After a while it came out, she wanted a kind of screen under which there was always sunshine. Nice idea! We talked and wondered how this might be possible (at least it's possible once a year on the Red Square in Moscow), but came to no conclusion. Later Nesrin designed the tulip-patterned-tartan-field. For a long time I thought this was only a cheap substitute for the original, very poetic idea. But now, on a warm evening, everybody is sitting around the tulip-patterned field, with all the kids playing on it—and somehow it is exactly the original thing: a piece of heaven mirrored into the park."

92. Park Fiction work can be related to what Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge describe as a "counter-public sphere," or *Gegenöffentlichkeit* (see Negt and Kluge, *The Public Sphere and Experience*).
93. Schäfer, "The City is Unwritten," 44.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*
96. In November of 2002, St. Pauli was the scene of demonstrations and blockades protesting the city's destruction of an unauthorized trailer park (the "Bauwagenplatz Bambule") used by an alternative community that lived out of car trailers and modified buses. The Bauwagenplatz protest attracted widespread support from St. Pauli's activist networks, and was eventually quashed following a violent police eviction.
97. See, for example, e.g., John Friedmann, *Planning in the Public Domain: From Knowledge to Action* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987).
98. Schäfer, "The City is Unwritten," 44.
99. *Ibid.*, 45. Schäfer further elaborates: "As a sign of trust, we demanded that the budget for the project, blocked by the Senator for urban development, would be transferred to our bank account before the elections. So it happened and we could start."
100. *Ibid.* Schäfer elaborated on the significance of the round table in a recent e-mail exchange:

"Round table" is an idiom, and a tricky one as well. 'Round tables' became highly popular during the [German] "unification" process to bring citizens and administrators and party members together. They are usually a device to calm down conflict. They have been criticized a lot, because the "round" is often a camouflage for real existing hierarchies; especially if the state or the administration picks the people who are allowed to sit at such a "round

table" (for instance: people from administration, citizens, shop owners, the local police, teachers from the school). A "round table" can be a tool to break the power of neighborhood self-organization.

In our case, we demanded a round table to bring all sectors of administration responsible for a possible park/solution to the table. On our side it was basically the initiative, the neighborhood. It was quite open, but at the same time, the people sent to the round table had to have the power to make decisions. With a lively social movement behind you, you can achieve something with a round table. As an institution I find it rather dangerous. We needed the round table from 1997 to 2002. It was then cancelled by the right wing government. But the park was nearly finished by then. The round table had a clear goal—find a solution everybody accepts for the park—and was more or less steering itself. The chair was a guy from an urban planning department. Following rule number one from Saul Alinsky's book for activists (or Ibn Khaldoun's book on "nomadic warfare") it was vital to have the table in our territory (that is in the school, the local community center etc.). In the beginning we would make special arrangements (decorate the hall with paintings, etc) to create an atmosphere that would not allow administrators to hide behind their files. This worked wonders at the beginning and all the "hard decisions" (that cost the city money) were made in the first four to six meetings, within three or four months. (E-mail to author, June 28, 2009).

101. "Our idea of the 'urban' is opposed to the principle of consensus—although you share a space, you do not have to agree. Now a very private idea (maybe of happiness) becomes a very public work, open for many layers of interpretation and use" (Noel Hefe, unpublished interview with Christoph Schäfer, August 2005).
102. "HafenCity Hamburg is one of the most important inner-city development projects in Europe, which will enlarge Hamburg's downtown area by forty percent within twenty years. This generates not only ten kilometers of a new public water line but additionally, due to the lift of the area caused by flood protection measures, a new topography, and consequently a new definition of public and private spaces. . . . Forty thousand people will work in HafenCity, about 12,000 people will live here and far more will be visitors on a daily basis. Major cultural institutions are under development, e.g. the Elbphilharmonie, a concert hall with 2,200 seats, a newly designed building by Herzog & de Meuron on top of an existing storage building, an international maritime museum to be opened in Summer 2008, and a spectacular science center by Rem Koolhaas (OMA) to be finished in 2012" (from the "HafenCity Hamburg" website, <http://www.hafencity.com>).

103. "From 2000 to 2005, property values have appreciated at an unprecedented rate. Five Third Ward area neighborhoods—Broadmoor, Belfort Park, Southcrest, Overbrook and South Park—have had annual average assessment increases of 10 percent or more during the five-year period, according to a study by Evert Crawford of Crawford Realty Advisors in conjunction with the University of Houston's Institute for Regional Forecasting. Andover Place, Kennedy Heights, Denver, Brentwood and Washington Place neighborhoods also show impressive property value increases. All have had nine percent or better annual growth since 2000" (M. Madere, "Neighborhood Home Sales: Third Ward Property Values Are Soaring, Joint Study Says," *Houston Chronicle*, May 17, 2006, B-3).
104. Elmo Johnson is quoted in Buntin, "Land Rush." There is much for contemporary artists and critics concerned with collaborative practice to learn from the organizational protocols of the civil rights movement. For an excellent study of the complex forms of collective decision making and action in the movement, see Polletta, *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting*.
105. As Lowe notes: "It was during that time when I started to really see my role as an artist as trying to uncover the meaning of the place and creating opportunities for people to give that meaning a place to live within the project in reality—in real time. And so it went from children in the neighborhood to church groups, museum groups, corporate groups, and a wide range of other professionals with technical expertise, from architects, historians, to attorneys, to people who conceptualized programs. For sure, all the programs of Project Row Houses didn't come from me. They came from inviting people who are really good at developing programs—giving them the space to be involved and letting them see what the possibilities were in terms of program development (from an unpublished discussion between Tom Finkelpearl, Rick Lowe, and Mark Stern, November 2004 and July 2005, to be published in a forthcoming book on art and social cooperation by Tom Finkelpearl).
106. *Ibid.*
107. Lowe elaborates: "Art was among the things John Biggers pointed out that were vital for good communities. He was speaking of art in broader terms. More like creativity out of necessity than 'art.' He talked about how people used creativity to take the old worn rags that they got from some place and turned them into a wedding dress, or the tools they made, instead of buying them, to carry out their work, or the quilts that were made from scraps, or the gumbo that was made from scraps of food that could feed many. He never really talked about it in terms of paintings, sculpture, etc. however, he would reference the music and story telling and things like that" (e-mail from Rick Lowe to the author, August 4, 2009).
108. From an unpublished discussion between Tom Finkelpearl, Rick Lowe, and

- Mark Stern, November 2004 and July 2005, to be published in a forthcoming book on art and social cooperation by Tom Finkelpearl.
109. Lecture by Rick Lowe in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego, March 4, 2009.
110. From an unpublished discussion between Tom Finkelpearl, Rick Lowe, and Mark Stern, November 2004 and July 2005, to be published in a forthcoming book on art and social cooperation by Tom Finkelpearl.
111. According to Coleman, "We learned a lot from the debacle in the Fourth Ward. So it would be stupid not to respond to the negative byproducts of rapid development. We want to find people who will make this community better by becoming part of its fabric, not by changing its fabric" (Kris Axtman, "After Years in the Suburbs, Many Blacks Return to City Life," *Christian Science Monitor*, April 29, 2004, 1).
112. *Ibid.*
113. Larry S. Davis is quoted in Buntin, "Land Rush," 24.
114. From an unpublished discussion between Tom Finkelpearl, Rick Lowe, and Mark Stern, November 2004 and July 2005, to be published in a forthcoming book on art and social cooperation by Tom Finkelpearl.
115. As Lowe elaborates: "I've been trying to work on this idea of what role artists, and arts and cultural organizations, should play in terms of community development. . . . Market developers' interest in community development is profit-driven. They don't care who gets served; they don't care who's paying. And then you have Community Development Corporations who are interested in who gets served by the development. Now Project Row Houses has a community development corporation also, but what role does it play? As an arts and cultural institution the role is to try to look into what values come out of these developments from a human standpoint. What does the development project mean? The CDC says it needs to serve low-income populations, but what does it mean if a development serves low-income populations in relation to market development of high-end real estate? I want to explore what those things mean and create opportunities to have dialogue in a meaningful way" (from an unpublished discussion between Tom Finkelpearl, Rick Lowe, and Mark Stern, November 2004 and July 2005, to be published in a forthcoming book on art and social cooperation by Tom Finkelpearl). With the successful creation of a PRH CDC, as Lowe notes, "the challenge . . . is getting the houses on the land. It's becoming easier now with the downturn in the economy. During the boom, builders were not interested in taking on small, less profitable projects. The row house community development corporation is doing thirty units with the 30% money [provided by the Tax Increment Financing Zone]. Maybe we'll do more. I'm not sure" (e-mail from Rick Lowe to the author, August 4, 2009).
116. See Davis, *Spearheads for Reform*.

117. The alternate interpretation was that open attack on the forces of order by a disorganized and undisciplined movement changed nothing and simply gave the state permission to unleash its far greater capacity for violence, while also providing the French right wing with a point of unification. As Jacques Lacan suggested during the upheavals of May '68, the *enragés* needed the state to respond violently to legitimate their own perceived radicality ("What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one") (quoted in Starr, *Logics of Failed Revolt*, 20). See also Debray, "A Modest Contribution to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Tenth Anniversary."
118. The existence of widespread public support for the May '68 protests during the initial phases of the movement was due in part to shock over the fact that police violence was being visited upon the sons and daughters of the bourgeoisie, rather than workers and immigrants (see Seidman, *The Imaginary Revolution*).
119. Mouffe, "Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces," 4. Mouffe's use of "agonism" as a model for political discourse can be read against Renato Poggioli's thoughtful analysis of "agonistic sacrifice" (on behalf of "the people," posterity, etc.) as a key component of the modern artistic avant-garde (see Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, 61–77).
120. Riis, Sierra, and the Yes Men each in their own way assume the existence of a receptive viewer who can be provoked into some recognition of human suffering (Riis) or the injustices of bourgeois liberalism (Sierra and the Yes Men). But this transformative recognition (of complicity, responsibility, or guilt) depends on a concept of civil society (in which appeals to quasi-universal notions of justice or equity can be transmitted through the mechanisms of the public sphere) that is equally part of the traditions of bourgeois liberalism. Even as Michel Foucault objected to the role of the "mediating third" in the modern judicial system (the judge who oversees and adjudicates), his work with various French NGOs and his "investigations" into the French prison system nevertheless positioned the French public in a similar role (see Bourg, *From Revolution to Ethics*, 91).
121. "Always Choose the Worst Option: Artistic Resistance and the Strategy of Over-Identification," BAVO Collective, June 26, 2008, pp. 24, 20, available at the BAVO Project website, <http://www.bavo.biz/>. BAVO consists of Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels, working out of Rotterdam and Brussels, respectively. BAVO continues: "To break out of this impasse, we argue that art should enter into alliances with radical social resistance movements (and therefore not with government authorities, developers, etc.), with social movements that demand a radical transformation of the existing order. Art must take care not to be a cosmetic operation that merely assuages structural injustices temporarily for a specific group. This hot-wiring of radical artistic activism and radi-

cal political activism is still a relatively unexplored area today. We therefore want to issue the following call to socially engaged artists: 'Artists . . . one more effort to be really political!'"

122. "Always Choose the Worst Option: Artistic Resistance and the Strategy of Over-Identification," BAVO Collective, June 26, 2008, 28. It is noteworthy that both Chantal Mouffe and BAVO cite the Yes Men as a paradigmatic example of a "really political" or "critical" art practice. The Yes Men are known for posing as representatives of various private corporations and governmental agencies (Dow Chemical, the World Trade Organization, etc.) and insinuating themselves into conferences or press appearances, during which they present outrageously exaggerated or uncharacteristically honest versions of neoliberal ideology (Dow Chemical accepting full responsibility for the Bhopal disaster and offering restitution; a WTO representative advocating slavery as a solution to world poverty, etc.). BAVO praises the Yes Men for catalyzing a subversive process of "over identification." "The critical effectiveness of the Yes Men consists in being *too* honest and sympathetic towards the WTO [World Trade Organization], thereby they succeed in bringing into the open the 'neo-liberal utopia of unlimited exploitation,' as Bourdieu phrased it" (ibid., 30). The appeal of the Yes Men for both BAVO and Mouffe would seem to lie less in their integration with a given "radical social resistance movement" (BAVO provides no explanation of what constitutes a "radical social resistance movement" or how the Yes Men are related to such movements), than it does with their rhetorical position, which confirms their own image of the subversive artist or intellectual "bringing into the open" the repressed truth of neoliberal exploitation. The artist thus becomes the embodied agent of Mouffe's notion of "agonistic" resistance, simultaneously sustaining and critiquing democracy. The Yes Men amplify the effects of global capitalism through parodic reenactment, "ruthlessly dishing up the system in its most extreme form" and thereby "pushing people who might otherwise have a more nuanced or relativist attitude towards the current state of affairs to the point where they cannot bare [*sic*] it any longer and feel compelled to take a radical stance" (ibid., 32). We might describe this as the *Borat* strategy, in which a given set of attitudes (anti-Semitism, misogyny, homophobia, etc.) are taken to an extreme, on the assumption that the viewer possesses a latent capacity for ethical discrimination that can be reawakened by the shock of overidentification. However, as with Sacha Baron-Cohen's famous namesake, the capacity of some viewers to identify with even the most outrageous beliefs should never be underestimated, and *Borat* can just as easily encourage and indulge these beliefs as he can challenge them. BAVO cites a Yes Men performance in which they posed as WTO representatives offering a proposal to recycle the feces of McDonald's customers as a food source to solve world hunger, leading several audience members to walk out. At the same time,

they acknowledge that in other Yes Men performances, audiences, far from being shocked into a more “radical stance,” sit quietly, greeting equally outrageous proposals with either indifference or polite applause. In fact, it seems likely that those who walked out in “disbelief” and “anger” did so not because they suddenly recognized the repressed truth of capitalism but because they realized that they were the butt (no pun intended) of a deliberately vulgar joke. This is not intended as a critique of the Yes Men’s work, but rather as a demonstration of the unreflective reiteration of certain tropes associated with the awakening of the viewer’s conscious (BAVO speaks of mobilizing the viewer’s capacity for “disgust” and “shame” [31] in contemporary art theory), and the need for more nuanced models of reception.

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