nine urban biotopes

NEGOTIATING THE FUTURE OF URBAN LIVING

Cape Town

Durban

Soweto

Johannesburg

Turin

Paris

London

Berlin I

Berlin II

# nine urban biotopes- negotiating the future of urban living

Nine Urban Biotopes – Negotiating the future of urban living (9UB) was an international, socially engaged art project delivering artistic research and cultural exchange. It did this both within and among social citizen and art initiatives in cities in South Africa and Europe in 2014.

The participating initiatives all distinguish themselves by addressing vital matters of concern with regard to contemporary urban living in innovative ways. They work around and respond to issues of safety and housing, youth and migration, education and environment, mobility and economic subsistence. They do so ›on the ground‹ and ›in the thick of life‹ in each city, thus ›urban biotopes‹, giving the overall project its name.

The aim of 9UB was to establish both a ›trans-local‹ and ›trans-continental‹ dialogue by interweaving and connecting new context-specific, socially engaged art projects into the existing social activities of these biotopes. It did so in order to expose, discuss and share different ›intentions, methods and techniques‹ of imaginative urban practices for building ›sustainable cities‹ and, in order to learn from each other, theoretically and practically.

From January through September 2014, nine artistic projects were produced in nine urban settings. Four European artists – Armin Linke, Antje Schiffers, Marjetica Potrč and Anthony Schrag – worked in South Africa, while at the same time five South Africans – Athi-Patra Ruga, Dan Halter, Taswald Pillay, Terry Kurgan and Rangoato Hlasane – worked in Europe. Three projects ran simultaneously; each for a period of three consecutive months.

By combining, linking and implementing 9UB within a South African-European partnership structure, local answers to global questions were discussed such that they were able to shed light on a range of sustainable solutions and innovative ideas regarding urban development issues on both sides of the equator.

As the final product of the project, this e-Publication both reflects this process and expands its terrain by including contributions from a range of writers, photographers, public intellectuals, urban practitioners and activists, including Bruno Latour, Michael Keith, Sophie Hope, Michael Guggenheim, Marcos L. Rosa, Adam Greenfield, Taryn Mackay, Henk Borgdorff and Alexander Opper, amongst others.

urban biotopes

foreword

Ambassador Roeland van de Geer

Head of the Delegation of the European Union to South Africa

The European Union Delegation to South Africa is proud to be associated with the e-Publication about the Nine Urban Biotopes project supported by the EU.

This project is a wonderful example of collaboration between South Africa and Europe and this e-Book is the result of us sharing information and experiences and learning from each other. I am delighted about the quality of the many ›urban living collaborations‹ and must attribute the success of this project to it having brought together – in a series of dialogues – remarkable ›creators‹ – artists and designers, from Johannesburg, Durban, Cape Town and from London, Paris, Berlin and Turin.

Ensuring the sustainable and equitable development of cities that cater for the needs of a diversified population is a topical challenge. This is especially the case in South Africa where the differences in levels of development and access to resources remain huge. These realities were also at the heart of the programme of the Cape Town World Design Capital 2014 initiative, and were equally prominent at the 25th World Congress of the International Union of Architects that took place in Durban in August last year. One of the key priorities of the European Union in South Africa is to initiate, in cooperation with Government and civil society, innovative and cutting-edge projects in support of South Africa's economic and social development. Equally importantly, the EU Delegation in Pretoria focuses on support for economically viable initiatives leading to employment creation. In this respect, the cultural and creative industries at the heart of the Nine Urban Biotopes initiative have enjoyed particular attention and support.

It is my hope that the dynamic networks that have been created through the Nine Urban Biotopes project will remain active in the years to come and will continue to assist in sharing vision, innovation and creativity between Europe and South Africa.

With the support of the Culture Programme of the European Union

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one project and two continents

Stefan Horn

artistic director of Nine Urban Biotopes (9UB)

About innovation in the 21st century

In Spring 1991, as the Iraqi ground forces withdrew from Kuwait, following military pressure from the Allied forces at the end of the second Gulf War, they set fire to around 950 oil wells. Images of burning drilling towers dominated news coverage throughout that summer. The American ›Red Adair‹ in charge of extinguishing the burning oil fields, and probably the most famous fire fighter worldwide, estimated his deployment to have lasted almost three years. Besides the global consequences of this devastating world catastrophe and the resulting increase in commodity prices, it was the total economic loss from their only source of income that persuaded Kuwait's oil sheikhs to think about finding more efficient methods of extinguishing these fires. And so, this is how, in the autumn of 1991, a group of Hungarian engineers came to present their technical innovation with regard to fire fighting. Using a discarded Soviet tank, and engines from an old jet plane, they had built a unique mechanism with extremely powerful water jets that was able to extinguish a burning drilling tower within only a few minutes. After precisely 43 days this vehicle named ›Big Wind‹ had extinguished the blaze in all 950 oil plants and the 78-year-old

›Red Adair‹ had lost his monopoly on global fire fighting. The Hungarian engineers had assembled and recycled the correct parts from scrapped technologies in order to find a solution to a truly burning question.

The 19th and 20th centuries were driven by groundbreaking industrial innovation and the rapid growth of cities, which contributed to great progress and prosperity. These innovations were often grounded within local settings but would, over time, affect life in other places. This ›principle of innovation‹ and its global effects has spread over the years and multiplied worldwide.

But the age of decadence has come to an end. European and other western societies particularly, but in fact most societies around the globe, are living beyond their means.

We are reaching an age of deceleration where the process of innovation is no longer automatically linked to a process of economic growth. Globalisation today is marked less by this diffusion of local innovations, and instead manifests itself in the interdependent relationship between larger cities. The Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman speaks of it as a »liquid

modernity«. Despite the ›multiple manifestations‹ of modernity we are all vulnerable to this, by now, worldwide interdependency and its range of contrasting outcomes. While some cities are immediately affected by certain innovations, others are not. And, where some cities will suffer to a greater or lesser degree, others might in fact profit. The toxic combination of the real estate bubble and the financial crisis in the US in 2008 with its catastrophic global repercussions is manifest and concrete evidence of Jürgen Habermas' »New Obscurity«. We are all now in the same boat, and we need to create and foster dialogue and exchange in order to find global solutions for local questions.

That's why innovation in the 21st century needs to be, more than ever, an intelligent combination of different, sometimes unlikely, elements in order to solve pressing problems. The Hungarian engineers' 1991 accomplishment can be seen as a trans-local management of innovation, which generated a solution to a global problem by thinking and experimenting across borders. They became pioneers for the 21st century by assembling the right combination of ingredients, drawn from the fund of modernity, in order to summon into existence the missing tool.

9UB aimed to formulate such a ›trans-local dialogue‹ by creating a trans-continental and trans-local network in order to discuss

It was both a complex and a pertinent framework for a multifaceted and productive ›arena of exchange‹, as it tried to figure out intentions first and then knowledge later on. 9UB created ideas through artistic research in order to convert them into practices ›on the ground‹.

Point of departure

For the last 15 years, the Berlin-based art association, urban dialogues, has engaged with all manner of change and flux around urban issues in Berlin and other European cities, by means of artistic research and urban interventions.

The idea for a project relating South Africa with Europe through socially engaged art practices came up during a conference in Johannesburg in March 2011 entitled ›WIDE ANGLE – Photography as Public Practice‹. As the artistic director of urban dialogues I was invited by the Goethe-Institut to contribute to this gathering with a presentation about an earlier networked project called ›Signs of the City – Metropolis speaking‹, which was an artistic research and youth art project exploring local neighbourhoods by means of photography in four different European metropolises[1].

During my stay in Johannesburg an email from the EU Culture Programme landed in my inbox. It was a call for project applications in relation to European/South African partnerships.

Earlier in 2010 my colleague Oliver Kremershof and I had already been thinking along these lines. We had drawn up a first draft for an intercontinental dialogue in order to create an ›arena of exchange‹ for innovative urban development projects. Our idea was to discuss and discover alternative models and solutions to some of the central problems of contemporary urban development, and, to bring them together in relation to each other in order to strengthen local positions in the articulation of urban futures.

The Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg recognised the potential of the project idea and came on board as a project partner for the funding bid, and during the rest of 2011 we negotiated with possible partners in Europe and South Africa in order to create an efficient and durable partnership for a two year-long networked programme.

Europe and South Africa

»The shortfalls and exposed capabilities found in our social, economic and ecological surroundings can often be deciphered as local expressions of a global phenomenon. Metropolises as living and work places have become the central arenas of globalisation and its resulting social developments. Within the cities' structures, global processes inscribe themselves as ›local colourful complexions‹, giving innovative players ever more reasons to propose site-specific alternatives regarding issues of mobility, food, education, housing, migration, safety and economics.«[2] Focusing on local experience and the transfer of intentions, knowledge and methods between South Africa and the European Union, 9UB

followed the global goal of sustainable development. We sought to find alternative ways of driving economic, social and ecological progress by using cultural exchange and artistic research as effective tools towards the installation and establishment of new ideas and structures, and also towards the creation of a sense of awareness and understanding of local intentions.

There are two important reasons to work on such dialogue and transfer. One relates to economics and the other to social change and common identity. First of all, from a European point of view, it is important to work on a sustainable exchange and transfer of knowledge between Europe and countries like South Africa in order to foster the idea of a global modern economy in which knowledge is the crucial resource, and circulation of this knowledge a source of economic growth, with learning as

Johannesburg
Soweto
Durban
Cape Town

Paris
Turin
London
Berlin
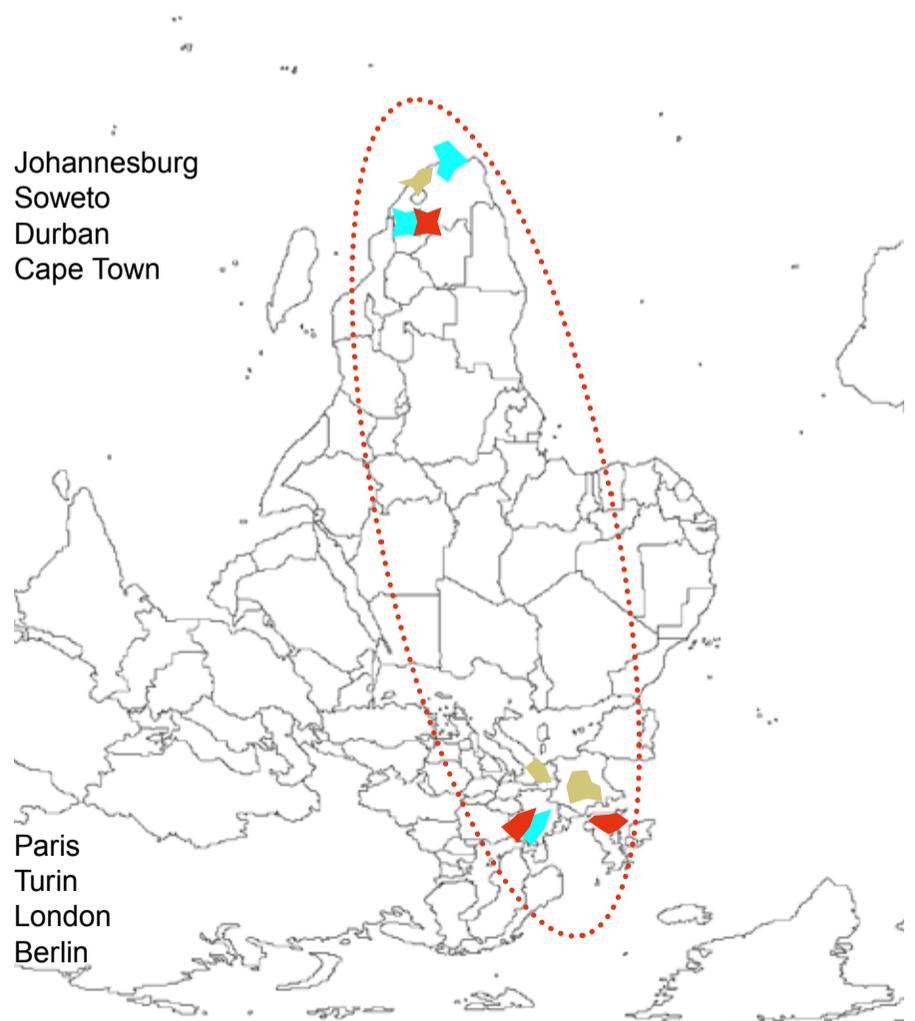
NINE URBAN BIOTOPES: TRANS-LOCAL DIALOGUE AMONG AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN CITIES

the most important process. In order to unfold fruitful relationships and well-functioning arteries in our swirling globalised world, it is important to learn mutually from each other rather than to just export our knowledge, ideas and goods. Secondly, South Africa and the European Union have more in common than is obvious at first sight. Since the apartheid regime came to an end in the early 1990s South Africa has been trying to forge and shape a new identity including all members of its diverse population. At more or less the same time the European Union has been trying to build a new sense of common identity amongst a diversity of cultures and languages within the framework of European citizenship, which goes beyond the national borders of identity.

Prominent South African writer and public intellectual, Njabulo Ndebele said in his keynote entitled ›From Sandton to Soweto‹ on 28 August 2014 at the House of World Cultures in Berlin that »the speed of delivery [after the apartheid regime] was not tested for sustainability and durability«. There is an amazing social imbalance in South African society on its journey towards new democracy and the »provision of housing has not produced bold models of settlement. It's not about building millions of houses but about building strong communities«.[3]

Sandton, the new post-apartheid economic centre of Johannesburg and South Africa, which has been built and designed like the typical high-rise, shiny glass and concrete business districts of most western metropolises, is characterised by Ndebele as a »wobbling bamboo bridge« of a transformation which is not sustainable in its future. It is imperative to seek new ways to truly humanise capitalism and therefore Soweto, as a multi-ethnic melting pot, should be looked upon as the »new Mother City of South Africa« – a place where social solidarities are built on their own through time due to the fact of its peoples' multiple roots and different ethnic identities. From a European perspective, South Africa's metropolises and multi-ethnic society with all their challenges can be viewed as vibrant laboratories of urban and social development.

Those times are gone where the terms of ›Global South‹ and ›Global North‹ served as a useful juxtaposition.

There are so many differences and commonalities between global cities and so much local colourful sparkle creating very specific flavours and productive ›mix-ups‹.

We all need to change our mindset in order to uncover the potential in the interconnections and interdependencies within our globalised world. And at the same time we need to solve local questions with regard to the outcomes of global interference. We have to learn from each other – local to local and transfer best practices from one place to another, ignoring global borders and boundaries.

URBAN DIALOGUES
BERLIN

SOUTH LONDON GALLERY
LONDON

GOETHE-INSTITUT SOUTH AFRICA
JOHANNESBURG

ISTITUTO WESEN
TURIN

CAPE TOWN COMMUNITY TV
CAPE TOWN

QUATORZE
PARIS

DRAMA FOR LIFE
JOHANNESBURG

ID22
BERLIN

PLANACT
JOHANNESBURG

CUCR GOLDSMITHS COLLEGE
LONDON

DALA ARTARCHITECTURE
DURBAN
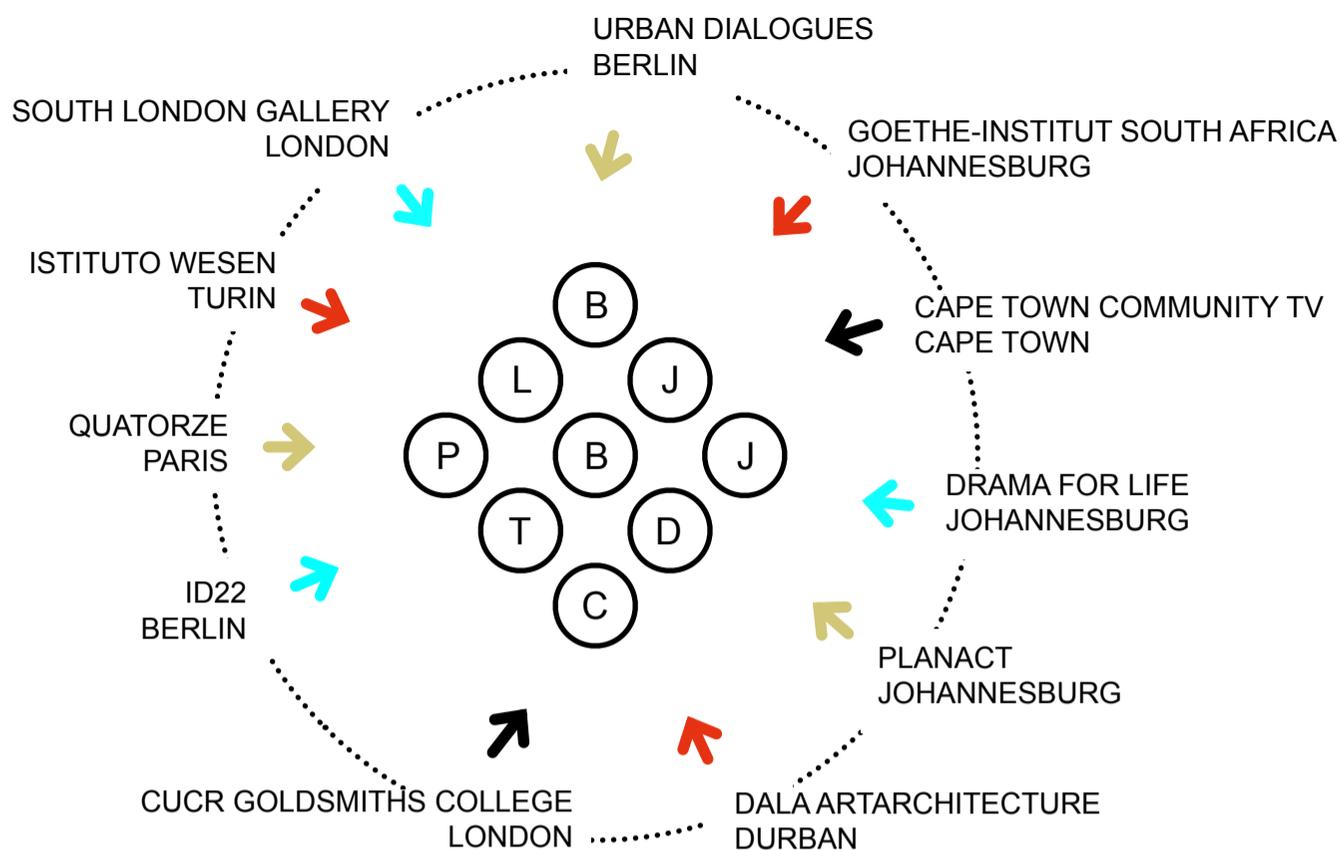
9UB trans-local network, a complex fabric of partners and artists

A networked project that comprises 11 official partners, several more associates, and nine unique artistic projects in five countries on two continents is quite a complex and challenging ›animal‹ to organise and direct. But such a ›superstructure‹ is also in some sense a mirror of our globalised world with all its many interconnections and interdependencies, with all its obscurities and local flavour.

Central to the development of our partnership network was the fact that each of our partners engaged in a range of innovative approaches to alternative urban development. Additionally, they had the capacity to host an artist in residence coming from abroad, and were interested in how that artist might approach, research and respond to their organisational terrain.

The core idea guiding our selection of artists was to find the most appropriate ›artistic incubator‹ for each biotope, in order to create both an outcome with and for the community, and at the same time an artistic output that would also comprise part of the artists' personal artistic agenda. In fact, finding or creating this amalgam of different interests to fit together and complement each other, is what makes socially engaged art practices so challenging.

The first idea was to set up an open call, but then urban dialogues, with the agreement of all partners, decided to apply for a second layer of funding from the Cultural Fund of the Federal Republic of Germany. For this application we needed to provide an already established artists list which necessitated a curatorial process rather than an open call. While our application was not successful, this list then formed the foundation for the final selection process.

In Turin, the project partner Istituto Wesen engages with immigrants from the south of Italy, who have been planting informal vegetable gardens around the Fiat factory in Mirafiori in the south of Turin since the mid-1950s. Immigrants first created these gardens surrounding their company-supplied accommodation, as a way of maintaining a sense of their own identities outside of the big factory, and also as a way of building social networks and convivial meeting places. Almost 60 years later, in a period of deep economic crisis and unemployment in Italy, these urban gardens still symbolise community life; providing essential food for families, but also offering up places of integration and aggregation. The South African artist Dan Halter gardened with community members.

Dan Halter likes to call himself a »fabricator«, who interacts with his art practice from within a social matrix.

He often remakes or reconstructs existing things and objects that are completely plucked out of thin air, drawing attention to those aspects of these things that are truth and fiction. Together they planted vegetable seedlings in trays and Halter introduced the concept of the Space Invader originally designed in 1978 for the famous computer game's symbol of an alien, which in the case of Dan's practice stands for immigrants. When the seedlings sprouted, they lent their colour to each tray that formed a pixel in the creation of a ›Mirafiori Space Invader‹ on the lawns of Colonnetti Park.

For the Quatorze Association in Paris, architecture always begins with conversation, held on a particular site, with the people who occupy or have a stake in it.

They decided to work with a Roma community on the outskirts of Paris, collaborating with them in a unique attempt to build a bridge between their informal, almost inhuman living conditions and the formal life of the adjacent Parisian suburb. Nowadays, particularly in France, but also in other European countries, the issue of Roma people is a contentious ethical and moral issue on the political agenda. On the one hand, there is the immense poverty and deprivation suffered by Roma communities due to their ›forced migration‹ from countries like Bulgaria and Romania to Western European countries. And on the other hand they are denied the freedom of movement that is theoretically a right of citizens and residents of the now borderless European Union. The South African architect Taswald Pillay worked with the Roma community and Quatorze Association to upgrade the living conditions of their informal settlement, through a process of dialogue and

collaboration between various stakeholders and community members. Prior to his Paris residency, Pillay, a candidate architect, had been part of the multi-disciplinary design team of a corporate company based in Johannesburg. He had been involved in a combination of projects ranging from informal settlement upgrading initiatives to various architectural workshops and area mapping exercises. The Parisian project ended up as a vibrant transfer of knowledge and methods from South to North.

South London is home for many residents of African diaspora communities who are part of the fabric of a multi-cultural society. The South London Gallery (SLG) has a long tradition of working with different sectors of their local community and is involved in partnerships with many local organisations. The SLGs long-standing peer-led group, Art Assassins, comprises young people aged 13-20 years old. They work with contemporary artists, designers and filmmakers to create a programme of events for other young people and a wider audience. In their own words »the purpose of Art Assassins is to engage the young side of society by researching, interpreting and demonstrating our knowledge of art and society to the public«.

Rangoato Hlasane is a Johannesburg-based artist, cultural worker and co-founder of the Keleketla! Library, which empowers inner-city youth and emerging creatives through art, culture and heritage programmes.

A Pan-Africanist cultural worker, writer, and DJ, as well as the co-founder of Keleketla! Library which was based in the historic Drill Hall, Joubert Park, Rangoato connected the Art Assassins to the Mysterious Dance Creatures, another group of young people, based at the Drill Hall, a community arts space in the old Central Business District of Johannesburg, in order to start a conversation between the younger generations across two continents.

Nowadays, many projects and initiatives in Berlin deal with new strategies and forms of alternative and creative city development. Organic vegetables are grown on the roof of a former malt factory and the post-fossil mobile platform provides DIY manuals for fixing together bicycles to transport cargo around the city. New forms of collaborative housing are on the increase – from self-managed and politically oriented cooperative housing projects to luxury, privatised forms of urban living in Central City districts. 9UB collaborated with id22: Institute for Creative Sustainability whose core activities focus on the development of »Co-housing Cultures«; self-organised, community-orientated and sustainable co-housing schemes.

The South African artist Terry Kurgan explored

these phenomena with a ›mobile research lab‹ to uncover some of contemporary Berlin's ›hot‹ issues, and to get in touch with people ›on the ground‹.

Kurgan runs an active Johannesburg studio and public sphere practice and has created a diverse body of artwork that explores notions of intimacy, pushing at the boundaries between ›the private‹ and ›the public‹ in the South African cultural domain. She works across a broad range of media from drawing, printmaking and photography to enlisting public participation in a practice that produces human interaction and social experiences. She likes to work with the notion of ›culture as infrastructure‹ – inserting her projects into existing social infrastructure and everyday practices. Domestic photography, and the complexity of the photographic interaction itself, is a central theme in her practice.

In Berlin, she collaborated with the local ISSS-research+architecture team, and transformed her ›research findings‹ into an exhibition of images, text and a short film, interpreting the outcome of her many conversations and meetings with strangers.

Another biotope project in Berlin was the collaboration with young people from Moabit, a highly gentrified inner-city borough of Berlin that has become home to many immigrants over the last 30 years. Our partner organisation, The Youth Theatre Office Berlin, aims to empower young people to use theatre and cultural action as a tool and a platform to engage in social, personal and political issues that matter to them. Importantly, young people are encouraged to develop their own artistic style and are provided with the skills required for self-determined cultural production, not only as actors, but also as directors, dramaturges, technicians and event managers. Athi-Patra Ruga is based in Cape Town and works in the space between fashion, performance and contemporary art. In his daring interventions, self-staging and self-dramatisation in public space – he enacts moments, in which political structures and ideological positions are questioned and caricatured. His videos, photos, costumes and paintings are hybrids; electric works, in which pop-culture, fine art and art as craft merge together.

Ruga initiated a process with members of the Youth Theatre Office in Berlin around questions of identity and self-perception.

While he unexpectedly didn't stay the course and complete his residency, the Berlin team led by Annika Füser managed to develop the ›Sheroes and Villains‹ performance to a strong finish and close.

In Johannesburg the Drama for Life organisation, based at Wits University, aims to enhance the capacity of young theatre practitioners and their communities to take responsibility for the quality of their lives in the context of HIV and AIDS and other local human rights and social justice issues. Drama for Life practices and teaches participatory and experiential drama and theatre that is appropriate to current South African social realities, and also draws on the rich indigenous knowledge of African communities.

The artistic work of Anthony Schrag, an artist based in Glasgow, is accompanied by research and collaborative engagement, which he wants to be recognised as the actual value of his creations. Thus, it is not the product in itself, which is prioritised, but the spatial context and the process of involvement that is shared by both the audience and the people participating in the process that makes up his artwork.

Schrag often uses play, humour, physicality and immediacy in order to engage with people without prior knowledge of aesthetic processes.

Schrag collaborated with different groups within the DFL organisation as well as with people he encountered on the streets, in order to highlight what he perceived to be contentious and prickly subjects; issues at stake in Johannesburg. For example, he explored the ambivalent outcome of South African society's fortification, and their security measures. Another project reflected upon the unpredictable results of gentrification processes that are harnessed to a range of creative industries.

In Durban, dala artarchitecture is an interdisciplinary creative collective that believes in the transformative role of creativity in building safer and more livable cities. dala emerged as a response to the growing need for a sustainable space for creative practitioners actively engaging in art/architecture for social change.

The photographer and media-artist Armin Linke prefers to work in collaborative ways. Moreover he combines different media to blur the boundary between fiction and reality.

He is working on an ongoing archive of human activity in the context of the most diverse and varied natural and manmade landscapes. These issues and interests see him travel to different parts of the world: Palestinian refugee camps or uninhabited islands in the Mediterranean Sea that are used industrially. Linke collaborated in a research process with dala, the local organisation of street traders and the cooperative for hawkers and informal business.

Every day thousands of street traders commute by foot between the townships of the faraway hills and the business centre of Durban. The project invited their photographs and opinions and enabled insight into their daily practice. Ten video portraits were produced and installed into the city market.

The final local presentation of the project was a platform for statements of passers-by about the inner city market district, which is currently highly endangered by master plans to build a shopping mall on its spot.

The project partner Planact has, since 2007, been involved in supporting participatory governance initiatives in Orlando East and Noord-gesig in Johannesburg. The purpose of Planact's intervention here has been to promote meaningful public participation in government processes and to close the social and racial gap between these two communities.

SOWETO stands for the South Western Townships, a summary of once informal communities created since the early 20th century due to the evictions of blacks from Johannesburg by the white authorities before and during apartheid. Today it is a city in itself, with an extremely diverse population.

For many years now, the Slovenian artist and architect Marjetica Potrč has

been interested in the question of how to efficiently solve the practical problems of day to day living.

As part of this quest, she has, for example, built dry toilets with inhabitants of the La Vega informal city of Caracas in Venezuela and initiated together with the Stedelijk-Museum an intercultural kitchen and garden project in a former Garden City of Amsterdam. Since 2011 she has been professor at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg where she runs the course ›Design for the Living World‹ within the Design Department. It is a research-based, cross-disciplinary course focused on participatory design projects where students collaborate with local residents in the tradition of learning by doing.

Potrč and her students of ›Design for the Living World‹ from HFBK in Hamburg, collaborated with members of the Community Development Committee in Orlando East, a suburb of Soweto. Together, they turned two formerly derelict, open spaces into linked and active community hubs.

Cape Town, ›The Mother City‹ was the first European settlement in South Africa. Today it is one of the most multicultural cities in the world, reflecting its role as a major destination for tourists, immigrants and expatriates to South Africa. Cape Town is also home to diverse communities who speak the three main languages of the Western Cape – English, Afri-

kaans and Xhosa – and who still live in largely segregated ways.

The artist Antje Schiffers understands being on the move as an essential part of her artistic practice.

She is interested in the realities of life of different social groups and how economic, political and social conditions – locally and also globally – determine someone's everyday life. Her research method involves exchanging goods with the people she encounters while she is on the move. These transactions include products of her artwork that are often exchanged for everyday items, such as texts or videos made with the different people she meets.

Antje Schiffers and her partner Thomas Sprenger, assisted by local resident Ziphozakhe Hlobo, attempted to work within and across the complex fabric of Cape Town society. Cape Town Community Television (CTV) was their partner in terms of facilitating contacts with communities within the city. The project evolved into a stop-motion film composed of Antje's drawings, lyrically and subtly representing what it was that Cape Town had to teach them.

Beside the hosting organisations and project partners mentioned above the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg played an important role as the key linking partner for the European artists working in South African ›urban biotopes‹. Right from the beginning of the development of the trans-continental partnership structure, and later on during the artists selection process, the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg and urban dialogues in Berlin, worked in close collaboration. From within its ›Culture and Development‹ initiative, the Goethe-Institut focuses on the link between the arts and society with regard to the sustainable development of knowledge-based societies where education in the broadest sense plays a key role. Achille Mbembe, professor in history and politics at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, refers to the relationship between arts and culture on one side and human development and emancipation on the other. »What brings both sides closer together«, he says, »is the capacity to create something new and original through imagination and invention«.[4] Lilli Kobler, the head of the Culture and Development department of the Goethe-Institut Sub-Sahara emphasises and expands upon these ideas and the Institut's policies in her introduction.

The GIZ – Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (international cooperation) also joined our network with the ›Inclusive Violence and Crime for Safe Public Spaces‹ – programme (VCP). The programme supports an integrated and holistic approach to increasing public safety in South Africa. The fear of crime and urban violence obstructs the ability of many residents to benefit fully from the processes of urbanisation, particularly in low-income and marginalised urban areas in South Africa. GIZ VCP advocates for public safety within South Africa's Integrated Urban Develop-

ment Framework (IUDF). All over the world the phenomenon of urban violence limits the development of societies in cities. 9UB, supported by GIZ, shed light on the fact that public and community safety is a determining element of the quality of life and in the future of urban living in metropolitan cities.[5]

Last but not least, The Centre for Urban and Community Research (CUCR), Goldsmiths College, University of London lead the academic support of the overall project and evaluated it throughout. CUCR is an interdisciplinary research centre within the department of Sociology with a distinguished history of collaboration with local communities and activists. This collaboration allowed them a constant process of assessment and improvement. Reciprocally and right from the outset, the interdisciplinary approach of 9UB allowed the social scientists involved in the project to critically assess innovative research methods, which produce knowledge by means of employing artistic practices to creatively intervene and comment on the urban and social world. Dr Alison Rooke and Christian von Wissel have produced feedback and a final analysis that are included in this e-Publication in four different articles and angles: safety, socially engaged art, sustainability and participation.

Learning from Each Other, the Complex Dialogue between South Africa and Europe

The project aimed to develop a vital exchange of artists and participatory arts projects from Europe and South Africa in order to develop and express social phenomena to a wider public relevant on both sides. Over the last years

new forms of cultural action described as artistic research have proved to be socially impactful.

According to the UNESCO definition the term research means »any creative systematic operation for the purpose to expand knowledge, to include knowledge into culture and society, as well as the utilisation of this knowledge for the development of new applications«.

While we learned to take into account different social codes and conventions across local communities and cultures, we were also able to gain insight into and understanding of certain practices. As just a few examples: in Paris, Taswald Pillay and the students from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture à Paris-Belleville discovered that the ethics of cleanliness within the Roma community disallows a sink that is used to wash dishes to also be used to wash hands. In Cape Town, Antje Schiffers found that in order to feel safe in a neighbourhood, you must of necessity greet your neighbours. In Soweto, Marjetica Potrč

and the students from ›Design for the Living World‹ learned about an essential transition point in African culture – you have to celebrate the work you have created. And in Berlin, Terry Kurgan discovered that for Germans, there are very few social taboos associated with stripping off your clothes in public spaces.

Things were not always that easily understood, and at times did not always run altogether smoothly, but sometimes, the tougher the situation and the harder it was to gain understanding, the more innovative the solution, and the greater the learning curve.

As one example, in Europe, there is a deeply entrenched, long history of public space as being something good, a place that everybody has the right to access and make use of as both a social, and a spatial system. But in South Africa, there is an equally deeply entrenched long history of quite the opposite, of public space belonging to the minority of the population, and the majority being denied its use or access. South Africans still do not understand, or take for granted, the idea of ›commons‹ as Europeans can do. Both South African and European artists needed to understand something as fundamental as this before getting down to work with communities in foreign and unfamiliar cultural settings. And so in the end, we learnt that above all, socially engaged art practices, which begin with a process of artistic research, must start with a long and deep conversation. We must listen and talk to each other in order to proceed productively and creatively. At its best this dialogue can foster innovation, perhaps not quite as technically ingenious as those Hungarian engineers, but as artists, designers

and cultural activists we can create a constant transfer of intentions into knowledge and creative methodology, which is the basic element of constructive interaction in an interdependent globalised world.

Art as a rule and socially engaged art practices in particular are not able to change the world. But art is able to change the perceptions of citizens, so that they are empowered to reflect, to organise themselves and then to become active in order to try and make things better. It is a sensible reason to engage.

Endnotes

1   urban dialogues had initiated and implemented ›Signs of the City‹
    from 2007 through 2009, and it was selected as a best practice for
    intercultural dialogue by the European Union.

2   Quote from an early draft of 9UB in 2011, where my colleague
    Oliver Kremershof and myself had fixed the conceptual framework
    for the development of the trans-continental partnership.

3   ›20 years of South African democracy and beyond: Goodbye
    Sandton, hello Soweto!‹ Keynote by Njabulo S Ndebele, 28 August
    2014 at House of World Cultures Berlin: www.hkw.de/en/ app/
    mediathek/video/30331. Accessed 15 of December 2014.

4   Achille Mbembe, ›Arts, markets and development in our times‹
    www.goethe.de/ges/prj/ken/pup/en9369734.htm. Accessed 15
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5   GIZ VCP Programme in South Africa, Sketching Video. www.you-
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shaping the urban community – negotiating its future

Lilli Kobler

Head of Culture and Development Department

Goethe-Institut South Africa

The word biotope, literally translated, means an »area where life lives«. The subject of a biotope is a (biological) community.

It is estimated that more than half of the world's human population is now living in cities. In this context, the Nine Urban Biotopes (9UB) project developed a framework within which to explore creative, innovative and sustainable approaches to some of our most pressing global urban development problems in cities in Europe and South Africa.

Urban Living

Urban spaces have become the ›central arenas of globalisation‹, yet urbanity does not develop in linear or uniform ways, but in a rather more unpredictable manner. Global cities like London, Tokyo or New York develop differently from cities in post-colonial settings on the African continent. Cities are complex, multi-layered and diverse and exist in trans-national relation to each other forming complicated, far-reaching systems and networks. Within these urban spaces, global processes reflect within local urban structures. The urgent problems and limitations of our social, economic and ecological surroundings might be interpreted as local expressions of global phenomena. Not surprisingly it is within these urban spaces, that social movements emerge, trying to gain influence and the the right to greater social participation. A struggle to participate in the shaping of your own neighborhood, your own city, is often a struggle for a better, alternative future.

The Goethe-Institut has had, for many years, but still today and even more tomorrow, as one of its key focuses, an interest in the meeting of culture with urban space.

How can local initiatives and movements be supported that secure public commodities, or democratic control over urban spaces and public futures within cities? How can we come to understand the systems by which cities are connected to each other? And what role can an international cultural organisation play within this context?

Culture and Development

»The arts, culture, and education play decisive roles in the constitution of societies and in coping with current global and regional challenges. Artists, persons in the cultural sector, and media players are seismographs as well as shapers of social change. Yet in order to be heard and able to act they need a self-confident voice, a professional structural basis, and a sound network.«[1]

Bearing this in mind, the Goethe-Institut in Sub-Saharan Africa implements quite a num-

ber of projects within its ›culture and development‹ initiative.

The initiative's programmes contribute to strengthening cultural infrastructure and the arts sector. They aim to improve framework conditions for the arts and culture and to support the development of education- and knowledge-based societies. The programmes train cultural and educational actors and advise cultural institutions. They network stakeholders with one another and with relevant initiatives and institutions on the African continent, in Germany or other relevant international networks.

The autonomy of arts and culture is respected and considered and is correlated with social as well as economic challenges. It is in this context that cultural management trainings, large regional platforms in the music and film sector as well as arts education projects, studies and academic works around the awareness of the diverse structures and relevance of arts education are implemented in South Africa and throughout the Goethe-Institut's African networks. We endeavor to work together with our partners to create and support the networks, communities and actors in order to find solutions to to some of society's current challenges.

Nine Urban Biotopes (9UB)

From January to September 2014, nine artists produced work and research in nine innovative urban spaces. All of them were participatory in their approach, engaging actively with both citizens and initiators of existing innovative urban development projects.

The participating initiatives in Paris, Berlin, London, Turin and Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban all distinguished themselves by addressing vital matters of concern with regard to contemporary urban living in innovative ways.

The aim of 9UB was to establish both a ›trans-local‹ and ›trans-continental‹ dialogue by interweaving and connecting new context-specific, socially engaged art projects into the existing social activities of these biotopes.

This is how the project was defined, thereby creating a platform for exchange juxtaposing (local) innovations with global challenges and using flexible strategies to find practical, site-specific alternatives to the key challenges that communities participating in this project faced. The intention to transfer these solutions across the globe is what makes the local once again global.

Stefan Horn states in his introduction, that »every approach of socially engaged art practices in the field of artistic research has to start with a conversation« and that the project aims »to discuss and discover solutions, models and practical alternatives that reach beyond the key challenges of today's cities, to bring them in relation and to inform each other, strengthening local positions in the articulation of such urban futures«.[2]

The Future

How these futures, especially urban futures are actually shaped, is what the Goethe-Institut has set out to explore in the coming years. We

believe, that shaping the future and future ways of life is also a cultural task. Culture can function as a starting point or space where experimenting with processes of change and social utopias are made possible. Creativity can function as a driving force for social change. But is this task private or public? Can the future even be shaped, or does it just organically happen? What are the utopian notions of future that radiate from the arts and art practices that claim to be socially engaged?

Negotiating

By negotiating the future, 9UB tried to answer some of those questions and to create a space for experimentation and exploration. But this begs the question: Who is it that participates in this negotiation process? How are they empowered and whom do they represent?

Participation is the involvement of culturally and socially different groups within cultural and social processes. This does not only encom-

pass a struggle for awareness or emancipation, but also asks questions about public space, and modes of communication within society and its regulations.

Participation means the involvement of citizens and communities in decision-making processes. It is never a given, or guaranteed, but rather, needs to be constantly asserted and negotiated.

But in the same way that urbanity is immensely complex, multi-layered and diverse, so too is this notion of ›a community‹. A Roma community outside of Paris, a post-apartheid community in Soweto, alternative co-housing communities in Berlin, communities of residents in downtown Johannesburg, West-European and South African artists with professional and academic backgrounds – all of these are communities in their own rights. Shaped by their different countries, their personal histories, their class and their levels of education and privilege, they are moulded from within their very own context and definition of cultural and social codes. And so, first and foremost, in order to create partnerships, exchange and common practice, they needed to try and bridge some of these differences and get to know and to understand each other first.

The approach of the Nine Urban Biotopes project to participatory, artistic practice lines up with the design and approach of the Goethe-Institut's arts, culture and development programme. We too are interested in working towards the shaping of sustainable and socially viable public spaces, and asking many important questions about how better futures can be shaped anew.

The nine urban biotopes are nine urban spaces where ›life lives‹, where local communities constantly negotiate their futures within the broader context of global structures, systems and networks. Given the diversity and multi-layered fabric of urbanity and communities, intercultural and interdisciplinary projects like the Nine Urban Biotopes are urgently required. This approach to social and urban innovation might perhaps have the power to generate the sensitive dialogue that is necessary in order to engage more citizen participation in processes of cultural and social decision-making. And this, in order that we may further negotiate local, sustainable solutions for our common urban futures.

Endnotes

1. Enzio Wetzel, head of the Culture and Development division &
   Dr. Andreas Ströhl, head of the Culture and Information depart-
   ment, www.goethe.de/cultureanddevelopment

2 9UB EU-1.3.5. Application, 2012

trialogue I

capetown

soweto

berlin
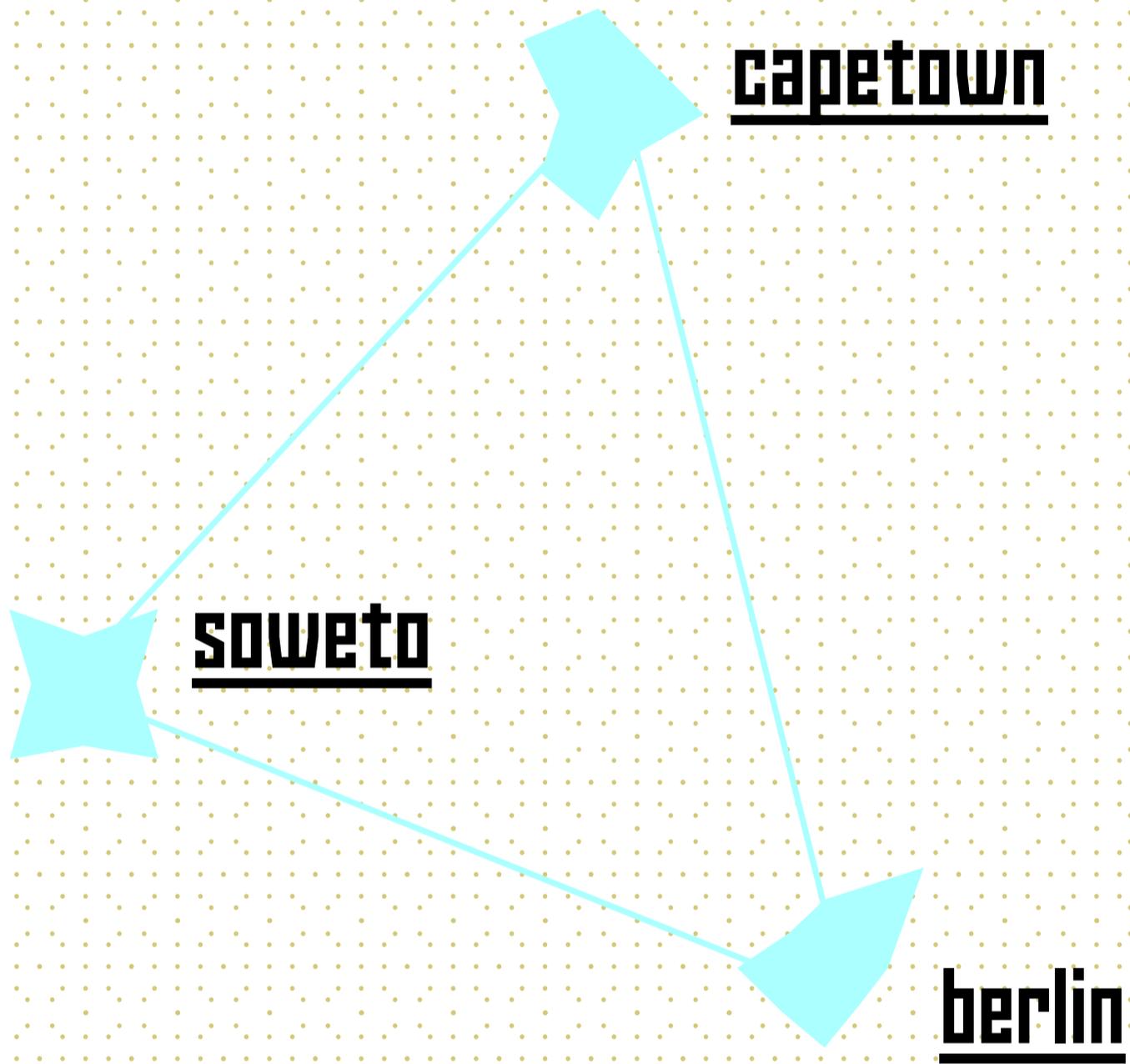
what cape town taught me

By Caroline Wanjiku Kihato

It is the contradiction that most stood out for me when I spoke to visual artist Antje Schiffers about her experience of Cape Town. »The first weeks here, I felt really stupid,« she admitted to me one afternoon, speaking from her home-for-three-months in Bo-Kaap, on the slopes of Signal Hill at the edge of Cape Town's City Bowl. »I thought I was a much-travelled person – I have been to central Asia, Mexico,« her voice trailed off, »but I underestimated the Cape Town context. What strikes me most is this beauty combined with so much tension, that is something I have not been used to. I cannot

just enjoy the beauty because there is so much tension.«

Antje Schiffers was born in Heiligendorf, Germany. Together with fellow artists Kathrin Böhm and Wapke Feenstra she founded myvillages. org in 2003, an artist initiative that uses participatory art practices to build rural communities and celebrate them as sources of cultural production. Antje's art projects have taken her across the globe, from Mexico to Russia, Ghana to Cape Town.

»My work includes a lot of travelling driven by curiosity about what life is like in other places,« she told me. »It was this curiosity that led me to accept the invitation to participate in the Nine Urban Biotopes in Cape Town.« As part of the project Antje approached people in Cape Town and asked them, »What can Cape Town teach me? What do you think a European can learn here?« She wanted to know what people would

VIDEO STILL FROM ›WHAT CAPE TOWN TAUGHT ME‹

think is different for her and what she could learn from the city.

Antje's participatory art project in Cape Town involved a technique that she had not used before – turning her drawings into an animated movie. Together with her partner, Thomas Sprenger, and Ziphozakhe Hlobo, her guide through the city, they captured Antje's experiences through animated drawings of the setting, and short texts of the conversations that took place between Antje and her Cape Town teachers.

Each narrative starts as an empty canvas, which as the story builds, fills up with graphite two-dimensional images of the setting in which the story is taking place. »It is really like making boxes of every place and explaining the box and then starting the story. It is interesting for me to see how much storytelling works in this way. How often we would use what we expect others to already know.« The twenty minute animation movie entitled ›What Cape Town taught me‹ begins with a Zimbabwean guitarist whose music takes us through Antje's Cape Town. Ziphozakhe's carrying voice narrates Antje's words:


ANIMATION MOVIE ›WHAT CAPE TOWN TOUGHT ME‹

BO-KAAP, YESTERDAY EVENING BY ZIPHOZAKHE HLOBO

THOMAS SPRENGER SHOWS THE TWO YOUNG MEN FROM ›YOUNG IN PRISON‹ THE ART OF ANIMATION.

»Don't think of the whole world and its problems, you will think you will solve them all but you can't and it depresses you. Think of the small space of your life and what you can do in it, be open and do your best, then go home and be proud of what you have done.«

Zipho's voice is clear and confident, sometimes sarcastic, sometimes sombre, sometimes playful, and carries with it the lilt of her Eastern Cape upbringing. However, it is odd that Zipho reads Antje's words and experiences as her own, in the first person. Perhaps it is part of the artist's plot to unsettle the viewer? This is left

open for the observer to ruminate upon. Zipho is a freelance performance poet and writer who moved to Cape Town in search of work. »It [Cape Town] is not too financially viable for a very young emerging artist« Zipho writes, »hence myself and those I work with have been occupying our time with part-time jobs, establishing our own movements, organising and performing arts events….« Zipho is a graduate in Media Studies from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. In addition to showing Antje around Cape Town, she also served as the embedded journalist for the project.

»What Cape Town taught me« is a series of short stories that explore Cape Town through Antje's learning experiences. As she moves through the city, Antje encounters characters and spaces, which form part of her narrative.

As the stop motion movie rolls on, we meet characters like Jonathan, a DJ at Radio Zibonele, and Vuyo, a former shack dweller, who provides Antje with lessons from Cape Town from practical how-to skills like making koek-

sisters (traditional Malay doughnuts), and an African meal, and growing crops in sandy soil, to learning how people navigate the violence of rape, muggings, drugs and killings in the city; from Ishmael's sound advice, »Don't collaborate with your enemies, stand for what you think is right«, to Vuyo's humanising reminder that »people always aspire for something better, that is the same in a shack as elsewhere.«

When I asked Antje what skill she would rank as most important of the ones she learned, she had this to say: »I would say greeting your neighbours, which is so simple, but is something we don't do in Berlin it sounds so easy and then it means quite a lot.« After a short pause, she adds, »also the concept of sharing, which many people referred to and reflected upon.« The people Antjie encountered in Cape Town were doubtful that they could teach her to share. There was so much sharing during apartheid within the community, everybody was united to fight apartheid. She explained to me that since apartheid's demise, people had become more focused on their own individual or family needs.

Ironically, it is what Capetonians thought they could not offer that seemed to teach Antje the most. She learned what sharing meant in the Cape Town context in her conversations with Zipho who comes from a large extended African family. »There's an African way of having a broader family and not having the concept of my money is my money… That's what we have [in Berlin]. I would never have the idea that if my brother has money he should give it to me.« From Zipho, she learned a more communal understanding of the word. The ways in which the word ›share‹ is laden with varied mean-

ings and responsibilities in different contexts. »I thought about [the word] ›share‹ seriously. Of course we often use the word lightly as in >let's share this experience<; that's easy to say. But to share can be quite a big thing.« For Antje, Cape Town seems to have had an uncanny ability to hold a mirror up to her and allow a kind of unexpected self-scrutiny and reflection. By asking what Cape Town could teach her, the city's quirks and paradoxes pointed to contradictions in her own life and her home city Berlin.

»I get conscious about how little tension there is in Berlin, it even starts to feel a bit strange. This very relaxed feeling is also not what we would find in all of the world.«

It is this introspection that resonated throughout our conversation; that the skills she learned in Cape Town raised questions about herself, as a white European woman, and her hometown Berlin. Cape Town disrupted her settled sense of her ›normal‹ life in Berlin. »Why don't we greet in Berlin? Because we don't need to greet for safety,« she said, answering her own question. »It's nice because it made me learn a lot and made me feel very stupid, which is okay too, because its fine to be shaken around from time to time. You shouldn't feel too comfortable.«

While some of the discussions around crime, the irresponsibility of youth, and unemployment seem to fit the stereotypes of places like Khayelitsha, Antje actively tries to disrupt these stereotypes in the movie through her visuals. The drawings make things look the same; a shack does not look so shack-like when it is drawn. It looks the same as other homes. Indeed there is a way in which the animation

evens out urban space, so that the viewer does not confront the racial, gender, class and geographic inequalities that constitute Cape Town. »I would write something about it being high noon and a hot day in a nice neighbourhood in Khayelitsha, and people would think, how can that be a nice neighbourhood? Khayelitsha is one of Cape Town's notorious neighbourhoods. Located on the Flats, it was planned under apartheid as a residential area for blacks, and has high levels of crime and poverty. Unlike the posh suburbs that hug Cape Town's Table Mountain, these flat areas sprawl in its margins, housing the city's other, the blacks, coloureds and poor that were apartheid's undesirables. This flattening of geography, of creating an anonymity of place allows a retelling of the story of Cape Town, so that the viewer does not judge a priori the value of Khayelitsha versus Tamboerskloof, Bo-Kaap versus Sea Point.« Antje explained that she wanted to leave the places in her story ambiguous, not to for people to say ›aha!‹, that is what I expected in Khayelitsha, or ›it's just the opposite from what I expected from Khayelitsha‹. »Sometimes it is clear and other times it is unclear.«

While this geographic evenness allows us to re-imagine Cape Town, it also erases contemporary and historical boundaries between communities in ways that might make an audience well-versed in Cape Town's past and present uncomfortable. Uncomfortable in that there seems to be an erasure of the socio-historical, political and geographic boundaries that constitute the very fabric of Cape Town's everyday life. For by evening out the city's inequalities, does the movie not erase people's histories, lived experiences and their everyday struggles

of class, race and place? Was this part of the artist's right of expression and creativity? Was the flattening of Cape Town a reaction against the very tangible tensions that the artist experienced in her time there? Does the animated image allow Antje to redraw the landscape of Cape Town and retell its story? By drawing the wealthy neighbourhood of Tamboerskloof in a way that is comparable to the Malay Quarter in Bo-Kaap, or the township Khayelitsha in a similar way to touristy Sea Point, can we read resistance in the storytelling of Antje's Cape Town?

It is this ambiguity that creates a tension throughout the film. And, for the artist, the ambiguity is intentional. »I try to keep the interpreting part low, being careful to leave the short stories I tell open too.« It is the simple and almost poetic way in which the film disrupts our stereotypical ways of seeing and allows us to re-imagine Cape Town and its margins that makes this intervention an important one. Cape Town's marginality as a city in the global South is rewritten as a city that is at the centre of global learning. The story allows us to question Cape Town's marginality and Berlin's centrality in global urban discourses. Cape Town, this city in the global South becomes the norm, and Berlin its aberration. Inadvertently, ›What Cape Town taught me‹ inverts the measure by which we evaluate, look and understand world cities.

WHAT CAPE TOWN TAUGHT ME.

Friday 21 March 3 p.m Hubspace Khayelitsha

with performances by
Ziphozakhe Hlobo and Jahfield
The Young Authors' Club Lansdowne

a screening of the short film
'To The One I Love' by Zolani Ndevu

and the premiere of the animated film
'What Cape Town Taught Me.' by Antje Schiffers and Thomas Sprenger

no entrance fee

urban biotopes   GOETHE INSTITUT
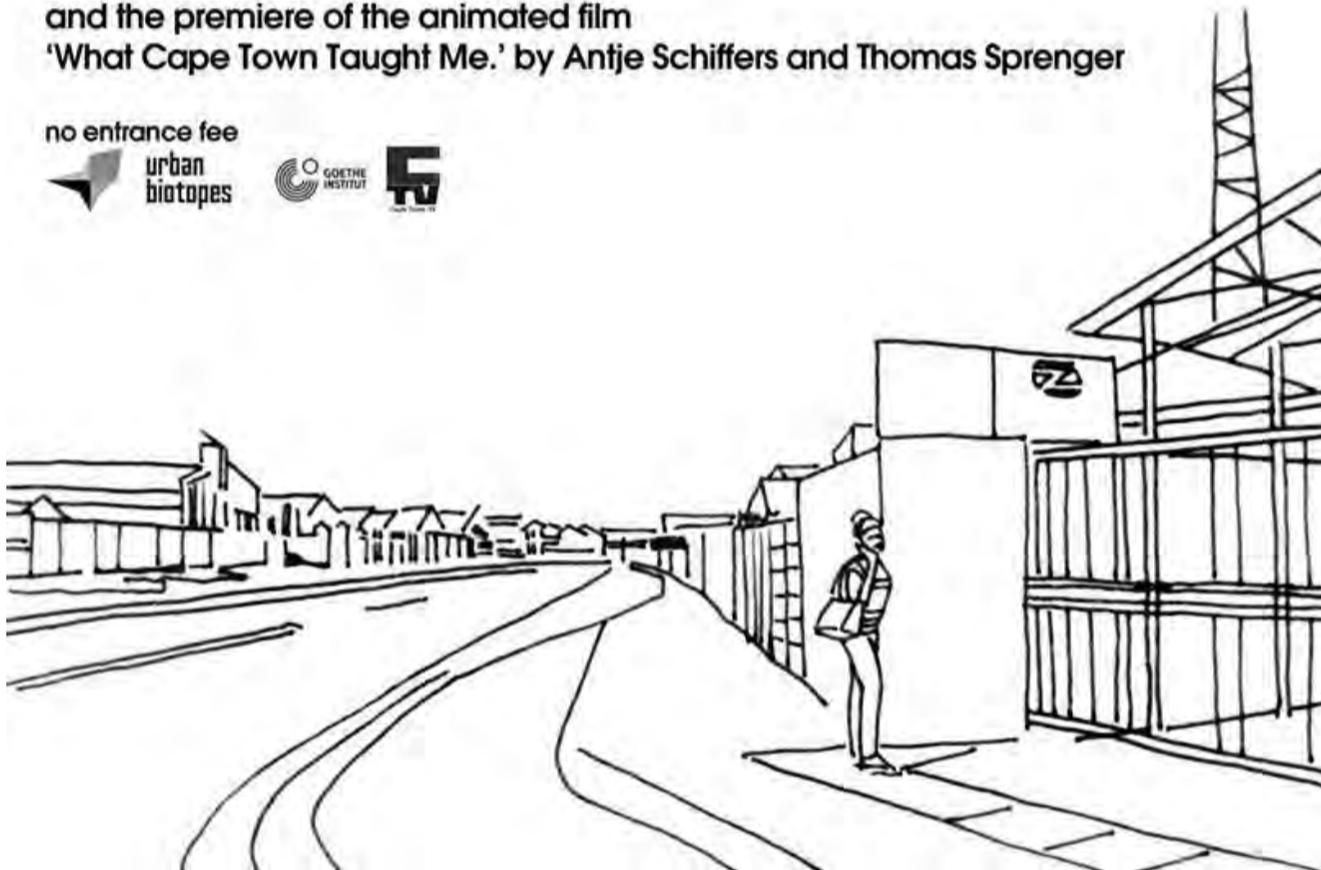
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Koeksisters Recipe   CV Antje Schiffers

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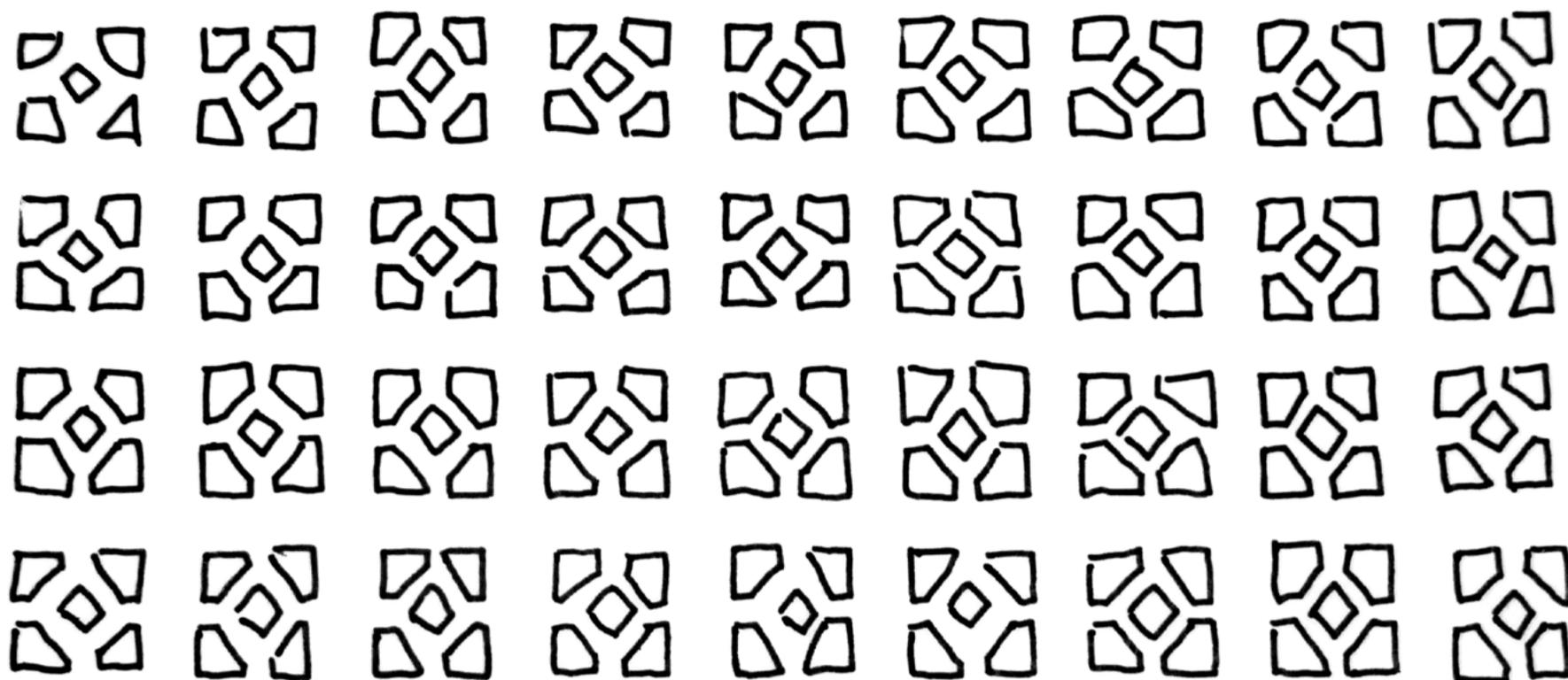
Koeksisters Recipe

Boil 3 to 4 cubed potatoes
Mash the potatoes
Add two eggs

+ Heat 750 ml long-life milk
+ Melt 100 gr butter

+ Mix with your hands:
  8 cups of flour
  1 cup sugar
  1 spoon ginger
  4 spoons anisseeds
  2 spoons cinnamon
  1 spoon cardamom
  2 packages dry yeast

+ Make a hole and add potato, egg, milk and butter, and mix

+ Put some flour on the table
  Oil your hands and the table
  Move the dough for 15 minutes

+ Put the dough in an oiled bowl, close it with plastic and let it rest in a warm place for 1 - 1,5 hours, depending on the weather

+ Heat a pot with sufficient vegetable oil
  Form balls out of the dough, the size of a small egg

+ Bake the balls in oil – they should swim
  The oil has to be hot, but not too hot; they should be brown within 2 mins, more or less, then you turn them around

+ Cook a syrup out of equal parts of sugar and water
  The syrup should be a little bit sticky between your fingers, but liquid enough

+ Heat the koeksisters in the syrup, then turn them around in coconut flakes

+ It is all about temperature and a feeling for the right degree of stickiness

moving beyond materialism: rewriting community histories through socially engaged art in soweto

By Caroline Wanjiku Kihato

It seemed not even the rain would quell the energy in Soweto that drab Sunday on the 9th of March 2014. Johannesburg had not seen

the sun in days and the country was experiencing the worst floods in 14 years. But the band members of the Noordgesig Boys Brigade (which also has girls) would not be cowered by the rains. They had a plan: to march from the Noordgesig primary school, across the Soweto Highway to the opening of a just-beautified park in Orlando East. Nothing, it seemed, would stop the troupe who were clad in midnight blue scout gear and traditional 1950s garrison hats, from executing it. The eager brigade, their friends and supervisors stood huddled from the rain under the protective roof of the school. The parade was over an hour late and plans were being made to transport the band to the park 3km away by mini-bus taxis. As the rain continued, the young musicians, tired of their containment, became restless. The percussion-

ist began to let out a rhythmic rumble on his Maxtone drum, then the high-pitched tin cans joined in and then the trumpets. In a few minutes, like the rising of a wave, everyone was dancing, singing and laughing. This band was not waiting on the rain anymore. There was a parade to put on show.

The parade was one of the two projects led by Marjetica Potrč together with students from her Design for the Living World class, which she teaches at the University of Fine Arts/Hochschule für bildende Künste (HFBK) in Hamburg. The student group included Finn Brüggemann, Maria Christou, Anja Gerin, Amalia Ruiz-Larrea, Nuriye Tohermes, and Radoš Vujaklija as well as Charlotte Riepe (of morethanshelters, Berlin and Hamburg), as a guest of the class. Marjetica and her students had arrived in South Africa some two months earlier. Anja Gerin said to me, »we came with many feelings which were unsorted, and we didn't know where we were going. It was very surprising what we saw when we came.« For two months, the ›people from Germany‹ as the group came to be known in Soweto, lived and worked in the community. This is an integral part of Marjetica's art practice. »You need to be really embedded in the society to understand their needs and propose what they want« she said at a presentation at Wits University. »To do to something together that makes sense, not just an artistic intervention and then everything collapses when you leave.«

Even the sun could not stay away from the band's sounds in the schoolyard. No sooner had their instruments warmed up, the clouds began to give way and the rain that had come

MIKE MAKWELA PROJECT MANAGER PLANACT INTRODUCING SOWETO

down for weeks began to subside. Before long, the band members had lined up. Percussionists first starting with the young four-year-olds, then the horns, followed by the vuvuzela's, plastic 20 litre drums and tin cans. As the band walked through the neighbourhood, people came out of their homes to join and cheer them on. What started out as a 50-strong procession was, by the end of the march, at least five times that. Even the South African Police Services, metro police, and the fire engine, there to ensure the safety of marchers, could not help but become part of the procession with many of the officials visibly moving to the band's local tunes. »All the police cars became part of the parade,« said Anja Gerin, »it became hilarious, it was huge!«, »I was very happy« ,one of the trumpet players told me when we got to the park venue, »people came out and cheered us!« When the band arrived at the park, there was a hush as the official opening began. After speeches from the councillor of the area and community representatives, Paulina who runs the crèche bordering the park unveiled the park's new name: Ubuntu. »It means humanity,« Gloria who lives in one of the homes neighbouring the park told me.

When they arrived, on January 15, the Hamburg-based group knew that they wanted to work in the Noordgesig and Orlando East communities. Research undertaken by Plan-act, a Johannesburg based non-profit organisation, had pointed to a historical rift between the coloured community in Noordgesig and the black community in Orlando East. According to Mike Makwela, project manager at Planact, »Noordgesig is predominantly coloured and Orlando East black. The two communities don't mix, especially the younger generation.« Separated by the Soweto Highway and the suave new BRT station, the community, according to their research, remained culturally and physically apart. The artists and architects wanted to explore ways of uniting both communities. »First we had to talk to community leaders. I wouldn't do it in other countries,« Marjetica explained, »but to meet community leaders here [in South Africa] is very important.« »We follow protocol here [in South Africa] and we had to go through our leadership structures,« said Mike Makwela. »It was strategic to bring in the officials,« he continued. »Everybody loves a winner, all of a sudden they see something is happening and because there is something to celebrate they are now on board.« With the leadership's blessings the group, together with their Soweto hosts began to talk to community members to understand what their needs were and what they wanted to do. »We came up with three projects,« Maria Christou told us at the Wits presentation. »A community garden project at the Noordgesig primary school that serves as a role model for enhancing food security in the community and encouraging the production of food by students and com-


VEGETABLE GARDEN AT NOORDGESIG PRIMARY SCHOOL, SOWETO

munity members; a park in Orlando East; and a parade that celebrated youth culture in both communities«.

Conceptual artist and architect Marjetica Potrč, a winner of the prestigious Hugo Boss Prize, teaches participatory design in Hamburg, Germany. »It is my passion to do projects with students for more than two months in a specific location,« she said, in the hot and packed room at Wits University about 21km away from her temporary abode in Soweto. While short-term art interventions have their place, she believes that »it is important to understand the social and political background and the challenges of the people you work with.« Typically, her embedded art practice involves four phases: conducting in-depth research before entering the community; talking and listening to the community and co-designing the project; working with the community to implement the project; and transferring responsibility for the developed project to the community in order to leave behind a sustainable work that benefits the community in the long term, before leaving

MARJETICA POTRČ ON COMMUNITIES

the project. »The fourth step is very important, you need to leave the project so that the project lives on.« For Marjetica, it is the act of leaving the project that allows it to have an after-life beyond the artist, as if the artist's ultimate success is measured not in the ›thing‹ itself, but in what life it grows and sustains beyond the artist. »I never actually follow up when we make this transition. My projects they take on a life of their own.«

»There is a shift from object art to relational object,« said Marjetica when reflecting upon her participatory art practice. »Are gardens art? We are talking about co-authorship,« she said, making the point that the process of creative collaboration may be more important than the outcome. Participatory art shines a light on the performative aspects of the collaboration; the nature of conversations; the dynamics of coming together; and the productive value of engagement. But even the notion of co-authorship is not guaranteed in collaborative processes. Can we ignore race, class and the imbalance of power dynamics that are inherent to collaborative art practices in contexts like contemporary Soweto? What about the role of the artist, their intentions and creative

direction. Are these ever at odds with community needs and priorities? It is these tensions between aesthetics and process, artist and

Beyond materiality: the symbolism of public space

CLEANING CAMPAIGN IN ORLANDO-EAST

community that allow a critical reflection of the Soweto art project.

On a sunny afternoon a few weeks after the parade, a group of community members involved in the cleaning and building of Ubuntu Park gathered together around one of the newly installed wooden park tables. They were reflecting on their experience of working on the project, the collaborations with »the Germans« and the park's future. The group included: Lebo Nkosi, the secretary of the newly formed management team; Bongani Lukele and Patrick Moshebi, members of the security group; Phumelelo, who runs a youth chess club; Zithulele Malinga; Gloria Makwela; Themba Skosana; Sophie Luthuli; and Paulina Khomo who runs the neighbouring crèche. It was hard not to get carried away by the exuberant discussion on the park's future. »I'd love for a day or two

to have kids playing chess in the park,« Phumulelo said. Turning her eyes towards the newly constructed concrete stage that was part of the art initiative, Sophia interjected, »When I see that stage I see poetry sessions, music, dancing, kids doing positive things. That's what I see around here.«

»If people don't dump here, grass is gonna grow, life is gonna grow, trees are gonna grow,« Phumelelo continued, »I would like to some day organise something.«

»We have a very painful history and we wanna tell our stories in a positive way, in a way that would tell this child,« said Sophia pointing to her son, »yes it happened but we are moving forward.«

In a way, Ubuntu Park is about the rewriting of a community's history. It moves beyond the materiality of the park, its benches, braai (barbeque) stands and concrete stage. Indeed, the park's realisation touched at the heart of a deep-seated questioning of self and community, history and future, empowerment and disempowerment.

When Orlando was built in 1931, it was, according to the Johannesburg City Council then, to fulfill the needs of the »better-class native, the new Bantu who has a sense of beauty and proportion. Like other people, they appreciate variety.«[1] In truth, the buildings were poorly constructed, the houses had no water or toilets and there were no tarred roads. The homes were not plastered and were far away from the city where jobs, shops and economic opportunity resided. The building of Soweto was part of the government's plan to separate the races and eradicate »black spots« in the city where blacks lived too close to whites. Sparsely scattered amidst what were known as ›matchbox houses‹, because of their identical monotonous grid blueprint, are vacant plots. Local lore has it that these empty lands were meant for shops, parks and other community services that failed to materialise, but have become convenient places for dumping waste. From above, Ubuntu Park looks like a courtyard flanked by a crèche, a church and residential houses on its four sides. But until the coming of »Masechaba [which means mother of the nation, the community's term of endearment and respect for Marjetica] and her team,« a resident who lives in one of the houses facing the park told me at the park's inauguration, »this was a dumping site.«

»It was where they were dumping rubbish; if the refuse company didn't come, they dumped here. Then they would burn old mattresses at night. Think about how unhealthy it is to live around here,« another resident chimed. »The houses where we lived had so many flies in summer and they smelled bad because of the rubbish.«

»It was an evil place,« Paulina who runs the crèche said, »lots of things rotten! It was dusty and stinky for many years.«

And this was one of the puzzles that got me asking how a community that surrounded this piece of ground had allowed it to become so decrepit. »And why,« I asked the group gathered around the picnic table on the warm Sunday afternoon, »did it have to take Masechaba and her ›team from Germany‹, for the community to reclaim this park in their own backyard?« There was a brief silence before Bongani Lukele, a member of the security team said this:

»Lack of community communication, some of the people are too ignorant. I believe that if one or two of us can say come and help us, people will find excuses and say ›I must go to church‹, but at the end of the day as the youth we have learned a lot. Although we wish this would have happened long ago. We have learned a lot from Masechaba and all the guys who have come from Germany. We should stand up and have

that power.« The conversation that followed involved a frank dissection of contemporary urban life. It is not that people were content with the squalor of the park that they had lived next to for so many years, it was that other things had taken over. The anomie of city life; the busy-ness of the everyday; the clashing priorities of the self, family and community; and the disheartening feeling of dealing with offi-cialdom, city officials and elected leaders. For the group that gathered around the park table, »the Germans« allowed people to step out of their routine and see something new. Gloria, who had helped to clean the park said: »The Germans came and held our hand and gave us strength.«

One of the frustrations facing community members who had previously tried to address the decaying site was the inaction of the council. Some of those I spoke to said that they had approached their councillor who had not done anything. Some months before though, a City Park's truck had arrived on site and had cleared the area and planted trees. A few weeks later though, the park was once again dirty and the trees were all dead. Some of those I spoke to blame the council for this neglect. »They planted trees and never came back,« one woman walking in the parade said to me, »they don't maintain the park.« While some blame the council, others argue that it is not the council that destroyed the trees, nor is it the council that prevented the community from coming together and cleaning up their neighbourhood. »It is ignorance,« Zitulele who has been involved in the landscaping of the Bus Rapid Transit route in Soweto said emphatically. »People are igno-rant destroying the flowers, plants [and] trees.

Young children are not taught how to take care of their environment.« »There is a lack of knowledge and motivation,« Bongani added, »people were busy with other things.«

Debates around the relationship between space and human behaviour have a history in psychology, social science and urban planning[2]. In 1982, George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson explored the relationship between policing and neighbourhood safety and realised that vandalism and urban disorder were closely linked to the nature of the urban environment. They wrote: »Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is true in nice neighbourhoods as in run-

down ones.«[3] What Bongani and the rest of the group had witnessed of their own community in Orlando East is similar to Wilson and Kelling's observations. If people see a dump, they will dump: and this anti-social behaviour reproduces itself so that what starts as dumping attracts other crimes like muggings, drugs and so on. The opposite is also true, when an environment is well taken care of, people are less likely to behave antisocially in that space. While the broken window theory makes a compelling argument on the relationship between environment and human behaviour, it has been criticised for encouraging policing practices that target marginalised communities. More pertinent for our case study, the theory fails to explain why the initial destruction takes place.

For Orlando East, an understanding of history – the nature of apartheid, people's resistance to it, and the Inkatha Freedom Party and African National Congress's factional wars in the early 1990s – offers some explanation. In the 1980s, the struggle against apartheid took the form of local insurrection under the United Democratic Front (UDF). The strategy was to make Black Local Councils (seen by many blacks as illegitimate structures that propped up the apartheid government) ungovernable. Public buildings, libraries, council offices were targeted, rent boycotts instituted. Public buildings and resources became equated to the enemy state and became spaces where people articulated their dissatisfaction with apartheid. It is no wonder then, that there is a history of neglect of public spaces, which were seen not as places where communities could come together, but perceived as ›enemy space‹. In the nineties, a new struggle took place in townships like Orlando East. Factional fighting broke out between the IFP and ANC, and public space became associated with violence, police bullets and burning tyres. Sophia remembered the park during that time:

»Before the place was not like this. They called it Hollywood before. We had a big play area with tyres – we used to call it Gomorrah – we had some swings and then it was destroyed in the '90s by burning the tyres. It was chaotic. Every time there was a gathering the police would come and disperse people with rubber bullets. I remember now … it was in 1991. I remember we had fights between Inkatha and the ANC. Even at school we used to leave at 1pm because we were scared of Inkatha.

Yet again, the notion of public space became associated with fear, violence, and danger – not building community and empowerment. If seen in this context, it is understandable how the empty lot in Orlando East suffered neglect. The community's association of the area with violence, destruction and disempowerment can explain why it has taken a long time to see and experience the space differently. It is also understandable why it required people without the collective memory of destruction and other baggage to ignite a new way of seeing the park. Mr. Skosana, an elderly gentleman that the group seemed to defer to said, »The presence of the professor's crew came with the seed. The seed must stay and we need to grow it.«

Sophia's reflection on the engagement is illuminating. »They taught us something that we know but didn't have the courage to do it. We have strength knowing that we can do it. We are going to take it further. They did it without fear, and they did it with love. I am writing a poem ›From Germany with Love‹. Orlando East is blessed because of them.«

March 9 became an important date not only for the opening of the park, but for bringing together two communities that had been separated by apartheid. »So did the parade bring the two communities together?« I posed this question to Anja Gerin, Amalia Ruiz-Larrea, Nuriye Tohermes, Finn Brüggemann and Rados Vujaklija, the Design for the Living World students, on Skype, a few weeks after they got back to Hamburg.

»It was a symbolic march,« said Anja, »it was going from the one project to the other project

and connecting them. The big symbolic act between coloured and black became small and super personal. The people who were important were those that we worked with on a personal level.« »As Planact we learnt a lot,« said Mike Makwela, »some of the [official] doors we were trying to open, they were able to open with the city and province. They became a strategy that Planact and the community could use to access development.« »The Soweto parade was important for Ubuntu Park because it was the symbolic transition of the park from our hands to the community,« said Marjetica from Hamburg. »From that moment on, the community felt ownership of the space after March 9. I got invited to many meetings with the community that I did not organise.« Indeed there is evidence that the Soweto parade was the first of many. According to Mike Makwela, »The Johannesburg Development Agency and the Johannesburg Heritage Company have committed their support for the project.« »The celebration in the park was the last act,« said one of the students. For those in the Noordgesig and Orlando East communities, we hope it was the first of many more constructive engagements in their communities.

LETTER BY THEMBA SKOSANA ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN ENVIRON UBUNTU PARK PROJECTS AND DONKEY CHURCH

Endnotes

1. Umteteli wa Bantu, c.f.

2. Jeffery, CR. 1977. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design. Sage Publications., https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=42792; Newman, O. 1973. Defensible Space: Crime Prevention through Urban Design. New York: Collier Books, https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=9697; GKelling, GL and Wilson, JQ. 1982. >Broken Windows<. The Atlantic, March 1982, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/.

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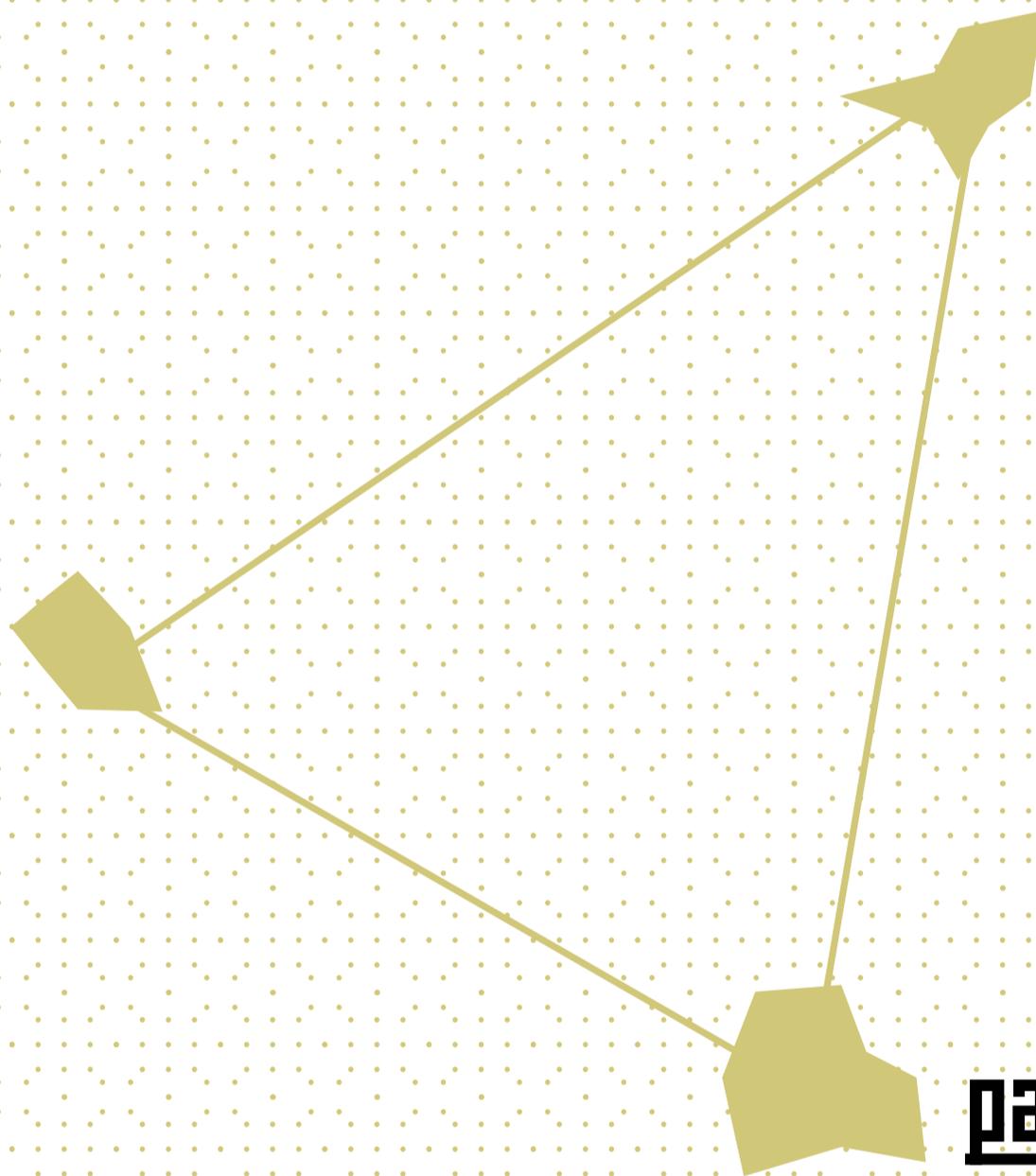
space invaders

By Valentina Rojas Loa

In April 2014, the artist Dan Halter landed in Mirafiori on the outskirts of the city of Turin. This traveller brought with him the experience of very distant places, cultures and parts of the world to what was used to be called Turin's ›Bronx‹. For decades the otherwise bourgeois and industrial north-Italian city considered the Mirafiori district to be a synonym for ›danger and crime‹ and looked down on it as an antithesis of the ›urban‹.

Mirafiori soil

From the 1940s through the 1970s, thousands of people arrived in Mirafiori in search of work at the FIAT factory plant located in this very district. These immigrant workers first came from the Piemonte region, but soon poured in by growing numbers from the most distant corners of southern Italy. Arriving in Mirafiori they found themselves faced with a total lack of housing and urban infrastructure, which is why they started building their homes with their own hands. It was not until the 1960s that the local authorities met their demands by constructing low-cost public housing, and by providing basic services such as water and electricity.

Right from the beginning – and long before urban gardening became fashionable in cities such as Paris, London or New York – the immigrants of Mirafiori improvised sophisticated vegetable gardens in order to produce their own basic food and to preserve some aspects of their rural identity. Mirafiori became a melting pot of distinct geographical and cultural origins and dialects, in part, precisely because of the common rural origin of most of its newcomers. It is because of this shared transitory rural-urban heritage that northern Italians scornfully called these migrant workers ›terroni‹ (›earthy‹).

Years later, around 2000, Turin's City Council undertook a major programme of urban renewal of the district of Mirafiori, including the reconstruction and management of the vegetable gardens. Such programme, which in part was also implemented by local citizens associations, produced remarkable results in terms of security and a sense of belonging. However, in relation to the gardens, the Council failed to acknowledge the complexity of the social – and natural – fabric that, throughout decades, had grown and flourished on site. Instead, they completely demolished most of the old gardens in order to rebuild them anew, and failed to encourage inhabitants to participate in the reconstruction process. As consequence, as the agronomist and local activist Marco Bottignole recalls, the authorities destroyed all traces of the rich network of public spaces that formerly existed, and where people used to meet.

Once the gardens were turned over, the Council opened a restrictive call to Mirafiori's low-income pensioners to apply for new allotments. Due to these limitations in the application process, the group of local garden users today consists of a homogenous population in terms of social background and age, and their energy and resources to keep the gardens productive has withered (at this point, 40 per cent of the gardens have been left to decay). There is also not much sense of community among the current gardeners.

At the same time, approximately 200 of the original gardens were preserved in their state prior to the renovation. These so-called, ›spontaneous gardens‹ are tolerated by the local authority, yet due to their ambiguous legal condition they are isolated from the ›official‹ gardens and from the infrastructure that connects the area with the city. High fences block the view and access is rough and disrupted. Nevertheless – or, rather, because of this secluded location – these gardens are inhabited by yet another group of people who have made the site their well-organised camp settlement.

Within this complex constellation of rural and urban, home and foreign affairs, Instituto Wesen, an Italian NGO supporting local development, citizen participation and cultural

SOUTH MIRAFIORI TOUR, VIDEO BY MARCO BOTTIGLONE

A MIRAFIORI IMMIGRANT STORY, VIDEO BY DAN HALTER

heritage preservation for more than 20 years, prepared the ground for artist Dan Halter's 9UB Turin residency.

Growing the project

When Dan arrived in Mirafiori, he spent his first weeks trying to understand the social and natural context of the place. Given his long experience of working on issues of migration, (born in Zimbabwe, brought up by Swiss parents and living in South Africa, he himself has a history of geographical and cultural displacement), Dan developed a project where gardening and migration could be brought together: »My idea was to use the plants to tell the story of migration. The plants themselves have an inbuilt message depending on what kind of plants they are, and where they come from. The way

they have moved around the world is political. A lot of plants that are considered to be ›Italian‹ come from somewhere else, such as tomatoes, basil or corn.«[1]

DAN HALTER, BORN IN ZIMBABWE, IS WORKING ON ISSUES OF MIGRATION

Dan's first idea was to use flowers to compose a planted sculpture of the image of the space invader, a metaphor he has used in his artistic production before, drawing on »its simple iconography and playful representation of aliens/immigrants«. However, he soon realised that in Mirafiori flowers are perceived as luxury items. He therefore decided to work with useful plants such as herbs and vegetables that locals grow in their gardens. With the help of Marco Bottignole, the local agronomist who also acted as 9UB's integrated reporter, ›gate-opener‹ and interpreter at Dan's side, he spoke to the Mirafiori gardeners in order to find out what they were interested in growing. In this sense, Dan's artwork started with learning: learning which plants to choose that would grow fast and well during the Spring-Summer season of his residency, and that could easily be transplanted in order to ›draw‹ with them and, last but not least, learning which plants offered an interesting colour palette for his extraterrestrial invasion.

The project then unfolded with the sowing and cultivating of the plants on the grounds of the Casa nel Parco, the community centre of Colonetti Park and project space for the residency. Once the plants had grown to a good size, Dan assembled a space invader image by using the trays with their different coloured plants to represent pixels. On June 14th a public event was celebrated to mark the end of the project.

A documentary video of the growing and performing of the living sculpture was shown along with a presentation of the art project within the context of Nine Urban Biotopes. At the end of the day, the plants were given away as gifts to the visitors and neighbours of Mirafiori.

Working with plants and people

The notion of fabricating things is central to Dan's artistic practice. He repeatedly works with different materials and is very keen on exploring their intrinsic characteristics in order to shape the art piece both in its physical and symbolic expression. However, he had never used living material before. Now, the project Dan envisioned meant that he had to incorporate into his practice working with living plants that needed to be nurtured and looked after continuously. »It has been nice to create something that grows from something very little … but it has been quite an effort to keep those plants alive!« Dan explained the emotional relationship he developed with his artwork and its process of growth. And with regard to the scale of his living sculpture, he experienced first hand why sustaining and managing »productive uncertainty« is intrinsic to what in experimental architecture is called ›botanic construction‹.[2]

In addition to working with plants, Dan had to incorporate the local gardeners as active stakeholders in the delivery of the project. Working with others was a new experience for Dan. By joining the 9UB project framework, he expanded his practice to include working in this way. Both the novelty of making something together with others, and the social context of the Mirafiori biotope made the process particularly challenging. Most of the gardeners belonged to a different generation, and came from a different cultural and social background. They did not have much interest in what gardening had to do with art and why what they were doing was supposed to be art in the first place. Moreover, language issues troubled their

MARCELLO'S GARDEN, VIDEO BY MARCO
BOTTIGLONE

conversations. Dan did not speak Italian and, according to Marco, the gardeners spoke in dialects or with strong accents that even for a native speaker were difficult to follow.

The support offered by Marco along with Silvia Magino and Marta Colangelo from Istituto Wesen proved crucial to building a bridge between the artist and the local inhabitants. According to Silvia, most of the gardeners were reluctant to participate in this or any other art project. Hence engaging them in a discussion about what Dan was trying to do with something as concrete and familiar to them as growing plants was as challenging as the new outlooks and perspectives that they gained were rewarding. During the process, some of the gardeners, such as Marcello Allotta, acknowledged that the effort and craft they put into their allotments, as well as the fact that they use their gardens as a means of self-expression, was indeed, their own way of making art. Dan, too, found his first encounter with participative art work very enriching: »The positive side of working with people is that I have been able to do much more than I would have been able to do by myself. It is a very collaborative

and collective work: the ideas came from the workshop, the words from the people, and the plants from the people and Marco. The difficult thing, however, was that I don't normally ask for permission to do what I do, and here I had to ask for permission for everything we did, even to cut the grass and hang posters.«

Invaders to space invaders

Asking for permission might have been bothersome, but it was nevertheless one of the minor issues that were at stake during the residency. The ›real‹ challenge was the invitation that Dan extended to a group of Roma children to participate in the project – clashing with the request of the community centre Casa nel Parco to exclude them.

The Roma children interested in Dan's work belong to five families that came from Bosnia as political refugees and who live in campers on the edges of Colonetti Park, right next to where the community centre is located. They live isolated from another Roma camp nearby who refused to integrate them in the settlement because they belonged to a different family branch. When Dan realised the kids were his neighbours, he invited them to help sow the seeds in trays and then later, when they had grown into plants, to assemble the pixel image of his living sculpture using the trays. As a matter of fact, he quickly recognised that engaging with these children was essential to him and his work: »The way Roma people are treated here was an eye opener for me. They are actually banned from here. Most of the work was made with the help of the Roma children. Dealing with the real immigrants of Mirafiori, the real out-

A VEGETABLE MIGRANT IN TURIN

INSTALLATION BY DAN HALTER

casts, was the point for me. The migrants from southern Italy are integrated. Some of them have even become snobs, if you like, but with the Roma the efforts to integrate them have failed.« Silvia from Instituto Wesen confirmed his observations. She described the situation as »history repeating«, because »Most of the families from Mirafiori treat them [the Roma settlers] like they themselves were treated back in the 1950s.«

However, the picture is of course much more complicated. The Roma are not simply the ›new victims‹ and the inhabitants of Mirafiori and the staff of the community centre the new ›culprits‹ unable to learn from their own history and experience, or refusing to grant the present day immigrants the same rights that they fought for on arrival (and which they now hold). According to Paola Monasterolo, director of Casa nel Parco, past efforts to integrate the Roma into the community centre were undertaken but failed. Paola claims that when the Roma people were invited to the community centre »They took over the facilities, in particular the toilets, and thus other people from the area were not

very keen on having them in the centre.« In addition to that, there have been constant incidents of theft, possibly perpetrated by the Roma kids, but often done quite openly by them as direct provocation.

Acknowledging these different points of view, we might ask ourselves about the more concrete circumstances that shaped this and previous encounters between the Roma and community centre staff. Perhaps building trust was not given enough time to succeed, or perhaps there was not a developed enough common language with which to reach an agreement. Moreover, the notion of integration itself needs to be reviewed. The will and need to integrate –either in the micro-cosmos of the community centre or in the larger city of Turin and Italian society– is likely to be contested both by the ›new‹ and the ›old‹ residents. Beyond being a buzzword to solve the problems that relate to migration, what does integration really mean? And on what grounds is it possible to achieve?

The interesting point here is that an event that was apparently only tangential to the project was

to become its very kernel: the Roma children were the space invaders of the Space Invaders project. And their situation as the new migrants on the edge of the city was not perceived by the gardeners as having anything in common with the experience of earlier generations of migrants to Mirafiori. Tackling problematic issues when they belong to the past and have been ›solved‹ is always safer than embracing a current situation with all the contradictions and complexities it entails. On the surface, the outcome of Dan's residency concealed the tensions among host, formal and informal participants. In between the lines, however, he allowed the situation to claim its space: at the end of his documentary video, he uses the pixels of the space invader image to write the Romani expression ›Hokkani Boro‹, which translates as ›the great trick‹ and is used to describe a person who has gained a client's trust in order to get hold of his money.

Conclusion

On the rainy evening of the project's final presentation, the neighbours, the local authorities and the members of Istituto Wesen kept mentioning that the most important outcome of Dan Halter's artistic residency for the community of Mirafiori was that they became part of an international network. From being considered the antithesis of the urban, this district became a point of reference for an international discussion on the construction of sustainable urban futures around the globe. This, of course, provided encouragement for building a sense of pride among the local people that, for more than a decade, have been striving to combat the ›fate‹ of being the perilous and unwanted peripheral daughters of Turin. Moreover, it

invited the rest of the inhabitants of Turin – who hitherto had been afraid of setting a foot into the area – to start including the supposedly scary district of Mirafiori both physically and mentally as a worthwhile part of the city. Beyond the importance of this sense of pride and transformed urban imaginary, the relevance of Space Invader lies in the fact that it succeeded in creating a metaphor of the history of migration of Mirafiori, 60 years ago and today. By using endemic and foreign plants for his living sculpture, ephemeral and interrelated nature of migration and settlement. Given the continuous and world-wide movement of both plants and people since the beginning of history, when do we start considering a plant or a person to be an ›original‹ from one place instead of another? How and when do we decide that a plant has ›the right to stay‹ even if it is an invasive specimen that destroys other ›endemic‹ plants? The South African Mesembryanthemum used by Dan in another installation he made in Turin illustrates this because today it is highly coveted in Italian gardens due to its ornamental value.[3]

As Dan mentioned before, some of the most typical ingredients of Italian cuisine – or any other cuisine when traced back in history – came from different corners of the planet centuries ago. The ›aboriginal‹ human population is also originally constituted of nomads who migrated around the world looking for a suitable place to live. Countries such as the United States are very proud of their migrant origins (although not very welcoming to their present migrants). The same is true with the Roma population both in the micro-cosmos of Mirafiori and on the European continent:

Where do they belong? What belongs to them? Are they not part of a pan-European culture? Does a nomadic population have the right to roam a territory that crosses national borders? Who decides whether they are entitled to stay and under what conditions? Dan Halter's 9UB residency in Turin revealed that a project about something as innocent and benign as gardening can address some of the most pressing issues of our human condition.

SPACE INVADERS A MIRAFIORI
Presentazione finale del progetto

SABATO 14 GIUGNO H 16
Casa nel parco, via Artom

h 16: introduzione a cura di Wesen e saluto di partner e istituzioni

Presentazione dell'opera dell'artista Dan Halter

Proiezione del video: Space Invaders a Mirafiori

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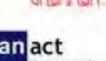
Endnotes

1   This and all following quotations have been taken from in-depth
    project interviews held with Dan Halter, Silvia Magino, Marta
    Colangelo, Marco Bottignole, Paola Monasterolo and Marcello
    Allotta on the 14th and 15th of June 2014.

2   See Schwertfeger, Hannes. 2012. ›Productive Uncertain‹. Oase
    Journal for Architecture 70 – 78.

3   This plant was part of an artwork developed by Dan Halter at the
    exhibition Vegetation as a Political Agent, which took place at
    Turin's art centre Parco Arte Vivente, during the time Dan was
    doing his residency at Mirafiori.

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warwick junction: redefining public art and space in durban

By Caroline Wanjiku Kihato

In the quest for public space in South Africa it is premature to put the words ›public‹ and ›space‹ together. Post-1994 we never started by asking, who is the public? How many publics? What is the public? Where is the public? before attempting to create a public space or public art.

by doung anwar jahangeer, Johannesburg, May 2014.

It was the events of the violence of 2009 that the market traders at the Warwick Junction in Durban kept recounting to me at the launch of ›Compliments and Complaints‹. The day was Friday, 27 June 2014 and my question to the traders could not have been further (at least in my mind) from the five-day standoff in June 2009 between the Ethekwini Metropolitan Police and the market traders. I asked the traders simply, what do you think of the project ›Compliments and Complaints‹? Like a wound that will not heal, the response would take us back to that fateful time almost exactly five years before. »The municipality came down on us saying that the market was going to close,« Money Govender – a third generation market trader told me. »They closed the gate of the

morning market and for five days the Metro Police harassed us.« »2009 I can't forget,« said 65-year-old T. Naidoo who has been selling in the market for fifty years. »The police started shooting at us … me and my friend dived under the cartons until the shooting stopped,« she said pointing underneath the empty cartons in her stall. »Since then, the market has been slow.« »The bullet hit my cheek here,« a middle-aged woman interjected pointing at her right cheek. »At that time I didn't even feel anything; I was even helping other people. Only later did I realise that I was bleeding.« »We fought our battle, it was too violent,« said Alfred, who has been in the market for sixty years, »they put the cops on us.« So the memories of the time the traders almost lost their market would continue, and as if to understand the significance of ›Compliments and Complaints‹, the traders needed to take me back to five years earlier.

›Compliments and Complaints‹ is a collaboration between photographer and media-artist Armin Linke and architect and artist doung anwar jahangeer of dala artarchitecture. Armin lives in Milan and Berlin. Working with

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS, VIDEO BY DALA

both photography and film, his ongoing work archives human activity in varied manmade and natural landscapes. doung hails from Mauritius and has lived in Durban since 1992. I met doung on a sunny autumnal afternoon in Johannesburg. »You must keep me in line« he warned me, »I am terrible, I don't stop talking.« In a gap year travelling through Asia, doung witnessed something that would change the way in which he understood architecture. It was the end of the day in Mumbai, the sun was setting, hawkers were folding up their belongings as people made their way home to their evening activities. doung had paused to take a break and in front of him, a family – mother, father, grandmother and two children – unfolded their meager belongings and began to set up for the night. The father opened up his board game and began playing against himself. Next to him, the mother began to cook dinner on a mobile stove and next to them the grandmother entertained the children. This home had no walls, interior or exterior, to separate the family from the bustle around them. They focused on their evening activities, oblivious to what was going on around them.

doung watched this staging with interest and decided to test a hunch. »I walked in between the father's game and the mother's kitchen, pretending I was lost,« he told me. »They did not notice. I walked through again, and the family kept on with its evening activities, as though no one had entered their space.« They were home now, and in their minds had erected this invisible place that was impermeable to the world outside. Trained as an architect at the University of Cape Town, a discipline that is about the built form, concrete walls and spaces,

THE AFRICAN CITY, VIDEO BY DALA

the very idea that architecture was a state of mind, invisible, and ephemeral was antithetical to what he had learned; that in fact what we call urban is about the invisible and transient spaces, constructed of both visible and invisible rules, formal and informal spaces. It is this experience that informs his activist and creative practice.

The project involved providing cameras to ten traders who work at the Warwick Junction in Durban's Central Business District. The idea was for the traders to take images of their lives in the market and tell their stories of their experiences there. This was vital for Armin since, »As a photographer it was important not to make the images myself, but to create an infrastructure that people with real and long-time knowledge of the place could use to create their own visual narration,« he said. »Photography could be an objective way to speak about everyday problems that often are forgotten or not visualised because they are considered too banal.« As each trader talked about their photographs, they were captured on camera and their short films formed part of the exhibition located in the morning market. Opposite the market, on

the other side of Julius Nyerere Road, the team set up an exhibition stall on the pavement with poster images and words taken by the ten traders. Each poster hanging from the makeshift marquee communicates a message:

My permit lies

Senza Ubuntu Ngokudayisa Edolobheni
Foreign traders, fair traders, legal traders
Phansi ngemoli phezulu ngemakethe
Trade pride: I am proud of what I sell

ALFRED RANGASAMY – FLOWER TRADER,
VIDEO BY ARMIN LINKE

As people walked past, they slowed down to look at the words, some stopped to watch and listen to the guitarist singing in the marquee, while others spoke to those in the stall. »We wanted to create a project with traders, to capture their words and collaborate with them to present it in a different form,« doung told me. »We are engaging in a subversive exercise where we start to define an alternative language at looking at urban and personal development.«

›Compliments and Complaints‹ aimed at using a method, which would provide a platform for democratic participatory engagement. Both Armin and doung focused on engaging in a collective creative process that redefines and expands the meaning of public space. The project goes beyond telling the stories of traders' experiences. It seeks a way of communicating with policy makers that both humanises and empowers the traders. »The project was part of a process of engaging in new forms of unlearning archaic city planning, and creating a platform to validate the innovative practices of emerging local initiatives,« doung said. Just how considered this modus operandi was, was articulated by Mzwandile Mavula, a fruit seller and the provincial secretary for the African Cooperative for Hawkers and Informal Business:

»The manner in which we have been dealing with the municipality, communicating a message through pictures, we are trying a new way of communicating where the traders can be treated as subjects rather than objects. The pictures are coming from us and this gives us a voice that was stolen by the municipality. It gives the municipality a chance to change their mentality. I think they will start to learn, it gives them an opportunity to re-learn our culture. It will have an impact for future generations where those who design our cities will accommodate street vendors.«

And it was this sense of recovery and ownership of voice, of history and of power that resonated throughout the day of the launch. As the ten television screens looped the short films,

SAVE THE MARKET, NO FORCED REMOVAL PICTURE

traders from the market clustered around the screens to see and listen to their own. I asked one woman sitting on a makeshift crate what she thought of the exhibition. »I came to see my friend on television. I can't hear what she is saying.« After a short pause she continued, »But it is good to see one of us there talking.«

The choice of Warwick Junction as the site for the Durban biotope was not accidental. According to Armin, »It was important to select an exhibition space that was not a gallery space, but a space in the urban context itself, where a typical art public would need to make an effort to get in contact with the real space and people.« Warwick Junction lies in Durban's Central Business District where the city's trains, buses and taxis converge around Warwick Avenue. It is a maze of layers of colonial, apartheid, and post-apartheid constructions, linked together by a fragile patchwork of corrugated iron, fencing, bridges and people's memories. By midday, the Junction is a cacophony of sounds from vehicles coming in or leaving town, people buying and selling, eating, meeting or just passing through. With at least 460,000 commuters passing through each day and between 5000 to 8000 vendors in its nine markets and along the streets, Warwick Junction is touted as South Africa's ›most authentic African market‹.

July 2009 was not the first time the traders had come into contact with city authorities, however. In fact, Warwick Junction has his-

torically been a site of contestation between city dwellers wanting to make a living and the municipality seeking to regulate and control trading activities in the area. A 73-year-old woman who has been in the market since 1957, remembers the days of the ›blackjacks‹. »That was during apartheid,« she explained, »that's what we used to call the metro [police] in those days. They used to harass us to prevent us from selling.« The Early Morning Market has its beginnings in the late 1990s, with indentured sugar cane cutters from India. As many labourers began farming, they needed a market to sell their fresh produce. Even at the time, the colonial government sought to keep the races apart. Indians were unable to sell at the European market and after protests, the city built an Indian market on Victoria street in 1910 where the farmers could trade. Even then there were protests by the Indian traders that the new market was too small and close to blacks. Before long, a Street market, which was known as the ›squatters market‹, mushroomed along Victoria Street. In January 1934, the Durban Council built a structure comprising 618 stalls for the traders. But the stalls were not enough to accommodate all the traders, some of whom were forced to continue trading illegally on the streets. During apartheid, street trading was tightly controlled and traders and blackjacks clashed often. According to Caroline Skinner, in the '90s, the post-apartheid city administration made significant strides to accommodate street vendors with its progressive antipoverty policy. However, over the last decade and particularly since 2009 when the council announced its plans to build a mall in the area, traders' positions have been precarious. That is when they vowed to fight for their right to the city.

MZWANDILE MAVULA INTERVIEW, VIDEO BY ARMIN LINKE

Yet the growing pressure to ›modernise‹ Warwick Junction and the clampdown on informal street trading is contradictory to people's needs and everyday lives. In this part of the city, traders have mastered their clients' needs and budgets. Whether you have one or one hundred Rand, you will find something here that suits your budget. It is no wonder that state agents, like Ethekwini's Metropolitan Policemen and -women will do their shopping at stalls, which they have orders to destroy. Mzwandile Mavula, a fruit seller at the corner of Canongate Road and Julius Nyerere Street, and one of the ten participants in ›Compliments and Complaints‹, points to this paradox in a photograph he took:

»The reason I took this picture is to show [how] the metro police harass us when we trade. You can see here is the metro police coming to buy from the very same people they don't want to operate. It also serves them during their work. That was the reason I wanted to expose [how] it is not only helping the local residents, [but] even those who hate us.«

MONEY GOVENDER – HEAD OF THE WOMEN TRADERS GROUP, VIDEO BY ARMIN LINKE

And so the everyday practices of ordinary urban dwellers reveal the contradictions of the city. Talking about her images for ›Compliments and Complaints‹ Money Govender put it this way: »I talked about the metro. I never thought in my entire life that human beings could be treated the way we were treated in 2009. They wanted to take this place. I want to tell people what we went through. I feel that it is a reverse government. They talk about job creation, how are they creating jobs when they are taking away from us?«

Warwick Junction captures the paradox that confronts South Africa's post-apartheid cities.

At this junction, there is a disjuncture between policy makers' and ordinary people's vision for the city; people's needs and the city's need to regulate; people's participation in the economy and the city's economic vision.

Whether on the streets or in the markets, or on the busy roads of Warwick Junction, this space is more than a trading place. It is a place where migrants from India, South Africa and other parts of Africa and the world begin their journey to self-reliance and freedom. It is a place that has fed and educated multiple generations. It is a place where the struggle for the right to the city is continuously fought in ways that compel us to rethink what humanity means in the city.

»We would like to be treated like humans with dignity and respect, like the officials. What we would want is for the government to support us, not treat us like dirt, as if we are nothing,« Mzwandile Mavula says in his video interview. »This fight is not for me,« says Money Govender, pointing at the project installation in the market. »It's for the rest that come behind me. This is our market … it is where life began. They can't take it away. We will fight. We can't allow the municipality to take something so beautiful and important from our country.«

Perhaps it is here, in this space, at this junction, that we begin to redefine what public space and public art mean in a contemporary African city. And maybe, just maybe, the participants in ›Compliments and Complaints‹ take a step towards that redefinition.

9 urban biotopes /durban presents a cultural action:
negotiating the future of urban living
inkulumiswano ngekusasa lokuphilisana edolobha

Compliments and Complaints

urban biotopes

project presentation :
friday 27 June
8am - 5pm
Warwick Junction
Early Morning Market and on the pavement, cnr Acorn Rd and Julius Nyerere Str

inside Early Morning Market : video installation / photographic exhibition
on the pavement : photographic exhibition
collection of compliments and complaints about issues of trade in the city

in collaboration with Armin Linke and Doung Anwar Jahangeer (dala)
www.urban-biotopes.net
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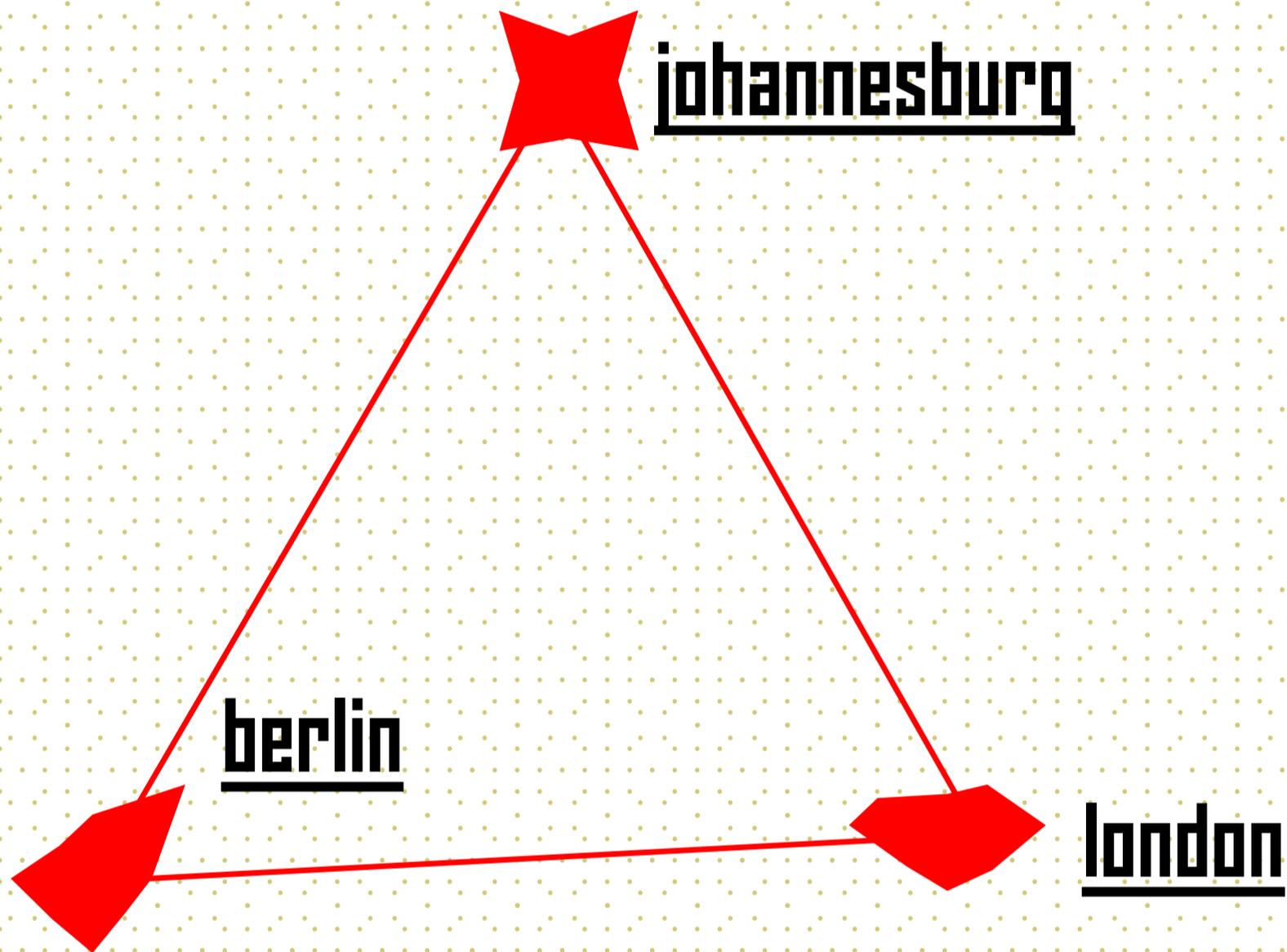
a cup of tea and a marriage proposal

By Valentina Rojas Loa

The trains of Berlin pass by on the opposite shore, one after another, non-stop. The city too keeps moving, rushing towards its future, sometimes blindly, other times with eyes wide open, and often with the memory of the recent past still tingling upon the iris.

Amidst the rush, a South African woman places a table at the Spree riverside and for 30 days,

offers almost 850 cups of fresh mint tea to passers-by in exchange for a photograph and a conversation.

The conversation circles around the past and the future of the city of Berlin; and the layer upon layer of history turned into concrete, debris and dreams; around personal stories, and paths not chosen, individual possibilities, fears and dreams; and somehow, also, about ›marriage‹: the alliance of citizens bonded by building and living together – under a plastic tepee, or by contrast, and in close proximity, within an eco-logically and socially sustainable brand new building project; the awkward yet profitable connection between high-end apartments, a housing cooperative and a fleeting micro-uto-pia; the match between Berlin and Johannes-

burg; the partnership between artistic and social research; and the ›marriage‹ marriage.

The smartphone photograph taken at the end of each conversation seals the exchange, and exists less as an object than a gesture; the remnant and proof of participation in a process; an acknowledgement perhaps, of human connection.

Living together

The biotope where artist Terry Kurgan conducted her residency is located between the boroughs of Kreuzberg and Mitte, right on the former border between West and East Berlin. After the Berlin Wall came down, the area fell into a deep sleep. Despite its proximity to the city centre, and its fabulous, scenic location on the banks of the river Spree, it remained a collection of empty lots and derelict buildings that were the temporary homes of some of the city's most legendary nightclubs: Kiki Blofeld, Tresor, and Kater Holzig.

During the last decade, however, rising pressure on the Berlin housing market has directed keen attention to this neighbourhood, which has resulted in dispute and conflict with regard to competing ideas about possible development paths to follow. For example: Kreuzberg residents' autonomous resistance to the business development plan of Mediaspree (as well as against culture-driven gentrification disguised as architectural research á la Guggenheim Lab), new Spreefeld residents against the party crowd of the club scene, the city-wide public against the privatisation of the river's shoreline, and local home owners against the unbridled

greed of international investors. Today, the site and its surroundings are characterised by different experiments in communal living, and by relatively unchecked real estate speculation.

Terry's residency covered an area containing three sites: the three brand new, eco-friendly, eight-storey buildings of the Spreefeld Housing Cooperative, the temporary settlement of self made shelters called Teepee Land, an »experiment« and »political statement« in democratic planning and societal conviviality;[1] somehow evoking the spirit of Berlin's pioneer days of the early 1990s; and finally, the Seifen Fabrik, an upmarket residential development of a former soap factory, currently being converted into luxury apartments as private investment. What unites these three ›worlds‹ are the extensive public, semi-public and private land running along the Spree River front, and upon which all of them rest.

The artist was particularly impressed by the physical proximity of such contrasting types of dwellings and lifestyles, superimposed upon the many visible layers and traces of 20th century history embedded within the site. »In South Africa, I work a lot with the notion of the palimpsest. In Johannesburg, there is so much past and present history alive at the same time, having to co-exist and ›get along with each other‹, so to speak, in such conflicting, complicated and of course, conciliatory ways. I was at home on the Spreefeld once I understood how many different chapters of Berlin's history the site told … I was also struck by the extraordinary juxtaposition of different kinds of co-housing communities, and how so many pressing contemporary Berlin urban and social issues were

evoked by the very particular one square kilometre upon which my project was based.«[2]

Terry's residency was planned as a collaboration with the host organisation id22, Institute for Creative Sustainability, a not-for-profit association »supporting cultures of sustainable urban development and innovative housing«. Michael LaFond, director of id22 is also a resident member of the Spreefeld Cooperative and believes that art can be very helpful when »communicating creative sustainability, creative methodology, publics and networking«.[3] Moreover, id22 was particularly interested in seeing what the cooperative could learn from Terry's work. »We expected that there would be some kind of research produced that might enable the members of our cooperative to reflect upon their lifestyle choices, their dreams, their fears and their own visions.«

Creating an ›issue‹

Terry has a diverse and extensive artistic practice exploring the borders between the private and the public in the South African public domain. Her original idea for the residency, which came along with the ready-made brief – to explore alternative housing cultures in Berlin – was to do a project on ›intimacy‹ in the context of the physical space of the different communities living on the Spreefeld. She thought about creating a project, a ›monument‹, or an installation composed of gestures from everyday life. Her plan was to speak to people in Teepee Land, the Spreefeld Cooperative, and a range of other co-housing communities in close proximity, and ask them questions that they would respond to by photographically docu-

menting moments in their personal lives. These would then be uploaded onto a platform like Instagram, and shared amongst a larger group. But there was not much take-up and so she went about researching the social and physical infrastructure of the site to come up with ›Plan B‹. Terry was anxious to find ›an issue‹, or ›a problem‹, to work with, or reflect. »These different co-housing projects, they mostly made people's lives look so perfect! And so I decided to try and understand the space surrounding, and in-between them more carefully instead.«

For id22 and the members of the cooperative the ›issues‹ that were relevant or represented ›problems‹ to them were hard for Terry to grasp or identify with. This points to important considerations regarding the creation of issues as Bruno Latour expounds. »Issues«, just like publics,« says Latour in his contribution to this e-Book, »have to be created.« People are not born with passions, interests and concerns for a certain topic. To the contrary, any such interests are created through the knowledge and experience a person acquires about a certain situation, the assimilation of such knowledge and its integration into what the person considers relevant.

In this light, id22 and the cooperative's concerns were perhaps not raised clearly enough, and therefore the artist's process of identification with these did not take root, in order to engage them as the ›issues‹ of her residency project. Both the host and the artist mentioned that one difficulty in involving the members of the Spreefeld cooperative in the project more directly, was that they were either too busy with their daily lives, work and errands to sit down

and talk, or were away on their annual summer holidays. Additionally, Berlin is full of pop-up public art projects and many might have perceived of Terry's proposal as just another artist doing her thing. id22 was also preoccupied with organising their annual co-housing expo, ExperimentDays, and were not able to support her residency as much as they'd hoped, or as she anticipated they might.

And so Terry went her own way searching for issues to emerge; observing the particularities of the site and conducting research on Berlin's housing history and contemporary situation. She spoke to a range of ›experts‹, and read the articles they recommended. She noticed the contentious debate on the ›question of housing‹, and the ensuing ›right to the city‹ argument it generated. »It seems to me,« she later reflects on the site-specificity of her artwork, »that 20 years after the Wall has come down, public land is being sold to the highest bidder … gentrification and rampant speculation are transforming Berlin from a city where just a short while ago, 90 percent of residents were living in rent-controlled apartment buildings, into a city where now, in 2014, mostly wealthy people live, who can afford to buy their own homes or buildings, and the rest are being pushed out to suburbs on the edges. The issue seems to be about gentrification and its threat to the fabric and identity of the city« – and it ran right through the middle of the Spreefeld.

A cup of tea

For 30 days Terry Kurgan parked a mobile lab in the middle of several public paths running through the Spreefeld cooperative and Teepee

ISSS RESEARCH & ARCHITECTURE: CONCEPT AND REALISATION OF THE FINAL PRESENTATION OF 9UB IN BERLIN

Land. »I put myself right in the way, it looked really odd, and so people just had to talk to me,« says Terry with a laugh. »I offered them a cup of tea … and then I asked them about their origins, Berlin's layered history and modernity, and the quite contemporary ghosts that seem to haunt this particular spot at this moment.«

Terry held conversations with lead representatives and more recent members of the cooperative, the residents and overnight visitors of Teepee Land, Berliners at leisure, many curious tourists passing by, nudist philosopher river bathers, apartment-hunting prospectors seeking value at low prices, and also with some of the builders and workers of the Seifen Fabrik site. The ›Spreelab‹ mobile furniture she used was developed with students of the BTK summer school design&build workshop hosted by id22 and Stefan Schwarz and Ingrid Sabatier of ISSSresearch&architecture.

Terry's presentation of her process, developed in collaboration with architects Schwarz and

Sabatier, and graphic designer Pablo San Jose, represented a selection of these many conversations. The exhibition comprised <u>a short stop-animation movie</u>, a series of portrait photographs and linked narrative text that were installed into a perfectly intact former GDR river police boathouse right in the middle of the square kilometer within which she'd been roaming. The boathouse had been one of the famous – post-fall of the wall – nightclubs and was now also part of the property owned by the Spreefeld cooperative.

However, for her, these outcomes were almost by-products or documentation. »My piece,« she explains, »was process driven and became a performance.« »As a matter of fact,« she continues, »I have never performed in this way before, and I was terribly aware and self-conscious that I was performing a version of myself in order to engage people in a particular way.« With regard to her placement in this biotope in relation to her own practice and to the larger 9UB project, she felt that her work related to Antje Schiffer's and Anthony Schrag's residencies in Cape Town and Johannesburg; with Anthony contesting the role and purpose of the artist performing in the public realm, and Antje acknowledging, just as Terry has, how challenging it is to engage in such contrasting urban contexts and social realities; urban South Africa by comparison with Berlin.

Artistic research

Terry Kurgan's intervention raised another issue for her, alongside the gentrification debate, about the role of socially engaged art practices in different contexts. Speaking

UNEQUAL SOCIAL POSITIONS ARE SOMETIMES PART OF THE NEGOTIATION OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ARTISTIC PROCESSES

about her larger body of work, Terry claims to be working »in a research driven way« with a particular focus on »pressing contemporary South African political and social issues«. And she explains, that »In the South African context, with its deep history and legacy of racial and social injustice and inequality, artistic public engagements often seem to try to ›help‹, or to make reparation, and inescapably raise the question for me of the role and purpose of public art; and of the extraordinary tension between artistic and social narratives. In Berlin, it was a great relief somehow to be working in a context and amongst people who did not need my ›help‹, and it was an extraordinary coincidence that while I was thinking about this in Berlin, Anthony Schrag picked up on exactly this issue in the South African context on his residency in Johannesburg, and provocatively walked through the inner city with a huge sign saying »Art cannot help you«. This reflection draws attention to the often hidden agendas and unequal social positions that are

sometimes part of the negotiation of socially engaged artistic processes. The specific practice and research contribution of this kind of art is the de- and re-materialisation of the production and life of issues and their publics.

Regarding the standards of artistic research, Henk Borgdorff points out in his contribution to this e-Publication that in the past century a »qualitative research paradigm« has developed in the social sciences, where »interpretation and practical participation are more relevant than logical explanation and theoretical distance«, and quantitative standards. In this regard, Michael LaFond raised the concern that the ›public‹ of the Spreefeld from which Terry drew her sample, was a selective one. It was mainly passers-by that accepted her offer of a cup of tea, while the members of the cooperative mostly did not or could not make the time. Michael describes Terry's work as a practice of mapping: »Terry created a space with her table and documented this space … There was a complex constellation of actors and possibilities and mapping it out was the artistic part.« It was not as »representative and rigorous as an academic survey might be« – yet precisely because of this lack it had the qualities of other forms of knowing: it reconfigured the site and matters of concern in an engaging, multi-coloured and inventive way and allowed fresh questions to be asked about the issues at the heart of the cohabitation model of the Spreefeld cooperative. Michael explains: »For us it was interesting to see from Terry's work what kinds of people move through our space: how open it is, how public, and how private, and whether it is okay for people to keep coming through, or whether

we need a fence: all these questions are very relevant to us.«

Reflecting on the extent to which this residency has been a form of research and what findings it has produced is a central outcome for 9UB as a dialogical platform for mutual learning and exchange. Only by making the experience productive in dialogue can it be a case study for others to learn form.

Learning from each other

Digging deeper into the particular knowledge produced by Terry Kurgan's intervention we find at its core precisely the exploration of cohabitation that in the beginning was discarded as a possible ›issue‹ for her residency. Via engaging critically with urban renewal and gentrification, the co-housing model resurfaced in the focus of both the artist's and her host's interests. »The cooperative housing model is an incredible model« Terry muses. »It's an example of purposeful exploration of environmentally and socially sustainable forms of living together, that is also capable of integrating sociability, individuality and conflict.« But her project did not neglect to raise the thorny issue of the borders and boundaries that social groups tend to want to erect around themselves; and Berlin, in this particular neighbourhood, is renegotiating the borders between public and private in a way that needs to remain transparent, honest and open.

For Michael LaFond, one of his hopes was that the 9UB project should enable communication between biotopes in order to see how people can learn from each other between north and

south. »To what extent, if at all, can we learn from each other without romanticising? Can we in Berlin be influenced by Soweto?« Unfortunately, as with other encounters, these significant questions, resonating with the ambitious aims at the core of 9UB, were hindered from being pursued due to time constraints and overstretched workloads. The shared space of this e-Book, Michael concluded, would be an important space for continuing such learning and reflection.

Bright futures (instead of a conclusion)

LET'S TALK, VIDEO BY TERRY KURGAN

As described above, the poetic narratives and compelling portraits that comprised an exhibition of Terry's dialogical encounters at the Spreefeld were presented during the fourteenth edition of id22's annual ExperimentDays in September 2014. They were installed into one half of a former GDR police boathouse together with an exhibition of all of 9UB's eight other residencies. This final exhibition, innovatively designed by ISSSresearch&architecture provided the material connection between all nine biotopes, and was also the context in which a live public chat between Terry Kurgan in Ber-

lin and Anthony Schrag in Johannesburg took place. They discussed the role of public art in their different contexts, and the value of the ups and downs of their personal experiences during their residencies.

This was also the moment when, as often happens with socially engaged art processes, some of the special and private moments of her artistic process did not come to light, such as an offer that was made to her to stay in Berlin to explore the ups and downs of living together, but this time for a life-long residency.

Endnotes

1   Ballhausen, N and Kleilein, D. 2014. ›Spreefel‹. Bauwelt, 39:
     14-23.

2   This and all following quotations from Terry Kurgan have been
     taken from the in-depth project interview held with the artist on
     the 10th of September 2014.

3   This and all following quotations from Michael LaFond and
     Ragna Sparger have been taken from the in-depth evaluation
     interview held on the 26th of September 2014 by Christian von
     Wissel. August 1st

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is dialogue enough?
the asymmetries of
partnerships

By Caroline Wanjiku Kihato

Sometimes dialogue is hard. It exposes the distance in our assumptions, our understanding of each other and our ways of seeing. Sometimes our cultural references and registers may be too far off to have easy conversations with each other. The ways we understand who we are and what we do can be questioned in a difficult

conversation. Yet while difficult conversations may be uncomfortable and painful, they are also the ones that most give us the opportunity to learn. The collaboration between Drama For Life (DFL) and Anthony Schrag provided such an opportunity. It tested the limits of dialogue in ways that were at once productive and disquieting. Yet this difficult space was also a platform for re-examining difference and questioning long-held assumptions about art, the nature of collaboration and the possibilities of dialogue. This was true not just for Schrag and DFL, but for Nine Urban Biotopes, the project that brought them together.

Drama For Life is an independent programme located at the Wits School of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Its

mission is to »enhance dialogue for purposes of social transformation through research, teaching and learning, and community engagement.« For Chatikobo Munyaradzi (Chati), DFL's Programme Manager, there were numerous reasons why DFL was excited about the Nine Urban Biotopes project. »It provided DFL an opportunity to share and exchange ideas with others,« he said to me in an interview. »It strengthened existing partnerships with Goethe-Institut and it provided a learning platform for students and academic staff.«

On his website, Anthony Schrag admits, »[that he has] a difficult relationship with art. I think that it is because ›art‹ is fundamentally an amorphous thing – it's the thing that constantly ›challenges our perceptual habits‹ (L Magor), but [which] sometimes gets formatted into galleries and museums [with] there being the expectation of what it should be, what it should look like.

And I have difficulty with that.« In an interview, Schrag told me: »Nine Urban Biotopes seemed like a good match in terms of my practice.The project was about exploring things on the ground – urban life and the joys and problems faced by people living in cities. All of my work is quite participatory, so I work with specific communities developing programmes for them and with them in collaborative ways.«

Schrag's time in Johannesburg was productive. He produced over 30 artworks that included solo and collaborative pieces.

Anthony's residency in Johannesburg questioned the world around him. His artworks continually resisted the urge to take the obvious as the answer – education as good, art as useful and armed security as the solution to high levels of crime in Johannesburg. In some of these works he interrogates his role as a white, Scot-

HIS PIECE ›I AM HERE TO HELP‹ DID JUST THIS, FOR HIM AND THE PEOPLE HE ENCOUNTERED

tish/Canadian born-in-Zimbabwe man, and inserts himself into situations and positions where he is an anachronism. His out-of-place-ness disrupts people's habitual ways of seeing in ways he hopes will result in greater reflection. His piece ›I am here to help‹ did just this for him and the people he encountered.

In »I am here to help«, Schrag sets up a table and chair on a street in Johannesburg with a sign that says: »I am here to help.« In this piece he challenges the notion that art is supposed to help. »Art is about dissent, challenge and provocation, it shouldn't aim to help, because the notion of helping is paternalistic,« he said to me in a conversation. But being in South Africa, which has extreme poverty and inequality, Schrag's understanding of art and its role was necessarily challenged. »It did challenge me to think about art in a context that isn't in northern Europe where the vast majority of people are predominantly wealthy. In a context like South Africa, is it moral [for art] to not to try to help? I don't know, because even though I did help people even by giving them directions or mak-ing someone laugh, or by making their day a little better, this did not change the structures of inequality, and so in some way it was merely a distraction from a real moral/ethical change. So, perhaps it is not ethical to try to help people, but instead change systems.«

While the residency was productive, it was not without its challenges.

Difficult questions

From the outset, the collaboration raised dif-ficult yet pertinent questions about public art practice, dialogue and collaboration across cul-tural, geographic and institutional divides. What is art? Who is the community? And how can groups that sit in different institutional locations, with varied mandates, work and learn from each other? With teaching and learning being one of DFL's key areas of work, it was impor-tant for them to locate Schrag's visit in an exist-ing academic programme. The expectation was to provide Schrag with a platform to explore his practice in relation to DFL's work and pro-grammes. »We made a conscious decision to embed the project within one of our courses, the theatre as activism course, which is a Mas-ter's course. Anthony was given six students to work with to explore spaces in Newtown and Braamfontein,« said Chati. »The first major hic-cup was that how I see community engagement was quite different from the way they (DFL) see community engagement,« Schrag said. »In my understanding of community engagement you have to have proper understanding of the com-munity, know what you are giving and what you are getting out of it. They assigned the seek-ing out of communities to students who did not have long term sustained relationships with the communities they approached.« As Taryn Lee, DFL's Sex Actually Festival Director put it: »One thing that stood out for me was that our [DFL's] understanding of community was located in space on a specific site, and it seems that Anthony didn't understand that.« For the most part, DFL's community work is located in spe-cific areas, rather than specific individuals or groups. »Most of the communities we work with are highly mobile and occupy many geographic spaces in the city. And do not necessarily stay together in a collective,« Lee explained. Because of this DFL's model of engagement

seeks to work in specific locales, where local institutions (such as schools) or organisations host populations that they can work with. Schrag's practice differs from this, exploring the relationship a community has to an institution and how they are mediated by formal institutional structures.

It is perhaps both fortuitous and problematic that DFL and Schrag were paired together for the project. DFL is located at a university, which in addition to teaching, conducting research and working with communities, also has to attract students, manage budgets and look for funding in a context of ever-shrinking institutional funds. Schrag's practice seeks to ask difficult questions of institutions, art practice and its role in transforming societies. In doing this, his work questioned the very basis upon which DFL (and other institutions) are founded. The DFL/Schrag interaction necessarily highlighted both the vulnerabilities of institutions to funding streams and the ways in which institutions sometimes compromise practice to accommodate everyday demands such as timelines, practicalities, donors, student needs and so on. These compromises are not necessarily negative or positive, but are strategies required of institutions such as DFL if they are to survive. Schrag admits that as an independent artist he is in a position of privilege and can be more critical of institutional workings in his art practice. »In northern Europe we have a lot more funding and freedom to critique and question institutions. South Africa is a different context and may not have the freedom,« he argued. Whether Schrag's analysis is correct (certainly many western organisations face similar limitations to DFL), his position as an independent artist

THE THIRD SPACE: PROGRAMME CO-ORDINATOR MUNYARADZI CHATIKOBO AND ARTIST ANTHONY SCHRAG REFLECT ON THE JOHANNESBURG RESIDENCY

allows him freedoms that others working within the confines of institutional might not have.

Unequal relations?

But perhaps in these conversations lies an even more fundamental questioning of the asymmetries of north-south collaborations. And, it is not simply the unequal resource distribution, but more significantly about how knowledge is produced, who has access to it, and how developing nations more generally, and Africa in particular, can participate on an equal footing. This was the topic of a frank video conversation between Chati and Schrag. Chati, articulates this clearly when he says:

»The idea [of Nine Urban Biotopes] is to facilitate a conversation in the virtual space where the biotope from the north and south exchange information. There is a lot that can be benefitted [...] But somehow I get stuck in the fact that there is a disproportionate transfer of knowledge, in the sense that we don't all have the privilege of easy access to the Internet and, as such, [only] a few priviledged people in the

south will get access to that. To what extent then do we facilitate that transfer of knowledge and perceptions and ideas with the broader community?«

This question perhaps opens up a broader discussion around knowledge production – question which academics, writers, and artists interested in Africa have reflected upon for a long time. African scholars like Mahmood Mamdani and Tiyambe Zeleza, among others, argue that this unequal terms of exchange of knowledge relegates Africa to producing raw material (data) while the west produces the ideas and theories. One of the missed opportunities in this biotope was the opportunity of the host organisation to assert itself on the global stage. A comment made by DFL in an evaluation report articulates this:

»We felt that the whole project, particularly the London and Berlin biotopes missed opportunities of seeing Johannesburg from the perspective of young Applied Drama and Theatre students, as their Theatre as Activism projects were not documented and uploaded on the Nine Urban Biotopes website to be seen by artists and participants from the eight other biotopes. The project ended up being more about the artist.«

Perhaps there is a question to be asked about the extent to which South African partners were involved in the conceptualisation of the Nine Urban Biotopes before they were approached to participate. Would this have made it easier to navigate the different conceptions of community, art and participation that faced DFL and the Schrag residency? Is

it even feasible to involve all partners at the inception of a project? And would this have smoothed the relationships in this biotope? It is difficult to answer these questions. But in reflecting on the DFL/Schrag biotope it is important to examine whether co-producing the project with partners from its inception would have yielded more productive dialogue in terms of knowledge sharing and learning across continents. What is clear, is that collaborations such as these need to take into cognisance that all voices are participants. Whether either partner likes the other's agenda, product, or point of view, giving everyone equal opportunity to present their work is essential; to ensure that no voice is stifled and in order to to strengthen cross-cultural dialogues.

Despite the project's shortcomings and difficulties there were important learning areas on both sides of the dialogue. Chati pointed out that it was »a very profound learning experience; a platform which allowed me to reflect on how we can begin to imagine our programming in such a way that it could be even more beneficial to us and the communities we serve. There is a need to do that and it is possible to do that.« Schrag said: »Being here has challenged me to consider what my role is and what the role of art is in a different context. I wouldn't have got that if it hadn't been for that clash of concepts.«

It takes courage to question, it takes even more courage to listen, reflect and learn from criticism. Hopefully the experiences of this biotope go some way towards allowing us all to reflect upon our own practices in our communities, countries and our world.

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CV Anthony Schrag

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sitting between chairs: the role of the creative practitioners in 9ub

By Alison Rooke and Christian von Wissel

Throughout 9UB's interventions, artists have been operating in different constellations and under different terms and conditions. They have also been working under different regimes of expectation regarding what 9UB should accomplish. The agendas of hosts, artists, local participants as well as coordinating and funding partners have been diverse, including research, developing curriculum, provoking dispute, healing cohesion, learning and teaching.

The term ›artist‹ here is, however, misleading. Rather, the ›artists‹ of 9UB have been cultural workers and urban practitioners with diverse backgrounds and training spanning architecture, arts education and design as well as fine art, photography and public/participatory art. At the same time, the ›artistic‹ practice at the centre of 9UB has also been interdisciplinary, forming nodal points in 9UB's multi-layered network where skills, expectations and agendas of hosts, local participants, coordinating and funding partners have come together. In order

evaluation

to achieve these interdisciplinary and intersectoral aims, funders have influenced hosts, hosts have directed artists and artists have engaged participants. However, this ›utilisation‹ chain has also worked in reverse, with participants taking the lead over the intervention or an artist reorienting the aim of their residency. Viewed from either side, these debates and negotiations over the direction and focus of the encounters are far from being shortcomings of the overall project. To the contrary, they are important reflections on the antagonisms that are inherent to participatory work[1] and thus valuable contributions *in practice* to 9UB's concern with »negotiating the future of urban living«.

At the same time, these reflections speak of the frameworks and theoretical constructions under which art, ›artists‹ and culture in general, are commissioned and produced. Struggles over the different roles of each partner, and the role of the artist in particular, is informed by the ethical, political and ideological framework which project partners, hosts and artists address. They are also shaped by, and actively shape, different understandings of the nature and purpose of art and of socially engaged art and artist-residencies in particular. The socially engaged, creative practitioners of 9UB, thus, found themselves at the centre of a dense and often contested network of expectations, desires and hopes. It is these expectations surrounding their work that will be reviewed in the following.

Motions and Tensions in Socially Engaged Art Practice

In general terms, socially engaged art practices de-emphasise the materiality and ›closed objecthood‹ of the artwork in order to re-conceive it as an open and collaborative process. Doing so, they not only challenge conventional notions of art but also set the frameworks by which to assess art, and its achievements into motion.[2] At the same time, socially engaged art practices raise ethical dilemmas and political tensions. They are, unavoidably, part of the discussion on what the humanist and cultural scientist George Yúdice has termed the »expediency of culture«, whereby culture is an expedient and malleable resource employed and managed on a global scale to stimulate economic growth and manage social conflict.[3] Yúdice argues that art has »folded into an expanded conception of culture that can solve problems, including job creation« and that art's often concealed agency and applied purpose is that of appeasing the systemic crisis of capitalism.[4] In this regard it is telling that socially engaged art practices usually take place within contexts of deprivation and marginalisation in order to bring about social change inspired by the ideals of democracy, equity and equality.

Instrumentalised by such agendas, artists are often tasked with producing positive experiences and ›impacts‹ when there are inevitably moments where the opposite is the case. Feelings of disappointment, debilitating pressure, indifference and uncertainty are also navigated and managed.[5] In this context, much of the work of the artist-in-residence is concerned with understanding the nature and ›quality of the invitation‹, questioning their own and ›local‹ assumptions, as well as analysing and acknowledging how own creative practices and objectives sit within the wider horizon of expectations surrounding the residency.

WALKING AS RESEARCH, INTERVENTION AND POLITICAL STATEMENT. DALA CITY WALK INITIATIVE, PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE AT WARWICK JUNCTION, DURBAN, 2ND TRIALOGUE, AUGUST 2014

Furthermore, when taking up their residencies, the agents of 9UB were placed within local and often competing frameworks and understandings. These include the nature and purpose of art as such, and of socially engaged art and artist-residencies in particular, as well as the relevant local and trans-local landscapes of cultural policy. Last but not least, visiting ›artists‹ arriving in their temporary host city cannot escape what Cape Town based cultural producer and researcher Zayd Minty describes as »the burden of history embedded in the landscape«.[6] Arguably, this is particularly the case in 9UB's apartheid-torn South African biotopes, yet certainly also relevant when engaging with tangible and intangible presences of, for example, German history in Berlin.

Taking these factors together, it becomes apparent that artists are often in a difficult position of ›sitting between chairs‹ at the centre of a dense network of expectations and desires when negotiating competing aesthetic and cultural value systems, urban formations, complex socio-political agendas, contested ethical obligations and sometimes turbulent emotional waters. A key characteristic of socially engaged art practice therefore is that of continuous and skillful dialogue and exchange between all stakeholders regarding their varying criteria of success. Futhermore, rather than concealing the simultaneously public and intimate quality of these endeavours, there is a case for finding value in the experience of uncertainty, negotiation, success *and* failure, agreement *and* disagreement, reflection, dialogue and the act of paying attention to these through a collective, creative and critical process.[7]

At the same time, we recognise that this flexible, open and iterative approach to developing creative residencies within an evaluative framework can be at odds with the demands of many funders and commissioners who usually require the delivery of planned projects with predetermined aims, outputs and impacts. In an affirmative commissioning and evaluative culture the artist's experience of uncertainty, ambivalence or even just not knowing can often be concealed when projects are public-facing and evaluated according to predetermined measures of success, which do not allow for failure and unanticipated or uncomfortable outcomes.

Residency Models in 9UB

Three principle residency types underpinned the artistic encounters and interventions of 9UB. They were born out of the contested role of the socially engaged artist and were distinct from each other on the basis of their particular host-artist-participant relationships, the duration of the encounter and the implied political-ideological frameworks of cultural programming.

In the first model, artists were understood as ›contracted cultural workers‹, whether for social development, education, community building or facilitating dialogue. Here, the residency merely provided the site of action for the cultural endeavour. In the second model, residencies were understood as laboratory and research projects with the artist as the principle researcher. In this type, the residency was held as an ›experimental system‹ for the production of knowledge.[8] The third model understood the fostered encounters between artist and site/context/participants as the space and time for co-production, critique or mutual learning. Here, the residency set the conditions and framework for such exchange. Drawn together, this typology reflects the perceptions and expectations of 9UB's different partners rather than presenting definitive categories, which is why they often overlapped in one and the same residency. A fourth mode of residency present in 9UB was that of the »act of dwelling«.[9] To think of the residencies in terms of this last category, that is, to draw on the etymological meaning of the Latin *residere*, is to understand the different artist-host-participant encounters as a specific time lived in a specific place, shaping this place and being shaped by it as the result of this engagement.

Multiple Roles from the Cases of 9UB

Antje Schiffers' residency in Cape Town comes closest to what we could call an artist-led act of dwelling, exploring and creatively responding to the city on her own terms. At the same time, her project might be regarded the least socially engaged of all of 9UB's interventions. The ›teacher-participants‹ in ›What Cape Town taught me‹ primarily acted as informants. Reciprocal listening and shared learning, however, was at the heart of Antje's relationship with Ziphozakhe (Zipho) Hlobo, the ›artist intern‹ hired to assist her as ›gate-opener‹ and interpreter.

In contrast, Dan Halter was commissioned in Turin primarily as part of a project of community building. However, he found himself in the difficult situation of working with one group, the pensioner gardeners, who were somewhat tentative about the project, while another one,

the children of the neighbouring Roma camp, was keen to participate, but kept at a distance. The difficult experiences of both artist and host point to the skills required by stakeholders in socially engaged art practices and to the high demands and expectations of them. This case made it apparent that socially engaged art is much more than a merely social encounter and the conjoined production of collaborative, process-driven art. Dan was stretched in all kinds of ways that he did not anticipate. At the same time, host and artist tried to make the most out of their encounter in order to sustain or expand their networks; Dan by building his curriculum as a global artist, and Istituto Wesen by building theirs as a local cultural player.

Meanwhile, at his Paris residency, the architect Taswald Pillay found himself placed in the role of consultant. He was treated as a ›specialist‹ in the needs and tactics of the urban poor and marginalised due to his previous work in Johannesburg – a role, however, he himself felt uncomfortable with. From the perspective of the host, Taswald helped them to accomplish their own commission, which consisted of revitalising the relationship between the Roma family and their sponsor Ecodrom, as well as improving the Romas' living conditions while carefully navigating the ›permanent temporality‹ of their situation. Within this constellation, Taswald developed a series of skills development workshops (together with Cochenko and 6ème Continent) as a critique to ›non-sensitive‹ architectural solutions. His role, therefore, became multidirectional: sympathiser with the target group, dialogue partner to the host, commissioner for additional partners and ›peer reviewer‹ to the other resident architects, the

ANTJE SCHIFFERS (CAPE TOWN) MEETING WITH STUDENTS FROM HFBK HAMBURG (SOWETO) AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM JUGENDTHEATERBÜRO (BERLIN) FOR A SHARED REFLECTION ON THEIR RESIDENCIES, 1ST TRIALOGUE ARTIST MEETING IN BERLIN, APRIL 2014

students of the design-build studio from Bellville University.

In London, arts educator Rangoato (Ra) Hlasane, was invited to facilitate a creative exchange between two artistic collectives, the South London Gallery-based Art Assassins and Johannesburg dance company, Mysterious Creatures. Ra acted as the medium through which dialogue unfolded, that is, as a ›living infrastructure‹ (compare AbdouMaliq Simone's notion of people as infrastructure[10]), albeit supported by video conferences. Taking the iterative, multimodal and intrinsically reflexive form of a call-and-response methodology,[11] exchange also happened via interpretative audio-recordings, dance and musical performances and written documentation that were sent back and forth between the two cities. In this residency, expectations were widely met among visiting cultural worker, host and creative participants largely due to the fact that they all acted on the common ground of a shared understanding of dialogical artistic prac-

tice. At the same time, the residency model envisioned by 9UB was challenged by the particularly short duration of Ra's stay in London. Rather, it was transferred into the realm of virtual communication and the facilitation of the above-mentioned trans-local and cultural artefact-based ›chain reaction‹. The encounter was turned into a successful example of what Ra described as an »online residency«.

In Soweto, the role of the artist was multiple and changed over time. Marjetica Potrč and her team acted as diagnostic devices, social workers and mediators: trying to sense what people wanted for their neighbourhood and to help them constitute as a group in order to articulate their interests. They also tried using their outsider and privileged position as white foreign artists to make connections and advance negotiations with government officials on their behalf. In exchange, they made the Ubuntu Park project become a successful example of what Marjetica frames as »design for the living world«.[12] Making connections became a key aspect of the artist's engagement; and in the process of so doing, the structures that hold people in place in Orlando East became visible, which in turn, helped residents realise their own position within the local political and institutional landscape with its respective ›protocols‹.

Regardless of their admittedly contested successes,[13] the different projects set out by the group did sound out the possibilities and adversaries of collective bottom-up agency inherent to the particular context of Soweto. Responses to this residency and its multiple parts have been diverse: oscillating between »there is

nothing there« to celebrating the case as ›best practice‹ in social urban development. Some perceived this residency as an example of misreading the cultural context, others as exemplifying a school of shared learning. These comments highlight the contested site that socially engaged art practices and their often complex, contradictory and unconventional outcomes can be. The project sat between all seats, with cultural policy frameworks, development paradigms and aesthetic judgements all pulling it into different directions.

Last but not least, visiting artists of 9UB also explored the roles of interlocutor and researcher. In the Berlin Moabit residency, Athi-Patra Ruga and the young actors of JugendtheaterBüro tried to engage in a conversation on racism and resistance, memory and trauma. Two trialogues later, Terry Kurgan intercepted the paths, lives and stories of those who, like her, explored and practiced the in-between spaces along the river Spree. This way she was able to sound out the dreams and fears that immediate users attach to this particular site that contains all the issues currently at stake in Berlin's urban development.

At the same time in Johannesburg (and in frequent exchange with Terry Kurgen in Berlin), Anthony Schrag, in addition to critically responding to his whiteness and Voortrekker ancestry, took on the role of the antagonist. He operated as the possibly arduous but eventually helpful provocateur that allows reconsidering one's own perspective and relational position. In his art, Anthony enacts what Sophie Hope has explored as the figure of the »critical friend«.[14] By means of successive performative

›HAVING A POSITION TOWARDS …‹ BY JULIA SUWALSKI AND JOHANNA PADGE, PERFORMATIVE WORKSHOP HELPING TO IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP FURTHER KEY ASPECTS OF THE SHARED REFLECTION, 1ST TRIALOGUE ARTIST MEETING IN BERLIN, APRIL 2014

interventions he pushed for dialogue with his host organisation, urging them to resist both their routine and success, and to take the time and space for questioning the core of their practice with its underlying assumptions of the concepts of art and participation. Particularly disputed here were competing notions of art either as healing power[15] or as the site of (positive) struggle; pointing to philosophically distinct paths for achieving better futures: either as *overcoming* conflict by means of achieving consensus; or as *channelling* conflict in what Chantal Mouffe has coined »agonistic pluralism«.[16] In a world where the critical potential of art seems to have been co-opted by the capitalist project, Mouffe claims that a »widening of the field of artistic intervention« is needed in order to »undermine« capitalism's »imaginary environment«, a movement that Andre Holmes describes as the potential to actively and collectively reflect through artistic practice on the very figures we depend on.[17]

Conclusion

Reviewing the residencies of 9UB by focusing on the different roles they ascribed to the artist or, more accurately, to the socially engaged creative practitioner, we can conclude that neither the encounters themselves, nor their ethical, political and cultural frameworks, have unfolded without dispute over what to do and how and why to do it. There is a strong case, therefore, for finding value in identifying conflict and tension; and in making conflict and tension apparent through a collective creative process. Only by coming together on the matters that divide us – matters that are indissolubly social *and* material[18] – can inclusive futures be imagined as truly open, open even for on-going dispute.[19]

However, as we have foregrounded in the beginning, this flexible, open and iterative understanding of the arts and artists' roles can be at odds with the demands of convenors, funders and project partners who require the

delivery of predetermined or expected outputs. In the case of complex constellations of active and passive stakeholders, consequently, a labyrinth of competing desires and obligations places those working at the centre of socially engaged practice in difficult ethical and political positions.[20] Socially engaged creative practitioners have to pursue their initiatives in many simultaneous directions and are often at the risk of being overstretched. This experience of significant pressure repeatedly goes unrecognised when it comes to providing an account of failure or success. It is usually the artist who is expected to guarantee the social sustainability and artistic integrity of the projects whilst simultaneously accomplishing the anticipated outcomes invested from outside the process. The roles of the host – as well as that of potentially supportive partners of the project's coordination and funding tasks – are regularly spared providing evidence of having fulfilled their responsibilities.[21]

Finally, 9UB has shown that in socially engaged art practices the figure of the artist, as well as common notions of art, are deconstructed and multiplied in many ways. From biotope to biotope, residency to residency, artists and teams of artists have worked to foster dialogue, produce research, facilitate exchange, operate as cultural diplomats and encourage reflection and critique as provocateurs. In other words, above all, they have laboured as creative cultural workers. At the same time, they have kept high art's autonomy, detouring, where possible, the expedience of their agency.

Related content

interview with Sophie Hope

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interview with Bruno Latour

incubations. a recipe for urban and other inventions by Michael Guggenheim et al

Endnotes

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incubations. a recipe for urban and other interventions

**By Michael Guggenheim, Bernd Kräftner and Judith Kröll**

The following is a recipe that the authors developed after having worked for a number of years on various projects. Many of these projects were situated in the borderlands between Science and Technology Studies (STS), art and design. While working on these projects, we did not have a language to describe them. We only knew that somehow, they did not fit existing descriptions of academic or artistic work. For academic works, the projects relied too much on strange technologies, invented and inventive methods, and unusual media of presentation. For art works, they came with too much methodological elaboration and their form of presentation was often text heavy. Further, they could neither be easily understood as scientific description, as they were too interventionist, but for people coming from an activist angle, these projects rarely were explicitly critical or took an easily definable stance against something.

What we aim for here is to offer a positive description of what we did. The result is a ›recipe‹ that is addressed to ourselves, because we wanted to be able to make sense of our ongoing practice. Maybe this recipe can help others who engage in similar projects that defy classification, to think about what they do. Hav-ing said this, it is also clear that we do not want you to copy our approach. Rather, it may help you to sharpen your own approach, by understanding in what ways it is similar or different. The background in STS informs a number of discussions in what follows, and some of the references may appear unusual for the reader having a background in urban studies, art or design. But this background should not hinder you to link back our description to whatever field you are coming from.

Introduction: A Recipe for Cultural Interventions as a Stew

An incubation is a socio-technical device that uses situational, social and time-based pressure to form new objects and interactions by using knowledge, interactions and objects. This definition is necessarily vague and it will become clear through the course of this article why this is so. This vagueness derives from the fact that in terms of existing art or science language an incubation is difficult to catch and is, to begin with, easier to understand by explaining what it is not. Firstly, an incubation cannot, and should not, be defined in terms of its media. Secondly, it is the case that an incubation is not an academic text, an exhibition or an artwork, a piece of visual sociology or a webpage. An incubation can be any of these, but incubations do not start with such objects in mind. An incubation also is not an ›intervention‹, as opposed to a scientific research project, it is not a scientific research project as opposed to an ›intervention‹, and it is neither an art project as opposed to a research project. An incubation is all of these, and can result in any of them, but at its heart it is neither.
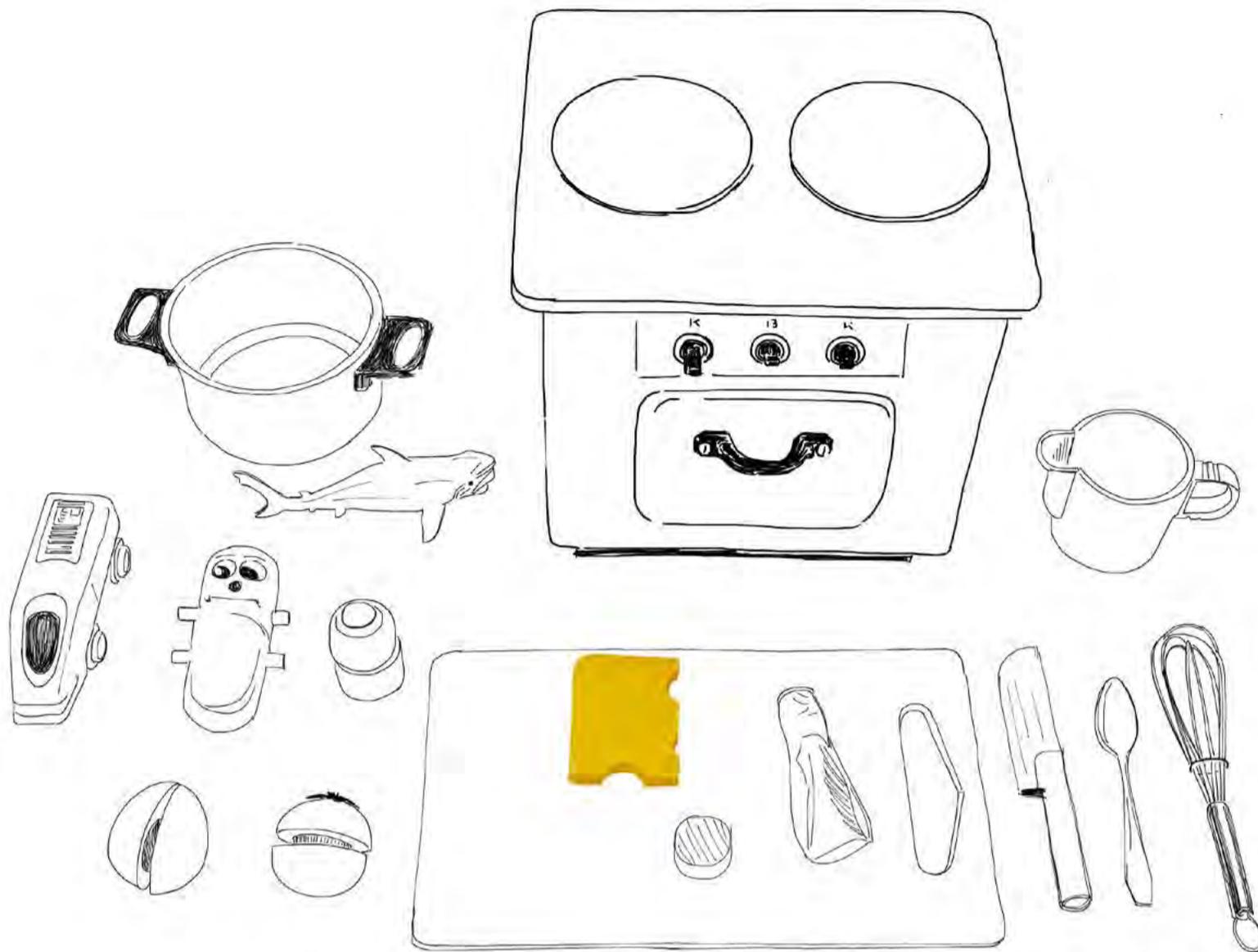
The recipe that follows is a recipe for a stew, not a neatly defined dish. It is a proposal for getting an edible result, with an intended specific flavour, rather than a recipe that has to be slavishly followed lest it fail. If the result disappoints nonetheless, the best way to continue is to tinker with the recipe.[1]

Not all of the ingredients listed below are necessary for each incubation, and the amounts in use can vary from one instance of practice to the next, but it helps to keep all of them in reserve and ready for use. A successful incubation cannot be judged by whether the recipe has been followed, but it has to be judged by its process and gustatory result. This also makes it impossible to judge incubations according to conventional, product and text-oriented standards. Like good cooking, the quality of the final result also depends on good, locally sourced ingredients, the specific skills of the performers and the technical facilities at hand. The following recipe should thus be taken with a pinch of salt.

1. Mise en place.
2. Add descriptive and constructive ingredients.
3. Add a good dose of pressure.
4. Mix ingredients.
5. Use leftovers.
6. Let the incubation macerate.
7. Taste frequently and develop adequate consumption situations.
8. Expiry date: when and how to stop.

1. Mise en Place: Begin with the Setup of a Suitable Organisational Environment

One cannot cook in a kitchen without a proper stove and other kitchen utensils ready at hand. Similarly an incubation is impossible without a proper organisational environment. As with cooking, this is not about flashy kitchens with computerized steamers and branded furniture that you should not scratch. It is about an environment in which you can act freely and according to your needs and that is made for quotidian use rather than display. The organisational background that we have found to be the most enabling for our project work is a mixture of direct funding for specific projects, combined with either specialized departments devoted to non-disciplinary research, or a (loose) attachment to Science and Technology Studies (STS), sociology or anthropology departments. Since funding explicitly for ›incubations‹ does not exist, we depend on funding possibilities that at least encourage projects at the border of social science and the arts. Incubations need materials, some of them costly. Work with humans necessitates spaces that are comfortable, and do not implicitly replicate the affect and organisational structure of offices.

2. Add Descriptive and Constructive Ingredients

An incubation consists of a range of ingredients, from descriptive methods to ways of recording the world, and to interventions and different media required to produce a result. An incubation resembles a stew or an Indian curry: it is based on an eclectic mixture of ingredients comprising various qualities and quantities. The quality of the stew depends on the skill of the cooks to add ingredients at the right time in the right quantities, to taste and adjust over and over, and to be open to adding new and unexpected ingredients to improve the complex interplay of textures and smells. A precise recipe for a stew is impossible, but also unnecessary. It depends on the circumstances and the variability and extends to the final product: its aim is not a predefined dish but something that tastes well. The central quality of the cook is not to follow defined rules to achieve a given result, but to juggle various ingredients to achieve something good to eat. An incubation, like a stew, is not based on pre-defined ingredients such as those needed for steak with chips, or alphabet soup, where the quality of the result depends primarily on the pre-defined exact quality of ingredients and the timing of the cooking. Take bad quality meat and cook it for too long and you end up with something inedible. Within the context of sociology, activist art, and STS, there is a long-going debate about the problem of intervention. In the context of STS, to which we refer here, the discussion resembles a dispute between one camp who wants to cook steak with chips and another who wants to cook alphabet soup, both claiming to know the perfect recipe to cook their dish and both pointing out that a mixture of the two dishes is impossible. But an incubation is neither steak nor soup, yet it is also not a compromise: one would simply end up with chips soaked in broth, so to speak.

There is a shared assumption held by most participants in the debate lining up behind a division between description and intervention, between inaction and action and between
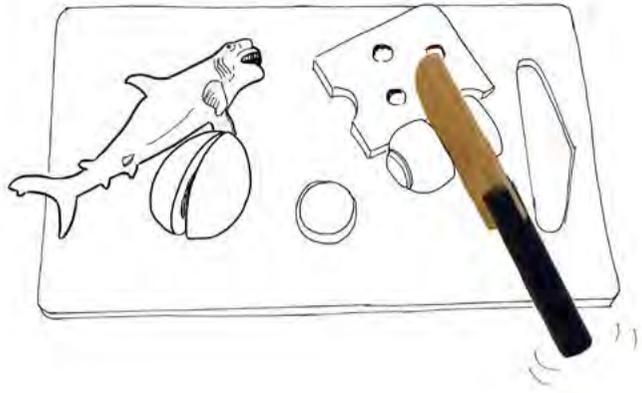
politics and neutrality, between either cook-ing steak and chips or alphabet soup. One is either an interventionist with a political agenda or an observer who believes in the neutrality of science. This lining up is in our view neither empirically correct nor fruitful. As Ian Hacking argues in his introduction to the philosophy of science, science itself is about »representing AND intervening« not »representing OR inter-vening«.[2] The either/or view of the problem entirely depends on a fixed view of the result. If I know that I want to cook steak and chips, it becomes impossible to consider adding a dash of cardamom. Only cooking a stew allows for the consideration of more, and wildly different, ingredients with different qualities.

One way out of this impasse is to point out that the underlying notion of ›action‹ and ›inter-vention‹ is limited and that descriptions are interventions as well, as both Zuiderent-Jerak and Vikkelsø argue.[3] Indeed, an analysis of politico-scientific controversies would probably easily identify many »descriptions« that ended up acting as crucial interventions at times favouring one side or the other. But from the viewpoint of incubations, we would rather like to question the reverse assumption, namely that an ›intervention‹ needs to be based on a defined political program and a known direc-tion for intervention.[4] We believe that neither

are such interventions necessarily particularly successful, nor are these the only forms for cultural interventions. It is possible to cook without knowing a recipe and without knowing the dish that will result beforehand. But doing so requires a certain openness and mastery of basic cooking procedures, rather than an ideol-ogy that favours certain ingredients over others.

Incubations are not a form of critique but a re-assembling, a re-construction of an issue. Bruno Latour hints at this shift: »the critic is not the one who debunks but the one who assembles«.[5] This shift from critique as debunking to ›critique‹ as assembling (and doing incubations), is the shift from one medium to another. An incubation takes a com-pletely different view of how methods work. Since an incubation is always a process of assembly and not of debunking, any method is always supposed to represent, intervene and transform. An incubation never starts with the primacy of writing, but with the search for inter-vening and representing devices appropriate for the object under study. How much a given device is an intervention, a representation or a transformation cannot be defined in an abstract way beforehand. The incubation proceeds not by ›applying‹ a method or taking what the method does for granted, as both the descrip-tivists and the interventionists do. An incubation is always also an inquiry into the transforma-tive, descriptive and interventionist capacities of different methods, objects and ways of working. An incubation accepts that each kind of pan will have an influence on the end result, and that for different kinds of ingredients we need differ-ent kinds of pans.

3. Add a Good Dose of Pressure

All participants in an incubation, including the researchers, have to be brought into a situation in which they act differently than they would under normal circumstances. Since incubations need to bring different kinds of realities together, such pressure also helps to erase and redistribute status differences among participants. Incubations create their own realities that facilitate the creation of new products and new forms of interaction that would otherwise not exist.

How to create pressure? Among the different ways we have used, the easiest is simply to add objects that act as attractors for interactions that challenge participants. Other forms come simply with the project form of what we do, the fact that there are deadlines and »products« we need to develop with participants. Finally, or more unusually, we often work with laboratory situations in which we create environments, which challenge the participants and ourselves to do certain things. This also involves the creation of affective atmospheres, which may spur emotions ranging from interest or consternation to fear.

The pressure of an incubation is similar to that of a pressure cooker: it *transforms and softens* the materials inside the incubation. Hardened positions, worldviews and bodily practices stabilised by habitus are softened and opened up to collective transformation.

Incubations do not produce pressure on the participants because we oppose their views, even if they may politically be opposed to ours.

We create pressure on all of the involved, including ourselves, to produce new situations and new solutions to commonly perceived problems.

4. Mix Ingredients

The central part of an incubation is the bringing together and mixing of various ingredients. From the beginning, one should not worry about the measurements. You are off to a good start if you can identify some ingredients, and have an approximate idea about how to mix them together. By ingredients we mean anything and everything, from scientific theories and methods, to different practices, objects, and ways of speaking and seeing the world.

An incubation is therefore never the application of a theory to an object. Incubations become impossible If ›actor-network theory‹ is applied

to ›housing in France‹. Such an understanding already starts from a disciplinary framework that subsumes an object under appropriate theories and methods. The theories and methods become distancing devices that keep ingredients at bay. In incubations, theories and methods are used as ingredients and mixed together to become one dish. By mixing ingredients during incubations it is sometimes not easy to understand to which reality one is contributing. Oscillations between different ways of speaking and seeing may become cumbersome, since these oscillations put ones own worldviews to the test.

This mixing of ingredients and the fact of having an increased set of options for action does not imply that it necessarily results in a ›positive‹ course of events, or that it unequivocally ›empowers‹ an actor, but it does weaken the excluding and disqualifying effects of an impoverished version of reality. To find ›good options‹ means to stay in the kitchen and try out various recipes.

5. Use Leftovers

As every cook knows, it is easy to placate eaters by throwing together some first class beef fillet and truffles. It is far more difficult to work with the half portion of moussaka from the day before, the two carrots forgotten in the fridge and the spoonful of mustard left in the jar. To work creatively with leftovers is not merely a matter of household economics, but also of creativity. Scarcity spurs creativity.

The same is true for incubations. They start from the assumption that specific (sub) disciplines, with their small repertoire of methods (interviewing, observation, discourse analysis), unnecessarily limit what is needed in a project. This crucially includes methods and ways of world-making that are not a part of the canon of either the arts or the social sciences.
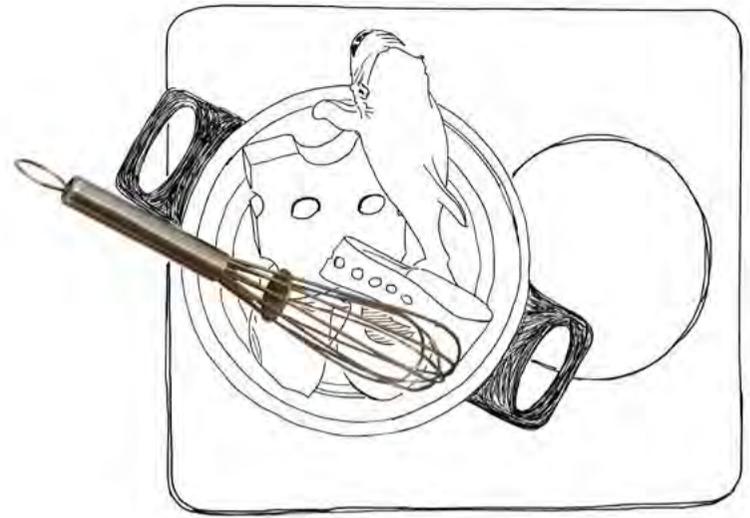
6. Let the Incubation Macerate

We have already mentioned the softening of materials, worldviews and relationships through pressure. Another ingredient required to achieve this during an incubation is the process of maceration: stay in the field and take your time, try to hang around and lo(o)se your aims for a while. Maceration means not being scared or worried about not fulfilling your work plan or goals. Circumstances that often are considered as ineffective or detrimental, »serendipitous« in Robert Merton's famous phrase, can lead to surprising situations.[6]

The word ›to macerate‹ describes processes of more or less well-controlled degradation, transformation and blending of components. Its linguistic root is ›maceria‹ – the garden wall made from kneaded clay. To macerate means to be patient and suspend creativity but nevertheless staying in a mode of attentiveness

and passionate repetition, as it is the case with the kneading of dough or with the occasional stirring of a stew.

7. Taste Frequently and Develop Adequate Consumption Situations

In German there is a saying: »was der Bauer nicht kennt, frisst er nicht«: What the farmer does not know, he does not eat. This is not simply a sociological statement about how specific social groups exhibit conservative tastes, but it is also an epistemological proposition that things that are difficult to

classify are difficult to judge and are therefore often simply ignored.

Some people are used to eating alphabet soup. They do not know how to judge stews with unknown ingredients that do not fit their taste experiences. If something comes as a stew mixed with letters, then only the letters in the stew are subject to judgment. The situation becomes even more difficult in the cases where there are no letters at all, as in the case of incubations that are presented to an either purely academic or artistic audience: the audience has to decide whether to appreciate an image, a comic, an ethnographic excerpt, a video fragment or a drawing. This problem is also prominent in the context of art universities and the debate about ›artistic research‹, with the question of how to measure the quality, or ›the taste‹, of a doctoral thesis that is not presented as an academic text.[7]

As we have experienced over and over again, a central effect of an incubation is the reaction by others, which are often rather predict-

able: In doing incubations one ends up being labelled as a clown or a stranger. The labelling as a clown or a stranger results from a lack of development and differentiation of taste, which in turn is linked to the media used. We have come to understand that it is often easier for others to approach our work if it is already framed as strange and a kind of ›theatre‹, a role-play, and meant to be taken only half seriously. This is both a threat to the integrity of, but also a help to, the life of the incubation. It is a threat, because even though many of our incubations are also intended to be fun and we are not always taken seriously, we are obviously engaged in the art of scholarship and moreover our projects usually tackle very ›heavy‹ themes. But to be labelled as a stranger or a clown is also an opportunity, because it opens a field, and it allows us to do things that otherwise would never happen.

8. Expiry Date: When and How to Stop

Even if a stew has to cook for a very long time at some point, before it starts to burn or the ingredients all melt together into an inedible sludge, it must be eaten. It is of crucial importance to find the point in time at which to stop, when the ingredients' culinary qualities have mingled together, but are still somewhat individually discernible in colour and texture. In theory, the same is true with incubations. But there is a problem: although it is often clear who initiated an incubation, the image of the master chef who seasons to taste with salt and pepper and then, at the perfect moment, withdraws the stew from the flame is wrong. This is because, in an incubation, the master chef herself is part, so to speak, of the stew and thus can merely

influence the stopping of the cooking process. But her vote for cessation may be overruled – what if the other ingredients, humans or artefacts want to continue? What if she wants to continue the incubation that the ›co-ingredients‹ have already stopped?

Typically, different from the work of professions, an incubation is a project limited in time and not an ongoing work. It is not the goal to become a social worker or a nurse, and it is not a goal to turn physicians into sociologists, or anthropologists into artists, or artists into zool-

ogists (although during incubations this is not impossible and happens from time to time). At some point, the incubation has to stop, without betraying the incubation process.

At this point, we provide only one criterion that may answer the question when to stop an incubation: an incubation stops as soon as those who take part, lose sight of, or give up, their research questions. It may also be brought to an end when new questions come to the fore. This criterion gives incubation an artistic flavour, because a question-driven work temporarily gives way to more ambivalent and not determined ways of reasoning, perceiving, creating and living.

An incubation ends not with a description and not with a political statement of hope. It does not end with a description, because this description, which is always also one product or result of an incubation, is merely a preliminary form of representing what happened during the incubation. It also does not end with a political statement, because an incubation has not been set up with a given goal that could have been achieved or alleviated.

Rather, an incubation ends when a situation has been intervened in and represented in such a way that it is reordered. It ends when everybody involved has been shaken and something new is experienced, when everyone has been changed and views the situation from different angles, and when a representation for these new angles has been found. An incubation ends when new structures emerge from within the situation and those involved do not need the incubation anymore to understand and to

find their way through these new situations. An incubation ends when those involved need their own space outside of the incubation to enable a better understanding and reordering of the situation. An incubation also ends when a representation, an object, or a space has been created that, at least for the moment, is sufficient to describe and explain the re-ordering of the situation.

Disclaimer: When Not to Use Incubations

Talking of a recipe may imply that using incubations is without danger. But as with many other substances and technologies, the differences between food and drugs, between cure and poison, are blurry and depend on context. As with any other powerful technologies, there are risks and side effects inherent in the use of incubations. There are also many conditions for which the use of an incubation is dangerous. It may seem from the above that incubations are the solutions to all problems for cultural analysis as intervention. But incubations are fraught with problems and these should not be omitted.

Apart from the organisational, reputational and practical difficulties, as related throughout this text, incubations are also not very helpful on a number of occasions. Incubations are needed when situations appear to be stuck in routines, and when ›more of the same‹ would not help to produce particular outcomes. We have plenty of ethnographies of experts; we do not need another one to understand that expertise is situated. We have plenty of studies that demonstrate the discrimination of particular individuals and groups, and we know how such situations are constructed and made to exert their power.

Here, incubations are the perfect means to translate a situation and to come up with new forms of describing and representing such situations. However, if a phenomenon is new, unknown and of a large scale and we need to get an overview, an incubation is of little help.

Incubations work best when applied to stable and continuous situations, involving persons who know what they want, and to organisations that function smoothly, but run the danger of getting stuck in routines that defer innovation. Here incubations can create new translations and transformations that allow for enlightenment and serendipity. If a situation, an organisation or the persons involved are highly unstable, an incubation is of little help. If we are confronted with a social dispute and one side needs help in the form of arguments (textual, visual or otherwise) to win, an incubation operates as a detour and may merely mess things up. If a situation is very fraught with internal and unresolved difficulties, an incubation is probably the wrong intervention. Finally, an incubation is not a mediation or a form of therapy, and incubators are not mediators or arbiters for conflicts. The use of incubations happens at your own risk. But don't be scared of it.

Hyperlinks to projects used by the authors to develop the previous text:

1. Goodbye tomato - good morning rice (1999-2002) (B. K., J. K. with Isabel Warner)
2. Topography of the Possible - What is a Person/a Body? (2003-2007) and Pillow Research (2008-) (B.K., J.K., with G. Ramsebner, L. Peschta and Isabel Warner)
3. Office for Scientific Flotsam and Jetsam/ Researchers Without Borders (2005-)
4. Who with Whom. Inheritance in Action (2006)
5. Gene Doping. A difference that makes a difference (2006)
6. Straight from the Heart. Prevention Indices and Divinations of Researchers (2008)
7. From Spinach to Brain (and other sensory and cooking research projects) (2008) (MG with Florian Keller)
8. "In the event of …". Anticipatory and participatory politics of emergency provision. (2010 - 2013): www.sharedinc.eu/SI/2010_2013. html

Related content

Endnotes

1   The analogy with cooking is well tested within STS and specifi-
    cally the discussion about interventionist STS. See: Collins, HM.
    1996. ›In praise of futile gestures: How scientific is the sociology
    of scientific knowledge?‹, Social Studies of Science, 26 (Spe-
    cial Issue on ›The politics of SSK: Neutrality, commitment and
    beyond‹): 229-244; and Richards, E. & Ashmore, M. 1996.
    ›More sauce please! The politics of SSK: Neutrality, commitment
    and beyond‹, Social Studies of Science, 26 (2): 219.

2   Hacking, I. 1983. Representing and intervening. Introductory top-
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    tion: Engagement and resistance in actor- network analyses‹,
    Science as Culture, 16 (3): 297-309.

4   For a clear statement of this link see: Hamlett, PW. 2003.
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    Technology, & Human Values, 28 (1): 112-140.

5   Latour, B. 2004. ›Why has critique run out of steam? From mat-
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    226-248.

6   Merton, RK. 2004. The travels and adventures of serendipity.
    A study in sociological semantics and the sociology of science.
    (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

7   Lesage, D. 2009. ›Dieter Lesage: A portrait of the artist as
    a researcher‹: http://summit.kein.org/book/export/html/233,
    accessed 15/02/2010.

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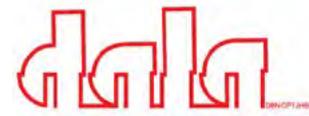
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