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## Art, Urban Commons and Social Change

Tijen Tunali

The discussions of urban commons involve us in breaking up the totalizing notion of those dominated by power as passive consumers and reconsidering how urban life is made as creative production, constantly appropriating and reappropriating the products, messages, and spaces for expression. The common acts of engagement and reorganization are based on re-appropriations and redeployments of the dominant image economy and hierarchical distribution of space experienced in the city. Hence, they are also a part of the struggle for the reclamation of public space wherein wrongly privatized space is returned to its rightful owners. The special issue “Art, Urban Commons and Social Change” discusses how art in the urban space creates unmediated spaces and instances of emancipated subjects.

The authors analyze various forms of art within economic, cultural, and social urban contexts to shed light on the complexity of modern urban life and struggles for urban commons. They delve into the issue of urban commons and social change both in the role of urban social struggles and creating urban communities. Some questions that the contributors seek answers are: Under what conditions could art become effective in reclaiming democratic citizenship? What kind of public should artistic creativity in the urban space try to constitute and what kind of public spaces are needed to that effect? What can we learn from urban art about visual resistance in the interplay with political power structures?

Mehreen Mustafa analyzes the creative endeavor titled “The indifferent A (4)rt” is curated in the low-income housing colony in Lahore. The project aims to challenge the notion of power and agency associated with patronized art by fetching art exhibition, creation, and appreciation out of the confined gallery space into a democratic domain of public space. Mustafa demonstrates how public spaces and public art can create bridges between people and thereby foster convivial culture. Using mapping, photographs, and empir-

ical observations Mustafa discusses that the collaboration of art and public forums could have a political potential. Miloš Moskovljević analyzes the function of street art (such as graffiti and murals) in constructing cultural memory and collective remembrance in the context of the post-Yugoslav space. Moskovljević bases his discussion on the notion of cultural memory and utilizes the media archaeology approach, not just to examine communicative functions of street art in collective memory but also to note patterns of urban commons behind the conveyance of socio-political landscape of the public spaces in Belgrade, as the former capital of Yugoslavia.

With examples from the aftermath of Turkey’s Gezi movement Tijen Tunali investigates the argument that the recent urban social movements arguably developed new notions of citizenship that extend the limits of politics and expand the decision making control of citizens. She argues that the legacy of these movements has been to give the aesthetic power to ordinary citizens over the public spaces of their city. She first analyzes the case of Turkey, where the ruling party has been reinforcing its power in the public both in the form of reinforcing a new socio-spatial order but also a particular aesthetic order to establish “a new cultural era” that is different from what the previous secular and nationalist ruling elite had established. Tunali then discusses how the Gezi movement might have given the citizens the power to reinforce their aesthetic rights to the city. The research group at Polytechnic University in Milan highlights how tactical urbanism methods can have a big impact even in highly-developed realities. They focus on the initiatives put in place by citizens and associations, like the projects *Piazze Aperte*, or *TréntaMi in Verde* that revive busy public spaces, take space away from the dominance of cars, create new open street meeting places for youths and increase security for pedestrians and cyclists. They argue that those case studies show how creative activism is effective in transforming areas traditionally considered problematic.

Although they are short-term, community-based projects they have the power to drive lasting improvements in the city commons.

Moham Wang's article provides an overview of SF Chinatown's visual history from the mid-1800s to today through the colonial and postcolonial periods. It proposes a conceptual framework for reimagining the Chinese diaspora within the Bay Area's architecture – a reimagination of the physical and metaphysical movement of the pagoda across various spaces and times – to develop a community while writing an alternative art history. By adopting art-historical and theoretical analyses, Wang reveals the critical role of the pagoda for Chinese Americans in performing identities and navigating cultural and economic issues to form a highly robust and fluid autonomy as a response to the various forces from this transnational saga. In her work-in progress essay Yimeng Yang analyzes The "Everyone's East Lake" (EEL) art project is an urban protest initiated by two architects in Wuhan, China since 2010, with the aim of advocating for the publicization of the lakeshore and resisting land enclosures led by the government and developers. Yang examines how the digital creative commons contributes to the real-world struggle towards urban commons in China's political economic context, and how the offline resistance in turn inspires the collaboration and co-creation in the digital space which promotes the sustainable practice of making urban commons.

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