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ASHGATE

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
Suite 420
101 Cherry Street
Burlington
VT 05401-4405
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Selling ethnicity:urban cultural politics in the Americas. – (Heritage, culture and identity)
1. Ethnicity–Political aspects–America. 2. Ethnicity–Economic aspects–America. 3. Politics and culture–America. 4. Indigenous peoples in popular culture– America. 5. Multiculturalism in mass media. 6. America– Ethnic relations.
I. Series II. Kaltmeier, Olaf, 1970–
305.8'0097-dc22

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Kaltmeier, Olaf, 1970–
Selling ethnicity : urban cultural politics in the Americas / by Olaf Kaltmeier.
p. cm. — (Heritage, culture, and indentity)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4094-1037-9 (hardback) — ISBN 978-1-4094-1038-6 (ebook) 1. Ethnicity—Political aspects—America. 2. Ethnicity—Economic aspects—America. 3. Politics and culture—America. 4. Indigenous peoples in popular culture—America. 5. Multiculturalism in mass media—America. 6. America—Ethnic relations.
I. Title.
GN550.K35 2011
305.800970—dc22

2010045835

ISBN 9781409410379 (hbk)
ISBN 9781409410386 (ebk)

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC
FSC® C018575

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the MPG Books Group, UK

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Chapter 3

Insurrection and Symbolic Work: Graffiti in Oaxaca (Mexico) 2006/2007 as Subversion and Artistic Politics

Jens Kastner

For the Argentinean-Mexican Cultural Studies scholar Néstor García Canclini, graffiti are, next to comics, a constitutive expression of "hybrid cultures." As a constitutionally impure genre, that is, a genre oscillating between art and everyday praxis, graffiti indicates a fundamental transformation in contemporary cultures. García Canclini maintains that from now on artistic practices will purportedly dispense with "consistent paradigms" (2005: 243), high culture and popular culture veritably slide into one another, symbols of elite culture and mass culture blend together, and contemporary cultures are distinguished by principally "hybrid cultures"—according to García Canclini's award-winning diagnosis of the times. The German Cultural Studies scholar Andreas Hepp argues that for García Canclini, graffiti also exemplify "forms of communication, along which the symbolic production of meaning takes place" (2009: 168) by linking together visual and literary forms. What graffiti and comics also have in common, in addition to their genre-crossing references, is their omnipresence and mass distribution in urban spaces. Whereas comics can be received and consumed by a mass audience more effectively than any artistic work due to their presence in newspapers, in García Canclini's interpretation graffiti is also a symbolic way of taking possession of public space by inscribing it. With his thesis of the appropriation of public space and thus implicitly also the enabling of a political space through murals, García Canclini anticipates a set phrase that is frequently invoked, not only in subculture research.[1] Does it apply to every mural?

In the city of Oaxaca in Southern Mexico, capital of the federal state of Oaxaca, an uprising determined political, cultural and social life in the second

1 "All those who who apply graffiti claim a piece of space for themselves, in which they can express themselves" (Baeumer 2009: 112, translation mine). Simply through this occupying of space, claims to power and property are said to be called into question, regardless of the contents of the slogans/images and the intentions of their creators, Tobias Baeumer currently asserts in reference to the German context.

half of the year 2006.[2] After the uprising, which enjoyed broad support among the population, was brutally crushed in late November with the assistance of the federal police, one of the first measures taken by the authorities was to paint over all graffiti and traces of street art on the walls of the historic city center and beyond (cf. Collective Reinventions 2009: 145). Was the political wall painting too subversive?

Obviously this was a replay of the conflict over the (re)appropriation of urban space, as it had been discussed over the past few years in research and debates on urban sociology and sociology of space (cf., for example, Löw 2001, 2008). However, the fact that not every expression on the walls of public space first constitutes it as emancipatory or intervenes in it subversively is particularly evident in Mexico, where political wall art (muralism) has also served less subversive functions, such as supporting the state and attracting tourism. Nevertheless, these painted walls also bear witness to the history of the involvement of artistic practices in those social movements—a history that has been largely ignored by academic art history up to the present. Contrary to this ignorance and equally counter to a leftist euphoria that deciphers acts of creative subversion in every mural, the intention here is to set out in search of criteria for what is subversive in art. Repression, such as the authorities painting over pictures, can hardly serve as a criterion for distinguishing subversion. Suitable criteria are more likely to be found, such is the thesis of this article, in answering the question of how forms of "insurrection" (Negri) are linked with the battle over the "collective unconscious" (Bourdieu).

2 Whereas the events were hardly present in the international press, they were followed with interest by leftist groups, blogs and initiatives all over the world and celebrated in part from the beginning. The subtitle of the chronicle by Diego Enrique Osorno (2007) sounds paradigmatically promising: "The First Uprising of the 21st Century." The movement thus met with international sympathy "among all who resist the status quo," as the Collective Reinventions (2009: 135) noted in its extensive and critical appreciation. Not least of all due to the very specific local conditions of its emergence—and possibly also due to the limitations of the joint demands, among which the demand for the resignation of the governor was central—the insurrection movement in Mexico hardly had an impact beyond the state boundaries. And this happened despite national mobilizations, which followed as protests against the election of the conservative president Felipe Calderón from the Party of National Action (PAN) in the same year. Although relatively small actions of solidarity with the insurrectionists were also held in Berlin, Vienna, and other German-speaking cities, up to the present Oaxaca still remains an undiscovered and hence unexplored terrain for research in Germany on social movements. In Mexico, on the other hand, several books have meanwhile been published on the subject (an overview of publications so far is provided by Victor Raúl Martínez Vásquez in the introduction to the anthology he edited [cf. Martínez Vásquez 2009]).

The "Commune of Oaxaca" and the Artes Plásticas

The events that have been discussed as the "Commune of Oaxaca"[3] began with a strike of the teachers' union in May 2006. When the protest tent city in the Zócalo, the main square of the southern Mexican city—so popular among tourists—was brutally cleared by the police on June 14, large sections of the population expressed solidarity with the concerns of the teachers. On June 17 the *Asamblea Popular de los Pueblos de Oaxaca* (Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca, APPO) was founded, in which roughly 350 organizations, groups, and initiatives joined together. Until officers of the federal police crushed off the Assembly in late November 2006, the movement against the authoritarian ruling governor Ulises Ruiz Ortiz from the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) fought for and suffered through the most diverse highs and lows: a number of people, at least twenty-three, were shot by paramilitary groups close to the government—the most prominent victim was the US-American Indymedia journalist Brad Will in late October—, countless people were wounded, and about three hundred arrested. Sometimes as many as 1,500 barricades were counted in the picturesque historical city center, several radio stations were occupied, and a group of women even occasionally operated a television station that had previously been occupied.[4]

Along with the protagonist role of women and the tremendous involvement of organizations of the indigenous and the striking teachers, artists were especially noticeable as a particular group, when it came to answering the question of who were the subjects of this social mobilization. The participation of visual artists in the Oaxaca insurrection of 2006 was particularly conspicuous, as many of them placed their artistic practices directly in the urban space (cf. Lache Bolaños 2009, Nevaer 2009, Porras Ferreyra 2009).[5] Several artists working in the area of visual

3 During the uprising, the leftist Mexican daily newspaper *La Jornada* already saw the spirit of Louise Michel, the activist of the Paris Commune of 1871 who presided over the nighttime barricades (cf. Beas Torres 2006). Even though words, images, and deeds of the movement have generally been appreciated as a mobilization event, the question of whether it is possible to speak of a "Commune of Oaxaca" as an operative counter-model to the state-capitalist organization of society is highly controversial. In concurrence with the previously cited appraisal of the Collective Reinventions published in German in the journals *Die Aktion* (Hamburg, vol. 214, 2008) and *Kosmoprolet* (Berlin, vol. 2, 2009), it is probably to be understood as more of a goal "that the movement was striving for and, in the worst case, as mere wishful thinking" (Collective Reinventions 2009: 143).

4 A detailed chronology is found in the appendix of the book *Oaxaca sitiada* ("Occupied Oaxaca") written by the journalist Diego Enrique Osorno (2007) about the insurrection.

5 However, it is by no means the case that all artists took the side of the insurrectionists. Jaime Porras Ferreyra (2009: 231) also names a fraction of artists who were directly or indirectly connected with the regime. Among the artists in solidarity were not only representatives of the "artes plásticas," but actors from the fields of music, video, and

arts (*artes plásticas*) like Ana Santos or the group Arte Jaguar, for example, had already entered the public sphere before 2006 with their *arte urbano* (urban art). Turning to artistic productions such as graffiti and street art, for instance, it should first be emphasized that the artistic works created directly in conjunction with the movement are to be treated as specific cultural practices—that is, as art—not only for chronological reasons, but also for most of the other reasons that continue to make artistic works distinguishable from other kinds of objects and practices. On the one hand these include, in addition to the material preconditions, the appraisal from art criticism and the museum, in other words the capability of being exhibited,[6] preconditions for which are also their formal and possibly content-related references to works consecrated by art history. On the other hand, the works discussed in the following merge neither with the organizational forms nor with any other propagandist means of the movement. Nevertheless, because they not only have an obvious relationship to political forms of expression but are ultimately also—as will be argued in the following—themselves political forms of expression, Jaime Porras Ferreyra (2009) is right in describing the artistic practices as a long ignored challenge for Political Science. Yet what is it that now leads to the fact that a mural not only modernizes a traditional image carrier, but also intervenes in social space in an emancipatory way, effects subversive impacts, and/or is—as Norma Patricia Lache Bolaños claims without distinction, for all graffiti and street art created in Oaxaca in 2006—an "action of resistance" (2009: 214)?

Subversion and Art

First of all, it should be explained or at least more clearly defined what "subversion" actually means. Subversion, in my attempted definition, consists of practices that challenge a dominant political–moral order in an emancipatory sense and not only sabotage its stability (which is already possible in individual acts), but also undermine it (which generally requires collective efforts) in a long-term perspective. Achieving the long-term goal of subversion (from Latin: *subvertere*, to overthrow or spoil), though, would demand a whole series of subversive acts and has historically never yet occurred solely through these, that is, without political organization or steering. Subversive practices do not necessarily require subversive protagonists and need not be intended as such at all; even unintentional actions and unpremeditated behavior can have subversive effects. But in this attempt at definition, subversion is named on the one hand as a political means and on the other as a means of undermining as opposed to either demanding or attacking. Terrorist (attacking) and labor union (demanding) actions can have subversive effects, but are not themselves subversive.[7] It is of course problematic—and this is probably also the reason why the concept has hardly played a role in the political discourses of the past few years—to assume a relatively stable order sustained by the majority of the population, which is a prerequisite for subversion. Practices can only be subversive from a marginalized position (which, as is generally known, need not always be a minority position); practices of "subversive rule" or "subversive hegemony" are by definition impossible. Even when one considers that subversive practices are not determined generally and metahistorically, but only relatively and concretely—that is, in relation to other practices and institutions—the problematic aspects of assuming stability and consensus remain. Although I have now formulated a general definition, it may still be possible in the case of artistic practices to set up or at least to discuss other criteria, which could form a basis for declaring them subversive.

photography—following a distinction from Porres Ferreyra (2009)—referred positively to the revolts in their work as well.

6 Some of the works created in the context of the insurrection could be seen beyond Oaxaca, for example in the exhibition "Oaxaca: Aqui No Pasa Nada," held in the Galería de la Raza, San Francisco from October 13 through November 3, 2007 (http://www.galeriadelaraza.org/eng/events/index.php?op=view&id=1008).

Criterion 1: Reflecting on Production Conditions, Installing Collectivity

To break through the representation mechanisms of the art field and achieve effects in the field of the political, it may be helpful to first of all reflect in some way on the production conditions of a work of art. The mode of production arranges productions according to field-specific specifications, which must be questioned if effects are to be achieved beyond the field of production. This reflection frequently already results in the partial creation of new modes of production, such as collective ones. Both the reflection and the new modes of production often characterize artistic practicAes that have arisen with social movements.

In Mexico there is a long tradition of artistic practices and formations that have coalesced in the context of social movements. Even the muralism the state promoted in the course of the reconstitution of the nation following the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) can be regarded as a current of this kind close to the movement. Its leading representatives not only regarded themselves as artists but were also politically active in addition to and, according to their explicit understanding, also through their art: in allusion to the radical peasant leader and revolutionary Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919), Diego Rivera called himself a "Zapatista." Together with the muralists David Alfaro Siqueiros and Xavier Guerrero, Rivera also formed the executive committee of the Revolutionary Union of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, founded in 1922. In 1924 the journal *El Machete*, which later became the official newspaper of the Communist Party

7 The concept of subversion employed here is therefore not limited to the dimension of "political-revolutionary subversion," which Ernst et al. (2008: 18–19) distinguish from "artistic-avant garde," minority or underground subversion, and a deconstructivist concept of subversion.

and was named after the tool of the Latin American rural population that is also used as a weapon, developed out of the newsletters of the union. In relation to the status of his person as well as that of his work, however, Rivera remained highly conventional. His fresco "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City," (San Francisco Art Institute, 1931) depicts the act of collective work, but the individual artist continues to remain literally and metaphorically in the center of the picture as its creator.

The collective Arte Jaguar, which was active in Oaxaca around 2006, ties into this form of representation in the "Making of ..." mold by posting a YouTube film on their MySpace page (http://www.myspace.com/losartejaguar) that shows the creation of a mural in Oaxaca. Yet Arte Jaguar goes far beyond Rivera's reflection on representation by also basing their work on organizational consistency. With their work as a collective, Arte Jaguar belongs more to a tradition that has emerged since the 1920s with and alongside muralism: many of the artists close to the movement already organized their work collectively (as leagues, in unions, movements, or groups) in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution (cf. Híjar Serrano 2007, Audefroy 2009). Collective work can be understood not only as an attempt to counter the structural individualism—the cult of the individual creator, the value of authentic authorship, and the like—of the field of art and its mechanisms of representation oriented to ward individual names with moments of disruption (even though group names can ultimately also be fetishized and made to conform to the market). In some circumstances it can also be opposed in particular to individualistic, sociopolitical models such as neoliberalism. A new phase of collective organizing emerged within the field of art in the 1970s as a reaction to the stagnant representations within the field and in the context of an individualism considered alienated in late capitalist society.

Criterion 2: Implicit References, Explicit Ties

In artistic work signs should emerge or become possible through reflections on the production process that allow to tie in with political and/or social occurrences through purely art-immanent (methodical) references. During the insurrection in Oaxaca, ties were made to the art practices of the 1970s in Mexico in various ways. When Ana Santos applies her shadow figures to the walls of buildings in Oaxaca—an art project she began in 2004—these were initially only anonymous spots, the presence of absent people, sprayed or painted on relatively permanently, although in passing. There have been very similar shadows in Mexico's art history before, when graffiti had only just been invented and most walls were still white in urban space that was barely public, because it was controlled by the state. One of the collectives of the 1970s, which has been registered in art history as the group phenomenon "Los Grupos," attached shadow figures to the walls of fences, stadiums, and other buildings in Mexico City. Grupo Suma, one of the groups of Los Grupos, painted *el burócrato* (the bureaucrat), the silhouette of a man with a

briefcase, on the walls of the capital in the late 1970s. What could be read here was a criticism of the bureaucratic rule of the state party PRI. Los Grupos also emerged partly in the context and partly as an effect of social movements, namely those of 1968 (cf. Espinosa 2002, Gallo 2007, García Canclini 2009, Kastner 2009b). Artistic actions like the production of ephemeral wall paintings even accompanied the student movement (cf. Vázquez Mantecón 2007). The transience of the works was to be understood as a direct reaction to the monumental and pedagogical orientation of the post-revolutionary murals. The choice of artistic means thus also reflected the political anti-authoritarian orientation of the student movement. The art movements of the post-1968 era frequently referred, both implicitly and explicitly, to revolutionary Mexican history and operated in this way, for example, through the demand, shared with many social movements, for the realization of the social revolution that had come to a complete standstill in state bureaucracy and the corporative single-party rule.[8] This kind of fight over the revolutionary heritage is evident especially in current social struggles, because the fight over the plausibility of legitimate inheritance always also forms part of the struggle for the legitimacy of current concerns. Thus, forms of symbolic inscription into revolutionary history were not lacking in Oaxaca in 2006 either. The Zapata portrait by Arte Jaguar is always posited in a direct, explicit context of appropriation: the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata belongs to the permanent inventory of state revolutionary folklore, adorns Rivera murals as well as T-shirts and other tourist merchandise, and yet still turns up in many contemporary social struggles as an icon as well. Uses of his image or his name in social conflicts also point to the unfulfilled promise of the Revolution from 1910–1920 and stake a claim for a radical political transformation. This is an example of an artistic intervention in a concrete historical–political territory. It aims at questions about the interpretation of the past and its value and valuation for the present. However, it is also possible to intervene in these kinds of value questions without blatant dimensions of political content like the Zapata portraits.

Criterion 3: Targeting Structures of Perception, Engaging in Insurrections

Subversive art is possible if it produces art-immanent—that is, by definition anti-everyday—references, using means and methods (or contents) of art and pointing beyond them at the same time, thus incorporating itself into everyday collective practices without relinquishing its existence as art.

These kinds of everyday cultural practices are currently also increasingly becoming the settings of what Antonio Negri called insurrection.[9] In his model

8 On the relationship between art and the politics of remembrance in Latin America, cf. Kastner 2009b.

9 According to Gerald Raunig (2005: 42), the concept first appears up in Negri's essay "Republica constituente," published in Italian in 1993. The moment of constituent

of social struggles, following the diagnosed failure of revolutions taking over state power and guerilla wars, Negri propounds a three-part collective practice consisting of resistance, uprising/insurrection, and constituent power. Gerald Raunig (2005: 40–61) explicitly and extensively points out that this is not a step-by-step model, where one step is taken after another, but rather a three-dimensional, inseparable process. In Raunig's reading, the concept of insurrection relates to modes of subjectivation enabled during collective revolts. Insurrection thus occurs both collectively and individually but is only one aspect of subjectivation: it does not last and, unlike resistance and constituent power, can hardly be organized or steered. "Insurrection is a temporary flare, a rupture, a flash of lightning, in short: the event" (Raunig 2005: 53).

Thus, art is to incorporate itself into a flash of lightning? What could this mean? It could mean the following: the sudden flare of a plausibility (such as that the federal state of Oaxaca is governed in an authoritarian manner and something has to be done against this authoritarianism), the moment of setting off to a practice that belongs to the spheres of the everyday and the non-everyday at the same time (like cooking while guarding the barricades in the city center), the spontaneously thwarting of fixed habits (like actively creating media instead of merely consuming broadcasts). These kinds of everyday practices that simultaneously break with everyday life can be reflected on and/or methodically anticipated through artistic practices: indigenous people carrying burdens, like those sprayed as stencils on public walls by the collective Lapiztola during the uprising, can be incorporations of this kind. On the one hand they reproduce an everyday perception in the urban space of Oaxaca, which is the capital of the Mexican federal state with the second highest proportion of indigenous populations. On the other hand, the everydayness is ruptured specifically through this reproduction (and the manner of reproduction), resulting in a space of imagination that at least potentially enables a vision of everything that is possible, from the concretely shown situation via conditions of working and living to indigenous organizations' demands for land rights. Diego Rivera had already depicted groups of indigenous people, who had hardly been represented in art (and in state politics) before, but in his murals—wholly in keeping with the concept of *Indigenismo*—they served to represent a glorified, nationally functional past rather than functioned as subjects with agency in the present.

Resistance and Negotiation

All three criteria for what is subversive in art have, or rather lay claim to, two interlocking, mutually connected sides: the side internal to the field of art that

power subsequently appears in the books Negri co-authored with Michael Hardt, *Empire* and *Multitude*. Thereafter it became a key concept in post-Operaist-inspired research on social movements (see, for example, Shukaitis, Graeber, and Biddle 2007).

relates to the production context in the narrower sense, and the external side that points beyond the rules of the specific institutions, mechanisms, and practices of art itself. To understand the way in which the two sides interact, one can turn to several theoretical frameworks that also allow for a conceptualization of these kinds of exchange relationships. The approaches of Antonio Negri and Pierre Bourdieu provide two cases in point. Even if it seems audacious to draw on such fundamentally different theoretical frames of reference as the post-Operaist one of Antonio Negri (and Michael Hardt) and the genealogical one of Bourdieu, this "audaciousness" is indeed justified by the reference to contemporary social movements that the two approaches have in common as well as their partial agreement with one another on the role that political resistance has for stability and for the mutability of social conditions.

For Negri and Hardt collective resistance is the precondition for the constitution of social classes and, beyond this, an indication of social conflicts to come. Even though there is certainly nothing like the "primacy of resistance" (Hardt and Negri 2004: 82–84) of post-Operaism in Bourdieu's approach, it seems that the two frameworks share a fundamental emphasis on social struggles. However, these struggles play a central role for Bourdieu that is not limited to field-internal confrontations. Indeed, he states in reference to the entire social space: "History only exists as long as people rebel, resist, react" (2006: 133). This kind of resistance, understood as the active questioning of the given as defined by minimum consensus—an originary act for Hardt and Negri and a reactive one for Bourdieu—, in both theoretical frameworks means establishing politics as a sphere of contentious social order. The question of the subversion of art always implicitly aims at the contribution of art to this establishment of politics. The answer to this question generally does not merely seek to undermine the art system and its field mechanisms, but instead applies them to the aforementioned, existing political–moral order. What should be emphasized at this point (and also highlighted as a further partial agreement between the approaches of Negri and Bourdieu) is that this order does not consist solely of state institutions and their legislative, juridical, and executive branches. For Negri and Hardt, politics means, among other things, the capability of collective actors and institutions "of entering into societal conflicts and differences and negotiating them" (Negri and Hardt 1997: 93). These kinds of conflicts and differences are tied to modes of social production and reproduction; their processes of negotiation do not begin in institutional bargaining. In reference to the state form of neoliberalism, Negri and Hardt note that the state—contrary to all ideological definitions of its withdrawal—is certainly capable of founding a moral unity and consensus (1997: 101). They start from this foundation of consensus in particular in order to be able to show that even the neoliberal, postmodern state does not lose its power, although it increasingly refuses the official procedure of negotiation. Pierre Bourdieu described this level of politics, which aims at founding consensus and at standardization, at length. It is based on the kinds of negotiation processes that do not first take place in representative and institutional procedures but already in the battle over structures of collective

thinking and perception. In Bourdieu's terminology these can be grasped as the symbolic dimension of the political. And these structures of thought, emotion, and perception are also that through which artistic practices can have an impact that is political as a whole and ultimately specifically subversive.

The Symbolic and Politics

If one raises the question of the effects of artistic practices that reach beyond the art field, that protrude into the political field, then it must be recalled that the political field encompasses far more than political parties, parliament, and the other state apparatuses. Bourdieu's field concept was developed, after all, specifically as distinct from Louis Althusser's term of the "ideological state apparatus" to overcome the notion of a relatively closed "apparatus" occupied by bureaucratically organized personnel and oriented to a certain purpose.[10] With a notion of the political as a terrain of the struggle over structures of perception and thought, Bourdieu is also able to describe political conflicts as a theoretical and practical fight for power, in which the goal is to "assert the legitimate view of the social world" (Bourdieu 2001: 238). More precisely, political conflict always involves "recognition accumulated in the form of symbolic capital in reputation and respectability, which empowers determining legitimate knowledge and a sense of the social world, its current significance and the direction in which it will and should develop" (2001: 238).

At the same time, the symbolic dimension of the political must also be defended against two relative conflations of Bourdieu's theory. In her engagement with the political field of Mexico between 1968 and 2000, Martha Zapata Galindo describes, against the background of Bourdieu's theory, "political power" as personally transferable power over means of production and reproduction. She differentiates this from "scientific power," which can hardly be passed on, because it is based on prestige tied to a person (cf. Zapata Galindo 2006: 59). In this perspective, politics or the political means nothing other than the state apparatuses and their actors. Even though Zapata Galindo's concrete analysis of the political role of intellectuals in Mexico in the 1970s is pertinent (and also fascinating with the detailed data material), the form of the political conceptualized in this way still contains a constraint that, as shown above, can hardly be reconciled with the idea of the field concept. According to Zapata Galindo, artistic practices, which she purposely omits

10 In direct reference to Althusser, Bourdieu writes: "In a field there are struggles, thus history. ... The school system, the state, the church, political parties or unions are not apparatuses but fields. In a field agents and institutions struggle, with different degrees of power and thus prospects of success, according to the regularities and rules constitutive of this space of play (and in certain given conjunctures, over the rules themselves), over the appropriation of the specific profits that are in play in this game" (2006: 133).

in her analysis that concentrates on the literary field, could not be politics in their collectivity and in their actions in public space, but can only be art.[11]

In a similar vein, Isabell Graw (2008) ignores the link Bourdieu constructed between the symbolic and the political in her analysis of the field of contemporary art inspired by Bourdieu, when she relates, in a kind of mirror inversion of Zapata Galindo's contraction, the symbolic value of artistic practices only to their commodity value[12] but not to values in the ethical–moral sense and as a set of embodied standards. For it is precisely their significance as unconsciously guiding practice that Bourdieu addresses: understood as legitimate knowledge about and sense of the social world, the symbolic becomes a key category of political conflict. On the level of the symbolic, collective social power relationships are consolidated in individual as well as in collective corporeal dispositions. These mutual (or even contradictory) attitudes are the basis for all measures aiming at the conflictual regulation of that which is shared—in other words, at that which is to be understood as the political.[13]

If the political has now been conceived to the extent of including the struggle over the significance of the social world, two things become possible: one the one hand, we can measure the political content of those artistic actions that emerge from the cultural field to join this struggle and thereby also temporarily and partially overcome the limits of the field. Even as the commodification of art increases, in the process of which the work of art with its functions as a source of belonging and

11 Zapata Galindo follows the thesis formulated by César Espinosa (2002) and others that the gradual demise of the hegemony of the state party PRI began when the student movement was crushed on October 2, 1968, and she affirms this particularly in reference to the cultural field.

12 In symbolic value, according to Isabelle Graw, the "special status of art, historically much fought for" (2008: 32, translation mine) finally found itself. It incorporates the demands on art that have been more strongly formulated since the eighteenth century; in symbolic value "that symbolic meaning, difficult to pin down, which is composed of various factors—singularity, art-historical description, establishment of the artist, promise of originality, assurance of duration, postulation of autonomy or intellectual demands" (2008: 32, translation mine).

13 It is only on this level of symbolic relationship that we can also answer, for example, the question of why the classes who are being ruled uphold the ruling class and actively contribute to its organization. For they do this not necessarily and primarily because of "conscious and considered agreement," but rather under the influence of the power "that in the form of perception schemas and dispositions ... has in the long run enlisted the bodies of the ruled" (Bourdieu 2001: 219, translation mine). The symbolic relationships are imposed according to Bourdieu "on the subjects as a system of rules that possess absolute validity within their domain as a system that cannot be reduced either to the rules of play in the economic sector or the particular intentions of the subjects" (1974: 73, translation mine). With regard to social transformations one should accordingly address not only the economic relationships or the appeal to the cognitive "intentions of the subjects" but also symbolic relationships and cultural leadership that have settled into the bodies of the ruled in the form of perception schemas and dispositions.

a guarantor of distinctions is more and more to be seen as "the forerunner of the brand-name article" (Graw 2008: 136), the artistic work is not a product like any other. Neither is its symbolic value completely absorbed by its commodity value, nor does it remain limited to the battles over differentiation that are immanent to the field. If artistic work is always work on the symbolic, this work can under certain conditions bring about greater or lesser effects in the social realm.

If we consider this symbolic dimension of the political, the discussion of the politics of artistic actions can be move beyond concrete examples such as the uprising in Oaxaca. For struggles over symbolic capital and legitimate knowledge about the sense of the social world occur in all societies and under the most different political administrative systems.

Insurrectional Flashes of Lightning and Symbolic Labor

The art works created on the exterior walls of buildings in Oaxaca during the insurrectional flashes of lightning can be designated as part of a certain symbolic work in Bourdieu's sense. This is the symbolic work required, according to Bourdieu (2001: 241), "to elude the mute evidence of the *doxa* and to articulate and denounce the arbitrariness it veils." *Doxa* is the term Bourdieu uses for self-evident knowledge or, more precisely, the schemata of perception, on which perspectives and ways of thinking are founded.[14] By developing symbolic forms that are integrated into the political struggles of various artistic aesthetic traditions, the works discussed here merge into the work against the "veiled arbitrariness" of the *doxa*. On the one hand they fulfill the classical enlightenment services of uncovering and denouncing. As symbolic forms, on the other hand, they at the same time reach levels that are more rarely touched by conventional political activism aimed at contents free from ambivalence. This is not intended to maintain that artistic practices generally go deeper or achieve more directly interventionist effects in society. Yet the field-specific professional way of dealing with the shift of the meaning of signs—picturing the absent as well as taking up, appropriating, repeating, and shifting this kind of work on symbols has belonged to the "business as usual" of artistic practices since the beginning of modernism—contain at least a certain potential in terms of the symbolic in social and political conditions. In this way, artistic practices can also influence the incorporated system of rules that is to be understood as the political across different fields.

By devoting themselves to these inscribed rules that have become everyday life, artistic practices also place themselves in the context of a reappropriation of the

14 According to Bourdieu, determining and shaping these foundational schemata of perception is claimed by the social forces that condense in the state. An exploration of a possible link between Bourdieu's approach and more recent materialist state theory in the following of Nicos Poulantzas (cf., for example, Bretthauer et al. 2006) through this question of the condensation of societal force relations is unfortunately still a desideratum.

political: for, first of all, the actions described affect the "veiled arbitrariness" and the "mute evidence" of the everyday perception of the political. The insurrection effects or enables questioning the political at a given moment, from within everyday life—in other words without prior sociological analysis or reflection from a political science perspective. The artists active during the uprising support this questioning with their concrete artistic activity, because in a certain sense they exemplify this question themselves as well as in and with their own practice: painting on the street not only exposes the artists' own work to direct observation by passers-by (thus disrupting the artistic norm of the individual creative process in sheltered retreat) but also confronts these viewers with the art historical tradition of muralism and with the break with this tradition at the same time. This demonstrates that political murals can be painted not only in the service of the national project and the state party but also explicitly against the political administrative establishment. As this embeddedness in previous practices in the artists' own field of production shows, working on the symbolic is never without preconditions, but it exists in a permanent process of appropriating and being appropriated. "It is only when the inheritance has appropriated the inheritors," writes Daniel Bensaïd, conveying a central idea from Bourdieu's habitus concept, "that the inheritor can procure the inheritance" (2006: 105–6). Allowing oneself to be seized by the inheritance—that is, an implicit reflection on one's own conditions of production and reproduction—also seems to be an important precondition for the success of artistic interventions. Yet these strategies also work as a reappropriation of the political to the extent that they operate, secondly, to counter attempts to close the political field. As they are clearly recognizably in the context of political mobilizations represented by the APPO, they reclaim the political that is claimed by the professionals for everyone, thus taking a stance for a *political perception of the everyday*. By making the everyday a relevant component of political confrontation, the artist groups, similar to social movements, "illegally exercise politics" (Bensaïd 2006: 109), which professional politics takes action against (and which Zapata Galindo does not take into consideration as such).

The illegal exercise of politics is subversive. Art practices like graffiti and street art can primarily develop these effects when they are able to maintain—to summarize my thesis—the interplay of movement between the everyday and the non-everyday as described here, when they are able to temporarily establish themselves in this shift back and forth between graffiti/street art as art, on the one hand, and as part of the practices of social movements, on the other.[15] The hybrid form or this maneuvering back and forth hinders or blocks, first of all, their hasty functionalization as a (purportedly functionless and hence "artistic") object of prestige and the subsequent pure commodification. Not every legitimization

15 The acceptance of graffiti and street art as art is not necessarily accompanied—as Baeumer (2009: 114) maintains—by ignoring the praxis of the production process that belong to them. Indeed, an inclusion of graffiti/street art in the praxis of social movements instead counters this omission.

of artworks automatically leads to their commodification. In the context of struggles over the city, recognition (as art) can even serve effects external to art. Secondly, this hybrid constitution makes it more difficult for the murals to devolve to the vacuous level of significance of spots of color or crumbling plaster that characterizes the urban building facades no more and no less than the forms that claim something different in form (and content). The latter is also the reason why, in terms of effectiveness, symbolic work on their—at least temporary—elevation as art practice is to be adhered to; an adherence, on which the distinction between everyday objects and art objects (which theoretically seems antiquated and is politically often disparaged), is ultimately also based. Although there is no direct, proportional relationship between the appreciation and impact of cultural production, without recognition, that is, without being furnished with symbolic capital, there is a tremendous drop in the potential for effects within the field of production and even more so outside it.

Consequently, not every piece of graffiti implies an act of taking possession of public space, as García Canclini maintained. Graffiti functions in this sense especially when it can establish itself as a specific artistic practice and make this specificity appear irrelevant at certain moments by merging into other cultural practices. This works best in those moments in which the everyday takes on non-everyday forms and in which other non-everyday manifestations outside the art field belong to everyday life. In short: in situations that are insurrections.

Translated from German by Aileen Derieg.

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