

Art and the Re-Invention of Political Protest

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Abstract

The involvement of artists in social movements that can be witnessed today is just one aspect of the interconnection of arts and political activism. This paper traces the inspiration social movements have gained from artist practices. In western post-war societies the trends developed in the realm of arts have deeply influenced the repertoire of action, social movements have adopted. In a broader sense it was the altered kind of expression visible in new forms of staging, performance art and alike that inspired protesters to develop forms of action they considered to be more effective and appropriate to a modified understanding of politics. In the western world, happenings, street theatre, fakes and other disruptive forms of action have been incorporated in the repertoire of protest by anti-authoritarian movements of the 1960s. Today, these modes of contention are deployed by any social movement actor ranging from faith communities to right-wing organizations. The bearing central to this enhancement of protest is a quasi-artistic relation to social reality. The cultural stock of shared symbols and meanings is regarded as material, disposable to re-invent common interpretations of reality. The global justice movements challenging neo-liberal hegemony have been enforced by many artists. By the means of arts they have illustrated the movements' framing of reality and made their contribution to colourful and diverse protest events. But neither has the connection between artists and movements reached a new quality - as suggested by some observers - nor did artists enrich the action repertoire of global justice activism contributing new forms of contention.

Introduction

In current discussions about political activism the role of art is being stressed as an important support and addition (Amann 2005, Raunig 2003a). This is a reasonable assumption considering the colourful and diverse manifestations of dissent that can be witnessed in the framework of the global justice movements. Still the connection of artists and political movements in an historical and more focussed context is worth examining. In this paper I will offer some tentative considerations about artists as pioneering predecessors of social movements. Artists' theories and practices can be taken up by social movements. In this way the unique approaches artists take to dissent might be introduced into a discourse shared by a broader public. The perspective I choose concentrates on movements' repertoires of action. The set of

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actions deployed by social movements to express protest is subject to constant change. Various forms of protest that extended this repertoire were inspired by action models found in artistic milieus.

Within this framework art should not be seen as a sphere detached from politics but rather as a pool for imagination and vehicle for innovation that fuels political culture. I will argue that the inspirational function of art was most politically disruptive in the era of those social movements western societies experienced in the 1960s. These movements were epoch-making in terms of their restyling of political action repertoires. As an important source of social movement innovations, artists, especially those in the avant-garde circles, presented a deviant worldview. Their ideas were adopted by social movements and have become part of a commonly shared body of wisdom.

Repertoires of action

The notion of action repertoires was coined by Charles Tilly (1977) in an historical perspective. This notion describes a set of means which political actors use to express their grievances and protest. The historical perspective yields evidence for substantial differences in repertoires of action dependent on space and time. Tilly shows that changes in society evoke new forms of action and thus changes in the repertoire of contention. The term repertoire also has a constraining aspect: It denotes a practical discourse in the sense of Foucault as repertoires of action are always a contingent choice from conceivable alternatives. “Repertoires evolve as a result of improvisation and struggle. But at any given time, they limit the forms of interaction that are feasible and intelligible to the parties in question” (McAdam et al 2001: 49). Thus, in a broad sense action repertoires contain conventionalized forms of interaction in political conflicts. The concept of action repertoires was later refined in reference to particular social movement groups embracing different tactics. Following this line, groups deploy a distinct set of actions which they find appropriate, depending on their aims, resources and ideology (e.g. Ennis 1987, Rucht 1990).

Innovation adding new practices to a commonly accepted repertoire can change interactions fundamentally. These innovations can be explained in two ways. Either they are seen as a product of minimal transformation at the margin. On this view contenders alter traditional modes of action “at the perimeter of the existing repertoire” (Tilly 1995: 28). Or, innovations occur in “moments of madness” (Tarrow 1995) when crisis allows for completely new concepts of political action. During such phases the conventional understanding of contention is

considered to be obsolete and alternative forms of expression are regarded as appropriate reactions to the new situation.

There has not been much effort in social movement theory to identify the sources contributing to innovations in repertoires of contention. Admittedly, the quest for sources of innovation is not central to a holistic approach as presented by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001); but it could be crucial for the actual application of the repertoire concept. Whether we are talking about evolutionary transformation “at the margin” or “moments of madness”, it is nevertheless *some subject* who develops or who absorbs and puts to use the ideas for new forms of action.

Referring to protest via the internet Rolfe (2005: 70-72) introduces the idea of “innovative hothouses” — small and specialized pioneering communities which aim at exploiting all opportunities of that medium. These hothouses provide means such as mail-bombing or net strike programmes and spread them via the internet. Such innovations are subsequently deployed by other groups and thus add to the repertoire of online-activism. I will refer to a concept akin to the hothouse metaphor to explain the impact of artists’ practices on collective action. It is that of critical communities introduced by Thomas Rochon (1998) to explain cultural changes in society.

Artists as critical communities

To make sense of fundamental value changes Rochon proposes a two-step model. Each step corresponds with an actor; both actors are separated analytically. At first, small groups or networks frame the perception of a problem in a new way or principally define specific phenomena as a problem. These groups are labelled critical communities. In groundbreaking discussions virtually detached from the public sphere they identify problems and try to develop solutions. Rochon provides two examples that are landmarks in the reformation of politics and daily life in the USA: the books *Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson and *Unsafe at any Speed* (1965) by Ralph Nader. These two works began a revolution of perception of reality contributing to shaping two policy fields: environmental policy and consumer protection. As in these examples critical communities may set new paradigms but they cannot translate their ideas into action (though members of critical communities can be political activists). This is where social movements enter to perform the second step in changing values. “Movements are most closely linked to critical communities and they are the best channel for the translation of critical values into topics of public discourse” (Rochon 1998: 241). Social movements

find ways to communicate the visions of critical communities to a broad public. They attend to the problems framed by critical communities and make ideas the starting point of contention.

Rochon's analysis of critical communities refers to intellectual innovation and changing values. In his view, critical communities develop a rational critique which challenges conventions through the use of arguments. But the notion of criticism can be extended to other forms of action or ways to produce meaning which do not appeal to rationality. Rational explanations have a long-lasting tradition in the interpretation of social movements. Several authors have criticised this paradigm as a distorting lens which narrows scholarly interpretation. Contrary to a rational perspective, the importance of emotions and cultural elements has been underlined. To extend the notion of criticism to other than textual resources suggests integrating these elements. Therefore, in this paper I will consider dissident symbols and behaviour which challenge the established order as a form of criticism. Indeed, the confidence in rational argumentation has been shattered in the context of poststructuralist thinking. A significant fraction of activists in social movements shares doubts about the possibility of convincing elites, consumers of mass media and bystanders with arguments. Nevertheless, these activists must find new ways to make their protests effective. In the light of these assumptions, artists should be understood as critical communities. Their practices can be an inspiration for making sense of reality in a different way. Artists provide methods of self-expression beyond the rationality of arguments. Social movements pick up such dissident cultural forms and integrate them into their practices. Thus, new forms of protest are staged and become part of a shared repertoire of contention.

Art and Protest

These considerations refer to a general reflection on the contribution of art to protest movements. For a long time, social movement scholars have neglected the impact of art or referred to it from a functionalistic perspective. Art was mainly considered as a means used strategically to reach an end, for example, to convince an audience. Since the mid-1990s culture has attracted considerable attention by social movement theory. Since then movements' culture in general and art in particular have been attributed high importance to a movement's identity, resource mobilization and impact on society (Eyerman & Jamison 1998, Johnston & Klandermans 1995). Art has particularly attracted attention of movement scholars in many cases where the use of arguments is restricted, for instance because of limits to freedom of

speech (Chaffe 1993, Steinberg 2004, Wicke 1992). In a case study in Chilean tapestry during the Pinochet rule Jaqueline Adams (2002: 241) has stressed that artist practices can be interwoven with processes which are central to the understanding of social movements such as framing and resource mobilisation. These cases do not match the preconditions of social movements in western post-war democracies on which social movement theory has been concentrating. This disequilibrium in the scholarly attention to art underlines as much the rationalistic perspective of social movement theory as the importance of non-argumentative means of expression in the context of authoritarian regimes.

For the purpose of this paper I would like to separate two kinds of impacts art can have on social movements. On the one side art can be an *illustration* of a movement's claims. For instance, opponents are caricatured on banners, impersonated in street theatre or ridiculed in songs. In these cases art is primarily a means to communicate a message. The Swedish Provos for instance staged a confrontation of two groups in the city of Stockholm in 1966. One was dressed in red one in blue; both carried horrifying paper-mâché bombs. Finally both bombs exploded and all actors collapsed. The purpose of this performance was to show or illustrate the consequences of the arms race and start a debate with the passers-by on the street. Thus, art can support a message. It is a medium to convince others not by words but by straightforward images and emotions. Illustration is the most obvious impact of art in protests because, in such cases, art appears at the surface of protest activities.

On the other side art can be considered as a *conceptual basis* for the reorientation of collective action. The artist's disposition to consider his or her surroundings as raw material for self-expression can be found in many protest events (Teune forthcoming). This creative relation to reality, the notion that reality is a contingent construction of meaning, was triggered by avant-garde visual and literary art, by the apparatus of the cinema and by innovative elements in contemporary music. The idea behind those forms of protest amalgamating with art has been to create situations which profoundly oppose habits or customs. Constructions of meaning which have heretofore been taken for granted are altered in order to irritate people. Again, the Provos provide an example for protest that toys with reality. In 1966, the same year when the performance in Stockholm was staged, Princess Beatrix and Claus von Arnsberg celebrated their wedding in Amsterdam. Provos attacked the royal couple's gilded wedding coach with smoke-bombs, thus disrupting the presentation of royal magnificence. The symbol of power was disgraced and robbed of its stage. Instead of cheering subjects TV cameras showed

the police battering protesters. Media commentators were forced to concede that Amsterdam, at least, was not entirely royalist.

Regardless of how art influences political protest, it has impacts on movements' repertoires of action: Art can depict protest or it can structure it. To assess the importance of the conjunction of art and protest I will contrast two periods of protest in western societies: the student movement in the 1960s and the global justice movements as it has developed since 1999.

The Roaring Sixties

When western post-war societies are compared, the similarities in the development of protest are striking. Germany might be the best example for a shift in the perception of the phenomenon. In its early years Western Germany was an authoritarian corporatist state where protest was met with suspicion and demonstrators subject to state repression. Slowly, the political system began to become more responsive to protest claims and permeable for actors beyond institutional channels of policymaking (Rucht 2003). With this "participatory revolution" (Kaase 1982) protest became a common means to influence political processes. Because of the long-lasting struggle for the recognition of extra-parliamentary demands, protest today is a normal part of German politics. During this process of normalisation not only did the perception of protest reverse, but the repertoire of contention also changed significantly.

After the war the repertoire for political actors beyond parliaments and corporatist arrangements included monotonous rallies and marches, petitions and collections of signatures. Occasionally, there was turmoil or disruption of some events by counter-demonstrators. A chronicle of protest events in Western Germany in the 1950s shows that there was hardly any protest that did not fit into that pattern (Kraushaar 1996). In the late 1960s, however, this constellation was challenged. The first signs of unrest at the turn of the decennium lacked an outspoken political message. Notably inspired by pieces of art, namely, Hollywood films such as "Rebel Without a Cause" (1955), German youths began to gather in the streets and were subsequently dispersed by the police. The gathering of young people shows the *illustrative* effect art had on the development of protest: it can be seen as a mirror of the motivation that triggers protest. In the 1950s sub-cultural art — be it films, jazz, the folk music revival or beat literature — was the medium of a profoundly different lifestyle. Bohemian circles where the first to sketch scenarios for a life different from that of the establishment, characterised by specific, set routines and conformity. Whereas mass culture (as in the case of Hollywood icon James

Dean) mirrored the gesture of rebellion, counterculture authentically expressed the dissent of dropouts. In this respect art played an important part in the pre-movement stage. It provoked a feeling of discomfort in a strictly conservative society and stirred the wish to live differently. But art fuelled the expression of protest not just on a motivational basis. The aesthetics of rebellion flooded the streets with a new language of symbols. The emblematic photograph of Ché Guevara which Alberto Korda took in 1960 became not only the identity forming decoration of socialist students' rooms but also one of the most copied pieces of photography of the 20th century. The posters of the students' movement displayed in the public sphere ushered in a renaissance of labour movement symbols such as the fist and the colour red, the universal symbol of socialism (HKS 13 n.d.). Adding to this, students revived the idea of street theatre and staged their view of reality in the streets which were referred to as the mass medium of the oppressed (Hüfner 1970).

Art also provided innovations encouraging experiments with the forms of protest. The *conceptual* effect of art is far less obvious but it shapes forms of protest in a very basic sense. The artistic worldview may contribute to a paradigm shift of human interaction. Its purpose is to reformulate the idea of social exchange, the relationship of subject and object, and society as a whole. In the field of fine arts in the 1950s the notion of the art piece was questioned through concepts of performance. Art was conceptualised not as an object presented to the audience but as a process being witnessed and influenced by the audience. With Fluxus and Happening two currents emerged which attempted to stage, frame or present art as a participatory process. With his "White Paintings" (1952) Robert Rauschenberg for instance created a projection screen for the shadows of those looking at the pieces. Similarly, John Cage's composition "4'33" was made up entirely of sounds produced by the audience. Both innovations are meaningless without the participation of the audience which, at the same time, ceases to exist as a crowd of passive consumers. The same development could be observed in the theatre. The audience became the subject of the performance; it was integrated into the work of the company. This altered understanding of actors and bystanders was the expression of the avant-garde vision of an ubiquitous art. As George Macunias stated in his *Manifesto on Art/Fluxus Art Amusement* "to establish artist's non-professional status in society, he must demonstrate artist's dispensability and inclusiveness, he must demonstrate the self-sufficiency of the audience, he must demonstrate that anything can be art and anyone can do it." (Maciunas 1965). Art was not regarded as a matter of celebrated individual artists but the collective product of spontaneous people.

By the same token, politics was regarded ubiquitous by rebelling students. Politics was not seen as the business of professional politicians but as a cross-sectional field where everybody was concerned. On this view, political action ought to be designed to empower those who do not participate. The public should not be persuaded from a distance but become part of a discursive process. Thus, the separation of activists and audience also vanished in the staging of street protests. Traditional demonstration marches had appeared as a compact collective body moving through the streets. Bystanders could either join the march or keep separate. Early forms of street theatre such as agitprop in the 1920s resembled this traditional relationship of actors and audience. But activists in the students' movement started to challenge clear-cut frontiers. In December 1966 students staged a "walking" demonstration in West Berlin's shopping district on the Kurfürstendamm, in order to evade a ban on protests. Students gathered repeatedly and attempted to engage passers-by in open discussion. Whenever the police approached a gathering, the participants would continue walking. The fact that several Christmas shoppers were also arrested demonstrated the arbitrariness of the authorities' response and ridiculed the attempt to prohibit protest.

In contrast to those art forms mentioned above, artists with an explicitly interventionist concept emerged in the mid-1950s and influenced the students' and subsequent movements. As an exceptional instance of an interventionist concept I will refer to the Situationist International (S.I.). This group existed from 1957 to 1970 and comprised 70 artists originating from Europe and Northern America. The artists and theoreticians in the S.I. regarded everyday life as colonised by the spectacle of capitalism (Debord 1983). From this perspective, peoples' biographies were seen to be prefigured — their motions and emotions controlled by a cultural system which produced meaning. To escape this constellation the S.I. promoted the amalgamation of art and life by developing basically two tactics. The first, *dérive* (driftage), is an isolated form of dissent. It means to wander through an urban area and disobey those signs whose purpose it is to channel human behaviour (e.g. traffic signs, advertisements, designation/segregation of public and private spaces). *Dérive* was particularly important to situationists because they considered urban planning as an alienating and isolating external form of control. Nevertheless, the group's *dérive* tactic was as utopian as the cities they designed themselves. Cities such as Constant's New Babylon were sketched as ever-moving spaces of creativity and interaction (Wigley 1998). The second situationist tactic was a reaction to the spectacular reign of symbols. Situationists referred to the images, symbols and icons to which society is constantly exposed as alienating means of oppression. Cultural products such as

billboards, TV programmes, comics, monuments, architecture, and the like were seen as part of the spectacle consumed by the people. The means developed within the S.I. to resist this form of control was *détournement* (misappropriation). This practice drew some of its inspiration from avant-garde art, incorporating ideas introduced by Dada and Surrealism. Elements of everyday life were abstracted from their surroundings and combined to create a new meaning. As in Duchamps' "Bicycle Wheel" (1915) the situationists looked for ways to create another reality by re-arranging particular elements of the given.

Both of the above-mentioned forms of action proposed by the S.I. broke with traditional leftist politics. The starting point for situationist intervention was not the struggle of capital and labour but culture in everyday life. The addressee of these actions was not a collective (preferably the proletariat) but the individual who was confronted with a monolithic spectacle (see Wollen 1989 on the relationship of S.I. and western Marxism). This autonomous and cultural turn anticipated the most important developments in the radical left. Sadie Plant (1992) argues that to a certain extent the S.I. prepared the ground for post-modern thinking. Traditional forms of politics, democratic centralism or reference to a proletarian collective were incommensurate with these situationist ideas. However, the S.I. did not fully engage in political struggles. Their critique of the traditional left was so uncompromising that there was no room for political action in the practical sense. No attempt to build alliances or to focus on political strategies was made within the S.I. Actors in the leftist scene were derided and insulted. Even though the journal *Internationale Situationiste* reflected upon a variety of protest means — an article in the journal proposed the *détournement* of pornography, comics and billboards and the appropriation of mass media like radio, films and newspapers (Vienet 1967) — the repertoire of action deployed by French S.I. members to intervene the conflict in May 1968 was limited to leafleting and graffiti. Nevertheless, the S.I. had considerable influence on the formation of political struggles. A pamphlet denouncing students as supporting the spectacle (UNEF Strasbourg 1966) was picked up by the anarchist *Enragés* and played a considerable role in the mobilisation of students in May 1968 (Gilcher-Holtey 1995). The artists triggered oppositional behaviour but at the same time they opposed the idea of channeling dissent. Some members of the German S.I. gave their activism a more explicit interventionist drive by merging with members of the anti-authoritarian current within the students' movement. Their protest was a politicised implementation of situationist concepts. Dieter Kunzelmann — proclaiming himself a theoretician rather than an artist — was one of the key figures in the establishment of political communes. He and his fellow communards promoted

disruptive forms of protest complementing the demonstrations organised by the traditional socialist student federation, the SDS. The Berlin-based *Kommune 1* staged happenings, disrupted church services and planned a food attack against US Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. The non-classifiable character of these protests triggered extensive media attention. Thus, this small group was well-known and formed an important part in the representation of the students' protest.

The structure of the actions carried out by *Kommune 1* followed the idea of *détournement*. They were designed to alter products or situations in everyday life to construct another perspective on reality. Creativity in the use of symbols was the core difference to prior forms of protest. The cultural stock of shared symbols and meanings was regarded as raw material to re-invent interpretations of reality. Whereas the connection between symbol and meaning was indispensable for most of the antecedent social movements (e.g. the red flag for the labour movement) the aberrant use of symbols gained momentum in the protests of the anti-authoritarian movements. Adding to this, other groups started to play with the cultural stock and integrated comics or advertisements in their posters. The German SDS, for example, took an advertising slogan of the German Federal Railway Company (*Deutsche Bundesbahn* — DB) and used it to create a socialist spin. The slogan was, "Everybody talks about weather, we don't." It was used as the caption to a picture of a DB train cutting its way across a snowy landscape. The SDS took the slogan and attached it instead to an image of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

In sum, then, art can have a strong impact on the formation of political protest.² Of the groups first mentioned — Beat and Jazz, Fluxus and Happening artists — none interfered directly with social movements. The S.I. had the more interventionist profile but ultimately it, too, shied away from strategic engagement. Despite sporadic overlap the ideas of the S.I. were not spread by the group itself. To be spread around and become known publicly the concepts of the S.I. needed to be enacted by groups other than the artists' collective. Students' movement activists developed political practices taking ideas of the S.I. as a starting point. In France the group to disseminate these thoughts was the *Enragés*, in Germany the *Subversive Aktion* and *Kommune 1*. All of the aforementioned artist groups had a repertoire of deviance

² Obviously, the relation of art and social movements is not a one-way street. In the same manner in which the unity of art and life had influence on the conception of political action, the politicisation of everyday life triggered organising processes in the art sector. Influenced by the civil rights movement artists founded the *Art Workers Coalition* in 1969 to protest against the curatorial policies of museums and galleries which favoured male artists. Opposition to discriminatory practices in the cultural sector is still salient, for example, in the work of the feminist *Guerrilla Girls*.

which offered new ideas for interpreting social relations. Thus the term ‘critical community’ applies to all of the groups. In a pioneering step they ignited the reformulation of ‘meaning’ which was heretofore socially agreed upon. These innovations triggered changing forms of protest in societies which experienced a fundamental liberalisation or even a temporary suspension of social rules such as occurred in Parisian May 1968. In this historical situation new forms of contention seemed appropriate. Even though some of the situationist concepts were present in an earlier epoch — namely the avant-garde of the 1920s — they became relevant for a growing number of political activists only fifty years later. In the framework of the students’ movement some tactics of the US civil rights movement — namely, sit-ins and teach-ins — were integrated into the repertoire of contention; new expressive elements such as running and linking arms enriched protest marches and rallies of the students’ movement. However, these forms could not express an individualized, creative and irreconcilable critique of a totalitarian consumer society. The concepts of the S.I. provided the means for a form of protest which was considered appropriate.

Artists’ Commitment to Global Justice

The modernisation processes experienced by western post-war societies in the second half of the 20th century yielded a completely different understanding of society. Collective identities lost salience and bipolar ideological conflict vanished. Today, high importance is attached to civil society in the identification and resolution of social problems. The liberalisation towards protest was part of this process; it produced a stable opportunity structure for social movement activists. The post-modern perception of society stressing the autonomy of the individual and the contingency of social structures was accompanied by an enriched repertoire of action for social movements. But this repertoire, considered as a set of action forms appropriate for a given political context, has not undergone basic changes since the initial period of the liberalisation process. Despite the fact that it is impossible to tell what effect present developments in art might have on future activism it is unlikely that fundamental changes in the repertoire of contention will evolve in the near future. Of course, there have been major political changes which have visibly impacted art and protest. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the bipolar world order have led to hegemony of an uncontained neo-liberalism. Today, the politics of transnational corporations in the global South fuels the motivation for people to take to the streets. So does the precarisation of work and living conditions which currently poses a very real and direct threat to people in western societies. Cul-

tural workers were the first to underline this effect in the protests of the *Intermittents du Spectacle* or in the context of Euromayday. The assumption of a stable liberal opportunity structure does not mean that nothing has changed in the relation between art and activism. In fact, the interconnection of both fields has become more obvious. Many artists consider themselves to be part of a social movement and, conversely, several processes akin to those observed in social movements have affected activist art as well.

In recent times the commitment of a growing number of artists to social struggles has become even more visible. In a unique study Raunig (2000) portrays the contribution of artists to the protests against the centre-right government in Austria in the year 2000. At that time countless artistic interventions — street-theatre, performances and music — fuelled a long-lasting mobilisation after a sustained period of latency among social movements in that country. In the USA the alliance of cultural workers and social movement activists was initiated somewhat earlier, within the framework of the *Act Up* campaign which opposed the conservative reaction to the threat of AIDS. In this context the joint engagement of artists and social movements gained momentum. Today, artists form part of movements beyond the borders of nation-states, which act in favour of a different kind of globalisation. A look at the street demonstrations in this context reveals abundant and ever-expanding tactics to express dissent. Many of them are artistic practices; some make use of the concept of *détournement*.

As in the 1960s, artistic practices enrich the image of protest events staged by the global justice movements adding to an *illustration* of movement ideas. Artistic action forms such as radical puppetry, street music and the like (see Amann 2005) help movement actors to transmit their message. Most of the major street marches of the global justice movement include percussion groups. Moreover, with the *Infernal Noise Brigade* the critics of neo-liberalism have a band that accompanies all major events and at the same time is an expression of the diversity of the movement. This band is made up of musicians from all over the world and keenly combines different musical styles (see <<http://www.infernalnoise.org>>). In these protest performances cities are turned to stages to make visible critique and express grievances. In May 2001 German *Attac* activists installed an inflatable island on the Alster Lake in the City of Hamburg. *Attac* declared this island to be Hamburg's first tax haven; this was done to draw attention to rampant practice of tax evasion. Pedal boats transferred suitcases filled with cash to the island for the purpose of money laundering. Passers-by were offered free counselling to assist in optimising their cash-flow. This action caught the attention of an audience to an issue which had widely been ignored.

The search for attention caused creative forms of protest to mushroom since the 1990s. This is due partly to activists' adaptation to the needs of mass media. Social movements have developed a reflected understanding of the function of mass media and most groups try to exert influence on their coverage (Rucht 2004). Thus, for many groups the staging of colourful protests is also a strategic consideration. Catchy forms of protest are regarded necessary to attract media coverage and, in turn, to influence the public discourse. In this vein, art can play an important part by producing meaningful images which make complex social interrelations visible.

At the same time movement activists increasingly emphasise the motivational value of art. The limits of traditional forms of protest continue to nurture creative forms of action. For activists especially the concept of carnival (Bakhtin 1965) has proven important to break with the routines of protesters and bystanders. Artistic forms are central to the carnivalesque reinterpretation of protest. They are seen as a way to make protest attractive for activists as well as potential participants. A flyer handed out at a demonstration ironically celebrating the upcoming war in Iraq read, "Activism doesn't have to mean droning speeches, dull chants, and tired slogans. To sustain the growing movement over the long haul, we need humour, theatre, music, flamboyance, irony, and fun" (cited in Shepard 2003: 7). Carnavalesque elements create exceptional situations; they turn around traditional role models. Additionally, they can motivate protesters who doubt that traditional street demonstrations are effective. Artistic forms can also serve to narrow the gap between actors and a politically remote audience which distances itself from outspoken anti-neo-liberal messages.

The *conceptual* basis of protest continues to follow the artistic worldview as suggested for the students' movement. The idea of *détournement* is widely spread in today's protests. It is deployed by anti-capitalist groups as well as charity organisations. In December 2004 the German *Welthungerhilfe* asked for funding deploying a billboards campaign which mimicked McDonalds' advertising. "Hunger?" the billboard asks, but the arrow which would normally point to the nearest pair of "golden arches" says instead, "only 4,291 kilometres from here". While artistic practices frequently serve as a conceptual basis for protest, artistic interventions have developed a more explicit political profile. The Italian artist collective *0100101110101101.org* realised a project on a central square of Vienna that suggested the locus' privatisation. On a fake website (see <www.nikeground.com>) the artists presented Nike's alleged plans to erect an oversized swoosh and constructed an info-box on the square. Before they held a speech to denounce the colonisation of everyday life by corporate symbols

they discussed the project with passers-by as Nike-representatives. The spheres of art and activism ultimately merge in the case of urban activists who, supported by a local theatre, staged a ballet in the area of Hamburg's central railway station where classical music is played to dispel drug addicts and homeless persons 'loitering' about the station. These examples show the convergence of art and social movements. By these interventions the action repertoire deployed by social movements has broadened. But, compared to innovations in specific historical contexts as observed in the 1960s, these changes seem to be of another quality.

As indicated above, activist art has experienced changes that are evocative of structural changes in social movements. The first effect is differentiation. Artists share their knowledge with activists, the former advising the latter on how to enact dissent. Unlike artists in earlier stages of social movement history, contemporary artists offer workshops and 'professional' assistance to translate a political message into a protest event. Adding to this, activists making use of a particular artistic technique of protest have founded groups and transnational networks. Pie-throwers, for example, have built up a specialised network of national groups exclusively engaged in throwing pies at politicians and corporate representatives. In this respect artists and artistic practices have a differentiated role within the movement. But the effect of differentiation is rather ambiguous. On a larger scale, with artists explicitly forming part of a movement, the differentiation of sectors opposing neo-liberal globalisation seems to be fading. Raunig (2003b) translates hope for an alliance beyond differences that were attached to the formation of the global justice movements to a broader scope. He contends that the critics of social inequality are linked transversally. On this view, "cooperation between overlapping fields" (*op. cit.*: 14) such as art, activism, and theory challenges the boundaries between the fields without levelling differences.

The second effect that could be observed in the development of social movements is institutionalisation. Even though it is extrinsic to the movement, a similar process has become obvious in the field of artists' activism. Since the turn of the millennium institutions of culture have brought back to mind the political commitment of artists. In Germany there have been numerous congresses and workshops dealing with artistic forms of protest. Theatres, museums and galleries picked up the issue, reflecting through events artists' contributions to political struggles, and the opportunities and limitations of artistic activism. Most of such events are funded by state-supported institutions. In the framework of these exhibitions and perform-

ances, political artists meet and find an institutional opportunity to continue and disseminate their work.

Further changes in the connection between arts and political protest can be traced back to technical-end economic developments. The exchange of information and ideas between scenes in different countries has been facilitated by cheap and more pervasive travel as well as the internet and electronic communication. Forms and symbols of political protest can be disseminated quickly around the globe because of direct, networked communication (Ayers 1999). Compared to print-media which were so vital for the diffusion of ideas and repertoires in the wake of modern social movements (Tarrow 1998: 45-47) the internet today provides tremendous opportunities for diffusion processes. Thus the internet complements other ways of sharing knowledge such as personal relations (McAdam & Rucht 1993) or visual media (Biggs 2003) to spread protest tactics. This adds to a broader access to knowledge on staging protest.

Towards an Integrated ‘Artivism’

Artists have illustrated the global justice movements’ framing of reality and made their contribution to colourful and diverse protest events. But the conceptual basis for protest, as far as it is rooted in artistic concepts, has not changed; rather, it has spread to broader parts of social movements which use disruptive forms of protest. In the 1960s it was a “moment of madness” that made an appropriation of avant-garde ideas feasible. The ideas encapsulated in modern art became salient for the interpretation of reality. What can be observed today is rich innovation at the margins. Today, online forms of contention resemble offline activities (blockades, petitions, fakes), carnival elements enrich the image of traditional street marches. The idea of street art, for instance, which was the subject of much publicity and attention in Germany with the first ‘live’ issue of the *Backjumps* magazine in 2003 (see <http://www.backjumps.org/li1_ku.html>), can be traced back to an action of some Danish S.I. members painting a fence in Copenhagen in 1962. The diagnosis of ‘innovation at the margins’ also holds for those forms of action which are obviously inspired by a deconstructionist perspective of reality and thus follow aesthetic ideas introduced into movement repertoires in the 1960s. Pink and silver and reclaim the streets, for instance, are practices that challenge hegemonic definitions of gender and public space.

When we compare the relation of art to political movements for both periods — the 1950s/1960s and today — there are still basic differences. Since the 1960s the formerly de-

tached spheres of art and social movements have developed a broader intersection. In some cases artistic and political practices are virtually indistinguishable.

Considering artists' influence on the repertoire of contention in the 1950s and 1960s the notion of critical communities seems to fit. Those groups promoted projects that were detached from the sphere of social movements. The avant-garde claims left no room for actual political alliances. Even though many artists had outspoken political views sustained collaboration was rare. Still, artistic ideas unfolded in the context of social movements to be presented to a wider public and affect the understanding of politics. To characterize the status of artists in relation to the global justice movements today the hothouse metaphor coined by Rolfe (2005) complements the notion of critical communities. The purpose of hothouses is accelerated growth of ideas and their transplantation to specific environments. The appropriateness of 'the hothouse' label to describe the commitment of contemporary artists becomes obvious when we consider the workshops held to teach activists artistic strategies. In these workshops activists learn to plan effective protest events. The events themselves are multipliers aiming at direct impact on political conflicts.

Conclusion

To convey their messages social movements employ a great deal of tactical variety. Art as a societal sphere of innovation and production of meaning has been a major source of inspiration in the development of new forms of protest. In western post-war societies the trends developed in the realm of art have deeply influenced the repertoire of actions which social movements have adopted. For social movements art, in turn, is an important means by which to mobilise fellow protesters and attract media resonance thus transmitting the movements' specific framing of societal problems.

In this vein, art can be understood as a political mediator in collective learning processes (Eyerman & Jamison 1998), but it can be even more. Art can serve as a model for a dissident understanding of reality and as a blueprint for behaviour in a changing society. Thus, art provided patterns by which to orient oneself in the "moment of madness" which activists experienced as unsettling in the 1960s. Precisely at that moment, art provided elements of a different worldview. Subsequently, happenings, street theatre, fakes and other disruptive forms of action have been incorporated in the repertoire of protest in the western world. Today, these modes of contention are deployed by any social movement actor including religious communities and conservative organizations.

The stimuli of artistic practice which once helped to re-invent protest seem to have a different impact today. The basic matrix of creative protest — a worldview emphasizing individual autonomy and the contingency of socially constructed meaning — was proffered by the avant-garde and picked up in the actions of the students' movement. The concept has not changed since. Unlike then, however, today we witness a diverse commitment of artists to the presentation of social movements' political claims. Today, artists are more integrated into the global justice movements. They regard themselves as political actors and their work as political intervention in a literal sense.

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