

DEBATES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Struggling for the Right to the (Creative) City in Berlin and Hamburg: New Urban Social Movements, New 'Spaces of Hope'?

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Abstract

In cities across the globe there is mounting evidence of growing mobilization by members of the so-called 'creative class' in urban social movements, defending particular urban spaces and influencing urban development. This essay discusses the meaning of such developments with reference to the hypothesis made by David Harvey in Spaces of Capital about the increasing mobilization of cultural producers in oppositional movements in an era of wholesale instrumentalization of culture and 'creativity' in contemporary processes of capitalist urbanization. After briefly reviewing recent scholarly contributions on the transformations of urban social movements, as well as Harvey's hypothesis about the potential role of cultural producers in mobilizations for the construction of 'spaces of hope', the essay describes two specific urban protests that have occurred in Berlin and Hamburg in recent years: the fight for Berlin's waterfront in the Media Spree area, and the conflict centred on the Gängeviertel in Hamburg. In both protests artists, cultural producers and creative milieux have played a prominent role. The essay analyses the composition, agenda, contribution and contradictions of the coalitions behind the protests, discussing whether such movements represent the seeds of new types of coalitions with a wide-ranging agenda for urban change. The essay finally proposes a future research agenda on the role of artists, cultural producers and the 'creative class' in urban social movements across the globe.

'We get the picture: We, the music, DJs, art, film and theatre people, the groovy-little-shop owners and anyone who represents a different quality of life . . . are meant to take care of the atmosphere, the aura and leisure quality, without which an urban location has little chance in the global competition. We are welcome. In a way. On the one hand. On the other, the blanket development of urban space means that we — the decoys — are moving out in droves, because it is getting increasingly impossible to afford space here . . . We say: A city is not a brand. A city is not a corporation. A city is a community. We ask the social question which, in cities today, is also about a battle

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which funded a fellowship for the research stay of Claire Colomb at the Center for Metropolitan Studies, Berlin (July–December 2009), during which time this article was collaboratively developed. Thanks to Carsten Joost and Christoph Twickel for their insight into the Berlin and Hamburg movements analysed here.

for territory . . . We claim our right to the city — together with all the residents of Hamburg who refuse to be a location factor.’

Manifesto of *Not in Our Name, Marke Hamburg!*
(NiON, 2010: 324–5)

Introduction

‘A spectre has been haunting Europe since US economist Richard Florida predicted that the future belongs to cities in which the “creative class” feels at home’ (NiON, 2010: 323). This reference to Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* is the opening salvo of *Not in Our Name*, a manifesto by Hamburg-based artists, musicians and social activists, published in October 2009. It is an uncompromising attack on their city leaders’ increasingly growth-oriented and gentrification-friendly approach to urban development and recent adoption of ‘creative city’ policies of the type championed by Richard Florida and Charles Landry. The manifesto’s publication plus the enormous attention it sparked throughout Germany and beyond are indicative of a broader conflict currently unravelling, not only in Hamburg but also in other German cities like Berlin, over contemporary urban development — that is often described as entrepreneurial (Harvey, 1989) or, more recently, neoliberal (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). This conflict is, paradoxically, spearheaded by people to whom many of the policies affecting Hamburg and other cities seek to appeal: well-educated middle-class creative individuals such as design and cultural professionals, as well as artists and students, i.e. individuals who are today, following the works of Richard Florida (2002), labelled members of the so-called ‘creative class’.¹ In Hamburg the publication of the above-mentioned manifesto coincided with the occupation of the Gängeviertel, a historic inner-city neighbourhood popular among artists that had been earmarked for wholesale renewal before the city council, in response to the massive resistance, decided to buy back the property it had previously sold to a private developer.

A year earlier in Berlin, the Media Spree project — a large-scale redevelopment scheme planned along the shoreline of the River Spree (where many music clubs and other sub-cultural spaces are located) — also found itself facing massive protests, culminating in a local public referendum in which a majority voted against the project and forced local authorities to reconsider much of the existing scheme. Coordinated by several local initiatives, the ongoing protests in Berlin are (in common with those in Hamburg) largely driven by precisely that segment of society around which Berlin’s politicians (in common with their counterparts in Hamburg) orientate so much of their policymaking (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009).

- 1 Florida’s ‘creative class’ concept is highly controversial, as are his hypotheses, methodology and results. Initially developed with regard to cities in the USA, his main argument is that economic growth and innovation are now driven by a ‘creative class’ comprising two main components. The ‘super-creative core’ includes professionals ‘whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology and/or creative content’ (Florida, 2002: 8) in the fields of science, engineering, computer programming, education and research. This core also includes the so-called ‘bohemians’: artistically creative individuals working in the sphere of the arts, media and entertainment (e.g. writers, film directors, etc.). The second component of the creative class is made of ‘creative professionals’: workers in the knowledge-based industries (business, finance, law and healthcare). Florida’s definition of creativity has been criticized for a lack of conceptual clarity and for aggregating unrelated occupational groups with highly heterogeneous characteristics (Krätke, 2010). In this contribution we will use the word ‘creative(s)’ not as an analytical category, but as the term employed in the discourse of policymakers or academics who have bought into Florida’s thesis. As researchers, we prefer — taking on board critical contributions from Peck (2005), Markusen (2006) and Krätke (2010) — to use the concept of ‘cultural producers’ or ‘artistically creative workers’ (Krätke, 2010), i.e. contributors to the cultural industries who ‘combine cultural expression and creativity with material production, tradable goods and, to a greater or lesser extent, market-based consumption’ (Montgomery, 2005: 340).

Regardless of how they might unfold in the future, these developments deserve scholarly attention. They suggest that entrepreneurial or neoliberal policy agendas, particularly those policy discourses and practices aimed at promoting 'creative cities' as 'soft' policy fixes that complement them (Peck, 2005), are increasingly coming under fire. They seem to show that some 'creatives', especially artists and other cultural producers (i.e. members of the 'super-creative' core of Florida's creative class formulation), have become a strong voice in contestations of the present-day urban order. Yet their role in urban social movements has thus far not been sufficiently explored. What precisely characterizes and drives the emerging protests in Berlin and Hamburg? How should they be interpreted, and what implications can be drawn from them with respect to the current state and status of urban social movements in both theory and practice?

Exploratory in nature, this essay seeks to address these questions, building upon recent scholarly contributions on urban social movements and contestations to neoliberal urbanism, notably in this journal (e.g. Köhler and Wissen, 2003; Pickvance, 2003; Pruijt, 2003; 2004; Uitermark, 2004; Leitner *et al.*, 2006; Nicholls, 2008; Mayer, 2009), as well as critical literature on the role of creative cities policies in contemporary processes of urbanization (e.g. Montgomery, 2005; Peck, 2005; Krätke, 2010). Our analysis will draw particularly on the work of David Harvey. In *Spaces of Capital* he emphasized the political and agitational powers of cultural producers, hypothesizing that the increased instrumentalization of art and culture as productive assets in post-industrial economies and policymaking could 'lead a segment of the community concerned with cultural matters to side with a politics opposed to multinational capitalism and in favour of some more compelling alternative based on different kinds of social and ecological relations' (Harvey, 2001a: 410; 2002). The objective of the following discussion is thus to assess whether or not the current struggles in Hamburg and Berlin lend support to Harvey's claim, and to discuss the extent to which the developments in these two cities hold promise for real and sustained progressive urban change; to paraphrase Harvey, whether 'spaces of hope' within which alternative politics can be both devised and pursued are truly emerging.

Focusing particularly on the German context, the first part of the essay provides a brief discussion of urban social movements and their transformations over time, addressing in particular the recent appearance of new actors and coalitions engaging in urban struggles. Harvey's notion of 'spaces of hope' and his hypothesis about the potential role of cultural producers in urban mobilizations for the construction of such spaces are then elaborated upon. The essay's second part takes the discussion to Berlin and Hamburg. The two cities' turn towards urban entrepreneurialism and their adoption of what might be best described as 'creative city' approaches are discussed. The contradictions, tensions and conflicts these approaches have given rise to are then illustrated through two short case studies of urban struggles in both cities. In the final section we discuss these recent developments as well as their possible implications in the framework of urban social movement theory, in particular Harvey's work on the role of cultural producers in urban protests. In the conclusion we put forward a number of questions for future research on the role of artists, cultural producers and 'creatives' in urban social movements across the globe.²

Urban social movements, 'spaces of hope' and the role of cultural producers: towards new coalitions?

Urban social movements have, since the 1960s, been conceptualized as a particular and separate form of 'new' social mobilization arising out of the economic, social, cultural and political transformations of capitalist societies. New social movements were characterized as a form of collective action not defined by (or centred on) relations

2 This essay is based on a small number of exploratory interviews with individual actors at the heart of the mobilization of 'cultural producers' in both the Berlin and the Hamburg movements described here, on participation observation of demonstrations, events and talks organized by the movements, and on a simple analysis of the media discourse on both conflicts.

between capital and labour, which had been at the core of 'old' social movements. Urban social movements (USMs) for their part have been defined as a 'type of social movement rooted in collectivities with a communal base and/or with the local state as their target of action' (Fainstein and Fainstein, 1985: 189). Castells (1977) initially posited that USMs would play a crucial role in altering social relations, through alliances with labour movement organizations and political groupings, but later modified his argument by arguing that the local focus of urban movements precluded fundamental structural changes (Castells, 1983). The most USMs could do, he now posited, was to produce resistance against hegemonic ideas and projects, and thereby change urban meaning, that is, the way how and for whom a society defines what a city is for (*ibid.*).

Castells' early categorization (*ibid.*) of urban social movements (USMs) identified three types of USM: those focusing on issues of collective consumption, i.e. struggles around the provision of and access to collectively managed services financed by the state; those defending the cultural and social identity and character of a particular place; and those seeking to achieve control and management of local spaces, institutions or assets. This definition reflected the dynamics of such movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Mayer, 2006). In recent years a number of scholars have analysed the transformation of USMs under the combined forces of globalization, economic restructuring, the transformation of urban governance and the changing role of the local state in a post-Fordist era. Mayer (2009) provides a helpful analysis of the shifting focus and form of USMs from the 1960s to the present day. The transformation of USMs has taken a different shape, pace and trajectory in different national and local contexts, influenced by local opportunity structures and the particular form taken by the restructuring of the local state.

In Germany the first generation of USMs (exemplified by squatting, rent strikes and large-scale demonstrations against urban renewal policies) 'left behind a new political actor in most West German cities: a self confident and politically active urban counter-culture' (Mayer, 1993: 150). This is true in both Berlin and Hamburg, where squatters, citizens and tenants' groups often successfully challenged prevailing forms of urban development. The early USMs were highly politicized and markedly anti-state in their orientation (Clarke and Mayer, 1986). In the 1980s the relation between USMs and the state changed significantly. The emergence of 'Alternative Lists', and in 1980 the Green Party, onto the local electoral scene meant that many of the claims of early USMs came to be channelled through and represented in city councils (Clarke and Mayer, 1986; Mayer, 1993). Community organizations which were at the forefront of, or emerged from, the grassroots movements of the 1970s were increasingly supported and funded by the state, institutionalized as part of the 'third sector' or co-opted into partnerships with state organizations for service delivery and neighbourhood regeneration (Mayer, 1993; 2006; 2009). Sites of cultural and artistic resistance and spaces occupied for autonomous alternative ways of living started routinely cooperating with the state, subsequently losing much of their radical political edge (Köhler and Wissen, 2003). They also began to be 'used to establish urban-cultural ambiance' and 'displayed by the city as (cultural) locational factors in the competition to attract investors' (Mayer, 1993: 161). Meanwhile, those movements or initiatives that resisted cooperation or integration found themselves increasingly marginalized or repressed. Torn between cooptation/legalization and repression/eviction, Germany's squatters' movement was a case in point (Clarke and Mayer, 1986; Mayer, 1993).

The consequence of these transformations is that since the late 1980s an increasing heterogenization of the social composition and political orientation of the German USM landscape has taken place (Mayer, 1993). The 1990s saw the emergence of unfamiliar forms of protest activity such as right-wing and neo-Nazi militancy, street fighting with the police on 1 May, or attacks by 'autonomous' radicals on the Greens in city councils 'where one group attacks as "yuppification" what to another is an achievement of gentle, participatory urban renewal' (*ibid.*). These new polarizations and cleavages within USMs have been fuelled by the rapid socioeconomic transformation of the nation's cities following German reunification. The transformation of the German USM scene in the

1980s and 1990s has left a legacy which still permeates contemporary forms of urban social mobilizations, as will be discussed in the cases of Berlin and Hamburg: a dilemma between strategies of confrontation/resistance (often increasingly radical in nature) and strategies of participation/cooperation with the local state. In recent years this has been expressed by tensions within the new coalitions of actors that have formed around particular issues or redevelopment projects (as explored in the third part of this essay).

In the context of this increasing heterogenization and fragmentation of USMs, several authors have identified (in the German and North American context) the emergence of new types of urban coalitions for social and environmental justice that have begun to challenge the consequences of the neoliberalization of policies in various fields (Leitner *et al.*, 2006; Mayer, 2009). A good example is the US-based 'Right to the City', a coalition of community-based groups, worker organizations, housing rights campaigners, environmental activists and migrant and minority groups united in their opposition against neoliberal economic and urban policies and social injustices of various kinds (Marcuse, 2009; Mayer, 2009). According to Nicholls (2008), the formation of such broad coalitions often results from a particular urban restructuring threat which acts as a 'structural push', as the two case studies explored later will illustrate. Such coalitions additionally rely on the establishment of 'tolerant identities' amongst very heterogeneous groups and networks, drawn together under the banner of 'loosely articulated concepts such as "justice" [which] provide diverse actors with a common objective that can be applied to a wide variety of issue areas' (*ibid.*: 848).

The two case studies explored in this essay are examples of the formation of such wide-ranging urban coalitions in the German context. What is specific about them, we argue, is that they seem to point towards an activist resurgence on the part of cultural producers, most notably artists, as well as other individuals who may be classified as members of the so-called 'creative class'. Cultural and artistic resistance, i.e. the critical intervention of artists and cultural producers in urban struggles, is not in itself a new phenomenon. Exceptions notwithstanding, such forms of resistance lost much of their radical edge — and resonance — over the last few decades as part of the transformation of USMs briefly described above. Action that occurred subsequently was, for the most part, small in scope, directed towards an artistic (rather than a general) audience, and did not explicitly summon communities to action and social mobilization (for an overview of different types of artistic practices that have criticized and subverted dominant forms of urbanism see Karasov, 2001; for a discussion on artistic 'interruptions' against dominant forms of culture-led regeneration see Miles, 2005). Now, at the height of what is sometimes referred to as the 'cultural' or 'creative' turn in urban development and policy, there is evidence, at least in Hamburg and Berlin, that we are witnessing a new phase of mobilization and politicization among cultural producers, as a seemingly increasing number of them takes issue with the growth-oriented entrepreneurial policy agendas that local leaders in their cities pursue, as well as with the appropriation or outright destruction of culture and creativity that such agendas entail.

This seems to give validity to a hypothesis which David Harvey (2001a; reproduced in a modified version in Harvey, 2002) put forward a decade ago in a chapter of his book *Spaces of Capital*, entitled: 'The Art of Rent: Globalization and the Commodification of Culture'. This provides an insightful yet surprisingly little discussed analysis of the increased reliance of urban economies and urban policy on what Harvey calls 'collective symbolic capital' and the ways culture is exploited by capitalism. Harvey attributes this increasing reliance to the loss of other 'monopoly powers' in advanced capitalist economies (e.g. through easier transport and communications and the reduction of barriers to trade). To 'keep commodities or places unique and particular enough' and 'to maintain a monopolistic edge in an otherwise commodified and often fiercely competitive economy' (2001a: 396–7), urban elites — as well as private sector actors — have according to Harvey (*ibid.*: 405) little choice but to find new marks of distinction in 'the field of historically constituted cultural artefacts and practices and special environmental characteristics (including, of course, the built, social and cultural environments)'. From

today's perspective, this argument may strike readers as not particularly groundbreaking. The increasing 'symbolic' nature of urban economies, the instrumentalization of cultural resources for urban economic development, the unwilling complicity or direct involvement of cultural producers in processes of urban change — most notably gentrification — have been extensively discussed since the 1980s, usually critically (Harvey, 1989; Zukin, 1991; 1995; Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993; Smith, 1996; Evans, 2001; Ley, 2003; García, 2004; Lloyd, 2005; Miles, 2007; Lees *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, recent books such as *The Creative City* by planning consultant Charles Landry (2000) and *The Rise of the Creative Class* by academic and consultant Richard Florida (2002) have generated a pandemic 'creative city fever' (Kunzmann, 2010) amongst mayors, city planners and policy advisors in Europe, North America and elsewhere. Such creative city approaches essentially reinterpret previous scholarly works on the culturalization of late capitalism, the commodification of culture and the injection of symbolic 'content' into all commodity production, as well as cities and corporations' increased appropriation of local peculiarities to respond to the intensified competition put forth by globalization within a 'normative script' with prescriptive recommendations for economic development (Gibson and Kong, 2005). Consequently, they have been criticized for contributing to the extension and consolidation of a normalized neoliberal urban rule:

The reality is that city leaders from San Diego to Baltimore, from Toronto to Albuquerque, are embracing creativity strategies not as *alternatives* to extant market-, consumption- and property-led development strategies, but as low-cost, feel good *complements* to them. Creativity plans do not disrupt these established approaches to urban entrepreneurialism and consumption-oriented place promotion, they *extend* them (Peck, 2005: 761, original emphasis).

What makes Harvey's (2001a; 2002) contribution particularly relevant for analysing the recent emergence of contestations by cultural producers is his refusal (contrary to other Marxist scholars) to consider the increasingly symbolic nature of post-industrial urban economies and the explicit turn to 'culture' as an urban and economic development tool as being altogether negative. Instead, Harvey saw contradictions emerging from the appropriation and commodification of a given locale's cultural capital — contradictions that according to him entailed opportunities for progressive urban and social change. The first contradiction is that the exploitation of local marks of distinction with the aim of yielding monopoly rents tends to lead to homogenization which decreases uniqueness and erases the monopoly advantage which can be extracted from a place, item, event — something commonly discussed by critical cultural geographers in their investigation of place-marketing strategies around the world (Kearns and Philo, 1993). The second contradiction is that in order to draw on local specificities and uniqueness to maintain a competitive edge and appropriate monopoly rents, capital has to 'support a form of differentiation and allow of divergent and to some degree uncontrollable local cultural developments that can be antagonistic to its own smooth functioning' (Harvey, 2002: n.p.). These contradictions, according to Harvey (2001a: 411), 'assume a certain structural significance' as they not only open 'new spaces for political thought and action within which alternatives can be both devised and pursued', but also could 'lead a segment of the community concerned with cultural matters to side with a politics opposed to multinational capitalism' (*ibid.*: 410, emphasis added) and favour more compelling alternatives based on different kinds of social and ecological relations (Harvey, 2002). Positing that mobilizing the political and agitational powers of cultural producers is a worthwhile objective for the Left (*ibid.*), Harvey hence both foresaw and called for the emergence of new oppositional movements in which artists and cultural producers would play a key role in response to the rapid capitalist penetration of a seemingly ever-expanding array of cultural forms and practices:

There are abundant historical precedents for mobilizing the forces of culture in this way (the role of constructivism in the creative years of the Russian Revolution from 1918–26 is just one

of many historical examples to be learned from). Here lies one of the key spaces of hope for the construction of an alternative kind of globalization. One in which the progressive forces of culture can seek to appropriate and undermine those of capital rather than the other way round (*ibid.*: n.p.).

Surprisingly, the emancipatory progressive potential Harvey identified has, to date, had little resonance in the academic realm. Instead, changes with respect to the role of culture for capital accumulation and urban (economic) development more generally seem to have 'escaped the attention of the social movement literature, including its post-Fordist variants' (Uitermark, 2004: 692), and there is little research into the way urban social movement formation is affected by — or responds to — the heightened significance of culture in urban development policies. Meanwhile, artists and other cultural producers are often accused of being complicit with the status quo rather than challenging it: on the one hand as beneficiaries of cities' greater engagement with and appreciation of culture and creativity, and on the other hand as (often unconscious) agents of urban restructuring processes through their productive and consumption activities which play a part in gentrification processes (Deutsche and Ryan, 1984; Zukin, 1989; Smith, 1996).

Ten years down the line, with post-industrial urban economies having become, if anything, even more 'cultural' and local leaders being even more preoccupied with culture — both as a productive force in its own right and as a critical component of the 'soft infrastructure' necessary to compete for mobile capital investment, jobs, people and tourist spending — we believe that Harvey's call to devote attention to cultural producers' (potential) role in contestations of neoliberal urbanization and governance is even more relevant than it was back in 2001. This is particularly the case since there is accumulating evidence that conflicts centred on the appropriation or outright destruction of culture and creativity in urban environments have become a widespread phenomenon, and that individuals in artistic or cultural occupations (along with other creative professionals and students across the creative spectrum) can indeed play an integral role in the mobilization, practices and outcomes of urban contestations.

Not in Our Name! The resistance of the 'creatives' in Berlin and Hamburg

Urban entrepreneurialism and 'creative city policies' in Berlin and Hamburg

Although both are so-called *Stadtstaaten* (i.e. city-states that form a complete federal state in Germany's federal system of government), Berlin and Hamburg differ from one another in many salient respects. Home to one of Europe's largest maritime ports and a leading player in foreign trade, media, marketing, IT and life sciences, the 'Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg', with its population of 1.8 million inhabitants, represents by most accounts Germany's wealthiest city and ranks among Europe's most economically dynamic and powerful regions (Hamburg's GDP per capita ranks third in Europe; Eurostat, 2009). By contrast, Berlin is among the country's poorest cities and has suffered for most of the past 20 years (since reunification) from a declining or stagnating urban economy. Although there have recently been signs of economic improvement, it languishes nowhere near the top tier of the national (let alone European or global) urban hierarchy — despite its regained status as the nation's capital.

What Germany's two largest cities have in common, however, is that for the past two decades they have been characterized by what many portray as an essentially entrepreneurial approach to urban and economic development. By many accounts, Hamburg was one of the first large municipalities in Germany to embrace a proactive growth-oriented policy style: its history of urban entrepreneurialism goes back to the mid-1980s when policymakers introduced the notion of '*Unternehmen Hamburg*'

(‘Enterprise Hamburg’) to propel the city more dynamically into national and European competitiveness (Dangschat and Ossenbrügge, 1990; Twickel, 2010). Urban policy in Berlin has since its reunification also become increasingly shaped by an emphasis on economic growth and the search for competitiveness (Strom, 2001; Colomb, 2011). Mirroring developments elsewhere and in line with the more general culturalization of economic development under late capitalism (Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Miles, 2007), this entrepreneurial turn has in both cities been accompanied by a growing interest in culture evident since the early 1990s, with a proliferation of projects to promote cultural consumption via the development and promotion of cultural attractions and events, and more recently with strategies supporting and marketing cultural production, ‘creative industries’ and neighbourhoods. This recent shift draws upon pre-existing concentrations of artistic and cultural industries in both cities: Berlin in particular has since its reunification become a magnet for young European artists and designers, and according to official statistics the creative and cultural industries now account for about 21% of the city’s GDP (SenWTF, 2008).³

Against the background of intensifying socio-spatial polarization and gentrification, as well as extensive privatization, deregulation and marketization efforts, the self-proclaimed ‘Growing City’ of Hamburg has for a number of years invested significant resources into supply-side oriented policies and projects to brand itself as an amenity-rich city and attract the right ‘talent’.⁴ The culture-led ‘regeneration’ (or gentrification) of the city’s red-light district (Reeperbahn) is one example, as is the 2013 International Building Exhibition (IBA) that directly employs the arts and culture as catalysts for urban and economic development on Hamburg’s Elbe islands. At the same time the city’s music and subcultural scenes have been increasingly marketed in official discourses as key attractions for tourists and potential ‘creative workers’, whilst policymakers have increasingly considered the urban spaces informally taken over by artists and young creatives for temporary uses (such as beach bars and clubs) as real assets for urban economic development (Overmeyer, 2010).

In Berlin, the motto of the ‘creative city’ entered the local marketing discourse for the first time in the year 2000, and the new coalition government elected in 2001 began to implement various policy measures to promote Berlin as a ‘creative city’. Distinct ‘creative industry policies’ were put in place by the Berlin Senate (the government of the city-state of Berlin) to improve conditions for cultural industries, support new business start-ups, create new urban environments to meet the needs of creative industries and encourage ‘creative clustering’ in ‘under-utilized’ urban spaces or in specific ‘disadvantaged’ areas (Ebert and Kunzmann, 2007; STADTart, 2007). In parallel the city marketing companies (Partner für Berlin and Berlin Tourismus Marketing) began to incorporate Berlin’s sub-, alternative and counter-cultural scenes into their marketing imagery, such as the temporary ‘urban beaches’ on the banks of the River Spree (Colomb, 2011).

In light of the pervasiveness of the so-called ‘creative turn’ in urban policymaking (Peck, 2005) many of the developments witnessed in Berlin and Hamburg are hardly surprising. Just as Mayer (2003) showed how the ‘social capital’ present in early USMs has been instrumentalized by the state for economic competitiveness and social cohesion objectives, in Berlin and Hamburg subcultural capital can be said to have been

3 The Berlin Senate does not distinguish between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘creative’ industries (Kalandides, 2007: 10), and its definition of the sector includes publishing and printed media, film and TV production, fashion, design, software and games development, telecommunications, music, advertising, architecture and exhibition arts.

4 Hamburg’s former science minister Jörg Dräger reportedly distributed Florida’s book to his colleagues, and the city government hired a management consultancy firm to examine how Florida’s theory could be applied to Hamburg (Oehmke, 2010). This led to an initiative (called ‘Hamburg, City of Talent’) which sought to attract 70,000 to 100,000 new ‘talents’ in all sectors by 2012.

Table 1 Hamburg's Gängeviertel and Berlin's Media Spree areas: facts and figures

	Hamburg, Gängeviertel (Valentinskamp)	Berlin, Media Spree Area
Size	ca. 0.45 ha	ca. 180 ha
Location	Centrally located within walking distance of Hamburg's central business and shopping areas	Waterfront location, east of historic city centre
Characteristics of the built environment	Densely built quarter of mixed-use historic brick buildings, courtyards and alleys	Mix of vacant brownfield sites, undeveloped lots, former port industrial buildings, former warehouses converted into office buildings and 'temporarily used spaces' (e.g. beach bars and clubs)
Land ownership	Initially city-owned, then transfer of property and urban development contract to private developer Hanzevast Capital (in 2005 and 2006 respectively). Cancellation of contract and return of property to the city in 2009.	Mix of private (mostly real estate and property development companies) and (a decreasing share of) public property (federal state and <i>Land</i>)
(Planned) Future use of the site	Initial redevelopment plans for upscale office and residential redevelopment were cancelled in favour of a mixed-use cultural district including affordable housing and work spaces	Mixed-use district with a predominance of office and leisure uses
Leadership	After initial plans were abandoned, mainly public (city council)	Private partnership (Media Spree) and local authorities (in particular the district authority of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg)

instrumentalized in the same way in urban development policies carried out in the name of the 'creative city'. Noteworthy, however, are the manifestations of protest and resistance against such policies by the very 'creatives' local elites seek to enmesh, best exemplified by the struggles surrounding the Gängeviertel in Hamburg and Berlin's so-called Media Spree project (Table 1) to which our attention now turns.

MegaSpree versus Media Spree: the fight for Berlin's waterfront

Covering about 180 hectares on both banks of the River Spree, though primarily in the Kreuzberg–Friedrichshain district (*Bezirk*), Media Spree is one of the largest urban development projects currently planned in Berlin. Apart from the short-lived euphoria and real estate boom of the early 1990s, until the early 2000s relatively little development occurred on the site, because of a lack of interest on the part of investors and the generally unfavourable economic conditions of the time. In 2001 and 2004 two high-profile media and music corporations, Universal Music Germany and MTV Central Europe (both lured to Berlin by the city authorities), relocated to the converted warehouse buildings of the eastern harbour on the east bank of the river (Balzer, 2002). In 2002 a private sector marketing company, Media Spree Berlin GmbH, was established by landowners, businesses and property developers with a stake in the area to promote the development of the site. It coined the project's name ('Media Spree') and was in 2005 transformed into a public–private non-profit association (called Media Spree Regionalmanagement) which began to promote the area as a 'creative cluster' for the media and music industries. Their agenda was strongly supported by the Berlin Senate,

which drew up a detailed land-use plan to facilitate the renovation of old warehouses and the property-led redevelopment of vacant buildings, selling off numerous plots of city-owned land in the area with ‘very few strings attached’ (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009: 329).

The project’s designation as a creative cluster project did not come out of the blue. It corresponded in many respects with Berlin’s ambition to enhance its status as a creative city, and to attract large media and music corporations (Krätke, 2002; Bader and Scharenberg, 2010). It built upon an existing dense fabric of artistic, musical and subcultural activities which had earned the area a reputation as one of post-reunification Berlin’s most vibrant (sub)cultural hubs, home to a number of famous alternative bars, techno clubs and small music labels. As abandoned industrial buildings were turned into clubs and bars, and waterfront plots into urban beaches (Stevens and Ambler, 2010), the public and private promoters of the Media Spree project quickly came to the conclusion that the ‘authenticity of the subculture’ and the ‘creative and alternative image of the neighborhood’ was a key asset which could serve as a catalyst for the clustering of creative industries in the area (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009: 331). Yet to date Media Spree has triggered less investment than conflict, as only a fraction of the plans for the area has been implemented. Those projects that have been realized, such as the O2 Arena (a 17,000-seat multi-functional event hall which opened in 2008), currently stand in the middle of an empty landscape. The planned development, however, has given rise to ‘Berlin’s arguably most successful urban social movement of the last decade’ (*ibid.*: 327) involving, among other stakeholders, a large proportion of ‘creatives’ who fought to delay or stop further redevelopment projects in the area.

Opponents of the project began to gain public attention in 2008 when several activist groups got together under the banner ‘*Mediaspree Versenken!*’ (‘Sink the Media Spree’) to protest against the master plan for the site, in particular the massive scale and nature of the proposed developments and the foreseeable privatization of access to the riverside, as well as to voice concerns about gentrification and the displacement of the area’s subcultural fabric. The movement brought together a rather diverse set of actors (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009): a small nucleus of activists from the existing radical alternative scenes of Berlin’s traditionally left-wing Kreuzberg neighbourhood; club and beach bar owners and operators threatened by displacement; groups and individuals from the city’s subculture and clubbing scene such as the interventionist–activist group ‘Hedonist International’; tenant organizations as well as many individuals concerned by the transformation of the river banks. As noted by academic observers, this is a rather rare case ‘where the alternative and radical left successfully cooperated with sub-cultural actors (in particular from the club scene), creative entrepreneurs, parts of the alternative middle class (often coming from previous movements) and the marginalized’ (*ibid.*: 332).

The movement used a diverse and imaginative repertory of protest forms to mobilize against the project: a rally through the project area complemented by boats on the River Spree (Figure 1), so-called ‘neighbourhood walks’ and workshops with residents and interested citizens, concerts and exhibitions, video installations and internet-based action. More significantly, within less than 6 months activists had collected enough signatures to enforce a non-binding public referendum⁵ conducted at the scale of the borough of Friedrichshain–Kreuzberg (which has planning authority over the project).

5 The constitution of the *Land* of Berlin allows for a popular referendum on municipal issues to be held if 20,000 signatures are gathered and if a number of signatures equal to or above 7% of Berlin’s voting population is obtained within 4 months. Questions posed in the referendum must correspond to issues which are within the remit and competence of the *Bezirke*, the lowest tier of government in Berlin’s two-tier administrative system.



Figure 1 Rally against the Media Spree project on 12 July 2008, the day preceding the local referendum (photo by Dominik Wagner, reproduced with permission)

The referendum was held on 13 July 2008 under the label '*Spreeufer für alle!*' ('Spree riverside for all!'). Residents were asked whether building-height limits should not exceed the traditional 22-metre eave height prevalent in Berlin, whether all new buildings should be at least 50 metres from the riverbank (to keep the riverside publicly accessible) and whether the plan to build a new bridge as part of the Media Spree project should be abandoned. These issues were chosen as they were within the remit of competence at the district (*Bezirk*) level, although the overall goal of the initiative was to derail — or 'sink' — the project. The referendum's results exceeded activists' expectations, with a turnout of 19.1% (above the required threshold of 15%) and a rate of approval of almost 87%. This made it the most successful local referendum in Berlin's history (Jacobs and Graf, 2008), a result which put tremendous pressure on district politicians to modify the existing plan for the area. A negotiation board was subsequently set up by the *Bezirk* authorities, including representatives of various activist groups, to consider alternatives for parts of the site. The outcomes were at best equivocal, as the developments that had already been formally approved were declared 'non-renegotiable' by local authorities. This led to internal disagreements among the coalition of activist groups about the viability of institutionalized negotiations with the local state, and fragmented the previously united opposition movement.

Nonetheless the protests have continued to the present day, largely thanks to the impulse of a new initiative named 'MegaSpree'. Describing itself as 'an alliance of people involved in arts and culture . . . political, ecological and social groups, free space residents and club operators, who are affected by current processes of restructuring and gentrification' (MegaSpree, 2010a), it currently represents the most powerful voice in the ongoing struggle against the existing scheme. The MegaSpree initiative has organized protest events to support particular projects threatened with displacement. On 11 July 2009, exactly one year after the referendum had taken place, it organized a large 'MegaSpree parade' which attracted about 5,000 to 8,000 people to a rally in front of Berlin's City Hall. The same event was repeated in July 2010. Noteworthy were the organizers' attempts to take the protests to a different level, moving beyond the particularities of the individual project and into the realms of a more general critique of the urban development policies of the Berlin Senate. One of the MegaSpree collective's

protest statements, for instance, spoke out against gentrification, the displacement of community networks, the privatization of public space and public goods and the commodification, displacement and destruction of Berlin's alternative cultures. It concluded with a spirited call to action: 'Go out on the street! For your right to the city! Save your city!' (MegaSpree, 2010b).

Fighting against the 'Brand Hamburg'

'Hamburg currently functions as a focal lens of sorts, one in which the conflicts of the coming decades are already recognizable.'

(Oehmke, 2010)

Cultural producers play a significant part in the ongoing struggles surrounding Berlin's Media Spree scheme, but appear to be of even greater significance in the rising wave of urban protests that Hamburg has experienced in recent years. The vitality of these protests has puzzled journalists and researchers alike, particularly since Hamburg's renowned grassroots protest movements (an important factor in shaping the city's trajectory in the 1970s and 1980s) seemed to have lost much of their original force. The increasing market orientation of local policies, major projects like the Hafencity — a new flagship waterfront neighbourhood built from scratch — and the state-sponsored regeneration of 'disadvantaged' working-class neighbourhoods into luxurious working and living environments (with a resulting lack of affordable housing) had sparked disgruntlement and protests for years. Yet these, in most cases, attracted little public attention and generated negligible results. Developments took an unexpected turn in 2009 when numerous local initiatives — acting individually as well as collectively within a newly established network under the banner of '*Recht auf Stadt*' ('Right to the City') — launched a series of protests against the city's rebranding and redevelopment activities.

The first milestone of these protests was the mobilization by citizens' groups and artists during the spring of 2009 against plans aired by an investor and local politicians to demolish period housing to make way for an upscale residential complex in St. Pauli, a trendy working-class neighbourhood close to the harbour that had been undergoing gentrification for several years. In this mobilization local artists and other cultural producers assumed a pivotal role, as exemplified by the activities of a local network against gentrification with the sarcastic title '*Es regnet Kaviar*' ('it's raining caviar'). Its combination of coalition-building efforts, *agitprop* events and other experimental forms of protest were instrumental in the local community's attempt to build momentum against the proposed scheme and raise awareness within and outside the neighbourhood about St. Pauli's latest wave of gentrification.

A few months later (in August 2009) another contested redevelopment project, this time in the city centre, came to public attention when some 200 artists and activists occupied the last remaining buildings of the Gängeviertel, a nineteenth-century former working-class district with a distinctive urban fabric of historic brick buildings and narrow alleyways that once extended from the harbour deep into the city's downtown area. This city property (vacant for years and in a seriously dilapidated condition) had been sold to a Dutch investor, Hanzevast Holding, who intended to demolish large swaths of the building stock to make way for an upscale housing and office complex. By squatting in the area and launching an initiative named '*Komm in die Gänge*' (a play on words meaning both 'Come into the alleyways' and 'Get things moving') that brought new life to the area with exhibitions, parties, concerts and debates (Figure 2), the activists publicly challenged what had been considered a 'done deal' and generated significant support for their demand that the city council should withdraw from the sell-off and revise its plans for the area. The media, including Hamburg's dominant conservative



Figure 2 A courtyard in the occupied Gängeviertel (photo by Dirk Reiche, reproduced with permission)

newspapers, covered the occupation in unexpectedly appreciative tones; famous personalities from Hamburg's culture and art scene came forward to applaud the activists' stance and even politicians who had previously nodded through the developer's plans suddenly expressed their support. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the Hamburg Senate decided not to send in the police to vacate the buildings, as had been common practice ever since the squatting waves of the 1980s, and chose instead to negotiate. The resulting mounting pressure led the city council to buy back the entire site from the Dutch investor in December 2009 at an additional cost of 2.8 million Euros more than the initial price, and revise their existing plans for the area.

With connections to Hamburg's establishment (indeed sometimes part of it themselves), the Gängeviertel artists — as they were labelled in the press (Oehmke, 2010) — and their surprising success caused a massive stir across Germany. At the same time they were also viewed with suspicion by some observers from the radical left and 'autonomous' scene, who accused the initiative of being primarily motivated by self-interest (e.g. the seizing of cheap studio spaces) and failing to address the more general shortcomings of Hamburg's dominant economic development paradigm as well as their own role within it. Meanwhile, the '*Komm in die Gänge*' initiators sought to counter such claims, arguing that their resistance was very much driven by a more general critique of the city's policies and planning, and that their goal was not, as occasionally implied, the creation of yet another arts district in compliance with 'creative city policy formulas'. Instead, the collective behind the occupation of the Gängeviertel produced an alternative plan for the future development and management of the area which set a vision for 'an autonomous, public and lively quarter used for a variety of cultural and social purposes' (*Komm in die Gänge*, 2010).

More importantly, the Gängeviertel initiative helped to set up a local 'Right to the City' network spanning various parts of the city, that for the first time brought together initiatives struggling against gentrification and the city's urban development policies from different parts of Hamburg's political and social spectrum (Oehmke, 2010; *Recht auf Stadt*, 2010). In October 2009, a handful of cultural producers-turned-activists wrote and published a manifesto entitled '*Not in Our Name!*' (NiON, 2010) which was published widely, both locally and beyond the city's limits, broadening the scope of the

struggle for the Gängeviertel significantly. It is a daring critique of Hamburg's growth- and image-oriented urban and economic development policy in general, and of the utilization of cultural/creative-city strategies involving the marketing and commodification of (sub)cultural expressions to facilitate elite wealth accumulation in particular. The manifesto explicitly attacks Richard Florida's policy recommendations and rejects the language of city marketing. Noteworthy is its conscious recognition of artists' and cultural producers' previous instrumentalization in (re-)branding and (re-)development strategies, the explicit rejection of this instrumentalization as well as the authors' reference to what they — in yet another reference to Marx — coin 'the social question'. Hence, not only immediate concerns such as the fear of displacement were denounced, but the consequences of Hamburg's recent urban policies for a wider set of social groups were also addressed in the manifesto.

The movements' composition, contributions and contradictions

The two initiatives described above display some of the basic characteristics of an emerging urban social movement, although it may be too early to judge their long-term development and impacts. They have the local state and its policies as a target. They exhibit the distinct organizational features of traditional USMs: a grassroots orientation, non-hierarchical mode of organization, distance from party politics and conventional pressure groups, preference for direct action and protest tactics. Both movements also seem to exhibit some of the features identified by authors such as Mayer as characterizing the transformation of German USMs in the 2000s. Three particular aspects of these recent initiatives are worth discussing in more depth: the composition of the movements; the contributions they make (or could make) to the struggle for progressive urban change; and their agenda as well as the contradictions that characterize the protests in the two cities.

The movements' composition

One of the most striking characteristics of the emerging protest movements in Berlin and Hamburg is their heterogeneous composition, as not only traditional activists but people from all walks of life seem to be involved in the protests, including artists and cultural producers who in both cases appear to be extremely prominent. The heterogeneous and somehow surprising composition of the '*Komm in die Gänge*' initiative was depicted ironically by a journalist as follows:

Young women with messy hair who look like they just returned from a gap year volunteering in Southeast Asia stand next to women in their 60s wearing beige jackets, their silver hair cut fashionably short. Some look affluent while others clearly have no money at all. Some come from the leftist subculture, while others are solidly middle-class. But they all share a sense of unease about their city, brought on by the fact that they have had no say in the changes in its appearance in recent years . . . One of them is the celebrated young German painter Daniel Richter . . . Another is the bestselling German author, musician and theatre director Rocco Schamoni . . . And then there are the young people who, until recently, lived in New York or South America, and are now painting the walls at night in the Gängeviertel. All of these people comprise a massive new protest movement, turning the city into a kind of social laboratory (Oehmke, 2010: n.p.).

This new generation of 'squatters' is different from its predecessors. Only a few of them have been involved in urban struggles elsewhere in the city and for many this is the first time they have taken part in a political action. In the media they are usually described as 'Gängeviertel artists', although freelance artists are no more or less represented here than 'the nursing care therapist, the student, the graphic designer and the unemployed' (*ibid.*).

Many of them are highly educated, articulate and engaged in discussions with the city council. At the same time, in the *'Not in Our Name'* manifesto published after the beginning of the occupation of the Gängeviertel, the signatories reaffirmed their origins in the alternative and counter-cultural scenes, 'from squatted houses, stuffy rehearsal rooms . . . clubs in damp cellars' (NiON, 2010), while the MegaSpree initiative currently spearheading protests in Berlin also explicitly highlights artists, club owners and other cultural producers as its core constituents.

There are significant lines of differentiation amongst the artists and cultural producers who are part of the mobilizations in Berlin and Hamburg: their highly heterogeneous employment and occupational status, and differing levels of economic capital and income. Employment conditions (from stable to highly precarious) and insertion (or lack thereof) into commercial and profitable circuits of cultural production are important factors of distinction within the loose category of 'cultural producers'; we may hypothesize that such factors will have a bearing on the degree and forms of engagement of individuals into forms of protest and social mobilization. Whilst a creative 'precariat' of freelancers has been struggling to live in precarious employment and housing situations in both Berlin and Hamburg, another segment is commercially successful or in stable employment, highly networked and mobile.

Nonetheless, what many of the stakeholders involved in the Berlin and Hamburg movements and their supporters seem to have in common is a high level of cultural capital (in the form of formal educational credentials and artistic or 'creative' skills) as well as a preference for certain types of lifestyles and urban spaces — spaces that they now collectively seek to defend: socially and culturally mixed, vibrant, not entirely gentrified, commercialized or gated. Seen from this perspective, the media's interpretation of recent developments in Hamburg and Berlin as an 'uprise of the creative class' (Schneider, 2010) may, to a certain extent, be understandable. One could even argue that these developments somehow paradoxically lend support to a (contested) claim inherent in Florida's creative class formulation: that there is a group of urban dwellers that — regardless of occupational status, social background or income level — identify and articulate themselves as 'creatives' and possess a sense of group identity (for a critique of the hypothesis of a 'class' see Markusen, 2006). The irony in the two cases considered here is that those currently articulating themselves do so not by pushing for more 'creative class policies', but by protesting precisely against these approaches, approaches which they denounce for camouflaging decidedly unprogressive (if not regressive) policies, and for ultimately being divisive.

The contribution of cultural producers to the movements

Cultural producers are not the only people currently marching on the streets of Berlin and Hamburg in protest against the trajectories their cities are taking, but they clearly play an important role in the recent wave of resistance seen in the two cities. While much of these developments are too recent and too diffuse to make definitive judgments about them, some tentative remarks concerning the contributions cultural producers make — or could make — in the struggle for progressive urban change nonetheless can be made. Based on what we observe in Hamburg and Berlin it seems plausible to argue that cultural producers are, as Harvey suggested, receptive to critiques of the urban status quo and willing to engage in pressure from below to demand urban change. Indeed, we would even go so far as to argue that they were instrumental in Hamburg and Berlin in helping pressure from below assume a new momentum in the two cities — a momentum that USMs were said to have lost for a variety of reasons after their heyday in the 1970s and 1980s.

In that regard it is interesting to reflect on the specificity of the resources which cultural producers have brought to the two movements, in particular the connections many of them tend to have to local elites and the media: in both cases this clearly contributed to the widespread resonance of the protests. Additionally, their familiarity

with communication techniques and media networks as well as their capability to contribute innovatively to the 'repertoires of contention' (Tilly, 1978; 1995) were employed to broaden the movement's appeal and attract attention from both the media and the wider public. Activism, both Hamburg and Berlin illustrate, does not have to mean dry speeches, tedious chants and worn-out slogans. It can involve theatre, music, playful and ironic subversion of media and place-marketing discourses — techniques which help to capture broad-based attention and bridge the gap between activists and audiences not belonging to the classical leftist spectrum or receptive to conventional routines of protest.

In a discussion of the role of artists and cultural producers in 'symbolic' and material gentrification processes in Germany, Holm (2010: 36–9) suggests that three types of strategies can be used by cultural producers who refuse to become complicit in urban restructuring and gentrification of their neighbourhoods: a dislocation strategy (go to places which are unlikely to be gentrified, e.g. peripheral industrial estates), scare tactics from underground counter-cultural movements ('image damage' to decrease the attractiveness of a neighbourhood) and finally contribution to a 'culture of resistance' by engaging fully with other social actors fighting against gentrification and its impacts. The Hamburg and Berlin movements belong to the third strategy. Artists can contribute to this culture of resistance through their capacity for public representation and communication, graphic design skills, etc. In the case of the Gängeviertel, the activists were ironically described by a left-wing newspaper as 'squatters with marketing competence' (Eckhorst, 2010), a portrayal carrying connotations of admiration concerning protesters' media savviness and campaign skills but also reflecting the scepticism that exists, particularly amongst the old or more radical left, with respect to the new wave of protests and their protagonists.

The movements' agenda and contradictions

Urban social movements, particularly when relatively broad-based, are generally characterized by built-in contradictions, and Hamburg and Berlin are no exception to this. These contradictions, and especially concerns about protesters' political commitment (or lack thereof), have led members of traditional activist groups from the radical left in particular to regard them with suspicion. This suspicion comes in a variety of forms but it seems that it is particularly the new movements' relative openness and inclusivity, i.e. their capability to transcend the traditional leftist spectrum and attract people with divergent ideologies, interests and preferences, as well as their use of unconventional forms of protests allowing them to gain political traction in the first place, which has caused some observers to be outspokenly critical of them.

The emphasis on playful, at times almost carnivalesque, protest forms is seen by some as indicative of a superficiality or lack of seriousness on the part of those participating in them — a charge that has been raised against the MegaSpree parades in particular, which were derided by many leftist commentators as being more about party than politics (Kudanek, 2009). Others think of them as political, but question how far their political commitment goes. They take issue with the fact that the movements have not to date explained precisely what their vision for a better city should look like, and to what extent they would support the structural systemic changes, for example in property rights, necessary to institute new modes of urbanization based on a collective 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968; Harvey, 2008: 37). They claim that the new protests are above all driven by concerns about issues of autonomy, recognition and self-realization, i.e. following the differentiation of a 'critique sociale' and a 'critique artiste' by Boltanski and Chiapello (1999, cited in Köhler and Wissen, 2003: 944), driven more by the latter than the former. Related to this, some observers have moreover suggested that narrowly defined self-interest, rather than a concern for the interests of others, is largely driving the protests.

Emerging forms of mobilization cannot be automatically assumed to be progressive in the sense of fighting for the increasing welfare, recognition or empowerment of a wide set of individuals or groups: they may be more defensive of the status quo of a small privileged minority, as Harvey (2001b) notes about conservative forms of 'militant particularism'. In both Berlin and Hamburg it would be unreasonable not to assume that some actors involved are motivated by narrowly defined self-interest. Some, such as the owners of commercial venues along Berlin's waterfront for instance, do not hide the fact that they pursue materialistic ends. Meanwhile, artists' concern about cheap and centrally located studio spaces, or clubbers' activism in defence of a favourite nightlife spot, do not necessarily pass muster as 'socially progressive' in the public eye. As a journalist noted in the Hamburg case, 'some might ask what exactly gives the artists the right to demand studios more or less for free in a prime downtown location. After all, those who care about social issues — and that describes the core of the anti-gentrification movement — might also argue that the buildings could be put to better use accommodating other, needier people than middle class artists for whom squatting is little more than a lifestyle choice' (Oehmke, 2010). The movements might thus, at first sight, be interpreted as a form of defence of the immediate interests of the actors involved: the right to stay put in neighbourhoods threatened with rapid urban redevelopment, the protection of one's living and working spaces, the right to be 'left in peace' and live one's alternative lifestyle in spaces sheltered from the pressures of real estate development, the preservation of one's commercial enterprise.

At the same time defending and promoting one's own (or group) interests does not necessarily exclude a concern for the common good or the interests and rights of others. What protest movements instead need to be judged upon is their commitment to build and expand solidarities and collective actions with other social groups and actors — an issue which appears particularly relevant in the case of protest movements whose members come from privileged classes and groups (as is the case in Hamburg and Berlin). Evidence suggests that both movements have attempted, at least discursively, to move beyond narrowly defined self-interest (i.e. the defence of the working and living spaces of artists and cultural producers) and instead address wider urban issues of the kind identified by Castells (1983) in his early work on USMs. In the case of Hamburg, under the motto of the 'Right to the City' the authors of the manifesto explicitly referred to issues of collective consumption and public access to certain goods, and denounced the consequences of Hamburg's recent urban policies for a wider set of social groups. The text mentions the oversupply of office space, developments for the (super) rich, the increases in rents in the private rental sector, the decrease in social housing stock, the sale of public buildings and open spaces to the highest bidder, the cuts in public funding for small-scale cultural projects, the displacement of 'the poor, elderly and immigrant' inhabitants away to the edge of the city, as well as the city's more general shift away from a concern for the social welfare of the city at large in favour of economic competitiveness considerations. Similarly, in Berlin the Media Spree activists also widened their scope, leading to a resurgence of critical debates in the city at large around gentrification, housing and local rent regulation, as well as the commercial appropriation of urban spaces and cultures and ways to resist them (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009: 332) (Figure 3). What unites an otherwise heterogeneous set of actors is thus a widespread discontent about the loss of cultural diversity, public space and room for experimentation, along with the exploitation of local milieux and subcultures as part of growth- and market-oriented urban policies. This concern has contributed significantly to the mobilization of previously non-organized or inactive groups and individuals.

At the same time, the absence of specific actors and alliances is also worth mentioning — something of which the activists involved are clearly aware. The traditional working class has been underrepresented in the Berlin movement (Scharenberg and Bader, 2009) — perhaps a reflection of its growing marginalization in Berlin's inner-city districts. Individuals from an ethnic minority or migrant background, or organizations representing them, have been by and large absent too. While Hamburg's



Figure 3 An ironic subversion of Berlin's 'Be Berlin' marketing campaign during the MegaSpree parade, 11 July 2009: 'Be hip, be creative, be exploitable. Be self-determined, be in solidarity, be in resistance: stop gentrification' (photo by Alex Lang, reproduced with permission)

'Right to the City' network has in many ways succeeded in bringing a diverse group of actors together — some of whom had never worked together before — actors nonetheless readily admit that the work to build lasting and workable alliances at a citywide level and overcome existing divisions among different actors and groups has only just begun (interview with Christoph Twickel, journalist, co-writer and inceptor of the *'Not in Our Name'* manifesto, Hamburg, 21 February 2010).

In relation to this, another major challenge for the initiatives' capability to act in the long term arises from the plethora of interests, positions and degrees of commitment among those who are involved. This is illustrated, amongst other things, by highly visible tensions that exist in both movements between those who favour a radical stance vis-à-vis the local state (e.g. strategies of confrontation/resistance), and those who favour dialogue and possible cooperation. This has been a feature of USMs worldwide, and in Germany it has divided the urban left since the 1980s. Berlin's initiative against the Media Spree development lost momentum as a result of conflicts that emerged after the local referendum of 2008 around the question of what strategy should be pursued towards the local state and the 'negotiation board' set up in the aftermath of the referendum. Similar conflicts, albeit less visible and arguably less pronounced, also exist in Hamburg where some activists involved in the struggle surrounding the Gängeviertel, as well as other activist groups forming part of the 'Right to the City' coalition, worry that the decision made by the *Komm in die Gänge* initiative to enter into negotiations with the city council will make them vulnerable to cooptation, and might weaken the struggle for more fundamental change. This raises the issue of whether such movements are doomed to fail because of their inherent divisions and the differing agendas held by their participating actors (radical opposition and anti-capitalist stance versus cooptation for the protection of one's interests within a — mildly modified — capitalist system). Whilst there seems to be no way out of the contradictions posed by the 'cooperation/opposition' dilemma, Uitermark (2004: 695) notes that the legalized squats of Amsterdam have managed to combine cultural and political activities, arguing that 'co-optation in some respects is not necessarily antithetical to radicalism in other respects'. It would be interesting to test and develop this hypothesis in other urban contexts.

Conclusion: a research agenda

This essay, albeit exploratory in nature, has attempted to initiate a debate on the transformation of urban struggles in the age of a hegemonic 'creative city' discourse and in the context of the ongoing transformation of urban policies. We find it interesting that developments in Berlin and Hamburg are pointing towards new forms of activism by precisely those groups around which policymakers orientate so many of their policies. Significantly, these groups are against the policies formulated in their name and the market-based urban development agendas they accessorize and camouflage (Peck, 2005). These developments lend support to Harvey's (2001a) hypothesis that the increasing appropriation and exploitation of local cultures and environments might lead to resistance by cultural producers. Their struggle might create 'spaces of hope' and represent a first step towards new forms of socially progressive politics. The issues raised in this essay clearly have to be investigated further, yet indicate that 'creatives' are, as Harvey suggested, receptive to urban contestations and can moreover be potentially critical to them, as they possess attributes and resources that can positively affect the mobilization and outcomes of urban contestations. To what extent the movements discussed in this essay are one-off protests confined to cities which are leading centres of artistic production, or exemplary of a wider trend, remains a matter of further research. In our view, future research should pay particular attention to the following issues and questions:

- An analysis of the composition of the emerging protest movements to better narrow down its main agents stemming from the groups identified here loosely as 'creatives', as well as their demands, interests and preferences, with attention paid to possible internal divisions and struggles. This is important because, as mentioned above, we may hypothesize that such divisions will influence the protests' trajectories as well as particular initiatives' capability to act in the long term.
- The strategies of the movements to cope with existing internal contradictions and divisions as well as their capacity to create coalitions with other social groups with a stake in the transformation of their localities.
- The specific resources which such 'creatives' bring to USMs, and how they can use their 'symbolic power' and role in the 'branded city' to criticize, question and disrupt neoliberal urban policies. Can these resources help such movements achieve things that previous USMs could not? Does the familiarity with the new media and the local and transnational mobility of (part of) the creative and artistic milieu involved in such movements have the potential to influence coalition-building efforts and linkages between USMs across localities?
- The risk movements face of being co-opted or discursively mobilized as a colourful addition to the marketed image of the 'creative city'. This is particularly evident in Hamburg where the struggle surrounding the Gängeviertel has already entered the city's official marketing, as expressed by a statement from Hamburg's marketing agency in April 2010 which described the struggle surrounding the Gängeviertel as a 'typically Hanseatic, elegant and sophisticated kind of protest' (Rote Flora, 2011). How the local state and other actors respond to such protests is therefore worth investigating, especially in the light of the capacity of neoliberal restructuring strategies to undercut or accommodate sources of political opposition (Leitner *et al.*, 2006).
- The role of local and national contexts in fostering the observed forms of mobilizations as well as the potential similarities and differences between them in different contexts.

Many of the developments in Hamburg and Berlin are too recent and diffuse to permit definitive judgments about them. By the end of 2011, the intensity of the MegaSpree

protests in Berlin seemed to have declined, while in Hamburg the Gängeviertel occupiers finally reached a successful compromise with the city government.⁶ This, as well as the built-in contradictions and open questions concerning the political commitment of the protest movements, does not prevent us from concluding on a rather optimistic note, though, as we believe that the recent developments in Hamburg and Berlin overall do indeed provide (to paraphrase Harvey) reason for hope: new movements made up of people previously not active in urban struggles have entered the political arena. Through a combination of old and new protest forms, they managed to (at least temporarily) derail two projects previously considered to be 'done deals', and successfully resisted the hegemonic discourses and practices upon which such projects rest. A repoliticization of the urban development and planning process seems to have occurred with new protests emerging in various parts of the city, and the power balance in the triangle between government, capital and civil society shifted (at least temporarily) in favour of the latter.

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Résumé

Dans les villes à travers le monde, on constate une mobilisation croissante des membres de la classe dite 'créative' dans des mouvements sociaux urbains afin de défendre certains espaces de la ville ou d'influencer l'urbanisme. La signification de ces évolutions est analysée en référence à l'hypothèse qu'a formulée David Harvey dans *Spaces of Capital* sur la mobilisation accrue des producteurs culturels dans des mouvements contestataire à l'ère de l'instrumentalisation massive de la culture et de la 'créativité' dans les processus contemporains d'urbanisation capitaliste. Après une courte étude des récentes contributions sur les transformations des mouvements sociaux urbains et de l'hypothèse d'Harvey sur le rôle potentiel des producteurs culturels dans les mobilisations en vue d'élaborer des 'espaces d'espoir', deux contestations urbaines qui ont eu lieu ces dernières années à Berlin et Hambourg sont présentées: le combat pour les quais de Berlin dans le projet Media Spree et le conflit centré sur le Gängeviertel hambourgeois. Dans les deux cas, artistes, producteurs culturels et milieux créatifs ont joué un rôle déterminant. Cet essai analyse la composition, le programme, la contribution et les contradictions des coalitions qui soutiennent les contestations, tout en cherchant à savoir si ces mouvements sont les germes de nouveaux types de coalitions dont l'agenda se diversifie en faveur du changement urbain. Pour finir, un programme de recherches est proposé sur le rôle des artistes, des producteurs culturels et de la 'classe créative' dans les mouvements sociaux urbains à travers le monde.