

Follow the white rabbit...

The politics of art interventions as a rediscovery of political participation or: doing democracy

A mountain bike competition in a staircase of a vacant panel construction, a stand-in class performed with pedestrians passing-by on Berlins Boulevard Unter den Linden, a human swarm organized per SMS in Munich or a temporary bazar on a rooftop parking for founders of micro-business are just some examples of the plethora of small-scale interventions and experiments that happen in todays cities in Germany and worldwide.

The PhD thesis deals with the question in which way and to which extent 'interventions' - however buzzing in the art world - can contribute to re-think and hence update political participation. The main objective is to analyse the artistic methods, strategies and tactics of exemplary groups which appropriate public space by staging sociopolitical issues by participatory cultural measures.

It's mostly small and informal groups that experiment with new contemporary forms of communication and encounter, of representation and situative participation. Because of their hybrid structure, their peripatetic practice and fluid aesthetic, their activities are only rarely being perceived within the broader public – and academic research. As temporary projects at the interface between cultural production and social activism, urban development and symbolic performance these interventions indeed evade and challenge conventional disciplinary categories of political science, social movement theory or art in public space.

Five case studies of art groups – *DIE KULTURMASSNAHMEN*, *PONY PEDRO*, *the REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT*, *the URBANAUTEN* and *the COMPLIZEN* – serve as empirical examples to reflect upon contemporary strategies and practices of art interventions in (mostly urban) public space staging sociopolitical issues and experimenting with alternative forms of community and democratic participation: In which way can their projects as an aesthetic experience inspire, influence, complement and/or transform more conventional forms of political expression and participation? Can experiences, approaches and strategies be applied to other contexts and what are the preconditions for a productive collaboration among public authorities and the arts/cultural world? How can these interventionist and participatory practices inspire future policy-making in the city – which might for the time being be called 'urban curating'?