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Shared Spaces, Divided Spaces

Between security and safety

Sonja Hornung / Ülkü Süngün

This text is a condensation of a series of emails, conversations and signal messages since summer 2021 between Ülkü Süngün and Sonja Hornung.

Sonja Hornung: We met at a festival for art in urban space in Stuttgart, September 2021. It was one year after an event that the media labeled the so-called "Stuttgart Krawallnacht"—when young people clashed with police on the night of June 20–21, 2020.

Sitting on the train on my way to Stuttgart, I tried to inform myself about what exactly happened. It was difficult to get a clear picture. In media coverage of that night, speculative statements about the "backgrounds" of the young people involved were continually made. Why this obsession with the young people's citizenship status, or that of their families? What exactly happened during the police check of a single person to make as many as 200 others act "in support" of (*sich solidarisieren*[1]) the person who was controlled—igniting clashes with the police? I could not find clear answers to these questions in the media coverage. I did however, read that, on the anniversary of that night, and as one of its long-

term consequences, video surveillance was set up in key public places in Stuttgart's inner city.

My direct question to you is: as an artist with a longstanding commitment to related questions concerning marginalized perspectives, can you tell me more about your understanding of these events? What conclusions can be drawn from these and other, similar events, which make it so clear that shared, so-called 'public' spaces, the 'public' sphere and 'public' institutions must be critically analyzed in relation to their safety and access?

Ülkü Süngün: I welcome the fact that you directly and critically question "public space" in terms of inclusion and exclusion. The discourse that followed the clashes[2] meant that young migrant[3] people were criminalized across the board and verbally attacked. They were spoken about exclusively through a deficit logic and tone. So when we talk about the riots, we must also read them as an indication of struggles over public space. We need to discuss them within a broader context and analyze them in a far more complex way. Particularly because since then, as a post-lockdown phenomenon, similar clashes also took place in other cities, such as in Frankfurt am Main.

The anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim terrorist attack in Halle an der Saale in 2019 and the right-wing extremist attack in Hanau in 2020 were two events with profound repercussions. Yet while words to describe, discuss and wrestle with these atrocities where still being found, the lockdown came—which made it almost impossible to meet in order to come to terms with the attacks as a society. Then, on May 25, 2020, a white police officer killed African American George Perry Floyd in public space by pressing him to the ground with his knee and full bodyweight, robbing him

of air until he died. This event prompted Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests around the world, including in the *Schlossgarten* in Stuttgart. In many cities in Germany, young Black people and People of Color (BPoC) became politicized, founding groups that went public with their demands and criticisms of racism. *Migrantifa Stuttgart* cites these events as impetus for its founding moment in May 2020. On the 19th of each month, the group comes together to publicly commemorate the Hanau victims—Ferhat Unvar, Hamza Kenan Kurtović, Said Nesar Hashemi, Vili Viorel Păun, Mercedes Kierpacz, Kaloyan Velkov, Fatih Saraçoğlu, Sedat Gürbüz and Gökhan Gültekin. Moreover, *Migrantifa Stuttgart* criticizes the takeover of public space during the Corona pandemic by "*hygiene*-" or "*Querfront*" demonstrations[4], which restrict the basic mobility rights of many PoCs (People of Color), as they no longer feel safe in the presence of far-right and extremist demonstrators in the city center.

Over the past decades it has been possible to observe a gradual but steady commercialization of public space. Every last square meter of the inner-city Schlossgarten has been appropriated by commercial tents and cultural festivals sponsored by local industry during city festivities, which effectively become advertising events for large companies on our common public spaces. This commercialization, this reduction of civic life to the role of urban consumer, is neither discussed nor perceived as a problem. Instead, a large Roma family is framed as being a "problem" when they apparently represent a threat by sleeping in the Schlossgarten. In summary: large-scale, commercial marquees are OK, but tent camps of Roma families are not...[5]

In addition, groups of people labelled "migrant", and who spend their evenings in the city center, are often denied access to bars and clubs due to racist door policies. Even if they make it inside, it

could be that they are not served, or are generally made to feel uncomfortable – while since the Hanau attack the Shisha bars are also no longer considered safe spaces... In the summer of 2020, with pubs closing in light of the first Corona lockdown, the public squares of Stuttgart's city center effectively became the only place where groups of people could, relatively safely, experience social proximity. But post-lockdown security policies in public and private spaces—brought on by expanded police jurisdiction in effecting mandatory mask and social distancing policies, as well as the control of suspected "Corona parties"[6]—converged on specific parts of Stuttgart and targeted specific social groups. These practices spilled over into a new legal gray zone, leaving behind a distinct aftertaste for many of both over-policing and racial profiling.

Following the drug search of a 17-year-old at Eckensee in Schlossgarten on the night of June 20, 2020, a group of bystanders expressed their solidarity by interfering, which led to the escalation of conflicts between them and the police. At first, about 200 people were involved in the clashes; later, more than 400 were involved. The outbreak led to shattered storefronts, looted businesses in the main shopping area, and attacks against the police, with injured police officers and damaged police cars. Around 25 perpetrators were arrested on the night of the clashes.

The city and public officials swiftly responded. Just ten days after the clashes, a 10-point plan was drafted by means of a newly-founded statewide security partnership. Pre-existing so-called "hotspots"—where police checks can be carried out without probable cause—were expanded to include many other squares in the inner center, while police presence was drastically escalated. Additional high-intensity mobile lights were set up to illuminate even the last corner of the Schlossgarten. The employment of

additional youth social workers was quickly approved. Strikingly, the police demonstratively sought out conversations with young people with migrant backgrounds at round table discussions, openly seeking support from youth work structures. However in the same move, they consistently denied the existence of structural racism in the police force itself, thus impeding a more complex and critical analysis of the clashes. On the first anniversary of the clashes, a similarly paternalistic dialogue session took place on the background of a city center completely cordoned off by an immense police contingent. Coinciding with this event in a timely manner, a new, state-sanctioned video surveillance system was installed, along with the above-mentioned 160 dimmable, high-intensity lights. All measures were aimed at reinforcing a sense of public security, according to Interior Minister Thomas Strobel (CDU). Interestingly enough, the emphasis is on a sense of security, and not of safety. And whose sense of security may that be? Because—as already described—the security of some effectively means the insecurity of others.

When, in this context, "family tree research" was to be carried out on suspects with German passports in July 2020 with the aid of the district offices in order to verify a so-called migration background, there was nationwide criticism of the institutional racism of the Stuttgart police authorities, which justified this genealogical research by saying that it would improve violence prevention in the future through milieu-specific social work.[7]

One year after the riots, the investigations of the largest special commission in the history of Baden-Württemberg, "Eckensee", were—for the most part—concluded. So far, 141 suspects had been identified, 82 arrest warrants issued, and combined prison sentences distributed totaling around 100 years—40 of them without parole. Police raids of private homes in connection with

suspects were still being conducted as late as March 2022.[8] I was particularly disturbed by the way in which a 16-year-old in pre-trial detention was brought before the magistrate and the press. His head was covered, he was wearing a face mask, and was walking barefoot in hand and foot shackles. He was publicly humiliated and de-humanized.[9] In one of the first trials, the sentence for an 18-year-old involved in the riots was two and a half years in prison! A 19-year-old was sentenced by the Juvenile Criminal Division to two years and ten months for, among other things, grievous bodily harm.[10] However, it has been shown that similar criminal proceedings in past juvenile criminal law cases led to suspended sentences only.[11] A further comparable case in adult criminal law is the verdict in the NSU trial: right-wing extremist André Eminger supported the National Socialist Underground (NSU) for 14 years, during which period they murdered ten people and carried out three bomb attacks. In July 2018, he was sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for supporting a terrorist organization.[12] This demonstrated the comparative severity of sentences that were distributed in Stuttgart, which were criticized both by juvenile courts and academics. Some verdicts were commuted to suspended sentences through subsequent appeal proceedings.[13]

In the meantime, the police were able to enjoy backing from the Federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who came to the state capital and was photographed by the press in front of a damaged police car—one that had already been removed from the scene, only to then be brought back to Schlossplatz to serve as the backdrop for this staged photo-op.[14] The 280 police officers on duty, who acted against “rioters and looters” that Sunday night in Stuttgart, were recognized, thanked and honored with a special day of leave by the Minister of the Interior Thomas Strobl (CDU). There was also a public fundraising campaign in solidarity with

injured police officers. All institutions condemned the violence and backed the security apparatus. With the help of a greatly-expanded investigation team and the support of the public, mug shots were published by the police in March 2021, after which many of the perpetrators were found. What went completely unnoticed was that many minors were detained by the police for hours on the night of the crime, without being allowed to inform their parents, as a mother affected by the events emphatically conveyed to me.

The riots were instrumentalized for the sake of partisan politics and populist rhetoric. On June 21, 2020, Alice Weidel of the AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) tweeted about the uninvolved *Migrantifa Stuttgart*: "'Migrantifa' out of control, policemen injured!" An unacceptable statement by the Lord Mayor Kuhn (Green Party) came as a slap in the face: "There will also be talks about people with a migration background, who may not yet know all the rules"[15]. In discourses and in the media, young BPoC were henceforth discussed through a deficit logic and placed under general suspicion: always-already criminalized objects, never political subjects. Support for the previously highly-regarded BLM activists of the Black Community Foundation—which was not long beforehand still everybody's darling—completely collapsed. Thus, a connection was indirectly made between civil rights activists and the perpetrators of the riots. I see this sweeping racist criminalization as a conservative setback to the public attention towards structural racism within the police and in Germany at large —which had temporarily been exposed by the BLM demos. This unbearable climate was the trigger for a rally on July 11, 2020 in the Schlossgarten, supported by *Migrantifa Stuttgart*, the *Initiative Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland* (ISD) and other initiatives, which I helped to organize. Finally, the riots were discussed from

perspectives other than that of police security. Safe public spaces for BPoC were demanded, and racial profiling was criticized.

Sociologist and researcher of critical racism Dr. Onur Suzan Nobrega, from the Goethe University Frankfurt, conducted research with her students on the racist criminalization in the Opera Square incident in Frankfurt am Main, which is comparable in nature to the clashes in Stuttgart. In an as-yet-unpublished manuscript, she writes: “Racialized youth are criminalized through discursive and material practices of the media, police and urban political representatives, and are thereby constructed as a threat to the maintenance of (criminological and pandemic) security. This construction becomes a means to shift perspectives away from the structural conditions of the crisis. Its crystallization of interpretive sovereignty and public consent legitimizes repressive measures to maintain spatial order.”[16]

The self-image of a tolerant, multicultural state capital was severely affected by the seemingly inexplicable riots. Following Tupoka Ogette, I would like to describe this as an expulsion from “multicultural happy land”[17]. The crisis serves as an occasion for the construction of an abstract danger of violent male migrant groups in the inner city. This is the legitimation for extensive control measures, including preventive and repressive restrictions of the individual freedom of all—grotesquely sold as protective measures. It is in this framing that the statement of Stuttgart Lord Mayor Kuhn is to be understood: “Stuttgart stands for freedom, liberalism and cosmopolitanism. In order to protect these values, we will now take quick decisions in consultation with the state and the police, and, for example, set up video surveillance at hotspots.”[18]

Let's pursue this further, hence my question to you: When Lord Mayor Kuhn says "Only where there is security, there can also be freedom"[19]—what freedom is he talking about here? Whose security are we talking about, when we talk about security in the public space of the inner city? How can the existing spatial order be described in a more differentiated way?

SH: First of all, thank you for your precise account of the context in which the clashes erupted, as well as the disturbing response of the justice system. All too often, legal, spatial and personal fallout after the racist framing of such events goes underrepresented. Surely, this is in part because those who are untouched have the privilege of being able to look away. Therefore, I want to respond to the question you pose about security and its relationship to "public" space.

In an emancipatory sense, security surely has to do with safety, with *securing* essential needs for everybody: from healthcare, to childcare, education and safe access to space, including housing and public or shared spaces. Yet in so-called liberal democracies in Western Europe[20], this form of security is rarely guaranteed. Dr. Vanessa E. Thompson, who researches racism at the University of Frankfurt (Oder), calls this the "security of the others". Thinking with Cedric Robinson, she argues that those "others" who enjoy the benefits of full security are historically white, male and property-owners, or are "seen as being part of a national community that is imagined to be 'white'". Thompson writes: "the liberal promise of freedom and security goes hand-in-hand with the unfreedom, exploitation and dehumanization...for example as experienced by People of Color, Black people, women and non-binary people". This process of exclusion is contextual, and can

shift—extending to exclude, for example, those who are perceived to be homeless[21].

According to Thompson, "policing" takes place when those who are *not* excluded identify with the role of the police, acting to support the security apparatus because they benefit from it. It is therefore no accident that journalists uncritically echoed an inflammatory statement on the Stuttgart clashes—posted on social media by police unionist Thomas Mohr—in which he described the young people involved as "migrants" and "testosterone-loaded young men"[22]. It goes without saying that this statement was, on both counts, factually incorrect. But it conveniently deployed a specific trope in policing that has a long history in Germany[23]; two recent examples include the media response to the *Silvesternacht* of 2015–16 in Cologne[24], and the Identitarian Movement's *120dB* campaign two years later, which framed racialized men as a sexual threat to apparently vulnerable white women[25], "empowering" them to equip themselves with whistles in case of attack. By weaponizing trans- and queerphobic narratives and attempting to hijack "me-too"-style feminism, mainstream and rightwing extremist positions seek to exclude racialized subjects and/or subjects with migrant histories, and to delegitimize their access to shared/public spaces. But they also disempower and divide women by reducing white cis[26]/female subjects to reproductive organs of the nation-state who—like property—then require the protection of its security apparatus against a fictional "threat", for example, through increased surveillance in the city center. The mainstreaming of such narratives not only amplifies white liberal fantasies of "carceral feminism"[27] and spurs on right-wing terror. It also serves to further invisibilize the danger that policing represents to racialized women, non-binary people, and sex workers —which can lead to murder by German police, as in the cases of

Mareama Sarr and Christy Schwundek, or very recently to an unnamed victim of familial violence in Pankow, Berlin[28]. As repeatedly pointed out by Thompson and others, such cases all-too-frequently go under acknowledged[29].

The following is a question I pose to myself as much as to you: since the "security of others" is based on the policing—in highly different and asymmetrical ways—of many different groups, (how) can these groups act together sensitively? For example, feminist cultural workers who are looking to address the male-dominated, resource-intensive and environmentally damaging production of (art in) public/shared space must logically also work to undo the racialization of public/shared space in the same step. Otherwise, we continue to normalise the same underlying, violent, and dangerous idea of 'the public' as a policed space. Undoing this violence also has to do with the stories that are told about shared spaces.

ÜS: Your question brings me to another issue of conflict in public space, the politics of memory. Who has the defining authority over historical narratives—who writes and defines history? For many years, specific activist initiatives have been resisting racialization in public space and fighting for transformative justice. Specifically, they are making demands for new monuments and the renaming of streets—and squares. After all, many street names still refer to profiteers of colonial history. while after World War II, those streets that were still named after Nazi-era criminals were mostly renamed, numerous street names in German cities today still use racist terms. However, renaming attempts—as well as the search for names—is met with resistance.

When street names are named after people, this is traditionally associated with a symbolic gesture of appreciation, and the

recognition of their achievements. Among other things, naming has to do with to principles of national identity, and thus names are also a reflection of structures of domination, representing and reproducing national ideologies.[30] Demands for de-colonial and anti-racist street renaming, e.g. to commemorate victims of right-wing violence, are to be found in the emancipatory approach of marginalized groups. At stake here is the rewriting of hegemonic and one-sided historiography, a co-creation of the politics of memory. The visibility of previously invisible perspectives and agents fulfills the social mandate to convey situated knowledge that has not yet been given an appropriate place in the collective consciousness, in public educational or school material.[31] Privilege may always cut people off from knowledge. Street and square names thus become places of deed and memory. With *Halitplatz* in Kassel, *Enver-Şimşek-Platz* in Jena and *Mehmet-Kubaşık Platz* in Dortmund, some of the demands of the NSU victims' relatives have been met. Also, after long discussions, the *M*****straße* in Berlin was re-named after Anton Wilhelm Amo, who is considered the first Black German philosopher and legal scholar. Conflicts over street renaming also flare up over the principle of equality, which states that "significant" people should give names to “significant” streets. This opens up a space for interpretation: how significant and deserving are victims of racist attacks, for example, and which places and streets correspond to this significance?[32] On April 6, 2006, 21-year-old Halit Yozgat was murdered by the NSU in his Internet café on Holländische Straße in Kassel. For years, the *Initiative 6. April*, together with the Yozgat family, has campaigned for Holländische Straße to be renamed *Halitstraße*. Halit Yozgat’s father, Ismail Yozgat, already appealed for this at the official memorial service in Berlin in February 2012. However, the city of Kassel has so far not responded to this demand; instead, in October 2012, a square at

the main cemetery was named *Halit-Platz*, and a memorial stone unveiled. Appropriate cultures of remembrance and policies that involve those affected are still not accepted as a matter of course: commemorating alongside relatives of victims, showing solidarity and jointly demanding further clarification by forming alliances is a step toward transformative justice. Especially since in the case of the NSU, through which the relatives of victims experienced decades of racist criminalization and victim-blaming perpetrated by police, the media and society. Yet in recent years, there have been movements and societal changes that make me hopeful.

SH: And yet decolonizing the politics of memory in shared spaces must surely also be accompanied by structural changes in how these spaces are policed on a daily basis. For example, earlier, you mentioned how the expansion of temporary "hotspots", officially described as *gefährliche Orte*[33] (dangerous places) in Stuttgart opened the floodgates for rampant racial profiling. Such zones in Berlin are known as *Kriminalitätsbelastete Orte* (crime-ridden places, or KbOs). As of 2017, their approximate locations are published by the Berlin police, although their precise borders are kept secret.[34] Among others, the areas Kottbusser Tor (Kotti), Hermannplatz and Alexanderplatz are all designated KbOs.

ÜS: Stuttgart's *gefährliche Orte* are still fully untransparent to the public, meaning that, in particular, racialized and/or otherwise stigmatized people (for example, homeless people) could potentially be randomly controlled anywhere. According to a statement from the press department of the police, the only way to find out whether you have been in a hotspot is by submitting an official complaint after being controlled.

SH: Yes, and one cannot help but note that policing is often upscaled in areas in the city that have been structurally neglected by the authorities, particularly in the moment when urban upgrades—such as *Stuttgart21*—are planned, and property must be protected. For example, areas around the listed KbOs of Kotti, Hermannplatz and Alexanderplatz are all currently slated for some form of 'green' urban planning renewal or development. Kotti's Oranienstraße is set to become a car-free, consumer-oriented promenade, while a police station is planned in prime panopticon position in the Neue Kreuzberg Zentrum spanning Adalbertstraße. The Karstadt dominating Hermannplatz is to be unnecessarily replaced with a 'sustainable' (so-called because partly wooden) structure planned by Austrian real estate developer Signa, whose CEO, René Benko, is aligned with the extreme-right FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria). Benko's company has also since pushed for a car-free Hermannplatz. The areas around Hermannplatz and Kotti host long-standing self-proclaimed migrant communities who are networked through political initiatives such as *Kotti & Co.*[35], *Initiative Hermannplatz,*[36], and *Kein Generalverdacht*. These groups have articulated just how damaging such developments are for housing and small businesses already under pressure, while architectural theorist Niloufar Tajeri has demostrated how local authorities have implemented racist, anti-Muslim stereotypes to spur gentrification in the area and push out targeted communities[37]. In the wake of the BLM protests and the founding of *Migrantifa Berlin*, groups such as *Ihr Seid Keine Sicherheit* (*You Provide No Security*) work against recent spikes in police raids and racial profiling, so that racialized people and people with migrant histories can feel comfortable in their own neighborhoods.

Meanwhile, the square south of Alexanderplatz—a remnant of socialist urban design that has been more or less neglected since the 1990s—currently functions as a meeting and sleeping place for homeless people. Here, state-owned company *Grün Berlin* plans to create a "Forum for Democracy" and a "sustainable recreation area with high quality-of-stay and a sustainable mobility concept."[38] This past winter, the *Bündnis gegen Obdachlosigkeit* (*Alliance Against Homelessness*) hosted the fourth sleep-out at Alexanderplatz to protest Berlin's cold disregard for the demands of homeless people with and without migrant backgrounds against policing, for self-organized housing and for access to healthcare. Directly on the other side of the river is the rebuilt Berlin Palace, a recent and garish contribution to the city skyline that erases and whitewashes Germany's socialist and colonialist histories respectively. A host of PoC- and BPoC-initiated groups, from *barazani.berlin* to the signatories of *No Humboldt 21!*, have protested against the reconstruction of the Berlin Palace and its institutional construct, the Humboldt Forum.[39] They rightfully demanded that urban planning and cultural policy cease to uphold a white, nostalgic and dangerously myopic understanding of 'German' identity and history[40].

Rather than listening to these sensible demands, Berlin's SPD-Grüne-Linke coalition has recently instead approved the eviction of the self-organised housing block on Habersaathstraße in Mitte, rolled out the video surveillance of KbOs, and acted to seize properties owned by so-called "clans" – a racist euphemism used to associate organised crime with migrant communities. The point is not necessarily that the creation of greener, more sustainable, or safer urban spaces and cultural institutions are in and of themselves undesirable. The problem arises – as political scientist and activist Françoise Vergès points out – when such places and spaces are in

fact only alibis for exclusion: when they provide safe and accessible only for a privileged few – namely, middle- to upperclass white people with property and/or money.[41]

This leads me to a final question: as public spaces, cultural institutions are indeed places of privileged access. They are often used to increase the attractiveness of an area, attract tourists, and, as a result, drive up real estate prices. Do they, in fact, simply facilitate increased policing? How might they enable its critique and disruption, and create space for viable alternatives, such as transformative justice?[42]

ÜS: You ask about the relationship between art institutions and public space. What does it mean to make or show art in public space with its hegemonic order, the place where struggles for the safety of all, the visibility of the marginalized, and the memory of the forgotten or excluded are played out? What role do public art and cultural institutions play here, what relevance and function do they have? Are they in turn to be claimed as public space by activists?

When the above-mentioned conflicts and aspects of safety and security are bracketed out by cultural institutions, they become nullified, leaving the hegemonic order strengthened—and in this move, cultural institutions become complicit in maintaining hegemony. However, I do not want to dwell on this. My interest is in the conditions of cooperation between political initiatives and (cultural) institutions, which like to see themselves as allies. My question is what institutions can do, not to destroy, but instead to strengthen these initiatives in the long run—because unfortunately, time and time again I observe the opposite. Pulling single actors out of movements and employing and empowering

them institutionally in temporary and powerless positions brings conflicts of trust, money and power within communities and movements themselves. At worst, they are used as tokens, BPoC decoration and visual proof of mainstream diversity. The inability to speak out—as an individual BPoC person, from within institutions—in a way that is critical of discriminatory structures is quickly read by communities and initiatives as a betrayal of the cause. Not to mention the lack of safe spaces for the isolated BPoC in the often-white institutions and the effect of this on their health. Not only is more diversity needed in the staffing structure, but structures and accumulations of power must be questioned. How may we set about negotiating ways of supporting hip initiatives like the BLM protest movement, to support them as a whole structure and not to isolate them—rather than instrumentalizing them for the sake of one's own adornment? Civil society and their initiatives are sensitive of and pay close attention to the institutions that maintain their street credibility. I'm not talking about temporary support dependent on game plans and exhibition themes, or patronizing access to gatekeeper resources that, when put on public display, yield symbolic gains for the institution. Here, I am rather speaking about longer-term support, based on earned trust and protection when it matters—the institution itself having to risk something. I am talking about institutions learning not to impose their hierarchical power structures, production logics and time pressure on grassroots initiatives. Rather, how can institutions change and open up towards the work ethics and themes of the “exhibited” activism—despite the imposed institutional imperative of non-partisanship? How might funding structures and budgets be reinterpreted and shifted, to allow new things to emerge outside the logics and funding lines conceived in cultural ministries continuing to pay lip service only to contemporary conflicts? How might institutional

resources be redistributed towards initiatives without requiring that initiatives tacitly adopt and accept—through cooperation with the institutions—those structures that are, in principle, being fought against?—those very same structures that are a part of a problem due to their terms of interpretive sovereignty, asymmetrical power imbalances, and their siphoning-off of collective situated knowledge without adequate appreciation and remuneration? This results in an inner conflict for initiatives and activists working on grassroots, direct democracy, voluntary and collective basis: because too close a cooperation is read politically as serving the interests of cultural institutions. Aestheticizing depoliticization, instrumentalization of anti-fascist and anti-capitalist struggles for neoliberal logics, cozying up to production constraints and annual budget plans—as well as copyright laws—can considerably undermine some struggles. How can social conflicts be brought into institutions in a productive and transformative way? In Stuttgart, 40% of the population has a migration background, according to 2018 population data. I believe that activists working for a more just society should be explicitly entitled to urban, central spaces, budgets and institutional support without being subject to their production constraints—until institutions are permeable enough.

Art and culture themselves produce a critique of the conditions under which we live, work and produce, rendering invisible structures visible. The Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan, working from his studio in a Kiev bunker during the war, says, art can help to develop a "new political sensibility that responds to contemporary challenges" and, without moralizing, evoke moral discomfort.[43] According to the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, strategic essentialisms in political activism that serve self-empowerment, whether in the politics of remembrance or other

areas of political self-representation, must be constantly deconstructed for identitarian logics to be broken down. Deconstruction, dissolution, demarcation and transformation are possibilities of art. It can criticize, name and reveal the existing, while at the same time imagining the new, the coming, the utopian, which can already be present and at work within art. Contradictions can coexist and be articulated, they can be experienced and endured. If we engage in creating a just society and processes of social transformation and connect these to art, this might unleash a force that is capable of overcoming questions of classism, elitism and hermetic exclusions in art. For example, at documenta 14, Rick Lowe referred to Holländische Straße in Kassel as "Halitstraße, formerly Holländische Straße" in a "map booklet" and complied with his father's request for 100 days of 2017. I like the idea that confused documenta visitors, following the map, searched for Halitstraße in Kassel and possibly asked locals about it.[44]

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[1] See for example Christine Bilger: "Randalierer in Stuttgart: Gruppen solidarisieren sich gegen die Polizei", *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 21/06/2020.

[2] I prefer the word ‘clashes’, because in my opinion the term “riot night” depoliticizes and narrows the whole thing very much.

[3] People regardless of nationality or origin, described as migrants.

[4] For an English-language analysis of the origins of the “Querfront” demonstrations, see for example “Querdenker, Querfront, and QAnon: On the German Far-Right and Its American Occupation”, *Europe Now Journal*, 25/07/2021, available online at: https://www.europenowjournal.org/2021/07/25/querdenker-querfront-and-qanon-on-the-german-far-right-and-its-american-occupation/ (accessed 05/05/2022).

[5] Jürgen Bock: “Illegale Zeltlager in Stuttgart: Roma-Clans sind zurück im Schlossgarten” ,*Stuttgarter Nachrichten*, 26/07/2018, available online at: https://www.stuttgarter-nachrichten.de/inhalt.illegale-zeltlager-in-stuttgart-roma-clans-sind-zurueck-im-schlossgarten.a80f3500-7c51-4a66-91cd-9744b8a4172d.html (accessed 10/04/2022).

[6] E.g. under the pretext of Corona policies: house searches due to public complaints about suspected “Corona parties”.

[7] Johannes Schneider: „Was ist struktureller Rassismus? Das ist struktureller Rassismus!“, *Zeit Online*, 12.07.2020, see: https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2020-07/polizei-stuttgart-struktureller-rassismus-stammbaum-recherche-krawallnacht-taeter (accessed 04/05/2022).

[8] dpa/lsw:” Stuttgarter Krawallnacht: Polizei durchsucht Wohnungen”, *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 22/03/2022, available online at: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/panorama/kriminalitaet-stuttgart-stuttgarter-krawallnacht-polizei-durchsucht-wohnungen-dpa.urn-

newsml-dpa-com-20090101-220322-99-622361 (accessed 10/04/2022).

[9] “16 Personen entlassen, acht in Untersuchungshaft – Was wir über die Chaos-Nacht wissen”, in *Die Welt*, 23/06/2020, available online at: https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article210041549/ (accessed 10/04/2022).

[10] Public officials use the term "rioters".

[11] Anna Hunger: “Krawallnacht”-Urteile- Der ganz große Hammer”, in *Kontext Wochenzeitung*, 18/11/2020, available online at: https://www.kontextwochenzeitung.de/gesellschaft/503/der-ganz-grosse-hammer-7125.html (accessed 10/04/2022).

[12] Ebd.

[13] Anna Hunger: “Eine Lawine aus Hass”, in *Kontext Wochenzeitung*, 19/05/2021 available online at: https://www.kontextwochenzeitung.de/gesellschaft/529/eine-lawine-aus-hass-7502.html (accessed 11/04/2022).

[14] See the tweet from photographer and journalist Jens Volle, 22/06/2020, available online at: https://twitter.com/Fotografie_JV/status/1275049246555811842 (accessed 11/05/2022).

[15] Claudia Henzler: “Stark nur in der Horde”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (Nr. 142), 22/06/2020.

[16] Dr. Onur Suzan Nobrega, seminar, “Rassimus, rechter Terror und Erinnerungskultur in Deutschland”, Winter Semester 2021/22, Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, Institut für Soziologie, Presentation “Opernplatz & rassistische Kriminalisierung”

[17] “I call the state in which white people live before they actively and consciously engage in racism 'Happyland.' [...] Happyland is a world in which racism is the offense of others." in Tupoka Ogette: *exit RACISM*, Münster 2020, p. 21. My interpretation, "Multikulti-Happyländle" (“multicultural happy land”), also refers to the controversial city marketing campaign for international professionals ‘The Länd of 2021’, and the demand of the Minister of the Interior Thomas Strobel (CDU) in an interview in *Bild* on 22/06/2022: "One should not overdo it with Mulitkulti", available online at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3JCrxTgHtk (accessed 11/04/2022).

[18] See „Sicherheitspartnerschaft für Stuttgart vereinbart“, *Press Release Police,* 02/07/2022, available online at: https://www.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/service/presse/pressemitteilung/pid/sicherheitspartnerschaft-fuer-stuttgart-vereinbart-1/ (accessed 10/05/2022).

[19] Ibid.

[20] For a comparison between European and North American contexts, see: Heike Mauer: *Polizieren als intersektional-rassistisches Verhältnis: Vanessa E. Thompson im Interview, blog interdisziplinäre geschlechterforschung*, July 2020, available online at: https://www.gender-blog.de/beitrag/polizieren-rassistisches-verhaeltnis (accessed 08/04/2022).

[21] Hannah Schurian: Die Sicherheit der Anderen: “Für wen ist die Polizei gefährlich?, Interview mit Vanessa E. Thompson”, in *Luxemburg: Gesellschaftsanalyse und Linke Praxis*, December 2020, available online at: https://zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/artikel/die-sicherheit-der-anderen/ (accessed 08/04/2022).

[22] See for example: “Polizeigewerkschaftler wendet sich gegen ‘Verharmlosung’: Krawallmacher von Stuttgart “überwiegend migrantische Jugendliche, Heranwachsende, aber auch Erwachsene”, *RTL News*, 23/06/20 – For Thomas Mohr’s full statement see: https://www.facebook.com/908299182569985/photos/a.952787118121191/3161427440590470/?type=3 (accessed 08/04/2022).

[23] For two historical examples, see the *Schwarze Schmach* campaign of the early 1920s (*Wikipedia*, available online at: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schwarze_Schmach (accessed 01/04/2022)) or Eva von Redecker’s account of discourse and imagery, mainstreamed in Nazi Germany, stereotyping Jewish men as sexual criminals in Eva Redecker: “Anti-Genderismus and right-wing hegemony”, in *Radical Philosophy* (Issue 198), July/August 2016, available online at: https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/commentary/anti-genderismus-and-right%E2%80%91wing-hegemony#fnref2 (accessed 08/04/2020).

[24] “In Germany, the federal police count more than 7300 reported rapes and sexual assaults every year (that’s more than 20 a day). Many more incidents go unreported….But where is the magazine cover of a man in Lederhosen, one hand holding a stein, the other groping a breast?”—Tamara Micner: “What happened in Cologne?”, *LRB blog*, January 2016, available online at: https://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2016/january/what-happened-in-cologne (accessed 08/04/2022).

[25] “A 2017 report by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) showed that only 1.7 percent of all recorded crimes committed by immigrants were sexual offenses.” Nadja Al-Khalef: “Die Identitäre Bewegung
gibt sich feministisch, um neue Mitglieder anzuwerben“, *ze.tt / Zeit*

Online, February 2018, available online at: https://www.zeit.de/zett/politik/2018-02/die-identitaere-bewegung-will-mit-angeblichem-feminismus-mitglieder-anwerben (accessed 08/04/2022).

[26] "Cis, short for cisgender (pronounced *sis-gender*, or just *sis*), is a term that means whatever gender you are now is the same as what was presumed for you at birth." Cis refers to people who are not transgender. Source: https://www.transhub.org.au/101/cis (accessed 10/05/22).

[27] "Carceral feminism" is a term used to critically describe calls for enhanced and increased prison sentences to punish forms of physical and sexual violence against women. In "Against Carceral Feminism", Victoria Law argues that *white* and cis feminists supporting such calls tend to under-acknowledge victim-blaming when physical and sexual violence is reported to the police, thereby underestimating the danger the criminal justice system poses to women and non-binary people, particularly when they are Black or of Color. See *Jacobin*, 17/10/2014, available online at https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/against-carceral-feminism/, accessed 05/05/2022).

[28] "Schwester der in Pankow getöteten Frau erhebt Vorwürfe gegen die Polizei", *rbb24 Abendschau*, 04/05/2022, available online at https://www.rbb24.de/panorama/beitrag/2022/05/berlin-pankow-frau-getoetet-schwester-vorwuerfe-polizei.html

[29] See, for example, the work of Andrea Ritchie in the U.S., documented through the book and website *Invisible No More*, Beacon Press, Boston, 2017. See also Vanessa E. Thompson's lecture "Polizieren von Schwarzem Leben und Bedingungen abolitionistischer Widerstände" in the framework of the event

series *SOFT SOIL, neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst,* Berlin, 2020, available online here (in German language): https://vimeo.com/447479830 (accessed 05/05/2022). Many thanks to Vanessa E. Thompson for pointing this out, as well as referring me to discussions around carceral feminism mentioned in footnote 27.

[30] Streets named or renamed after important living Nazi personalities for purposes of propaganda and demonstration of power were completely renamed after 1945 as part of denazification in both parts of Germany: see . Marion Werner: *Vom Adolf-Hitler-Platz zum Ebertplatz: Eine Kulturgeschichte der Kölner Straßennamen seit 1933*, Köln/Wien, 2008.

[31] Joachim F. Tornau: "Kassel erhält Halit-Platz", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 01/10/2012, available online at: https://www.fr.de/rhein-main/kassel-erhaelt-halit-platz-11317425.html (accessed 11/04/2022).

[32] With *Deine Straße* (*Your Street*) (2020), Swiss filmmaker and author Güzin Kar has made a poetic short film about the Saime-Genç-Ring in Bonn-Dransdorf, named since 1998 after the 4-year-old victim of the racist arson attack in Solingen. The street in question is a newly built in a de-centrally located industrial area, lined with car washes and horticultural businesses.

[33] Such zones are designated on the basis of statistical evidence of higher crime rates and the police's "subjective perception" of a given area, police are granted extended powers. See for example: Aiko Kempen: "Keine kontrolliert die Kontrollen", *taz*, 12/03/2019. For information on the legal foundation for *Gefährliche Orte* in Baden-Württemburg see: *Polizeigesetz, § 26 Abs. 1 Nr. 2*, available online at: https://dejure.org/gesetze/PolG_bis_16.01.2021/26.html (accessed 08/04/2022).

[34] See: “Kriminalitätsbelastete Orte”, *Polizei Berlin*, 23/04/2021, available online at: https://www.berlin.de/polizei/polizeimeldungen/fakten-hintergruende/artikel.1078268.php (accessed 08/04/2022).

[35] “Wir wollen keine Polizeiwache im NKZ”, *Kotti & Co.*, 17/03/2022, available online at: https://kottiundco.net/2022/03/17/wir-wollen-keine-polizeiwache-im-nkz/ (accessed 08/04/2022).

[36] The Initiative Hermannplatz also criticises the new Karstadt facade’s nostalgic reference to a nostalgic pre-war German ‘innocence’, which covers up the “power structures of the colonial and Nazi eras” and erases the area’s migrant history: *Fassaden-Replik, Initiative Hermannplatz: Kein Abriss keine “Aufwertung” keine Verdrängung*, available online at: https://initiativehermannplatz.noblogs.org/fassaden-replik/ (accessed 08/04/2022).

[37] Niloufar Tajeri, “Städtische Ungleichheit, Verdrängung und Rassismus: Die Verknüpfung von rassistischen Zuschreibungen und Gentrifizierung in der Bezirkspolitik.” *MieterEcho*, Nr. 215, July 2022, available online at: https://www.bmgev.de/mieterecho/archiv/2022/me-single/article/staedtische-ungleichheit-verdraengung-und-rassismus/

[38] “Rathaus und Marx-Engels Forum”, *Grün Berlin*, available online at: https://gruen-berlin.de/projekte/urbane-freiraeume/rathaus-und-marx-engels-forum (accessed 08/04/2022).

[39] Funded by donors associated with new and old right-wing extremist milieus, see: Philipp Oswalt, “Neue Recherchen zeigen: Weitere rechtslastige Spender*innen für das Berliner Schlossprojekt”, in *ARCH+*, 09/12/2021, available online at:

https://archplus.net/de/neue-recherchen-zeigen-weitere-rechtslastige-spender-fuer-das-berliner-schlossprojekt/ (accessed 04/04/2022).

[40] See for example: Anna Yeboah: “Blackout Berlin-Brandenburg—Spatialisierungen des deutschen Kolonialismus”, *ARCH +*, *Issue 235—Rechte Räume*, pp. 226-231.

[41] Françoise Vergès: “Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender”*, e-flux journal #100,* May 2019.

[42] Concepts and approaches such as "transformative justice" or "community accountability", which have been developed within political practices in Black and queerfeminist communities in the US, provide concrete suggestions for how a world without police can function. These practices involve taking responsibility for each other, for one’s own actions and for the community. For further information see for example: https://incite-national.org/analysis/ or https://ignite.blackblogs.org/transformative-gerechtigkeit-ressourcen/ (both accessed 08/04/2022).

[43] Catrin Lorch: “Wir sind der Preis, den Europa für seine Sicherheit zahlt”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 04/04/2022, p. 9.

[44] “documenta benennt Straße in Kassel nach NSU-Opfer”, *Migazin*, 12/06/17, available online at: https://www.migazin.de/2017/06/12/kunstausstellung-strasse-kassel-nsu-opfer/ (accessed 10/4/2022).