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Art Production, Consumption and the Effects of Gentrification

Cultural Capital as Utility for Gentrification

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ABSTRACT

Gentrification creates a matrix of accumulation and consumption of cultural expression and social control that changes the nature of the city. Additionally, the rising value of art enhances the value of related factors: the urban forms that grow up around it, the activity of doing it, and the status of consuming it. To understand the implications this process has in the artistic arena, this paper will provide an exploration on how the restructuration of the urban space affects the production and consumption of art, and vice versa. This paper aims to contextualise the emergence and development of socially engaged art through the urban phenomenon of gentrification.

KEY WORDS: Gentrification, Socially Engaged Art, Instrumentalization, Cultural Capital, Artistic Mode of Production

1. Introduction

Some scholars have questioned whether contemporary art *is* neoliberalism in its most purified form. Whether we like it or not, contemporary art is thoroughly permeated with the processes of gentrification, capital accumulation, and the procedures of divestiture and exploitation. Artists already complicit –wittingly or unwittingly– in the renegotiation of urban meaning for elites, were called upon to enter into social management. Real-estate concessions have long been extended to artists and small non-profit organisations in the hope of improving the attractiveness of the "up-and-coming" neighbourhood. The prominence of art allows museums and artistic/architecture groups, to insert themselves into the conversation on civic trendiness and urban planning. In the article *The Artistic Mode of Revolution: From Gentrification to Occupation* (2012), Martha Rosler specifies that artists are hardly unaware of their positioning by urban elites, from the municipal and real-estate interests to the high-end collectors and museum trustees[i]. However, one should ask to what degree artists are aware and/or taking responsibility for the repercussions their actions might have in the global socio-political space and how the changes in this space intrinsically affected the artistic production.

In order to understand the implications the process of gentrification has in the development of the so-called socially engaged art, this paper will question how the restructuration of the urban space affects the production and consumption of art, and *vice versa*. First, it will discuss how the increasing value of art in the urban setting is deeply intertwined to other factors: the urban *forms* that grow up around it, the activity of *doing* it, and the status of *consuming* it[ii]. Then, it will explain how the changes prompted through gentrification affected art's role within the city –from being a mere decoration to becoming a form of social amelioration. Finally, it will discuss the effects the instrumentalization of art have on the way cultural funding policies are made, and how art's relation with institutions changed from being an autonomous discipline to subsume under the demands of neoliberalism.

My aim is to show how the problematic entanglement between the process of gentrification and socially engaged art affects artistic autonomy. The hope is to understand if there is an artistic alternative which instead of enhancing neoliberalism in fact takes responsibility for the effects it has in the socio-political arena.

2. What is gentrification?

Gentrification is an ambiguous concept, and as Rosalyn Deutsche sharply points out, most of its definitions –generally issued from the gentrifying classes– describe moments in the process, but not the process itself. So, to be able to recognise gentrification in all its forms one needs to identify the economic forces and the intricate socio-political relations that surround this phenomenon[iii]. The notion of gentrification is routinely employed to designate urban changes. It underlines how space and time are used in the social and material constitution of an urban middle class. In other words, gentrification is the conversion of socially marginal and working-class areas of the central city to middle-class residential use, and it reflects a movement of investment of private capital into downtown districts of major urban centres, and which began in the '60s, [iv].

The term was coined by the sociologist Ruth Glass in 1964 to refer to alterations in social structures and the housing market in certain areas of London; the word evoked more than a simple change of scene. As Sharon Zukin specifies, the concept "suggested a symbolic new attachment to old buildings and a heightened sensibility to space and time. It also indicated a radical break with suburbia, a movement away from child-centered households toward the social diversity and aesthetic promiscuity of city life"[v]. Thus, gentrification may be described as a process of spatial and social differentiation.

Moreover, the complexity of urban life often appears –from a governmental perspective–as a troublesome knot to be disentangled. A central task of modernity has been the improvement and pacification of cities in their industrializing metropolitan core –consider such basic matters as the management of violent crime, prostitution, sanitation, and disease. In the advanced industrial economies, the 20th Century urban planning encompassed not only the engineering of new means of transportation, but also the creation of new neighbourhoods with improved housing where the working classes and the poor usually live[vi]. At the beginning of the '70s it became fashionable in some of the older industrial cities of North America and Western Europe, to live in former manufacturing spaces that were converted to residential areas. This 'new housing style', as Zukin describes it, grew into a trend that influenced the redevelopment plans of cities[vii].

Gentrification is a specific historical instance of a more general contradiction between the imperatives of accumulation and reproduction in the late capitalist or post-industrial city. By this I mean that even though the understanding of this concept is intertwined with the idea of revitalisation, improvement and redevelopment; its social effects tend to be superficial, blurred, or eclectic rather than grounded in a cognisance of the specific factors governing patterns of urban growth and change.

Gentrification is not just about neighbourhood improvement; in fact, it is often referred to as the recycling of a town and it has two contradictory outcomes. On the one hand, the 'improvement', rebuilding or renovation of a neighbourhood, typically an urban low income area intervened in by wealthier people. But, on the other hand, the displacement and relocation of its long-time residents, usually low and moderate income people with few options to be part of the thriving economy. That is, gentrification enhances a particular urban area by repositioning underprivileged individuals that cannot be part of the bourgeoning of the city. Deutsche indicates,

> Gentrification is an important aspect of this strategy of impoverishment. By creating neighbourhoods and housing that only the white-collar labor force can afford, the cities are systematically destroying the material conditions for the survival of millions of people. Expelled from the economy […], turned out of their homes by state legislation, these cast-offs of late capitalism are fast losing the right to survive in society at all[viii].

In other words, gentrification typically occurs when a wealthier-income people moves into a neighbourhood, makes improvements to property that causes market prices and tax assessments to rise, and so, drives out the previous lower-class residents[ix].

It is of critical importance to understand that even though this is a social change, it does not offer a political change; the gentrifiers' choice of neighbourhood does not imply their social integration with existing neighbours of a different race, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The existing residents may "resent the superimposition of an alien culture –with different consumption patterns and an accelerated pace of change– on their community"[x], so, eventually they have to leave. Moreover, the logic of the economic system demonstrates that the effects of gentrification are integrally linked products of decisions made by primary actors in the real-estate market – financial institutions, developers, governments and landlords– and the main victims of this process are essentially those with a low or moderate income[xi]. In fact, this pattern is tied together with the term 'abandonment' –manifested in various forms such as deserting buildings, harassing and evicting tenants, and rapidly turning over neighbourhood property in order to escalate the real-estate values. Put differently, gentrification is an unjust process where those with a lot of money play with the lives and futures of the people who cannot afford it. This urban phenomenon takes various forms and the art world plays a crucial role within it. In the next section I will explain how the presence of the arts in a city, and its production and consumption are intimately intertwined with gentrification.

3. Art Production, Art Consumption and the Process of Gentrification

Gentrification has been described as "the latest phase in a movement of capital back to the city"[xii]. As Smith and LeFaivre explain, the use of city areas as commodities to be exploited for profit is only one of the purposes in a capitalist economy. Neighbourhoods have also traditionally provided the conditions for reproducing labour power. "The economic function of the neighbourhood has superseded the broader social function"[xiii]; thus, gentrification is itself a means for reproducing labour power. Since the '70s there has been a global reorganisation of the nations' labour force. This global restructuring consisted of many cities inviting the burgeoning corporate and financial services sectors to locate their headquarters there, appeasing their appeal through zoning adjustments and tax breaks. Suddenly a new international division of labour entailed by multinational corporations sprouted around the world as cities became concentrations of state and corporate administration.

This global economic restructuration brought profound ramifications for urban spatial organisation on a variety of levels. On the one hand, the multinational corporations presented limited opportunities for the working class –blue-collar worker who performs manual labour– hence, the lower class was marginalised. This triggered a disparity of employment possibilities, which was clearly reflected in the spatial register of the city. The urban life saw a class polarisation, a wrenching economic restructuration and soon there was a social dislocation of the poor. It is crucial to clarify that even though the city's population may be polarised between rich and poor, the latter still provided personal and domestic services for the former and worked in the remaining labour-intensive manufacturing sectors[xiv]. Efforts, however, made by governments to attract desirable corporations to post-industrial cities soon provoked the realisation that it was the human capital in the persons of the managerial elites that were the ones whose needs and desires should be addressed. Rosler explains,

> The provision of so-called quality-of-life enhancements to attract these high earners became urban doctrine, a formula consisting of providing delights for the male managers in the form of convention centers and sports stadia, and for the wives, museums, dance, and the symphony[xv].

Accordingly, new redevelopment and renovation programmes as part of an embellishment agenda of the city were created. So by bringing art and culture to the neighbourhood, the State automatically provided the new middle classes with the lifestyle, collective identity and social credentials for which they strive. Conversely, this caused more evident shifts in neighbourhood's population; soon, a displacement of artists, writers, actors, dancers, and poets to residential areas nearby the financial sector, occurred.

Furthermore, in her book *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (1982), Zukin lays out a theory of urban change in which artists and the entire visual art sector –commercial galleries, artist-run spaces and museums –are the main engine for the repurposing of the post-industrial city and the renegotiation of real-estate for the benefit of elites[xvi]. Zukin elucidates how by the early '70s, "art suggested a new platform to politicians who were tired of dealing with urban poverty"[xvii]. Therefore, there was a policy change carried forward by city officials, art supporters, and well-placed art patrons serving on land-use commissions and occupying other seats of power. This promotion of an arts infrastructure changed the nature of urban space. As Zukin suggests,

> Shifts of power in the art market transform the urban terrain. Looking at loft living in terms of *terrain* and *markets* rather than "lifestyle" links changes in the built environment with the collective appropriation of public goods […] studying the formation of markets […] directs attention to *investors rather than consumers as the source of change*[xviii].

Accordingly, many cities –especially those lacking significant cultural sectors– established revitalisation strategies to provide an infrastructure for arts, which eventually would attract investors who will bring capital to a particular area. Accordingly, the quality of life of that specific neighbourhood would improve.

People always express the aesthetic values of their time and milieu. However, the way that they individually appropriate collective goods also reflects the way that markets are structured and the relations between competing uses and users in those markets. The succession of uses of space and users in the market reflects processes of social change in the larger society. Not only does it parallel the gentrification of working-class neighbourhoods in many cities, but it also cements the "dislocation of industrial production from traditional centers of light manufacturing and it[s] apparent replacement by higher-level, 'post-industrial' activity"[xix]. It is important to understand that the demand of the living market is even set to change in dominant aesthetic modes, which also responds to economic changes within the middle class. "Gains in the social position of the arts and the financial viability of art work, as well as an increase in the availability of middle-class investment capital, made it possible to capture the suppl[ies] […] that a new market required"[xx]. This included the manifestation of galleries, museums and other cultural institutions in the new so-called 'artists' districts'.

The paradoxical results from this alignment of the art world's interests with those of the city government and the real-estate industry are quite evident. This, however, has two outcomes. In the short-term, artists' proximity to markets for their services eases their insertion into the urban economy. In general, the presence of cultural markets validates and valorises business investment in major corporate cities[xxi]. The presence of arts in a city is attractive for purely symbolic reasons as art markets and state support for the arts indicates a connection with motifs of power:

> The arts may be small in economic terms […], but the arts 'industry' is one of our few growth industries […] The concentration of the arts in New York is one of the attributes that makes it distinctive, and distinctive in a positive sense: the arts in New York as a magnet for the rest of the world[xxii].

Nevertheless, in a long-term, the artists' contribution to the downtown's cultural capital may raise housing prices so high that they can no longer afford to live there.

Some have fallen into the trap of deeming artists as the real victims of gentrification. An example of this is Craig Owens who states that, "Artists are not, of course, responsible for 'gentrification'; they are often the victims, as the closing of any number of the East Village galleries, forced out of the area by rents they helped to inflate, will sooner or later demonstrate"[xxiii]. Nevertheless, it is critical to acknowledge that although a new art scene and its main actors –and legitimators– might be oblivious to the workings of gentrification, they have, indeed, become enmeshed in its mechanism. And in fact, the "art journals, the mass media, galleries, established alternative spaces, and museums manipulate and exploit the neighbourhood, thereby serving as conduits for the dominant ideology that facilitates gentrification"[xxiv]. So, "to portray artists as the victims of gentrification," as Deutsche condemns, "is to mock plight of the neighborhood's real victims"[xxv]. Artists cannot be exempted from their own responsibility and they should acknowledge that they serve as channels for the dominant hegemony that initiates gentrification in the first place.

In addition to the economic impact of artists and galleries, the art world functions ideologically to exploit the neighbourhood for its 'bohemian or sensationalist' connotations while deflecting attention

away from underlying social, economic, and political processes. The search among artists for a way of life that does not pave over older neighbourhoods but infiltrates them with coffee shops, bohemian bars, and clothing shops, "is a sad echo of the tourists paradigm centering on the indigenous authenticity of the place they have colonized"[xxvi]. The attitudes that permit this exploitation are the same as those that allow the city and its affluent residents to remain indifferent to the fate of the displaced poor[xxvii].

3.1. *The Cultural Capital as Utility for Gentrification*

Gentrification was initially received as a revelation. However, it is important to understand that gentrification creates a matrix of accumulation and consumption of cultural expression and social control that changes the nature of the city.

> The area transformed in gentrification's penumbra is limited by strategies for capital accumulation on the part of the dominant social and economic institutions, and the related strategies of 'consumption sectors' that support internal redifferentiation of urban space[xxviii].

The ideology of gentrification often describes it as a process of spatial expansion, as a settlement on an urban "frontier". Nevertheless, what these changes in fact illustrate is a capital expansion. As Neil Smith points out, "…capital expansion has no new territory left to explore, so it redevelops, or internally redifferentiates, urban space"[xxix].

Furthermore, the beautification programmes of the cities –art and culture use for rebuilding neighbourhoods– do not lack an economic rationale; as a matter of fact, they are an aid to urban real estate markets, forms and degrees of government intervention, local politics and social forces[xxx]. Artists are complicit with capital in the realm of consumption; and in fact, they serve capital quite well. Zukin states, "The mutual validation and valorization of urban art and real estate markets indicates the importance of the cultural constitution of the higher social strata in an advanced service economy"[xxxi]. However, it is fundamental to clarify that even though artist and other 'cultural workers' provide an immaterial and flexible kind of labour, they are not *the* source of capital accumulation. It is inarguable that the rising value of the built environment depends on their pacification of the city, and art and culture are just an instrument for revitalisation strategies within the urban setting. Though, as Max Nathan remarks,

> Everywhere, culture and creativity improve the quality of life; iconic buildings and good public spaces can help places reposition and rebrand. But most cities –large and small –would be better off starting elsewhere: growing the economic base; sharpening skill, connectivity and access to markets: ensuring local people access new opportunities, and improving key public services…[xxxii].

The transformation of cities through the process of gentrification took at least an entire generation. It also required the concerted effort of city leaders. For example, in New York, Soho had proved that the transformation of old warehouses into valuable real estate could be accomplished by allowing the presence of artist to live and work in them. The Soho model became paradigmatic for other cities around the world. However, no matter how much art has been regarded in some cities as an economic motor, this remedy is not applicable everywhere and not every city has proved to be a magnet for the arts. So, the question should be to what extent art functions as utility for the capital growth and enhancement of a city? If the realm of art is not the best strategy for the growing economy of a city, then what is the real role of art in the urban terrain? And more importantly, how do these urban changes affect the production and consumption of art?

So far it has been discussed how gentrification has set up the ground for art's presence in the city. But it has been crucial to understand how this restructuring of the urban space has affected the art's production and consumption. There are two important factors that I would like to address in the next section: a) How gentrification aids the 'professionalization' and 'democratisation' of art; and b) how through this socio-spatial restructuring the ways of making art are also altered. In order to address these two issues, it is, first, necessary to comprehend that the rising value of art also enhances the value of related factors: the urban *forms* that grow up around it, the activity of *doing* it, and the status of *consuming* it[xxxiii].

3.2. The Artistic Mode of Production

After World War II, the support for the arts became a useful tool in the propaganda efforts of capitalist states. Art in the 20th and 21st Centuries has had a more directly 'capitalist' use. Art can be seen as a compliment to urban real estate development, and when it is set within the proper physical and institutional framework –the museum or the cultural centre –it can become a vehicle for its own

valorisation. Zukin describes the production of value and space itself as the Artistic Mode of Production (AMP). For Zukin, the urban forms that are created through the dominant class's accumulation strategy are the basis of AMP[xxxiv]. Far from being a response to aesthetics problems, the AMP in fact represents an attempt by large-scale investors in built environments to ride out and to control a particular investment climate. By this, the ability of art to enhance public spaces such as plazas, parks, and corporate headquarters was quickly recognised as a way to revitalise inner cities, which were beginning to collapse under the burden of increasing social problems. Thus, art in public spaces was seen as a means of reclaiming, improving and humanising the urban environment[xxxv]. Therefore, it can be said that the AMP originated in part as a response to certain contingencies that were developed through the process of gentrification. This is to say, as an introduction to the ideology of the so-called socially engaged art –but this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Integral to the AMP is the gradual transformation of the artist and the expansion of the 'artistic class'. During the '60s the definition of the *artist* expanded; there was a regularisation of the status of the artist. For the first time in history, cultural producers were employed as artists, which enabled them to make a living off a totally self-defined art[xxxvi]. The State played a crucial role in this transformation[xxxvii];

> From 1965 on, the number of art jobs in state-supported educational and cultural institutions multiplied enormously. Government grants for arts activities rose from nearly nothing to a million-dollar 'industry'. […] The state's contribution to artistic careers also took an indirect form through its support for higher education, which encouraged many more young people than before to go to college[xxxviii].

Soon artists were brought into the white-collar labour force; hence, they became so integrated into society's mainstream that they were practically 'indistinguishable' from other groups in the middle class. One should bear in mind that this progression not only altered the way *in which* art was perceived but also *to whom* it was addressed. Which eventually built a demand to make art an integral part of public spaces.

Governmental funding, grants and private sector money soon were commissioned for art programmes and the creation of cultural monuments symbolic of contemporary society. Therefore, in the '70s some artists and administrators began to differentiate between public art –a sculpture in a public space –and art in public spaces –focus on the location or space for the art. Accordingly, the government started to encourage proposals that "…integrated art into the site and that moved beyond the monumental steel object-off-the-pedestal to adopt any permanent media, including earthworks, environmental art, and nontraditional media such as artificial lights"[xxxix]. The site became a key element in public art; thus, site-specific art –as such art in public places began to be called– was commissioned and designed for a particular urban space, taking into account the physical and visual qualities of the site. It is important to understand that since its earliest formation, this kind of art focused on establishing an inextricable and indivisible relationship between the work and its place, and it demanded the physical presence of the viewer for its completion.

Accordingly, "a new breed of arts administrator emerged to smooth the way between artists […] and the various representatives of the public sector"[xl]. Collaboration with other professionals, researchers, and consultative interaction with civic groups and communities became more common, and the teams of artists, architects, designers and administrators were formed. Consequently, during the '80s programmes that encouraged the exploration and development of new collaborative models within the field of art emerged.

There are two major facts to bear in mind here: first, that the programmes of beautification and cultural funding policies work as an integral part of the gentrification plan as previously seen; second, that these cultural schemes are funded by the private sector, and more importantly, the State, who obtains economic resources from taxation. As established before, the presence of art in public spaces reinforces this occurrence. But, what happens when there is an economic crisis and there are other more relevant issues, rather than the embellishment of the city, that need to be addressed? And what happens when the presence of art in public spaces only favours the interests of the elite sectors?

3.3. From Public Decoration to Social Amelioration

It is critical to emphasise that the model of public art, which heavily relied on a new architectural or social critique, had prompted increasing incomprehension and annoyance from the wide public. At the same time, the economic downturn –that affected much of the world in the late '80s and early '90s –expanded urban troubles[xli], which only enhanced a new distrust to public art and its funding sources[xlii]. "As the conventions of artistic expression continued to come into conflict with public opinion, the presentation of an artist's plans to community groups became the rigueur"[xliii]. Likewise, the growing influence of this new kind of public art or 'new genre public art', as Lacy named it, influenced the changing funding mandates of the major private foundations, for whom, given the social upheaval of the moment, 'participation', 'creativity' and 'community' became buzzwords. After experiencing a

transformation of the '60s discourse of participation, creativity and community, Bishop states, "…these terms no longer occupy a subversive, anti-authoritarian force, but have become a cornerstone of post-industrial economic policy"[xliv].

The presence of arts within the city goes beyond an embellishment agenda, and in fact, it has utterly political motives. In order to justify the public spending on the arts, by the beginning of the '90s the question asked was: what can the arts do for society? The answers included increasing employability, minimising crime, fostering aspiration. Thus, cultural policies were revised, and the guidelines for funding applications called for a *demonstration* of artistic projects that include planning activities "to educate and prepare the community" and "plans for community involvement, preparation, and dialogue"[xlv]. Grant Kester accurately indicates that this 'new public art' draws from the history of progressive urban reform. This is clear in new public art's concern with ameliorating problems typically associated with the city, as well as in the relationship that the artist takes up with various constituencies and communities[xlvi].

Parallel to this, the cultural producers started realising that what architecture, design and/or public art have in common was their social function and content. Artists conceived the site not only in the physical and spatial terms but also as a *cultural* framework. As this kind of artistic practice matured, artists shifted their attention to the historical, ecological and social aspects of the site; in pursuit of a more intense engagement with the outside world and everyday life. In Bishop's words, "artists devising social situations as dematerialised, anti-marketed, politically engaged project to carry on the avant-garde call to make art a more vital part of life"[xlvii]. Thus, it seems indisputable to say –in terms of the role of art sited in public space– that 'public art' turned to a service/experience model in the social sphere.

Art expanded its concern beyond the aesthetic specificities and visual appearances, and instead concentrated on offering a platform for dialogue between audience, artists and the public sphere. These social artistic projects unfold through a process of performative interaction with particular publics or communities. Its main concern was –and still is– beyond focusing on aesthetic specificities and visual appearance, and instead is focused on offering a platform for *"…artistic participation as a prefiguration of a direct democratic participation*"[xlviii]. Occasionally, these projects evoke various forms of public institutions, such as, libraries, schools, laboratories, archives, etc.

4. The Instrumentalization of Art

The production and reception of art –from 'public art' to 'new genre public art' to 'socially engaged art' – was reshaped within a political logic in which audience figures and marketing statistics became essential to securing public funding. The presence of a diversified audience in these works leads us back to issues of power, privilege, and the authority to claim the territory of representation. Inevitably then, the possible 'uses' of the artwork in the social context were reconsidered. With these institutional ideological and urban shifts the artist was positioned as a kind of social service provider. Soon artists were inscribed to the agendas and ideologies of sponsors whose aim was to utilise art for social engineering. As Kester points out,

> In some cases support is being given to artists' projects by organizations or funders whose primary interest is no longer in the arts but in social programs. […] [Given the fact that certain] state-sponsored, social programs have failed and the 'new approaches' are necessary. Thus, artists are being placed in the position of providing alternatives to existing forms of social policy. To the extent that artists (consciously or not) subscribe to a set of ideas about poverty or disempowerment … [xlix]

So, it can be established that the changes in the system of arts patronage from the '90s affected the production of art, which accordingly changed from being a construction of objects to be consumed by a passive bystander, to be an art of action, interfacing with reality, and taking steps to repair the social bond[l].

One should notice that this exploration of socio-politics in art whereby people constitute the main artistic medium and material, has been widely to criticised and accused of being more interested in creating a socially rewarding participatory experience than exploring or creating a particular aesthetic. However, there is a twofold problem with the valorisation of these artistic manifestations. First, its resemblance with social movements is quite substantial; especially because some artists tend to treat aesthetic and art-historical concerns as secondary issues. For some, the problem is that, "these perceived social achievements are never compared with actual (and innovative) social projects taking place *outside* the realm of art; they remain on the level of an emblematic ideal, and derive their critical value in opposition to more traditional, expressive and object-based modes of artistic practice"[li]. Whilst for others, the danger of inflated political claims being made for art as to compensate or even substitute for governmental and non-profit agencies who seek to inject the legitimacy of egalitarian and civic

participation[lii]. Regrettably, this yields a socially engaged art that was –and still is– subsumed to the demands of cultural and creative industries, subsidised by the State, market, and private corporations.

The post-industrial economy increasingly became a cultural economy[liii]. That is to say, culture has become a resource, and art has become something useful to fulfil the interests of others[liv]. Additionally, the art's markets and modes of marketing changed, as did the professional and political attitudes towards it. Art became animated by biennials, magazines and art fairs; and the world of contemporary art and its circulation soon became a privileged field of politicization and even an integral part of socio-political action[lv]. Therefore, art was fused with "…political sensibilities that exploit art's diplomatic potential, as these political sensibilities consider culture to be a form of social capital, a resource"[lvi]. Those who have the power to control what is heard and seen, what is produced and where it is displayed, thus, do not need to employ censorship. Under these conditions, how can art create critically antagonistic responses that will in fact be artistically innovative and socially productive?

In the opening statements of this paper the question of whether contemporary art *is* neoliberalism in its most purified form was asked. One could envisage the art world as a microcosm of the current world order. Large institutions –museums, galleries, biennials and, to an extent, educational mechanisms– often function in much the same way as enterprises. So, if one ponders that with neoliberalism society started questioning the forms of life, and that art world is indeed a microcosm of the world order, it is not surprising that socially engaged art became the mainstream of contemporary art. There is a lot of money in this game, for it is in many cases financed by monarchs and oligarchs who have discovered in the cultural field a new, advanced form of social capital. Institutions, just like big companies want to invest in something that will give them any kind of profit. Hence, if civic participation and egalitarianism provide social capital, the normal reaction would be to sponsor and support those artistic projects that show some kind of community involvement. As Brian Holmes bluntly puts it "in the age of corporate patronage and the neoliberal state, art is becoming a field of extreme hypocrisy"[lvii]; and socially engaged art is the perfect conduit to 'justify' gentrification. So, if artists are caught up in the new forces of neoliberalism, have they indeed forsaken their role as society's insubordinate critics?

Biographic Note

Ana Varas is a PhD candidate in Art History and Theory at University of Essex, UK, where she is currently working on a thesis about the effectiveness of Socially Engaged Art (SEA). Her project seeks to provide a conceptualization of SEA by probing the multiple valences and implications of the concept of gentrification, broadly defined as a process of urban changes. Her research calls into question the (mis)assumptions that underpin our understanding of gentrification: above all as the process of spatial and social differentiation, capital expansion, and social cleansing where artists are the victims. Additionally, it aims to understand the connections between gentrified spaces and other social, spatial, and artistic developments, many of which converge around ideas of postcolonialism and globalisation. She completed my MA in History and Philosophy of Art with Distinction at University of Kent, UK (2013-14) and my BA in Art History at Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico (2006-2012).
Her research focuses on the different levels in which socially engaged art operates in relation to aesthetic imperatives, institutional demands, socioeconomic ramifications it develops, its social efficacy and its reception/perception. I am interested in analysing five aspects within artistic practices: spatiality, temporality, materiality, social/communal relief, and institutional entanglement.

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[i] Rosler states that “Many artists have gone to school in the hopes of gaining marketability and often thereby incurring a heavy debt burden. Schools have gradually become the managers and shapers of artistic development; on the one hand, they prepare artists to enter the art market, and on the other, through departments of ‘public practice’ and ‘social practice’,they mold the disciplinary restrictions of an art that might be regarded as a minor government apparatus. These programs are secular seminaries of ‘new forms of activism, community-based practice, alternative organization, and participatory leadership in the arts” that explore “the myriad links between art and society to examine the ways in which artists … engage with civic issues, articulate their voice in the public realm.’ See more in Martha Rosler, “The Artistic Mode of Revolution: From Gentrification to Occupation | E-Flux,” accessed May 6, 2016, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-artistic-mode-of-revolution-from-gentrification-to-occupation/#_ftn26.
[ii] Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Urban Affairs (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 177.
[iii] Deutsche predicted for gentrification cannot be defined unless one isolates the economic forces that are destroying, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, city by city, the traditional labouring classes. See more in Rosalyn Deutsche and Cara Gendel Ryan, “The Fine Art of Gentrification,” *October* 31 (1984): 94, doi:10.2307/778358.
[iv] Sharon Zukin, “Gentrification: Culture and Capital in the Urban Core,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 13 (1987): 130.
[v] Zukin, “Gentrification,” 131.
[vi] In many countries the viability of ‘housing projects’ or ‘council housing’ in improving the lives of the urban poor has been increasingly challenged, and it is an article of neoliberal faith that such projects cannot succeed. In Britain for example, the Thatcherist solution was to sell the flats to residents, with the rationale of making the poor into stakeholders. See more in Martha Rosler, Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part II | E-Flux,” no. 23 (2011), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-ii/.
[vii] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 1.
[viii] White-collar labour force refers to a person who performs professional, managerial or administrative work performed in an office or administrative setting. Deutsche and Ryan, “The Fine Art of Gentrification,” 96.
[ix] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 5.
[x] Zukin, “Gentrification,” 133.
[xi] Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics*, Graham Foundation/MIT Press Series in Contemporary Architectural Discourse (Chicago, Ill: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies inthe Fine Arts, 1996), 14.
[xii] Smith and LeFaivre, “A Class Analysis of Gentrification” in J. John Palen and Bruce London, *Gentrification, Displacement, and Neighborhood Revitalization* (SUNY Press, 1984), 54.
[xiii] Smith and LeFaivre, “A Class Analysis,” 46.
[xiv] Portes & Waltoon 1981, Sassen-Koob 1984 in Zukin, “Gentrification,” 139.
[xv] Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part I | E-Flux,” no. 21 (2010), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-i/.
[xvi] Her analysis focus on the urban homesteading movement in New York, however, for the purposes of comprehending the relation art has with the process of gentrification in the Western cities in general; Zukin’s insight is extremely valuable.
[xvii] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 117.
[xviii] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 190–91.
[xix] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 173.
[xx] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 174.
[xxi] Zukin, “Gentrification,” 143.
[xxii] “The Arts: New York’s Best Exporte Industry”, *New York Affairs* 5, no.2 (1978):51. Quoted in Zukin, *Loft Living*, 112.
[xxiii] Craig Owens, “Commentary: The Problem with Puerilism”, *Art in America,* vol.72, no.6 (Summer 1984), pp.163 in Deutsche and Ryan, “The Fine Art of Gentrification,” 104.
[xxiv] Owens, “Commentary,” 105.
[xxv] Owens, “Commentary,” 104.
[xxvi] Martha Rosler, “Culture Class: Art, Creativity, Urbanism, Part III” *E-Flux Journal* no. 25 (2011). Accessed May 23,2016. http://www.e-flux.com/journal/culture-class-art-creativity-urbanism-part-iii/.
[xxvii] Deutsche and Ryan, “The Fine Art of Gentrification,” 104–5.
[xxviii] Zukin, “Gentrification,” 142.
[xxix] Neil Smith, *Gentrification, the frontier, and the restructuring of urban space* (Smith & Williams, 1986):15-34. Quoted in Smith, *Gentrification*, 141.

[xxx] There are at least three clear-cut benefits that private enterprises and state leaders expect in exchange for their support of art activities: the creation of service-sector jobs, political donations, and tax deductions.
[xxxi] Zukin, "Gentrification," 130.
[xxxii] Max Nathan, "The Wrong Stuff? Creative Class Theory and Economic Performance in UK Cities," MPRA Paper, (October 1, 2007), https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/29486/.
[xxxiii] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 177.
[xxxiv] A perfect example for this is when a small number of industrialists began to buy the work of Impressionist artists, as they had a dual conception of modern art as both investment and means of socializing. Zukin, *Loft Living*, 177.
[xxxv] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 21.
[xxxvi] In modern cities artists have become the role model for what Andrew Ross calls the 'No Collar' workforce: artists provide a useful model for precarious labour since they have a work mentality based on flexibility (working project by project as a freelancer, rather than nine to five) and honed by the idea of sacrificial labour (i.e. being predisposed to accept less money in return for relative freedom) . See more in Andrew Ross, *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004), 258.
[xxxvii] As I mentioned before, Zukin's analysis is based on New York City, however, her theory is applicable to a large number of North American and Western European cities. So when I refer to the State and the government, I am referring to a ruling political entity.
[xxxviii] Zukin, *Loft Living*, 96–97.
[xxxix] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 23.
[xl] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 22.

[xli] Great economic shifts bring massive tensions and disruptions. The shift from an agricultural to a capitalist industrial economy generated incredible disruption and social turmoil –huge flows of people from farm to the factory, from the rural hinterlands to great urban centres and brought social problems ranging from workplace injury to crime, congestion and disease. Adapting to the industrial age took long decades, with lots of give and take, lots of experiments that did not work. But after the New Deal and World War II era, a broader industrial society was built; a society that was able to support and harness the tremendous productive capacity of the great industrial engine. However, as Florida states, the real challenge in the post-industrial era is to complete the system we have given rise to –to build the broader creative society that can harness the creative energy we have unleashed and mitigate the turmoil and disruption that it generates. See more in Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: Revisited*, 10th anniversary ed. (New York, N.Y: Basic Books, 2012).

[xlii] An example of this is the case of Richard Serra's abstract, minimalist, site-specific piece *Title Arc* (1981); which due to the demands of the office workers had to be removed from its site in a civic plaza in front of a lower Manhattan federal courthouse. See more in *Tilted Arc Controversy: Dangerous Precedent?*(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Gregg M. Horowitz, "Public Art/Public Space: The Spectacle of the *Tilted Arc* Controversy," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, 1 (Winter 1996); *The Destruction of Tilted Arc: Documents*, eds. Martha Buskirk and Clara Weyergraf-Serra,(Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1990). Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 24.

[xliii] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 24.

[xliv] Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 14.

[xlv] Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 24.

[xlvi] Grant H. Kester, "Aesthetic Evangelists: Conversion and Empowerment in Contemporary Community Art," *Afterimage*, no. 22 (1995), http://www.academia.edu/download/30948821/Aesthetic_Evangelists.pdf.

[xlvii] Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 13.

[xlviii] Yates McKee, "Occupy and the End of Socially Engaged Art | E-Flux," no. 72 (2016), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/occupy-and-the-end-of-socially-engaged-art-an-historical-snapshot/#_ftnref9.

[xlix] Kester, "Afterimage 22 (January 1995) Aesthetic Evangelists."

[l] Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 11.

[li] Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 19.

[lii] Claire Bishop, "Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?" in Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (New York: Creative Time, 2012): 34-55.

[liii] See more in Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism by Fredric Jameson* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991); Fredric Jameson, *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998.*

[liv] George Yudice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[lv] See more in Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts ; London, England: MIT Press, 2012).

[lvi] Irmgard Emmelhaiz, "Art and the Cultural Turn: Farewell to Committed, Autonomous Art? | E-Flux." *E-Flux Journal*, no. 42 (February 2013). Accessed January 13, 2016, doi:17:29:35 http://www.e-flux.com/journal/art-and-the-cultural-turn-farewell-to-committed-autonomous-art/.

[lvii] Brian Holmes, "Liar's Poker." in *Springerin*, no. 1/03: Picture Politics. Accessed June 5, 2016. http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1276&lang=en.