

The City is Unwritten

Urban experiences and thoughts seen through Park
Fiction

*But advisable it is, to confront the mythical powers
with trickery and recklessness.*

Walter Benjamin

Barricade Days

1987 - 1988 was a decisive year in this city, Hamburg, and in my life. Winter 87 has gone down into local history as the barricade days. They saw me as a person at the fringe, supporting (like many did) the heroic squat in Hafenstrasse, but far away from the frontline. Half of St. Pauli, the area around the squatted houses, had been surrounded by the biggest amount of barricades this city has seen since world war two. The police could not enter the territory, and Radio Hafenstrasse was transmitting it's pirate programme 24 hours a day. The clever tactics of the squatters had managed to split the city, useless police brutality had become too obvious to be ignored and moved even conservative citizens to side with the rebels. Hafenstrasse struggle was breaking news, and fears, the city would be on fire, would the police try to clear the area and demolish the houses, were not exaggerated. St. Pauli was unified against the government, squatters from all over europe stayed in the houses and in St. Pauli church. A service to guide school kids through the barricades had been set up. The best bands in town were playing each night on an improvised stage before the houses (with electricity stolen or supplied by neighbours) and in every advertising agency a "Hafenstrasse viel gut!" poster was the cool thing to have. A temporary autonomous zone had come to existence before it would be called

that, a piece of land had been shot out of the map of state control. 14 days, that left a deep impression on everybody who had been part of the experience, 14 days that inspired Hamburg's left to start projects like one of the best free radio stations, FSK (still playing hard today), 14 days that left a network and a sense of what's possible in the community, St.Pauli, 14 days that left a deeply impressed me. The year also marks a turning point - it was the last big confrontational militant movement in town for years. Barricade days were an event, that, in it's scale, in it's shocking consequence and in it's surprising radicality, was not repeatable. Afterwards, the city's government decided not to let anything like it happen again, ever. Their negotiating skills were growing, their repressive instruments were adapted, and more powerfull but softlooking tools of integration developed. It looks like a whole era of leftist activism, a practice of resistance and a way of thinking had come to a dead point.

The same year, silently, a new mode of operating appeared, a shift towards a different way of moving. Probably it was to be felt and practiced first in cultural fields not recognised as political at all. What started then, feels like a turning point, a change of paradigm, and we are in the midst of it now. For me, it started with music, and that came from Chicago and Detroit. Acid House The first Hamburg Acid club was the Shag in a derelict sixties complex on Reeperbahn, Front, a predominantly gay disco in an industrial part of town where Boris Dlugosch was spinning records. Then, Opera House opened on thursdays in Grünspan, a forgotten rock disco in Große Freiheit from the early seventies, parallel to the more dark and shabby Kombinat that later moved from it's home in a basement under the Meanie Bar into the former strip joint Madame Pompadour, to become Unit. More than probably any music style before, House, for a decisive moment in time, was more about mixing (so

basically: playing records) than about bands. When punks questioned the band-audience relation by storming the stage, house was more about people dancing, and not about people being the audience in the first place. Consumers became producers, irreversably. What also started with Acid, was the conscious idea and ability to create situations - Ambient carries that quality in it's name, chill out zones sprung up everywhere, and with Rave, the temporary and unauthorised use of empty buildings, factories, hangars, farmland, banks - became a mass activity. Maybe it was the use of m.d.m.a., that gave everybody the sudden ability to trust each other, and to see oneself as a person or part of a collective, that has the power to construct situations, now, and in a smooth way. Suddenly, the urban everyday life was the most exciting starting point. An adventurous spirit drove us into the strangest of places, made us produce encounters and surprising events in the most unlikely spaces. The city was full of possibilities. We could read the most secret of signs, understand the codes and were ready to redefine them lighthandedly. We were able to see the disco as a place celebrating the city by intensifieing and transforming that, which goes on your nerves in the day: if a city is noisy, polluted and crowded, a good disco is a joyfull place because it is louder, stinking of cigarette smoke, perfume and sweat, and too full. Suddenly it was possible to see a McDonald's not anymore only as a symbol for "American Cultural Imperialism", but as a pseudo neutral backdrop, that would allow us to analyse the spatial practices inside those fastfood restaurants, a foil, that made us see the german suburban leisure time, for instance, or the fashion preferences of the lower middle class in Munich, or the everyday life of families more clearly. On the funfair, we would see the automatic machines that take fotos of you during your ride, not anymore as a sad commercial sign of alienation, but as a sick but reflexive tool, a popular Dan Graham. And an aquarium in a thai restaurant was definitely not a sign of petite bourgeois squareness, as new left theory would

still have it, but a miniature garden, a promise of happiness, a window into imaginary worlds. Beatbombs One of the starting points of Park Fiction was definitely rooted in this changed point of view, in this new found ability to redefine spaces. A rave called Park Fiction in St.Pauli - beatbombs on Berlin halfironically renamed all the little pieces of land left at the harbourwall, according to their every day use, (like:Hafentreppenhundepark (Harbour Staircase Dog Park) for the space between the squatted houses roamed by a gang of rotten punk-dogs, or the Bierdosenpark (Beer Can Park) for a slope usually occupied by heavy drinkers looking like the last unshaven survivors of the confederate army) and transformed those "parks" into different "areas" for that rave, - and the name for the project was born. Another root or better: rhizome shoot, was the neighbourhood network and experience left from the Hafentstrasse struggles. With Park Fiction, two lines of operating have met. After eighties style militant activism had lost it's momentum, after the squat had been legalised, after the former fighters had retreated into their houses, after private had become private again, we had to find different ways, if we wanted to open public space as a field of dispute. The project was successfull, because neighbours and people from the subcultures, a social cause and politics of desiring have teamed up, built platforms of cooperation and managed to link the everyday with the imaginary.

Privatised View - Socialised Shadow

Our neighbourhood is the poorest in western Germany in the 2nd most rich city in the European Union. So the situation is tense. More than 50% of the residents have no German passport. It is densely built; public space is rare and used heavily by tourism, cappucino addicts and the red light district. The city planned to obstruct the last view from this community over the river with a million heavy block of buildings at the harbour wall. The neighbourhood didn't want these

buildings; we wanted a public park instead. However, authorities had always ignored demands like this. In this location the demand was even more hopeless, because the Elbe shore, the harbour wall, is a place, where power likes to represent itself. When Park Fiction took off in 1995, the harbour wall started to be sold to New Media companies. So the project is located in a highly symbolic place. Things that might be tolerated in other places as interesting alternative flavours are automatically confronting power and the dominating ideology in this location. Every step you take is symbolic in this display situation. And the dominating ideology right now in city politics, is the tendency towards image policy - the Hamburg markets itself as the New Media Harbour City. Hamburger Schule Park Fiction works in a local network: neighbours, social institutions, the church, squatters, artists, shop- and cafe owners and together with the very strong Hamburg music scene around the Golden Pudel Klub (The Golden Poodles Club) located in a tiny old house right in the park, the government would have liked to demolish, too. The Pudel was founded by Schorsch Kamerun and Rocko Schamoni, musicians from a scene around the Die Goldenen Zitronen that had started in the eighties as fun punks, had played during the Hafenstrasse riots, had turned down many offers by major labels, and developed a space for poetry, artists and experimental bands. While techno became dumb and mainstream, these bands reinvestigated beat, teamed up with early german Hip Hop, founded an anti-fashist alliance called Wohlfahrtsausschuss, organised tours to Nazi-ridden places in Eastgermany, and developed a very refined, selfreflexive and ironic music style. Bands you might have heard about like Les Robespierres, Blumfeld, Die Sterne, Stella, Bernadette La Hengst, Knarf Rellöm, Sylvesterboy, or later the Absolute Beginners, Chicks on Speed or Lawrence, most probably had one of their first concerts, a job behind the turntables or the bar, in Pudel Club. The impact of the connection between Park Fiction and the Pudel can not be overestimated, as it opened a field of resonance in

the musical subcultures, that have a high sensibility for style and a sense for play with codes, that is so often missing in political groups and their supposedly objective analyses of conditions. And of course, bands attract a lot of people. The first year of demanding the park was very much carried by the network left over from the Hafenstrasse struggles, especially by social workers from the community center, GWA, the priests and by a very visionary headmistress of the local school. They had managed to negotiate with local politicians. In the back of these negotiations, the threat was still lingering, that the militant struggles might light up again, which the city wanted to avoid. But these classical ways of lobbying were about to lead into a dead end after a year, when I joined the group. Together we developed a new set of practices and new concepts, which were informed by a rereading of situationist texts and those of Henri Lefebvre, practices tested in the selforganised art scene of the early nineties, reflections about democratic art projects of the seventies, conceptual art and a dissatisfaction with the limits of art in public space and by the acidic experiences I described before. These concepts mark the transfer from demanding a park to Park Fiction. Production of Desires The key idea of Park Fiction is, to organise a parallel planning process and a collective production of desires for the park - without being commissioned by authorities to do so. We developed a parallel and approachable planning process for a real place, connecting arts and social movements, without going into the trap of taking the "legal" path of limited participation suggested by the bureaucratic system. The planning process was supplemented by a program we called Infotainment, lectures on Parks & Politics, parks and their political and ideological backgrounds; "art and politics making each other more clever" (Margit Czenki). Political groups on the left as well as the rulers usually underestimate art - they don't take it seriously. As sad as this is sometimes, it can also be a benefit. We started the collective production of

desires, made lectures and park related exhibitions in all shop windows, in schools, the church and so on, and thus also created a little parallel knowledge universe. Activities anticipating the park were held on the streets and the slope of land, open-air cinema, agit-prop slide shows and raves. Shortly after we had started, Cathy Skene and me were invited by the cultural board (who didn't know about Park Fiction at that time), to develop an art in public space project. We thought for a week, and then decided, that we didn't want to drop a sculpture, but we suggested to do Park Fiction instead. So the park was already a real thing on many levels - in the community, in the hip&trendy music scene and on a national level in the art-scene, before we approached the state with demands. This constituent way of working, of organising a parallel planning process, is of course challenging the dominating system of urban planning. When the politicians entered the scene, they found themselves in a complex field, where they had difficulties to move. For a short moment in time, we had made the rules of the game, had a complex, lively idea of what we were doing, firm ground under our feet - and they were in the stupid position, and looking boring and just like what they are: people who just block things. Which they did: while the cultural board had agreed to finance Park Fiction in early '96, the Senator for urban development stopped it as soon as he heard about the project later in the year. In winter, we decided to take more militant action, to put some pressure on the authorities. Things developed differently, though. Harbour Hospital The city decided to demolish the very popular Harbour Hospital, only half a mile away from the park. After the government had cleared the first wing of the hospital, to their surprise, the empty building was squatted by activists. The squatters were strongly supported in the neighbourhood, there were weekly demonstrations, and for the first time ever, even a strike in the red light district during those demonstrations. The movement was getting out of hand, '97 was an election year, and suddenly the government was ready to

negotiate about the hospital and all the other problems in St.Pauli. Also for the park, a round table was installed, with us from the neighbourhood on one side, and the authorities on the other. Round tables are a dangerous thing, as their name suggest an equal power balance, that conceals the unequal status of the participants. Also, speaking with bureaucrats means to half-accept their, the dominant way, of thinking and negotiating. However, it had become unavoidable, and we managed to agree about the space, and that the planning process would be organised by Park Fiction. As a sign of trust, we demanded that the budget for the project, blocked by the Senator for urban development, would be transferred to our bank account before the elections. So it happened and we could start. Devices We developed tools: How do you make planning accessible? We organised the planning process like a game, and gave out game-boards instead of leaflets, that show all the access points where you can get involved. We opened a planning container containing the "modeling clay office" or "plasticine office", a telephone hotline for people who get inspired late a night, a garden library and the archive of desires. Added to this was the Action Kit - a mobile planning office with questionnaires, maps, dough, a dictaphone, an unfoldable harbour panorama, and an instant camera to capture ideas. We employed pseudo-sociological instruments, quoting and recycling means from a deeply social-democratic era, refering to the betrayed promises of the past. The difference to a social worker's way of working, however, is in our work concept - integrating us, as artists (or designers, programmers, researchers or shopowners) in a rhizomatic way with our own ideas and desires into an open process. But we did not use these tools in an objective way, we took sides from the beginning. As normally participation is only ever allowed in situations where it doesn't hurt anybody, and where it doesn't question the frame fixed by authorities, an open process has to be protected against state influences. With all our tools and many publications, we played around with forms, that power, corporations

or mainstream media used - to relate our small project with the real existing wealth in society. The planning container was painted in the colours of the "Info Box" that had "mediated" the biggest corporate building site in germany ever, on Potsdamer Platz. Potsdamer Platz is a model for a new authoritarianism in urban planning, with even the most rudimentary democratic possibilities to influence the planning process being excluded. As a substitute for this objective exclusion, the developers constructed the Info Box, filled with 3D animations and all kinds of participatory games. Our container, in contrast, was filled with ideas of what a city could be, and offered manifold possibilities to influence the planning process directly. The New Front About all the ideas we decided in two community conferences, in 1998. As we didn't want the ideas to become neutralized by long discussions, by an "alternative consensus", we decided democratically only about general functions of the park and picked favourite designs. After this decision, the design is further developed by the individual or group who invented it, in a radically subjective way. The park will consist of different "islands" with different functions, designed by different people, some of those you can see printed here. If subjectivity is the new front of capitalism, then artistic practices get, potentially, more power. At the same time, artistic practices carry the potential for autonomy, potentials of resistance and unwieldyness. Park Fiction moved into this field, by claiming public space for non-commercial productions of desires from the neighbourhood. This move is related to the idea of the immaterial worker, as it was developed by Negri and Hardt, and to the idea, that creative productivity is not the domain of the artists alone anymore, but is becoming a generalised ability. But there is a flipside to this development, that is related to the thought about image-cities I mentioned earlier. This flipside hit down hard on us, when an investor bought a building underneath a part of the park, the Kasematten, in 2001. whoownsthecity The investor made himself known in the community by

chopping off trees in front of the houses in Hafenstrasse. A month later, parts of the park and the Kasematten were suddenly surrounded by fences, and guarded by security men. Shortly after, a glass-aluminium construction came up in front of the Kasematten, and we found out, what kind of an event was planned there: a MediaNight was to happen, paid for by the government, as a special event to accompany the National New Media Congress "Hamburger Dialog". The events caught us at a time, when only very few members were active with Park Fiction. The headmistress had left the school, the priests were involved with other things. Events in the park had been organised more by people from the Buttclub, a discussion club founded by musicians and artists, in cooperation with antiracist groups. Those of us left, protested against the use of Park Fiction territory by an investor and analyzed the situation in a flyer called That's Gentrification. It had quite an effect and spread on it's own. Support came from sides we didn't expect - first from the new generation of electro musicians from Pudel Klub, who understood the events most clearly as a threat to the last remaining free subcultural and cheap spaces left in this town, and who were especially angry about the fact, that some of the DJ's playing MediaNight would otherwise spin records in the same clubs with them. Then, support came from Rote Flora, the squatted autonomous cultural center in the north of St. Pauli, which the city had sold to the same investor. And, late but heavily, from the former squatters in Hafenstrasse. After our flyer, someone created a witty fake letter, that kicked off things. In it, the "City Development Company" (STEG), invited everybody in the neighbourhood to mingle with the New Media people with a glass of champagne, during MediaNight. Of course, STEG denied publicly to have written that invitation, and this denial was printed in all newspapers. The day before the MediaNight was to happen, Schorsch and Rocko from Pudel quickly declared themselves as "Official Supporters" of the event, dressed up as investors wearing white construction helmets and shot

a fast video about the countless corporate buildings coming up along the river, dropping all the words of the neoliberal newspeak (win-win-situation, subcultural ambience, private-public partnership etc.). We planned an information stand, and an open air screening of Margit's movie "Park Fiction - desire will leave home and take to the streets". The next morning I found an anonymous female voice on my answering machine, threatening me, I "would have no chance in the art world anymore" (The investors wife was a not so known designer-cum-artist). Already in the afternoon hundreds of police blocked the whole area around the Kasematten, not letting people into their houses anymore. A café had to close, because customers were not let in. As people started to protest against this, they were hit up. Policemen trampled on our screening canvas. Later people threw money at the politicians, investors and shocked new media people coming to the party. Schorsch and Rocko's video was being shown on a giant screen outside Pudel Club, and on the other side the Park Fiction Film was screened over the heads of the police lines, from one house to the neighbouring house. After the events, we formed a shortlived but effective group called wemgehoertdiestadt (whoownsthecity), that made a very well recieved press conference, analyzing the events and the function of subcultures and artists in run down areas before they get gentrified. Later that group organized a re-appropriation event of the territory. The investor got bad press and never tried to do another event in the location till today. But still in spring 2004, the Park Fiction area on the Kasematten is fenced in... betrayed promises When we were invited to participate in Documenta 11 (2002) we had a couple of tasks: first of all, political art projects in general and collaborative ones specifically, always seem to have to prove a) that they are formally more precise, inventive and complex than those of the alone working colleagues, and, b) that this has always been the case. The Park Fiction Installation is an attempt, to find a way, how a collective work, produced by a network from social

movements and artists, in an urban context, can be shown in an appropriate way in the museum like situation. We have developed a solution, that allows people who are neither familiar with the project, nor with the context it is located in, to find an easy entry into the complexities of the work. It also allows in depth research, all designs, every flyer and was used by many visitors for hours. On a second level, the Park Fiction Installation speaks about the history of utopian projects. There are references to the early revolutionary artistic experiments in the Soviet Union, and to the betrayed promises for a democratic society and education-for-all from the late sixties. We were looking for forms, how to present materials of a different nature, like drawings, posters, flyers, in a horizontal way, and how to avoid european museal forms of hanging. In this way, the installation is intended as a precise intervention into the discourse about how projects, that stand for a change of paradigm in the art practice, can relate to the museum. Flying Carpet Finally, after 9 years, the park starts to be realised. Two elements have been opened in September 2003: the Palm Tree Island or Tea Garden, and the Flying Carpet. As summer 2003 was the hottest since weather has been measured, people have used it heavily, and a lot of nice things happen in the Park, that we didn't plan at all! For instance, whenever the sun is shining, at five in the afternoon, some 15 to 30 three-year-olds enter the park, and play on the flying carpet - an age group, we didn't think about at all, because you wouldn't have seen them in public space in St. Pauli before the park was built... 9 years is however too long a time for such a small project! Due to the long process and the close co-operation with authorities in the realisation phase, key ideas of the project have been damaged, forgotten and corrupted. It is not sure, if significant parts of the design will be realised at all: the Pirate Fountain showing translucent images of Anne Bonny and Mary Read, glowing blood red and poison green at night, is not financed yet, and one of the most popular designs, the Strawberryshaped Treehouse, has

fallen out of the plan completely, as of now. For us, it is not sure at the point of writing this, if we can go on cooperating with the authorities. Under the condition that central elements will be built, and the idea of linking the urban everyday with the imaginary, will be visible in the design of the park, we can do so. If the integrity of the project is being corrupted and designs are boiled down to the common level of uninspired urban planning you see on every corner, we will however have to cancel the cooperation with a bang. Unlikely Encounters Independently from these considerations and dependencies, we found it necessary to open the horizon again. As a first step of a possible Institute for Independent Urbanism we organised an international congress in summer 2003, Park Fiction presents: Unlikely Encounters in Urban Space. We exhibited the Documenta 11 Installation on the street directly on Reeperbahn, between translucent sails, guides from the community gave tours through the exhibition and to the park, and the congress happened in the disco next door, in Hafenstrasse, in the church, in the Buttclub, in the community center, in the harbour city, and on a boat on the river. The idea for the imaginary institute is, to push the urban discourse forward, that still is not seen as an own line of thinking, and can not be reduced to urban planning. In contrast to this, we see the urban is a different category all together, a set of practices and a way of thinking, opposed to the political, the state, not identical with the democratic, and neither a unified artistic vision. The city is an accumulation of differences and the unexpected can linger behind every corner. Put simply, a city worth living in, is a place of contradictions living next to each other, piled up, and potentially growing endlessly.

Megacities In the past, the most interesting and significant social or artistic developments happened in the biggest cities. What a strange situation, when most people don't even know the names of those cities! Even more significantly, these cities largely are built by people themselves. The vast majority of houses in Mexico City was constructed without

architects and urban planners, the same can be said about Delhi, Jakarta, Kolkatta, Dhaka, Buenos Aires. In contrast to these informal cities, north european cities look like they want to be nothing but threedimensional realisations of ideologies. To challenge this reduced view of the urban, was one of the starting points of Park Fiction, to open the "public space" for a production of desires, to relate the city to the imaginary, starting from experiences rooted in the urban everyday. In Hamburg-St.Pauli, our aim was, to stop the city's government from blocking the last existing view over the harbour by a row of houses, and to get a public park instead. At first glance this project might look exactly like the opposite to the struggles around the informal settlements in the cities of the south, where very often neighbourhoods are demolished because the government wants to replace them with public parks. But for us, the informal settlements have been the horizon of the possible cities of the future, the cities ignored by the architectural trade, the cities that solve the problems modernism failed to solve. More than that: these cities mark a change of paradigm from "city" being the business of specialist urban planners to becoming the product of the people who live in cities. These cities mark the end of the western paradigm of modernism. They mark the end of clearly separated specialized practices, a very deep and general rupture. Constituent Practices Park Fiction, like other recent collaborative projects, some of whom we could invite to the congress (Sarai Media Lab from Delhi, Borderhack and Maclovio Rojas from Tijuana, Ala Plastica from La Plata, Cantieri Isola from Milano, Ligna from Hamburg), can only be understood as an attempt to redefine artistic practice under post industrial conditions. These projects have developed a whole different set of practices and new agendas, that are becoming the leading currency of art practice. All other artistic practices are affected by them, and, although artists and the artmarket are still trying to ignore the current developments, artists are under pressure to relate to these new

practices that have just started, or they will look like impressionist painters did in the age of cubism. A change of paradigm is not necessarily a change for the better - there are new traps and powerstructures, but there is no way back either. Speaking looking back to my experience with Park Fiction, I'll try to line out briefly some essential concepts of these new practices. (I hope the connection to my Acid house considerations are visible): Constituent Practices ... constitute social relations without being commissioned by authorities to do so - avoiding to address the state directly, as much as avoiding trench battles with power. Constituent practices much rather study on streetlevel, connect arts and social movements, invent new games, engage in alternative forms of science, squat land, build new settlements and whole cities, redefine public space - and thus challenge dominating systems of urban planning, and reality description. This concept is connected to the idea of: Working Parallel or (as the EZLN said before Halloway): How to change the world without taking over power. Working parallel is very different from working autonomously in the old artistic sense - an autonomy restricted to the deliberate jail limited to the size of your canvas. Working parallel means to involve directly with reality and others, but gaining an autonomy to operate. Unlikely Encounters: Groups that develop tools, attitudes, courage, practices, programs, that make unlikely encounters, meetings and connections more likely, search for them, jump over cultural or class barriers, go where no one goes. They do not let their activities be reduced to symbolic action, mirroring, critique, negation, or analysis of their powerlessness nor do they muddle along in their assigned corner. Creating Platforms ... is already an overused word and concept, but artistic practices that want to be anything to talk about create platforms of exchange for others. The interesting products reflect complex views of different people, and are not linear. This has to do with the appearance of the "immaterial worker", who is by far not only the advertiser or the programmer, but as much the person who has a street

stall and has to develop all the affective and networking abilities a multinational company needs big departments for. The fact that you can't sell anything today without an image, that image has become a hard factor in the economy, actually gives back some power to those, who always had to create meaning and images without having power, the artists. However, the battle has started to control images and to block the channels of communication, because power has understood this already. By the way, exchange means exchange and not bottom down or education. Local Knowledge - Global Exchange: The private living space, the space of everyday life, everyday knowledge and everyday poetry - is the level most devalued, culturally, economically, and in political thinking. But here exactly is the very source of the dawning urban revolution. From here it is getting it's direction. How can the local knowledge develop a tension with the global forces? How can local knowledges and movements exchange with each other and challenge the global powers? Collective Production of Desires Collaborating with others does not mean to reduce yourself to become a social worker. It also doesn't mean to reduce artistic work to the administration of the creativity of others. Projects that fail to link with the imaginary, fail to be art. Artists, who do participatory projects in the art context, more often than not, just poeticise the dull status quo of the art system, and give up even the last utopian spark that still glows in a conventional painting. Open City Often we are told, that a project like Park Fiction was only possible, only "real", because everybody in the group lived in the community, and that it is not reproducible. Reproducible it is not, because situations change fast and everybody has to develop their own tools, devices and local intelligence, and groups have to develop their own rhythm. But I do not believe that you have to be local. Much rather I think, that cities are built by the imaginaries from outsiders, migrants and travellers, who have an idea, of what a particular place could be. Cities that fail to develop an openness to accomodate

the change coming from outside, are dead. Palmtrees in Hamburg prove: globalisation is irreversable. Zapatistas Shortly before we started, in 1994, the Zapatistas had said: we decided to stop preaching to people, and started to listen. As much as this sentence marks a dramatic rupture in revolutionary thinking and practice, today's projects mark a change for art, social practices, architecture or urban planning. In a time, when the crisis in Argentina looks like the model of the situation that will reach the centers of capital sooner or later, small projects and innocent acidic experiences like this are letters from an about-to-vanish-past to a very near future, where we will have to reinvent cities and our everyday life on a much bigger scale. It is small unlikely encounters like those on the congress, like those in this book, like the informal meetings in the park, that create a parallel universe, the pockets of parallel public spaces, that constitute the last international.

Christoph Schäfer, 2004