

Whose space is it? Interstices and urban commons. The city from an interdisciplinary perspective

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Marina Mironica

Reclaiming and losing the urban space. The case study of the Paintbrush Factory from Cluj, Romania

The Romanian cultural space from Cluj *The Paintbrush Factory (TPF)* has been finding itself in both temporal and physical interstice between 2009 and 2019. The *TPF* has been using the space of a former factory with the same name, with an important distinction - creating cultural and artistic products instead of paintbrushes. The residing conglomerate of organisations and artists defined themselves as an independent contemporary art centre and revolved a rich and meaningful activity with few financial resources and institutional support from the local government.

From the economic perspective, the *TPF* was a vacant space (Edensor, 2005), i.e. impossible to be exploited on the real estate market. Both the building's owner and the renting artists regarded the space of the *TPF* as a way to fill in the interstice created by the global financial crisis and the city's urban development regulations (by the owner) and the lack of better institutional frameworks (by the artists) (Dolores, 1995). Making use of this interstice in the economic profitability of the factory, its value as a physical space and as a brand increased due to the urban regulations changes and the contemporary art space fame (Lefebvre, 2007). The artistic activities that took place in the *TPF* may be also regarded as an interstice between the industrial character of the former factory and the current usage of the space as offices by the IT businesses. The interstice got filled temporarily by a producing art organisation, later evicted as the more profitable economic opportunities showed up (Zukin, 2010). The difference between these three stages is the role of the profit-making – decreasing before the *TPF* time, absent while it had activity there and rising again as economic and legal regulations made it possible. Even though the more profitable real estate market got the *TPF* evicted from the space, there are lessons to be learned from the commons-type of organisation and contemporary engaged art issued by the art centre in its ten years of activity (Bishop, 2012, Harvey, 2013).

The methodology applied for the research is qualitative and it's based on ethnographic observations and interviews I made in early 2019 (before the TPF eviction), but also policy and mass-media evidence on the subject. The theoretical framework is given by the critical theories on urban spaces and their production as profitable or socially and artistically enriching resources. There is also a strong input coming from inquiring the role of art in the modern capitalist society.

Short bibliography:

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Zukin, Sharon. (2010). *Naked City. The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Spaces*, Oxford University Press