

# MOBILIZING THE GRID. COLLABORATIVE CREATIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE, AND RADICAL ARTISTIC FLOWS FROM SOUTH TO NORTH. FROM “SANDINISTA” TO “ZAPATISTA” TO “OCCUPY WALL STREET”

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The article at hand explores the mobility of artistic ideas and practices within the Americas and analyzes collaborations between artists from the South and the North. In particular it looks at artistic collaborations between artists from Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico and the US that embrace radical aesthetics defining art as tool for social change. In which way these artists challenge and change the public sphere by practicing art within public space is the major research question guiding the analysis. Revisiting public space in the Americas also means to return to the foundational pattern of structuring space in the American hemisphere: the grid. The grid is considered the foundational architectural and urban structure to colonize and organize space in the Americas for purposes of spatial community-building and expansion. the grid contains tremendous power to shape the social in spatial terms. Functioning both horizontally and vertically, it supports the expansion of territory as well as the extension of architecture. This article reads the grid as a fundamental “American” structure—a “space of entanglement” that sets spatial limits to utopia but also provides open spaces between the metal, steel, and iron through which voices of the dispossessed can pass and through which new forms of participation, interaction, and community emerge.

Keywords: Grid, Public Art, Public Space, the Americas, Flows

## Introduction

When Diego Rivera collaborated with Thelma Johnson Streat on the mural *Pan-American Unity* in San Francisco, he did so against the background of a largely US-centered way of imagining the Americas. Rivera’s vision, however, attempted to mediate southern and northern visions of the hemisphere (Flores). The mural was presented at Treasure Island’s Golden Gate International Exposition in 1940. In its attempt at all-inclusiveness, *Pan-American Unity* negotiates the two utopian strands we encounter in the Americas and creates a more comprehensive imaginary of “America”. Outside Latin America, the term “America” frequently

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recalls images of US America only, but both the English and the Spanish term have historically functioned as signifiers in respect to notions of utopia and independence in particular. As Quijano and Wallerstein see it, the differences between South and North America lie within utopian conceptualizations: «North America's "utopia of social equality and liberty" and Latin America's indigenous "utopia of reciprocity, solidarity, and direct democracy"» (556-557). Rivera's yearning to conceive of a more inclusive modernity paved the way for his Pan-American visions overcoming a North-South divide in murals like the one in San Francisco. Susana Pliego Quijano asserts that Rivera explored new frontiers with which he associated hopes for human progress (59).

Rivera's work also stands paradigmatic not only for artistic collaboration but also for radical artistic flows from South to North in the Americas. Fernando Coronil observed that «carried along by winds of history that fan old flames and rouse new struggles, Latin America has become a diverse fabric of collective utopian dreams» linking these to the negotiation of temporalities. «The dialogue between past and future informing current struggle», he writes, has «challenged place-bound, parochial conceptions of universality and has generated global exchanges about reimagined worlds [that] now unite South and North» (Coronil 263-264). However, Coronil warns that these «new imaginings may be co-opted or crushed» (264), given the unequal power structures within which these phenomena have occurred.

The article at hand explores the mobility of artistic ideas and practices within the Americas and analyzes collaborations between artists from the Isthmus and the North. In particular, it looks at artistic collaborations and flows between artists from Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, and the US that embrace radical aesthetics defining art as a collaborative tool for social change. As John Urry suggests in a blueprint for the study of mobility, «the turn [to mobility studies] connects the analyses of different forms of travel, transport, and communication with the multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and various spaces» (6). Defining the mobility turn as "post-disciplinary", Urry not only refers to the transdisciplinary potential of a focus on mobility studies but also highlights «how all social entities, from a single household to large scale corporations, presuppose many different forms of actual and potential movement» (6). Mobility, as it is explored here, primarily focuses on the collaboration of artists from different national backgrounds that unite in site-specific projects with local as well as global outreach.

My approach is based on the assumption that «creative action is at all times relational. There is no form of human creativity that does not rely on direct, mediated, or implicit interaction or exchanges» (Glaveanu & al. 742). As the authors from the field of creativity theory further emphasize, «we collaborate,

compete and rely on others in the production of meaningful novelties» (743). Collaborative creativity underlies many practices in the social and artistic world. With reference to public art practice in the Americas, it appears important to note that collaborative art practice can always return to the utopian beginnings of imagining new social orders in the new world. This may also explain why creative collaboration has such strong standing in art practice from the Americas in general. In which way artists collaboratively challenge and change the public sphere by practicing art within public space is the major research interest of the analysis at hand. As I argue, revisiting collaborative creative action in public space also means to return to the foundational pattern of structuring space in the American hemisphere, the grid.

The grid is considered the foundational architectural and urban structure to colonize and organize space in the Americas for purposes of spatial community-building and expansion. As Richard Sennett puts it, «It seemed that only the most arbitrary imposition could tame American vastness: an endless, unbounded grid». The grid «seemed to render space meaningless» (57). Yet, the grid contains tremendous power to shape the social in spatial terms. Functioning both horizontally and vertically, it supports the expansion of territory as well as the extension of architecture. To a large extent the grid has shaped the spatial conquest of the Americas and dictated urban structures of hierarchy, division, and marginalization. The grid's presence as modern urban utopia ranges from South to North and East to West in the American hemisphere. As Olaf Kaltmeier puts it, the Latin American grid bears «a strategic role for the colonization of space» (5). The grid in the Americas has great significance in urban and architectural design, from the rectangular blocks that mark cities like Chicago and New York to their skyscrapers (Sennett 52). Both, in Latin America, where the grid had already a pre-Columbian history, and in North America, the grid became a tool for colonizing space and installing white hegemony (Kaltmeier 6-7). With reference to the US, Richard Sennett maintains that the grid serves as a force for expansion. While he refers to westward and imperialist expansion, I would add that it functions as a mobile and repeatable structure for horizontal and vertical expansion and as a framing device for collaborative creativity in public and virtual space. Access to virtual space certainly mirrors power divisions between the Global North and the Global South, but at the same time it facilitates stronger links, more rapid exchanges, and mutual participatory projects between the two. This links various public spaces in the net and turns the public sphere into a multilayered, multi-sited complex beyond local or national control. Public space has become fluid, multiply combated, and difficult to control by single actors (Bauman 2000).

In the new media age, the grid adopts a new virtual extension. As Zeynep Tufekci explains, «Now it appears that everything political is personal, since movement politics is experienced in environments that combine multiple contexts from the personal to the political, all homogenized because multiple audiences who might otherwise be separated by time and space are all on the same Facebook page» (272). Internet networks build new powerful grid structures linking multiple locations over long distance, controlling and channeling the flow of information, but also revealing gaps and fissures in their structures that open venues for acts of divergence, dissidence, and counterhegemonic discourse. At the same time, governments have noticed the challenge posed by digital technology practices. In response they have developed counter measures, tightening grid structures by blocks and censorship.

While in the nineteenth century the flows and mobilities within the grid happened mostly through railroads, telegraphs, and newspapers, in the twentieth century telephone, radio, cinema, and television took dominance. In the early twenty-first century, digital technology, new media, and networking with the help of computers, smartphones, and the internet shape the flows and censorship of information. The new media have underscored that the public sphere is not uniform, and public space is ever more multilayered (Tufekci 5-6). Hence, the coffeehouses and salons that Jürgen Habermas (1989) once imagined as the site in which the public sphere emerged in rationalist discussion are now but a small piece in the puzzle of real and virtual social networking. The public has turned plural and consists of many “counterpublics” opposing hegemonic discourse (Fraser 1990).

### **The Sandinista revolutionary mural project**

By occupying and / or invading public space, art practices demand a renegotiation of the public sphere. In *On the Political*, Chantal Mouffe argues for a «vibrant ‘agonistic’ public sphere of contestation where different hegemonic political projects can be confronted» (2005: 3). This public sphere makes unlikely the resolution of conflicts via rational agreement, but it «nevertheless recognizes the legitimacy» of opposition (52). A pivotal example for radical art practice in public space in crisis is certainly the Sandinista revolutionary mural project in Nicaragua from the 1980s. As David Kunzle remarks, «The Nicaraguan mural movement is part of a global renaissance of art on public walls» (55). The influence of Latin American political muralism as practiced by Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros is undeniable as are influences from Pre-Columbian art practices. It is safe to say that «Latin America, and Mexico in particular took the leading role in establishing muralism as a central public art in the American hemisphere in the twentieth

century» (Rausser 2020: 402). Still, with the Sandinista revolutionary mural project we encounter an artistic movement in which the Isthmus represented the central geopolitical propelling force. While it was site-specific with its major base in Managua, the capital of Nicaragua, it was most of all an internationalist approach to art in the streets cherishing collaborative creativity between local and international artists.

As Lancaster Wright puts it, «Nicaragua began to experience growth in all areas of its culture, literacy and economic growth –all while fighting outside forces to solidify the Sandinista insurrection» (s. p.). A first impulse came from Panama. Within two months of the insurrection of the Sandinista revolution in July 1979 –a revolution bound to regain governmental control following colonization, a civil war, and an oppressive dictatorship–the Panamanian Felicia Santizo Brigade, which had been inspired by Chilean muralists, migrated to Nicaragua to join the project of social change, creation of literacy and political art practice in public space. The murals created by Panama's Felicia Santizo Brigade represented an example for a profoundly revolutionary imaginary of art practice and political message. And they emerged from collaborative painterly action emphasizing ideas of communication, exchange, and solidarity as base of artistic creativity.

These murals displayed a high level of militarist attitude supporting the idea of social change through painterly expression. They also caught the immediate attention of US officials supporting the Contra movement in Nicaragua. The struggle over political messages in the streets exemplified that public space in Nicaragua had turned into an intellectual, political, and artistic combat zone. Many artists from Latin America, Europe, and in particular from the United States traveled to Nicaragua to support the Sandinista cause and to oppose US interventionism. Dominant themes were the struggle for literacy, the dawn of a new social order expressed through child-centered themes, the Sandinista insurrection itself, and Sandinista heroes (Kunzle 8-12).

This also included a revision and contestation of masculinity and femininity in the public discourse. While government sponsored murals continued to emphasize the archetypes of motherhood and femininity, the murals commissioned by the Association of Nicaraguan women (AMNLAE, Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses) used the international icon of the "New Woman" as recurrent theme for the revolutionary discourse. One of the most striking examples was created collaboratively in the suburbs of Managua in 1980 and signed "Muralist Brigade Felicia Santizo Panama S.P.C. Sandinista Police III-80" (Brigada Muralista Felicia Santizo Panamá S.P.C. Policía Sandinista III-80). While the mural captures a mass scene of revolutionary protest, the woman in green takes center stage in the visual design. Her bodily posture and the clenched fist express absolute determination. She appears as the leading force and is closely surrounded by armed children.



*Image 1: Muralist Brigade Felicia Santizo Panama S.P.C. Sandinista Police III-80.*

Many of these visual representations of the “New Woman” were based upon a picture taken by the Nicaraguan photographer Orlando Valenzuela of a Sandinista female combatant titled “Miliciana de Waswalito” or “Armed Mother and Child” (Plaza 8-10). This iconic image of a woman warrior breastfeeding her baby while carrying an arm over her shoulder became a iconic symbol of female empowerment and social change on a national and global level.



*Image 2: Armed Mother and Child.*

Another example underscoring the female element of the Nicaraguan revolution is represented by the mural "Homage to Women" which was designed by Alejandro Canales and created collaboratively with local and international artists in Managua in 1980. In this government sponsored mural, the artists express a celebration of female creativity and fertility and the important role that women play in the field of education. The tone is more celebratory than revolutionary here. The collage of different female figures in combination with children and images of nature creates a dynamic picture of womanhood and the important role of women for creative education, sports, literacy, and agriculture, all important points on the revolutionary agenda of the Sandinistas to regain governmental cultural and intellectual control.



*Image 3: Homage to Women.*

The central places but also the suburbs of Managua became a major exhibition space for revolutionary murals. Spread throughout urban spaces and selectively also in rural areas, murals reflecting the above themes turned the urban grid into a canvas for social, cultural, and political messages that could reach a larger public (Craven 190-198). With a focus on child-centered themes the visual narratives unfolded a future-oriented discourse and built upon the emotionalizing and empathizing potential of childhood imaginaries. These visual narratives drew on «the construct of childhood as collective emotional leverage for social and political change [...]» (Mayar 8). Together with a focus on education, the vision of literacy from early age on found expression in the international artistic collaborations. Promoting agency through education and resistance, local actors profited from the international media attention that the Sandinista insurrection had received and turned art into a language for social change embedded within

translocal and transnational networks. Among the local and international artists were men and women like Manuel García, Hilda Vogle, and Julie Aguirre (Craven 180-185).

How powerful these visual narratives of a new social order impacted the public sphere becomes evident when we look at US reactions. With the 1989 US invasion of Panama, the Brigade's revolutionary murals in Panama and Nicaragua were systematically destroyed. Notwithstanding, the intense creative collaborations that had been initiated from the Isthmus from the late 1970s onward reestablished art in public as a powerful tool to shape protest, resistance, and visions of new social orders within a collective memory of resistance across the Americas.

### **Communities of fate and collaborative creativity**

Protest movements that followed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century fed on the Sandanista legacy. Art practices involved in the Zapatista movement, the Battle of Seattle, the Occupy movements, and the current Black Lives Matter movement, particularly strong in the US, Brazil, and Canada, have addressed in their participatory and network outlook questions of justice, governance, citizenship, human rights, and cultural differences. As artistic and intellectual claims from within these movements make clear, the above issues are pushed forward to be debated and negotiated in different local, but also transnational and transcultural, contexts in an open and agonistic public discourse—in a world that needs to be understood as a multi-centered and multiply entangled world. Strategically these movements build on the collaborative approach to creativity as a means of social and artistic renewal. «The way people relate to the world, to others and to themselves» (Glaveanu & al. 742) appear to be at the very base of creative collaboration that foster communities of resistance and protest. While «the understanding and the practice of creativity vary across space and time», a fundamental urge to change collaboratively infuses the conceptualization of creativity as social change in recent and contemporary movements (Glaveanu & al. 743).

The current artistic and activist movements that challenge limits and monitoring of public space act against the background of multiple global challenges, menaces, and hazards. One way to conceive of this new interconnectedness is to acknowledge the ongoing devastation of the world. One of the leading proponents of a new cosmopolitan politics, David Held, speaks of “overlapping communities of fate” (168), denoting that environmental developments such as global warming, natural disasters, and diminishing resources render all people



as a world community equally convicted and responsible. In a similar vein, Ulrich Beck uses the term "world risk society" (1999) to address ecological and technological questions of risk shared by all of us, which necessitate political experimentation to form a new type of global morality. Thinkers like Seyla Benhabib have put forth new ideas of a dialogic democracy in a «globalized world of uncertainty, hybridity, fluidity, and contestation» (Benhabib 186). While all artistic practices claiming public space as a democratic platform differ in radicalness and site-specificity, they unfold their agendas and actions largely within an understanding of dialogic democratic politics.

Collaboration and participation are the prominent markers of public art's current development, and street art has created a trans-American tapestry of aesthetic and political conquest of public spaces by street art cultures from Panama, Nicaragua, to Mexico and the US. This process began in the 1970s but reached a new intensity and level of expansion in the twenty-first century. As walking various cities in the Americas reveals, art in the streets has experienced a renaissance. At the intersection of artistic expression and political commentary, graffiti, spray paint, posters, and murals infuse contemporary urban life with new visual semiotics. The city's public spaces are increasingly shaped by symbolic appropriation by grassroots movements, activists, and artists (Youkhana & Förster 5-8; Rausser 2017: 1-4). But let me return to the movements of the late twentieth century.

### **From 'Sandinista' to 'Zapatista' to 'The Battle of Seattle' and 'Occupy Wall Street'**

Radical art practice in the twenty-first century shows a strong interAmerican imaginary at its core. While the Sandinista mural project infused art practice with a transnational collaborative approach to express new national agendas, the Zapatista movement from Chiapas in Mexico has influenced in many ways these art and activist practices that virtually connect multiple public spaces on a local and global level since 1994. The Zapatista movement was one of the first social movements to claim presence on the internet, propagating networks of "*convivencia*", solidarity, and communication, bringing together radical activists from the North and the South. The Zapatista movement managed to bring the Third World Network from the Global South into dialogue with radical thinkers from Northern labor, ecology, and solidarity movements.

This new North-South coalition fueled the protest in Seattle in 1999, calling both the People's Global Assembly and the World Social Forum to join for the struggle against neoliberal capitalist exploitation (McKee 50-51). The Zapatista

movement contained important cultural and artistic elements that have helped fuel the imagination of protest movements in the South and North. They emphasized the importance of the local in global times, projecting cultural elements like masks and dialogues with ancestral spirits to give their political protest a culturally anchored site. In addition, they used the internet to push their surreal politics of revolution and embraced artistically carnivalesque and socially provocative practices of political action around the globe, fueling also the imagination of the Critical Art Ensemble (CAE). Artists like Ricardo Dominguez and the CAE build on artistic rebels like Henry David Thoreau in challenging the semiotic codes of global politics and free trade in manifestoes such as *Electronic Civil Disobedience* (McKee 51). Net art became a tool for interfering with the digital networks of corporate and governmental institutions, as websites and internet servers were hacked. The artistic quality of Zapatista expressed through their surreal poetics opened venues for rethinking art, the public, and practices of social protest.

At first glance, Managua, Chiapas, and Manhattan are worlds apart. The Sandinista and Zapatista movement and the Occupy movement seem equally distant. All managed to capture worldwide attention, though. The imaginaries created by the Sandinista mural project have shaped transnational blueprints for local civil resistance, the Zapatista movement and actions, with their mix of surrealist poetics and politics, have shaped grassroots visions of community-building and resistance against corruption and oppressive structures around the world. Many rich conjunctions of public art and the politics of democracy emerged in the period from the late 1980s, with the fall of the social welfare state, to the late 1990s. While the Sandinista movement in particular inspired creative collaboration across national boundaries to change national discourses, the Zapatista movement, from a regional positioning, inspired major movements in the North against the neoliberal politics of exploitation. A watershed event occurred right at the turn to the new millennium in 1999. The Battle of Seattle highlighted the friction underneath contemporary capitalism at the level of trade policy and global economy (McKee 53).

And the Battle of Seattle also showed interAmerican imaginaries at work in the attempts to rethink the public sphere and the functions of radical art. From the Sandinista and the Zapatista Revolution to the Battle of Seattle and the “Carnival Against Capital” in Quebec City during April 2001, imaginaries from the Global South fed the protest movements in the Northern hemisphere of the Americas. One can see this with the puppetry and street theater that were brought to Seattle by a group that would prove crucial to the Seattle project. A network of anarchist artists extending along the West coast from the United States to Canada, the group Art and Revolution were instrumental in weav-

ing together various direct action-oriented environmental groups and various autonomous groups, thus launching the Direct Action Network (McKee 56). Artists took the lead in reporting for the media networks via Indymedia and strategizing actions. Puppetry took center stage as a specific form of street theater that embraced what is known as anti-closure in the art world. It rejected the solemnity and elitism of contemporary art and its related art historical self-references so often associated with postmodern artistic expression. Instead, puppet theatre fostered dialogue with the audience, encouraged direct participation, and celebrated the joy of communal artistic endeavor (56). Seattle became a showcase for art's multifaceted power to claim public spaces at the intersection of political, environmental, and artistic engagement. As McKee succinctly puts it, «Seattle opened a new horizon of aesthetics and politics» (58). A mix of carnivalesque puppet theatre, banners, and costumes, Indymedia's self-organized public sphere, the action logics of internet shutdown, and the Yes Men's cyber inventions created an artistically based movement against neoliberal governance, Wall Street, The World Bank, and similar institutions.

The Battle for Seattle made clear that public space and the public sphere had taken on new complexity, fragmentation, and diversity as art created, claimed, and multiplied new forms of public spaces at the dawn of the new millennium. In the US, the Occupy movement also drew on revisions of public space and the urban grid along horizontal and vertical lines. The desire to reinvent collectivism resulted in *The Illuminator*, a mobile and high-powered public projection during the Occupy movement's activities in Manhattan. Most of the movement's events received worldwide media coverage. Thus, events could count on a surplus of media diffusion from outside the movement. The multi-levelled event signaled its illuminating function in its title. Combining presence in the streets with a technologically created presence in the air, it connected various public spaces and enhanced artistic models of participatory culture. On 17 November 2011, the Occupy movement announced its two-month anniversary in the Zuccotti Park. *The Illuminator* was the greatest gift of the movement's alliance of art and protest.

Arguably with Walt Whitman's vision of America as multitude in mind, hundreds of marchers crossed Brooklyn Bridge with hopes for a just world. They shouted slogans, poems, and other short texts on the ground in dialogue with the tremendous light projection on the Verizon building in Manhattan. The projection contained multiple signatures, slogans, and texts representative of the Occupy mission. This multi-sited presence made the aesthetic and political signs visible to the police who were in the air and on the ground. Creative action was conceived as a dialog within the movement and as a dialog with the opposing forces of control and surveillance. For the marchers, the projection

created the sense that their messages literally traveled through space and gained high visibility in the city. The event was site specific with Brooklyn Bridge and the Verizon building as markers of local New York identity. And the event was nomadic as the Occupy movement as a whole «in its mobility and replicability as a meme, translating freely between images, objects, and worlds across time and space through media networks» (McKee 103) reached out globally.

The images projected onto the Verizon appeared to have an empowering effect on the marchers, bringing them together in an intense moment of shared political desire. The transmitted images on the web helped create local and global circles of supporters diffusing political objectives even further. Creative collaboration included the real and virtual world and the collective was growing far beyond the reach of its initiators. Out of the Occupy Wall Street movement emerged the Illuminator Art Collective, which has continued its support of grassroots movements, environmental groups, and big political organizations like Greenpeace in their struggles against capitalist and environmentalist exploitation. The collective has staged hundreds of interventions in public spaces—both geographical and virtual—as acts of incitement and invitation. According to their mission, they transform the street from a site of transit to a democratic space of engagement, conflict, and dialogue (Blunderbuss).

When looking at recent collaborations between artists in protest movements from Seattle to Occupy, in which Judith Butler also appeared as a public speaker in Zuccotti Park, it becomes evident that the theoretical framework of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's concept of "dispossession" offers a new understanding of "the human" and the "social" in circumstances of oppression and / or marginalization (Butler & Athanasiou). The concept also sheds light on agency and activism in the public, especially through their understanding of spaces of appearance as general constructs that enable "the human" to *perform* his / her dispossession, and thereby resist it. This agency need not be bound to a specific medium, but materializes dispossession *through* the bodily performance.

The Illuminator performance as a collaborative multimedia projection and the marching individual chanting slogans across Brooklyn Bridge illustrate the multi-media facets of performing "dispossession" in public in the recent Occupy movement. Butler and Athanasiou unfold a normative understanding of political or economic dispossession that marginalizes different people worldwide by depriving them of citizenship, property, or land. It is Athanasiou who develops that «dispossession persists beyond the colony and the postcolony» (84). As they explain: «In the context of neoliberal forms of capital—combined with tightened migration policies and the abjection of stateless people, *sans papiers*, 'illegal' immigrants—bodies (that is, human capital) are becoming increasingly disposable, dispossessed by capital and its exploitative excess, uncountable and unac-

counted for» (29). The mix of political and artistic protest from the Sandinista, the Zapatista, and Occupy movements continues to thrive in contemporary action-networks struggling with the misery of global migration in contemporary times. As Tufekci reminds us, «the longevity and durability of these networks means that know-how, especially infrastructural know-how, can be shared across time and place» (86). A site-specific movement, Occupy erected a library in Zucotti Park, as did many other Occupy encampments around the globe. Through new media networks shared knowledge and practices traveled fast.

## **Conclusion**

Conceptions of public space are changing, as are the people taking their life concerns to the streets. Storming streets for protest, strike, and resistance has historically been associated with working-class masses. However, youth and citizens' revolts in recent years in Santiago de Chile, Tegucigalpa, New York, Mexico City, Cairo, London, Madrid, Tel Aviv, and Tunis have consisted largely of young, middle-class, well-educated people, including artists and intellectuals. The reclamation of public space that can be observed in these protest actions—which are frequently labelled “social media revolutions”—raises the question as to how public space is being reimagined, how it is designed physically or digitally in each case, and what new actor-constellations are involved (Leonardi 47-48). For Mouffe, «public spaces are always plural and the agonistic confrontation takes place on a multiplicity of discursive surfaces» (2007: 3). She goes so far as to define public space as a battleground on which different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation. Mouffe would certainly also agree that critical artistic practices help subvert dominant ideologies in what she labels an “agonistic” model of public space, as these practices can visualize that which is repressed and eliminated by the consensus of contemporary post-political democracy. We can place the various art practices discussed within Mouffe's conception of public space and see that the experience of art practice going public has been controversial, conflictive, transgressive, and innovative in its attempts to work within and against the grid patterns of spatial control in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

Artists have proven tremendously creative in producing social, cultural, and political visions, particularly when working out of a profound desire to infuse public sites with creative imagination (Galante). The movements discussed in this paper show us that creativity in collaboration is the core issue for contemporary art practice. While Rivera's mural in San Francisco visually expressed an all-embracing Pan-Americanism, the collaborative art projects in the Sandinista, Zapatista, and Occupy movements used site-specific positionings that became

the source for global outreach. Central and Latin American approaches to collaborative creativity in public space have traveled north and have gone global. Not only have they provided examples of how to shape the urban grids anew, horizontally and vertically, they also have translated the American utopian impulse into collective imaginaries of resistance.

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### **Images**

- Image 1: Muralist Brigade Felicia Santizo Panama S.P.C. Sandinista Police III-80. Retrieved from <https://nicaraguamurals.wordpress.com/muralgallery/>. Photograph by David Schwartz (Last accessed 14/06/2022).
- Image 2: Armed Mother and Child. Retrieved from <http://ahabbestad.blogspot.com/2011/05/miliciana-de-waswalito-by-orlando.html>. Photograph by Orlando Valenzuela (Last accessed 14/06/2022).
- Image 3: Mural Gallery Albright College. Retrieved from <https://nicaraguamurals.wordpress.com/muralgallery/>. Photograph by David Schwartz (Last accessed 14/06/2022).