

Call for participation

Contested spaces – urban design anthropology in practice

Sebastian Topp

University of Hamburg - Institute of European Ethnology / Cultural Anthropology

Hamburg – St. Pauli an example for collaborative urban design

St. Pauli is a district in the city of Hamburg that consists of extremes. It belongs to the poorest areas in Hamburg but is also a place where the highest rents on real estate can be found at the same time. Moreover, it is highly valued by tourism but also a place where protest and violent clashes. In conclusion, as strong dynamic of gentrification processes and social imbalance can be recognized. Within these dynamics of inclusion and exclusion design students create design artefacts for socially undeveloped people to support their everyday life. They work in collaborative teams together with social workers, urban planners, architects and ethnographers and deal with urban issues. Their aim is to solve urban problems and to experiment with an extended understanding of design. They dedicate their work for finding new tasks for design in urban areas and to collaborate with other disciplines.

The research work is based on a 10-month ethnographical participant observation and investigates in the urban design processes. It gives insights in techniques and methods the designers use from an urban anthropological point of view. In addition, it illustrates how designers use anthropological methods and the problems, which occur within the application of these methods in the urban context. Moreover, it focuses on the process of designing within disadvantaged urban areas and how designers develop field specific knowledge. In conclusion, the fieldwork wants to focus on the collaboration between designers and ethnographers and the potentials and difficulties this inhabits in regard to urban contexts.