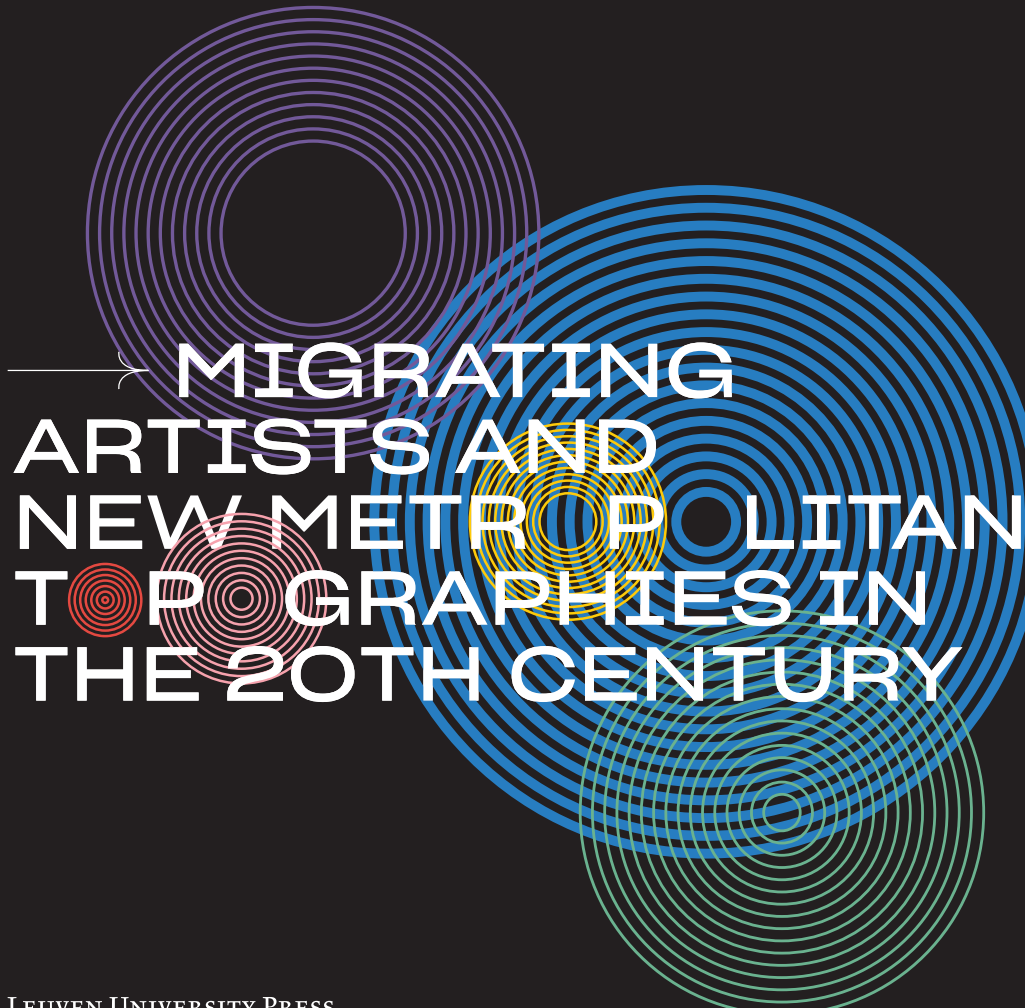


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# ARRIVAL CITIES



—> MIGRATING  
ARTISTS AND  
NEW METROPOLITAN  
TOPOGRAPHIES IN  
THE 20TH CENTURY

LEUVEN UNIVERSITY PRESS

## Arrival Cities

# **Arrival Cities**

Migrating Artists and  
New Metropolitan Topographies  
in the 20th Century

Edited by  
Burcu Dogramaci, Mareike Hetschold,  
Laura Karp Lugo, Rachel Lee  
and Helene Roth

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# **The Bar Sammy's Bowery Follies as Microcosm and Photographic Milieu Study for Emigrated European Photographers in 1930s and 1940s New York**

Helene Roth

This text begins with a photograph taken last year on a research trip to New York. After my first day at the NYPL Archives, I crossed Manhattan and walked down the Bowery to the Lower East Side to visit an exhibition at the International Center of Photography. As I was about to enter the museum, I glanced across the street where I noticed a sign above a bar: “PAULANER. CRAFT BREWERY” (fig. 1). The name of the brewery immediately evoked my home town, Munich, and triggered a feeling of connection and belonging to New York. At the same time, I thought of the METROMOD research project at LMU Munich, within which I conduct my doctoral studies on European photographers who emigrated to New York in the 1930s and 1940s, with a special focus on urban spaces. It was by chance that several months later, while searching more deeply for the meaning and function of the Paulaner Bar on the Lower East Side, that I found out that until 1969 there had been another bar in the same place, called Sammy's Bowery Follies.<sup>1</sup> This bar was opened in 1934 by Sammy Fuchs at 265–267 Bowery and subsequently became an important gathering place for various social and cultural groups throughout the 1940s. Interestingly, the bar and its patrons were also the subject of pictures by emigrated European photographers such as Weegee, Alfred Eisenstaedt, Erika Stone and Lisette Model, who were fascinated by the patrons of Sammy's Bowery Follies<sup>2</sup> and captured their impressions of them and this special place. It was clear, then, that this place and the urban environment were connected to the wider topic of emigration movements to New York in the 1930s and 1940s and also to the history of photography.



Fig. 1: View of the Bar Paulaner, 265–267 Bowery, New York, 2018 (Photo: Helene Roth).

In the context of the immediate urban environment of the Lower East Side, a quarter where many European emigrants lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, a number of questions arose: Why were the emigrated photographers so interested in Sammy’s Bowery and its surrounding neighbourhood? How did they photograph the bar? Can the bar be seen as a photographic milieu study for these emigrated photographers and what function does photography play here? Based on photo reportages in *Life* magazine and other photographs, this essay sets out to analyse these questions in the context of exile, urban, sociology and photography studies.

## **The Place to Be? Sammy’s Bowery Follies on 265 Bowery, New York**

In December 1944, *Life* magazine published a photo reportage by Alfred Eisenstaedt entitled “Sammy’s Bowery Follies. Bums and Swells Mingle at Low Down New York Cabaret” (fig. 2).<sup>3</sup> Across four pages, Sammy Fuchs’ bar is portrayed through concisely titled photographic sequences and an introductory text (Anonymous 1944b, 57–60). The first page features a half-page photo which shows the interior of the bar: the twilight atmosphere, the luminous spots of lamplight as well as the number of customers suggest that the photograph was taken at night.





**Fig. 2:** Alfred Eisenstaedt, "Sammy's Bowery Follies. Bums and Swells Mingle at Low Down New York Cabaret." *Life*, vol. 17, no. 23, 1944, pp. 57–60 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München).

Eisenstaedt chose an elevated point of view for his photograph in order to obtain as wide an overview as possible of the interior of the bar. This also enabled him to capture the clientele at an unobserved moment. Especially striking is the lavishly feathered hat of a woman leaning on the counter on the left, drinking from a glass. The small upright photograph to the left-hand side of the page shows an exterior shot of the bar. The text, the author of which is unknown, describes the bar's everyday reality in at times derogatory terms. Besides the "bums and swells" mentioned in the subtitle of the reportage, the bar is described as "dingy", "seedy" and as an "[...] alcoholic heaven for the derelicts whose presence has made the Bowery a universal symbol of poverty and futility" (ibid., 57). The text further states that in 1941, seven years after the bar opened, Sammy Fuchs was granted a licence to stage cabarets for which he hired some ageing vaudevillians (Anonymous 1944b, 57; see also McFadden 1970; Ferrara 2011, 104). The reader also learns that the bar was a popular spot for well-to-do people from Midtown who were drawn to the bar's rugged atmosphere:

It is also a popular stopping point for prosperous people from uptown who like to see how the other half staggers [...] The uptown clientele began to pour in, attracted less by the entertainers than by the general spectacle of dirt and degradation offered by the frowzy men and blowzy women whom Sammy likes to have around his saloon to provide "atmosphere". (Anonymous 1944b, 57)

Accompanied by the text, these two photographs provide a first insight into the bar, which is further explored on the following pages of the magazine. In sequences of four and nine photographs, the next double page focuses on the bar's artists and customers, who are divided into "performers" and "patrons" (Anonymous 1944b, 58f.). Among the "performers" are various corpulent female singers engrossed in their performances and clad in similarly conspicuous hats and gaudy costumes to the woman at the bar described above. A stark contrast to the dynamic and exuberant mood in these photographs is provided by the nine "patron" portraits on the right. These photos show the so-called regulars, described by Sammy Fuchs as "escapists" (ibid., 59), who can be found at the bar day and night, begging for beer from other customers. All of those portrayed have either turned their heads away from the camera or stare melancholically into the distance. The very last picture of the reportage consists of a shot of Tugboat Ethel, the "Queen of the Bowery", who also features in the previous series of "patron" portraits in the lower right corner. This full-page portrait shows her sleeping at the table, resting her head in her hands.

Eisenstaedt photographed all his subjects in unobserved moments. His photographs directly convey the atmosphere in the bar and depict a run-of-the-mill evening at Sammy's Bowery. In a scenic progression, the photo reportage takes the viewer on a tour of the bar. The camera functions as an external observer and does not engage with the singers or patrons. Following Henry Luce, the publisher of *Life*, Eisenstaedt's work thus fulfils the photojournalistic paradigm of a certain kind of photography that honestly and authentically draws on real life, while still acting from an impartial outsider position (Luce 1980, 7). The visual impressions are complemented by the text's descriptions which create a somewhat trivial and negative image of the bar. Apparently, Sammy Fuchs had tried consciously to set himself apart from other nightclubs in Midtown Manhattan by creating a "unique" atmosphere and by advertising his bar with the slogan "Stork Club of the Bowery" (Anonymous 1944b, 57; Ferrara 2011, 103–107).

With this he was not referring to the American whiskey brand "Stork", but to the Stork Club near 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. This upscale establishment had also been photographed by Alfred Eisenstaedt and featured in a previous edition of *Life* (Anonymous 1944a, 119–125). Similar to the piece on Sammy's Bowery, the first page of the reportage "*Life* Visits the Stork Club: Famous New York Nightclub Makes Business of Attracting Celebrities" features a half-page photograph of the interior of the club as well as a small photograph of the entrance area (fig. 3). The nightclub allowed entry to celebrities only after an admission check, thus representing the exclusive opposite of Sammy's Bowery. The camera's view is directed towards the interior of the "Cub Club" and shows well-dressed guests sitting around tables. The text further explains that the bar also attracted visitors who, despite their lack of celebrity status, hoped to attain a higher social standing by patronising the club (Anonymous 1944a, 119). Just as in the article on Sammy's Bowery, the following pages take the reader on a tour around the bar which features spacious rooms, each with a different design. The focus here is less on individual portraits but rather on ambience and the patrons' stories.

A comparison of the two photo reportages suggests that the two nightspots were frequented by contrasting social groups, each of which not only represented vastly different symbolic institutions within its respective neighbourhood in New York, but also pointed towards fundamental urban socio-cultural divergences. Both journalistic pieces, however, by way of a specific editorial constellation of text and image, direct the reader's attention towards different social classes rather than the lives of individuals.<sup>4</sup> What is striking here is that social groups from the Bowery were not given access to nightclubs such as the Stork Club, whereas visitors of the Stork Club could also be found in Sammy's Bowery. Despite these social divergences, both reportages also convey an ironic view of nightlife in



Fig. 3: Alfred Eisenstaedt, "Life Visits the Stork Club. Famous New York Nightclub Makes Business of Attracting Celebrities." *Life*, vol. 17, no. 19, 1944, pp. 119–125 (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München).

Manhattan. With the name “Stork Club of the Bowery”, Sammy Fuchs refers to the Stork Club in Midtown Manhattan in order to distinguish himself from it while simultaneously self-consciously alluding to the social milieu of his clientele and thus gesturing towards his establishment’s “identity”.

## The Ups and Downs of the Bowery

What the *Life* reportage on Sammy’s Bowery does not mention is that the bar, which was located at 265–267 Bowery, between Huston and Stanton Streets on the Lower East Side, had an important cultural value and was perceived as an integral part of the urban cityscape. When the bar had to close in 1969, an article in the *New York Times*<sup>5</sup> reports the following: “[...] the [Sammy’s Bowery, HR] Follies had become over the years a symbol of the city’s melting pot, a place where the prosperous and the impoverished could drink elbow-to-elbow and sing along with aging, passionately prune faced vaudeville entertainers” (McFadden 1970). The Bowery is 1,600 metres long and stretches from Chatham Square in the middle of Chinatown to Astor Place (see city map, fig. 4). For many years the



**Fig. 4:** Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library, “Plate 8: Bounded by W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Great Jones Street, E. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Avenue A, Essex Street, Broome Street and West Broadway” (New York Public Library Digital Collections).

Bowery was considered to be one of the most dangerous streets in the city and, thanks to its high rate of homelessness, poverty and adverse living conditions, was pejoratively referred to as “skid row”. The large number of alcoholics living on the Bowery (estimated at more than 14,000 in the 1930s and 1940s) were subsequently dubbed “skid-row bums” (Marx 1984, 154; Howard 2013, 3–11). This negative image of the neighbourhood was exacerbated by the many criminal offenders, former patients from mental hospitals, and alcoholics, predominantly single middle-aged men, who resided there (Giamo 1989, xiii). The Bowery was also of interest to contemporary American writers such as Elwyn Brooks White. He describes the street as follows in his 1948 published book, *Here is New York*, which took its readers on an urban tour of the city:

Walk the Bowery under the El<sup>6</sup> at night and all you feel is a sort of cold guilt. Touched for a dime, you try to drop the coin and not touch the hand, because the hand is dirty; you try to avoid the glance, because the glance accuses. This is not so much personal menace as universal – the cold menace of unresolved human suffering and poverty and the advanced stages of the disease alcoholism. On a summer night the drunks sleep in the open. The sidewalk is a free bed, and there are no lice. Pedestrians step along and over and around the still forms as though walking on a battlefield among the dead. Standing sentinel at each sleeper’s head is the empty bottle from which he drained his release. [...] The glib barker on the sightseeing bus tells his passengers that this is the ‘street of lost souls,’ but the Bowery does not think of itself as lost; it meets its peculiar problem in its own way – plenty of gin mills, plenty of flophouses, plenty of indifference and always, at the end of the line, Bellevue. (White 1948, 43f.)

However, the public image of the street as a poor and alcohol-fuelled neighbourhood should not be reduced to the terms “skid row” and “Bowery bums”. Instead, the Bowery needs to be interpreted within the context of historical and migratory developments and the different socio-cultural classes that populated it. The history of the Bowery in fact chronicles Manhattan’s urban changes, representing both the development of the city of New York and its evolution from a Dutch settlement to a metropolis whose socio-cultural processes have not always run along straight lines (Ferrara 2011; Marx 1984, 153).<sup>7</sup> The street was first mentioned in 1635 as a passage to Boston, built by colonialists and leading to the farm (Dutch: *bouwerie*) of the Dutch colonial governor Pieter Stuyvesant. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, other

wealthy Dutch merchants built their farms on the same road (Marx 1984, 154; Giamo 1989, 1ff; Ferrara 2011, 24ff). At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Bowery was considered a noble street with upscale restaurants, shops and hotels (Marx 1984, 156).

From the 1830s onwards, the Lower East Side gradually transformed into a residential area where predominantly German and Irish emigrants settled; from 1870 on, their numbers also included eastern and southern European emigrants. Subsequently, parts of the Lower East Side and the Bowery were called “Little Germany” and “Little Italy”, each of which had its own shops, nightclubs, beer gardens and cultural institutions, while the Jewish emigrated population also created a cultural, economic and religious infrastructure (Ferrara 2011, 37–40; Stölken 2013, 25–52). Thus, the Lower East Side surrounding the Bowery grew into a densely populated and multicultural neighbourhood. To house the rapidly increasing number of emigrants, the first American apartment buildings were built in the 1890s (Stölken 2012, 28; Minetor 2015, 30ff.). These tenement houses extended over four to five floors and were divided into many small, unventilated rooms of eight to nine square metres, some without windows. The typical architectural structure of these houses consisted of shops on the ground floor and apartments on the floors above.<sup>8</sup> In addition to the residential and shopping areas, numerous bars and nightclubs opened along the Bowery (Giamo 1989, 31ff.). Growing rates of homelessness, crime and widespread alcoholism earned the street a bad reputation, especially after the Great Depression of the 1930s (Ferrara 2011, 42). This development led to a contradictory public perception of the Bowery: on the one hand, aid projects and socio-critical photographic documentaries, including those by Jacob Riis, aimed to draw attention to the Bowery’s state of poverty and destitution. On the other hand, the situation was trivialised and turned into a public “urban spectacle” (Giamo 1989, 31). As a result of sensationalist reporting and visualisation, stereotypical images of the Bowery took hold in the media (Giamo 1989, 39ff; Howard 2013). With the beginning of the 1940s and the advent of World War II, numerous musicians and artists as well as students relocated to former worker or emigrant flats on the Bowery because of its affordable rents: “Rather than shun the Bowery’s marginal past, many embraced it; the Bowery fed, sheltered and inspired them, visible in the pioneering art coming out of the era [...]” (Ferrara 2011, 43)

Alfred Eisenstaedt’s photo reportage must be placed in the context of these different and parallel existing social, urban and cultural structures of the Bowery. In addition to Eisenstaedt, other European and American photographers, such as Berenice Abbott and Lewis Hine, were interested in the Bowery and offered their own photographic perspectives on its social conditions and everyday life. Besides

Lisette Model, a photographer who took up exile in New York and took pictures of Sammy's Bowery, there were also emigrated photographers who had come to the US as children.<sup>9</sup> Erika Stone and Weegee (Arthur Felling) fled from Europe to America when they were young and later began their careers as photographers in New York.

## **Flashlights: Erika Stone and Weegee at Sammy's Bowery**

Erika Stone, who was 12 years old when she and her family emigrated to New York in 1936, had already been taking photographs back in Germany. After arriving in New York, she quickly deepened her interest in the medium by photographing the neighbourhood children and selling the portraits to their parents. As a student at the Photo League and the New School of Social Research, she made urban exploration tours with her camera through New York and earned recognition with her photographic series on Sammy's Bowery in 1946.<sup>10</sup>



**Fig. 5:** Erika Stone, *Bowery Beauties*, New York, 1946 (Erika Stone, Courtesy of Katarina Doerner Photographs, Brookly, NY).



In two photographs, entitled *Bowery Beauties* (fig. 5) and *Ethel, the Bowery Queen* (fig. 6), she portrayed some of the protagonists also featured in Eisenstaedt's *Life* reportage: a group of female vaudeville artists and Tugboat Ethel.<sup>11</sup> Unlike Eisenstadt's photographs, however, the motifs here are not captured in an unobserved moment. Rather, they are taken in agreement with the people portrayed. The *Bowery Beauties* photograph shows a close-up of four singers sitting around a table and looking directly into the camera. The women's cheerful expressions and gestures, their elegant black dresses, jewellery and feathered hats, convey a relaxed and evocative atmosphere. Ethel Tugboat in *Ethel, the Bowery Queen* is also portrayed in a front-facing shot. Seated at a table, she rests her left cheek in one hand while her other hand holds a lit cigarette over an ashtray. Ethel does not wear extravagant make-up, unlike the female vaudeville artists. She seems to want to evoke a cultivated bourgeois impression with her pearl bracelet, hat, coat and black patent handbag. The photograph not only reveals a different approach to the external physical appearance, but is also dedicated to the mental state of the subject. Ethel's sad eyes look into the camera with an empty and melancholy gaze, the corners of her mouth are turned downwards and her lips are closed, conveying depression or exhaustion in a non-verbal way. In addition to these two images, Stone has also photographed other day and night scenes inside the bar and on the street outside, which are printed in the volume *Mostly People* and include two tattooed men engaged in an arm-wrestling contest (*Mostly People* 2001, 37). Stone had a great interest in individuals regardless of their social background and tried to preserve the human dignity of her models (Heß 2001, 8).

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of this book.

**Fig. 6:** Erika Stone, *Ethel, the Bowery Queen*, New York, 1946 (*Mostly People* 2001, 41).

Stone's photographs, thus, can be viewed in contrast to Eisenstaedt's work, which recorded the artists and patrons of Sammy's Bowery in unobserved moments. Eisenstaedt also visualised scenes which raise questions concerning morality and the subject's right to privacy, such as when he photographed the sleeping Ethel Tugboat (Anonymous 1944b, 60). Nevertheless, Eisenstaedt conveyed his respect for his subjects via different technical means: as a proponent of available-light photography, he worked without a flash bulb and used naturally available light to capture the mood in the bar (Heß 2001, 11).<sup>12</sup> By contrast, the dark background and brightly-lit faces in Erika Stone's photographs indicate that she worked with an artificial light source (Stone 2004, 134). Her singular focus on the individual is only emphasised by the often indefinable backgrounds of her photographs.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that Stone benefitted from the technical improvements in the field of flash photography that evolved throughout the 1930s and 1940s. In 1925, Paul Vierkötter patented the first photo flash bulb, which was then sold by the American company General Electric under the name Sashalite in 1930 (Price 1938, 24ff; Wakefield 1947, 9–17; Bonanos 2018, 35). Although these early flash bulbs were very expensive, bulky and could be used only once, they still offered a practical alternative to the hazardous and cumbersome flash powder which they replaced.

An important proponent of these new technologies was Weegee (Arthur Fellig), whose flash shots established a unique aesthetic of New York's day- and nightlife. Erika Stone was acquainted with the emigrated photographer through the Photo League. After emigrating in 1909 at the age of ten with his family to New York, Weegee had taught himself photography and, like Erika Stone, begun his career as a street photographer selling portraits on the Lower East Side, where he grew up and lived for several years. A variety of assistant jobs in darkrooms and publishing houses enabled him to establish himself as a respected press photographer from the 1930s onwards (Weegee 1982, 7–35; Purcell 2004; *Extra! Weegee* 2017, 9).<sup>14</sup> In addition, he often photographed the life and inhabitants of the Lower East Side using a speed-graphic camera and flash bulb, including the goings-on at Sammy's Bowery (Weegee 1982, 238–249; *Extra! Weegee* 2017, 15; Bonanos 2018, 141).<sup>15</sup> He synchronised his flash bulb so that it lit up as soon as the shutter opened. This created a particularly strong light-dark contrast, which can be seen in a photo entitled *Shorty, the Bowery Cherub, Celebrating New Year's Eve at Sammy's Bar* (Loengard 2004, 6). The photograph (fig. 7) shows the owner, Sammy Fuchs, dressed in a top hat and tie, as he stands behind the bar celebrating the end of 1942 with his customers gathered around the wooden counter. Some of the festively dressed patrons have positioned themselves for Weegee and look directly into the camera. The flash bulb illuminates metal objects and the string

of lights on the fir tree in the background as well as the faces of those in the photograph. A variety of facial expressions and gestures, a cropped hand at the right edge of the picture and a woman's body lend the shot a sense of dynamism. The focal point of the photograph is the eponymous Shorty, a small man clad only in white underpants and a hat with the inscription 1943, who is about to drink from a full glass.



**Fig. 7:** Weegee, *Shorty, the Bowery Cherub, Celebrating New Year's Eve at Sammy's Bar*, New York, 1943 (*Weegee's New York* 1982, 248, International Center of Photography, New York).

Weegee had a special connection to the Lower East Side as he had grown up in one of the neighbourhood's tenement houses in impoverished circumstances. For him, photography was a means of sharing his social context with other, more privileged, social classes and of promoting tolerance and the acceptance of marginalised groups, cultures and outsiders (Bonanos 2018, 141). This socially conscious strategy can also be found in the photographs of Erika Stone who, like Weegee, grew up as a destitute emigrant in New York:

The fact is that I myself was poor. [...] Therefore it was hard for me to conciliate with the fact that I have a Jewish background. But not anymore. So we were a very poor immigrant family. As I remember, I worked all throughout my childhood. I started as a babysitter, then got more serious jobs. We always had a lack of money in our family. Thus I think it's logical that I am more attracted to poor people and their lifestyle. When I became a little older I started to wander around Harlem and Lower East side and photograph poor people. There is where I found a lot of people with unconventional stories and I wanted to tell them through my photographs. I was not attracted to the posh, fancy areas such as Park Avenue. (Korbut 2015, n.p.)

Both Erika Stone and Weegee were members of the Photo League, a photography school with a focus on social documentary photography. As European emigrants who grew up in poverty, Stone and Weegee used the camera as a medium of solidarity with marginalised and socially disadvantaged people (Schaber 2005, 84f.). They portrayed life in the metropolis with its residents and urban structures as they themselves had experienced it (*Mostly People* 2001, 137).<sup>16</sup> The historian Jens Jäger attributes important social significance to photography that “conveys social norms and, more importantly, visualises them. It manifests what is regarded in a society as worthy of representation, as normal and deviant, as beautiful or ugly. Therefore, images are always part of the formation and shaping of public opinion” (Jäger 2009, 14).<sup>17</sup> He adds that in all social areas, photographs have assumed the function of expressing a certain relationship between an individual and the world. He ascribes particular importance to the medium “in the construction of ethnicity, class and gender” (ibid., 15).<sup>18</sup> At the same time, he argues that photographs draw the viewer’s attention to these social ruptures (ibid., 154). For Stone and Weegee, photography was an important medium not only for focusing on the social life of the marginal and diverse clientele of Sammy’s Bowery and the Lower East Side but also for engendering solidarity between the emigrated photographers and their subjects. Taking this a step further, Stone’s and Weegee’s photographs thereby follow the tradition of American social documentary photography, whose focus on marginalised social strata can already be found in Jacob Riis’ work. As a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Danish emigrant, Riis documented his own experiences of exile in the East Side slums between the 1870s and 1890s, subsequently published in his book *How the Other Half Lives* (Riis 1890).

## **Sammy's Bowery Follies: From Metropolitan Microcosm to Photographic Milieu Studies**

In her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1962), the urban studies scholar Jane Jacobs puts forward the following methodology on how to respond to the complexities of social, cultural and urban structures in a metropolis. She argues for a viewpoint that considers the microcosms and everyday realities of urban life, in order to draw conclusions about the more complex contexts of cities:

[...] we shall start, if only in a small way, adventuring the real world, ourselves. The way to get at what goes on in the seemingly mysterious and perverse behavior of cities, is, I think to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as is possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events, and attempt to see what they mean whether any threads of principle emerge among them. (Jacobs 1962, 13)

Therefore, Sammy's Bowery, as an everyday bar on the Lower East Side, can also be seen as an example of such an urban microcosm which allows a better understanding of the cultural and social urban environment, and also of the relationship between the city and emigration. The photographs of Alfred Eisenstaedt, Erika Stone and Weegee show a variety of approaches and employ different photographic techniques to emphasise their respective image narratives and picture motifs. As Alfred Eisenstaedt published his series on Sammy's Bowery in *Life* magazine, using available light technologies and a 35mm camera, he adopted the premises of specific photojournalistic practices portraying unobserved moments in and out of the bar. Erika Stone and Weegee used flash bulb technologies and thereby achieved a stronger light-dark contrast in their work. Their focus was on the individual, the customer at Sammy's Bowery, who was portrayed in a distinctive way.

The camera functions as a medium of solidarity with the Bowery's marginalised groups and outsiders. In the context of their own former living conditions as emigrants on the Lower East Side, Stone and Weegee wanted to draw attention to the cultural and social ruptures in the metropolis of New York. Focusing on everyday scenes from urban contact zones, such as Sammy's Bowery, the photographs of Stone and Weegee closely align with Jane Jacobs' approach. For Weegee, who grew up in poverty in the same neighbourhood, Sammy's Bowery provided a microstudy of the city, representing the life of the poor on the Lower East Side, where many emigrants lived. For Erika Stone, who discovered Sammy's

Bowery in her explorations of the city and perhaps rediscovered herself as an emigrant in the neighbourhood and the bar, it provided a way for her to identify with the people. Unlike Weegee, who was a press photographer, she did not focus on the “sensational” but on the people themselves and tried to preserve the human dignity of her subjects.

In sociology, milieu studies were developed to investigate the social and cultural mechanisms of urban micro-spaces such as city districts (Geiling 2006, 336ff.). Pierre Bourdieu is a representative of this approach, having developed a space-oriented milieu and class theory for approaching questions of societal conflict and socio-hierarchical relationality (ibid., 349). Bourdieu’s research on social actors and their respective surroundings sought to highlight their position within their social, cultural and political environment (Bourdieu 1992, 49–79). In his volume *Photography: A Middle-Brow Art*, published in 1965, Pierre Bourdieu transferred these observations of everyday social practices to the medium of photography. He emphasised that for the analysis of cultural and social contexts, photography ought to focus on everyday social groups in order to be able to experience and interpret holistic social structures:

[o]nly the methodological decision to make a study based primarily on ‘real’ groups was to allow us to perceive (or prevent us from forgetting) that the meaning and function conferred upon photography are directly related to the structure of the group, to the extent of its differentiation and particularly to its position within the social structure. (Bourdieu [1965] 1990, 8)

In film studies, too, the term milieu study is used. Here, lay actors examine the life and social conditions of a particular neighbourhood and subculture (Decker 2003, 352).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the analysed photographs of Alfred Eisenstaedt, Erika Stone and Weegee can also be interpreted as milieu studies: inspired by their own urban environments as emigrants, they not only engaged with the microcosm of Sammy’s Bowery Follies, but used their cameras to analyse urban multicultural and often poor milieus such as the Lower East Side and to express solidarity with those who were marginalised. In this essay urbanity and emigration are analysed through the method of a microstudy using the example of Sammy’s Bowery and the images generated there by emigrated photographers.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. <https://www.boweryboogie.com/2018/06/paulaners-former-bowery-brewery-seized-by-marshals/>. Accessed 27 May 2019.
- <sup>2</sup> For the sake of brevity, the bar will sometimes be referred to as Sammy's Bowery.
- <sup>3</sup> The American magazine *Life*, which had appeared since 1936, considered photography – alongside text – to be an important information medium for reportage. The focus was on authentic, real-life photographs (*Kiosk* 2001, 190; Loengard 2004, 6–11; Holzer 2014, 441).
- <sup>4</sup> The two very different establishments are also presented together in Alfred Eisenstaedt's photo book, *Witness to Our Time*, thus suggesting a certain interpretational direction (Eisenstaedt 1980, 110–114).
- <sup>5</sup> The closure of the bar in 1969 was described as a loss to the neighbourhood not only by the *New York Times* but also in various other newspapers (McFadden 1970). The two apartment complexes were then sold to the city, and, until 2018, housed the aforementioned Paulaner bar.
- <sup>6</sup> "El" is the abbreviation of "Elevated Railroad" and refers to New York's high-rise railway, which was constructed between 1878 and 1894 and whose rail lines were often erected on the same level as the first and second floors of apartment buildings. The El thus considerably darkened the streets in the Bowery area (Marx 1984, 158; see also Höhne 2017, 54).
- <sup>7</sup> For an extensive history of the Bowery, see Giamo 1989, 1–30; Howard 2013; Stölken 2013, 25–58.
- <sup>8</sup> Along with Weegee and Erika Stone, photographers like Andreas Feininger and Fred Stein focused on forming a multicultural shop of European emigrants. See: Andreas Feininger, *New York*, Ziff-Davis, 1945; *Fred Stein. Dresden, Paris, New York*, edited by Erika Eschenbach and Helena Weber, exh. cat. Stadtmuseum Dresden, Dresden, 2018.
- <sup>9</sup> Lisette Model was an Austrian photographer who emigrated via Paris and Marseilles to New York. There she quickly gained a reputation as a female photographer focusing on the streets and urban life of New York, as in her series „Running Legs“ and „Shop Windows“. She also taught photography at the New School for Social Research and was a member of the Photo League. See for example: *Lisette Model. Fotografien 1934–1960*, edited by Monika Faber and Gerald Matt, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Wien 2000, Wien, 2000.
- <sup>10</sup> Erika Stone was born in Frankfurt am Main in 1924. As an autodidact, she learned photography from the emigrant Leo Cohn in his photo laboratory Leco. From 1941/1942 on, Stone further deepened her knowledge by attending Berenice Abbott's classes at the New School for Social Research and the Photo League (Kelley 1947; Küppers 1995; Heß 2001, 5ff.; *Mostly People* 2001, 94; Stone 2004, 134).
- <sup>11</sup> According to Erika Stone, she was commissioned by a Swedish newspaper to shoot a reportage about Sammy's Bowery (Stone 2004, 134). It is still unclear, however, when, by which magazine and for what purpose this assignment was issued.
- <sup>12</sup> Another advocate of this technique, in addition to Eisenstaedt, was Erich Salomon who, with the help of light-sensitive lenses and film materials, tried to avoid the use of flash bulbs and overly lit scenes (Eisenstaedt 1979, 15, 72; Garner 2003, 151ff.).

- 13 Stone worked with a Voigtländer Superb, a two-lens medium format SLR camera. One characteristic of this camera type was the light shaft viewfinder with grid pattern, which displayed the motif mirror-inverted, but which also enabled the photographer to view it as a two-dimensional picture, thus enabling a sound assessment of the subject matter at hand. The photos were available in either square format (6 x 6 cm) or rectangular format (4.6 x 6 cm) (Cremers 1992, 12, 57–61; Maschke 1997, 94–101).
- 14 For a selection of Weegee's photographs, see the online collection at the International Center of Photography (ICP): <https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/weegee?all/all/all/all/0>. Accessed 28 May 2019.
- 15 The Speed Graphic camera, which had been sold in the USA since 1912, was upgraded in 1947; this technical update enabled easier and faster triggering. With a shutter speed of 1/100 second, the robust large-format camera, which was integrated in a wooden housing, became particularly feasible for press photographers. The term "speed" as used in a professional photographic context indicates the degree of light sensitivity of the film (Feininger 1982, 119).
- 16 Other Photo League photographers such as Aaron Siskind were also interested in the Bowery (Raeburn 2006, 219–245; Blair 2007, 23–39). For a more in-depth discussion of the Photo League, please see Ya'ara Gill Glazer's chapter in this volume.
- 17 "Mit ihnen werden auch gesellschaftliche Normen vermittelt und, wichtiger noch, visualisiert. In ihnen manifestiert sich, was in einer Gesellschaft als abbildungswürdig, als normal und abweichend, als schön oder hässlich angesehen wird. Bilder sind daher immer auch Bestandteil einer Meinungsbildung und -beeinflussung." Translated into English by Helene Roth.
- 18 "[...] bei der Konstruktion von ethnischer Zugehörigkeit, Klasse und Geschlecht." Translated into English by Helene Roth.
- 19 An example of this is the film *Dead End* (1937) by Sam Goldwyn, which explores the social environment of Goldwyn's teenage years, the Lower East Side, as well as the conditions in New York's tenement housing estates.

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