

OTHER OPTIONS:
ARTISTS RE-INTERPRETING, ALTERING AND CREATING
INFRASTRUCTURE THAT AFFECTS THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts Administration and Policy

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Spring, 2008

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Abstract

OTHER OPTIONS is a both a research project and traveling exhibition that looks at artists, both historically and contemporaneously, who have re-interpreted, altered and created infrastructures, which have affected their everyday lives and artistic practice. Within the current climate of support, artists are increasingly incorporating new models of resource allocation, community building, funding structures and forms of exchange as part of their artistic production. OTHER OPTIONS is a way to share research, imagine solutions and create a simultaneous network of similar practices dealing with conditions of support for artistic production.

As a traveling exhibition, OTHER OPTIONS has identified contemporary artists' projects that incorporate ideas of support and infrastructure. These projects are then exhibited in cities where they are happening in order to create a local context for the entire exhibition, while simultaneously gathering information about similar practices along the way.

As a research project, OTHER OPTIONS considers two art historical projects with similar goals; Carol Goodden's FOOD and Haha's FLOOD, which includes an analysis of the political, social and economic milieus that influenced them. What aspects of these projects are potentially viable today? How does this research create a context for understanding similar contemporary practices? How can artists offer fresh perspectives on administrative and organizational approaches? What are some other options?

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Roman Petruniak and Abigail Satinsky for their hard work on the OTHER OPTIONS project, engaging conversations and general support. Thanks to Carol Goodden, Robert Kushner, Laurie Palmer and John Ploof for their willingness to be available for interviews. Thanks to those who took the time to read through my drafts and give valuable feedback: Brett Bloom, Melissa Matuscak, Ned Rossiter, Rachel Weiss, and George Wietor. Thanks to Paul Wittenbraker and Adam Wolpa who have continually challenged my thinking about the role of art. Thanks to all the artists who have participated in OTHER OPTIONS. Finally, thanks to Emma Heemskerk and for her emotional support and my family for their continued encouragement.

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Introduction:

In post-Reagan United States, federal spending on the humanities has seen dramatic decreases, but funding for the arts has faced the most challenging obstacles. It has become apparent that the current debate over how culture in the United States should be supported is not adequately summarized by the overly simplistic and binary distinction of public v. private, and thus it is necessary for the administrators of art and culture in America, as well as artists themselves, to seriously consider the historical precedents, theoretical parameters and real possibilities of working outside and in-between the established parameters of support in the United States.

With this research, I plan to raise the questions of how to develop, fund and support alternative infrastructure for commercial and non-commercial forms of art, culture and resistance that might be capable of fostering meaningful transformations of both self and society. Through an analysis of historical precedents and contemporary practice, I have observed models of support that address artists' needs in more effective ways by developing hybrid models as well as creating their own autonomous means of support. This research is presented here in a two-part sequence; an historical analysis of two artistic projects dealing with issues of infrastructure, and an analysis of works presented in OTHER OPTIONS.

In general, this research aims to articulate the current climate of support for artistic production in the United States and identify ways artists have created infrastructure and networks of support or developed their practices to account for minimal support that is

available. More specifically, this research includes a historical analysis of the New York City artist-run restaurant FOOD by considering it as a means of support for working artists in the 1970s. Secondly, it includes an analysis of Chicago-based artist group Haha's FLOOD project as a means of reallocating institutional support in order to incubate community-based projects and organizations. Finally, it will present examples of contemporary artistic practices by identifying a series of themes and similar approaches, which include new funding structures, imaginative uses of material and economic surplus, creative enterprise, as well as reallocation of institutional resources

Chapter 1: Problem of funding the arts in the United States

“Taking art seriously means defending the arts as a sector for action, decision taking, and change-making in our complicated world. It means putting the arts alongside politics, economics, policing, schooling, and medicine as a sector of serious significance.”¹

In the United States, the ability to fund artistic and cultural production (in particular the visual arts) is becoming increasingly more complex and problematic, especially since the “Culture Wars”² of the early and mid-1990s halted a system that upheld and legitimized challenging contemporary art in the eyes of many individual patrons and private foundations alike. Today, the competition for funding from both public and private sources is quite fierce. Furthermore, the established public support structures can only offer minimal financial support.

For example, in 1995 the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) eliminated individual artist grants, and soon after eliminated 13 of its 17 programs – which included the Visual Arts Program.³ The individual artists grants were not only a source of income for living artists, but also served as a legitimizing force in contemporary artistic practices. Once the NEA was publicly criticized for sponsoring art that addressed challenging views of

¹ Alberta Arthurs, "Taking Art Seriously," *American Art* 10, no. 3 (1996), 2-7.

² Joseph Zeigler, *Arts in Crisis*, (Chicago: a capella books, 1994), 67-78. Culture Wars in the United States began with the attack on Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ* in 1989 after receiving a SECCA grant, which took his work on a short tour of other SECCA grant recipients.

³ Diane Haithman. "Studying the Politics." (LA Times, 1995). Taken from: Donna M. Binkiewicz, *Federalizing the Muse: United States Arts Policy & the National Endowment for the Arts 1965-1980*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

societal changes, particularly dealing with race and gender, institutions began to self-censor, in fear of facing the same criticism brought upon the NEA by Senator Jesse Helms and others.⁴ The effects of the restructuring of the NEA in the 1990s resulted in an organization that no longer complies with the agency's mission written in 1965, "to help create and sustain not only a climate encouraging freedom of thought, imagination and inquiry, but also the material conditions facilitating the release of this creative talent." Beyond the "chilling effect," instilled by the attacks on the NEA during the 1990s, funding for the arts saw a dramatic shift - looking towards both private foundations and corporate giving.

The NEA's changed policy and the dramatic shift in public funding was warned against almost immediately. In 1995, Alberta Arthur, then director of the Rockefeller Foundation's art and humanities division, pointed out in a report to the President's Committee on Art and Humanities that, "private foundations, corporate and family foundations do their funding by guidelines and goals which are special to their interests and institutional purposes; they fund to advance their corporate ideas."⁵ Furthermore, in "Illusions of Private Giving." Robert Storr writes, "There are no substitutes for Government's contribution to cultural affairs. The coalition of support that has helped the arts to thrive in America is dangerously out of kilter." How can actual arts administrators working within arts institutions advance new ideas and ways of working when they are limited by the inclinations of family foundations and "corporate interests"? In a 1998

⁴ Michael Brenson, "Washington's Stake in the Arts." (New York Times, April 1998), sec. Arts.

⁵ Ibid.

article, Michael Brenson points out, “It is important to keep in mind that there is no model for private support in the United States that indicates that it, by itself, could meet the demands of this or any future artistic moment.” He continues, “the market system ignored exceptional artists earlier in the century, including many African-Americans, and it still gives little support to many exceptional artists, particularly those who prefer to work outside galleries and museums.” The struggle to work outside the grips of private persuasion is not limited to cultural production.

What are some other options?

In the introduction to *The Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, collaboratively written and edited by *INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence*, Andrea Smith points out many of the complexities concerning non-profit organizations in their tendency to perpetuate stasis, absorb resistance or change, and promote the interests of a wealthy contingent through the funding of family foundations and corporate donors. Though *INCITE!*'s text primarily focuses on organizations with visions of social justice, their critique of available funding models shares many of the same concerns with arts administrators such as Arthurs and Storr.

In addition, *INCITE!* addresses the ways in which the *non-profit industrial complex*, “promotes a social movement culture that is non-collaborative, narrowly focused, and competitive.” Such competition also affects arts organizations and individual artists, who are obligated to divert both time and energy away from what are traditionally seen as creative processes in order to meet financial obligations via the courting and cultivating

of state and federal granting agencies, private foundations, wealthy individual donors, etc. This level of competition allows for minimal opportunities for collaboration among like-minded organizations, often competing for the same support.

How then do organizations and artists interested in social and political change move forward? Is an oppositional or autonomous approach the only solution? What can be salvaged from the current state of non-profit organizations? What are the possibilities for hybrid approaches and reallocating institutional support? How can artists offer fresh perspectives on administrative and organizational approaches? What are some other options?

FOOD and FLOOD

The research presented here is primarily concerned with artistic and cultural practices that are generally considered to be activist or concerned with issues of social justice, political equality, economic inequality and other aspects of everyday life. Within contemporary art criticism, and as art historians begin to identify and canonize contemporary artistic practices, many classification have been invented in hopes to better understand non-object based or socially engaged work such as *new-genre public art*, *relational aesthetics*, *social practice* and *art as service*. As these histories are written and classifications given, much of the social and political efficacy of these projects are glossed over, excluded or simply forgotten. It is my interest to both discover and share these histories, as well as attempt to allow these practices to be appreciated simultaneously as an artistic practice and one with the potential to effect social and political change.

In order to look beyond academic art historical discourses and categorization, terms such as *relational aesthetics* will be discussed in order to identify why certain aspects of the work is excluded in their historicization. In addition, it will allow me to concentrate on how these practices and projects interact with issues of support and the infrastructures they engage with and create in order to sustain their practices and meet their goals.

In order to better understand the way that these contemporary practices are linked to the social, political and economic climates from which they arise, I have investigated similar artistic projects; Carol Goodden and Gordon Matta-Clark's FOOD restaurant from 1971 and Haha's FLOOD project from 1993.

This dissertation's historical analysis begins with looking at other options for supporting artists by creating small-scale infrastructures of support. FOOD was a restaurant run by Carol Goodden with the help of her then partner, Gordon Matta-Clark, in SoHo in the 1970s. SoHo, during this time, was a neighborhood in transition from an industrial corridor to a cultural hotbed with artists flocking to empty industrial buildings.

Following the formation of cooperatively run 112 Greene St., which later became what is now White Columns, FOOD was run by artists for artists. In an interview from 1971 with Jeffery Lew, founder of 112 Greene St., and artist Alan Saret in *Avalanche* magazine, Lew gives us some insight as to what was going on in SoHo during this time, "I think artists are really untogether [sic.] as a group, but very together as individuals.

The things which make you an artist can make you a revolutionary, can make you change

your own environment.” FOOD was a result of artists wanting to change their environment and, counter to Lew’s assumption, artists working together. A further analysis will allow us to see how Gooden and Matta-Clark and others worked to create cohesion within their community and infrastructure to support it. Within this research, FOOD is presented as an administrative attempt at creating an autonomous support structure for working artists. Throughout this dissertation, the word *autonomous* is used to articulate separateness from an institutionalized art world. By looking more closely at FOOD, the goal is to identify and consider ways in which support structures can develop and exist apart from formalized cultural institutions and the structures that support them.

Not only have artists attempted to create their own means of support and infrastructures to disseminate ideas and meet their goals, but the artistic avant-garde is also synonymous with a critique of mass culture, including the infrastructures which support and influence our daily lives. This critique of quotidian infrastructure is evident in the Chicago-based artist group Haha’s FLOOD project. In 1992, as part of Sculpture Chicago’s *Culture in Action*, Haha opened a storefront in the Rogers Park neighborhood, which housed a hydroponic garden growing fresh vegetables and therapeutic herbs for HIV/AIDS patients in the area. During Ronald Reagan’s two terms as President, the AIDS epidemic took the United States by storm. Reagan had been heavily criticized for not doing enough during the epidemic, not even publicly uttering the word “AIDS” until 1987, after more than six years of U.S. citizens being diagnosed and tens of thousands having died. There was not only a lack of practical infrastructure to deal with the crisis, but also a lack of social and emotional support, as well as access to reliable information about

HIV/AIDS. It is within this milieu that FLOOD is examined as a project which both critiqued a lack of substantive public infrastructure required to meet the needs of its constituency, and provided a social space for inquiry and collective understanding. According to the artists' statement, "the storefront was a place for life-affirming and collective activity in the face of the AIDS epidemic," achieved through thoughtful decisions and an organizational structure, which more effectively met the needs of people with HIV, their friends and family than the public health system.

Continuing to look at ways in which artists attempt to improve or re-imagine infrastructures, I will use FOOD and FLOOD as a context for understanding themes and goals in contemporary practices.

Contemporary Practices

This dissertation consists of both a research project and a traveling exhibition, which looks at artists both historically and contemporaneously who have re-interpreted, altered and created infrastructures, which have affected their everyday lives and artistic practice. Within the current climate of support, artists are increasingly incorporating models of resource allocation, community building, funding structures and forms of exchange as part of their artistic production. The exhibition is a way to share research, imagine solutions and create a simultaneous network of similar practices dealing with conditions of support for artistic production. Artists' projects presented in this exhibition are used as examples to better articulate different methods of addressing support employed by artists,

such as mimetic charitable giving, utilizing surplus and excess, creative enterprise and reallocating institutional support.

As a traveling exhibition, OTHER OPTIONS has identified contemporary artists' projects that incorporate ideas of support and infrastructure. This exhibition process simultaneously presents research and collects information administered by the Institute for Community Understanding Between Art and The Everyday (InCUBATE), a group of arts administrators and historians, of which I am part, who are dedicated to challenging current infrastructures and more specifically how they affect artistic production.

With this exhibition, we would like to raise the question of how to develop, and specifically how to fund alternative infrastructure for supporting commercial and non-commercial forms of art, culture and resistance. Through our research, we have found new models of support that address artists' needs in more effective ways by developing autonomous means of support, as well as employing strategies aimed at hybrid support structures.

This is not a typical traveling exhibition. OTHER OPTIONS travels to cities that are home to projects we have identified as being *other options* through our research. Each iteration of the show is different, yet one thing remains the same – it always features a local project, thus giving an audience familiarity and an access point to understand the additional projects featured in the exhibition.⁶ Moreover, as the exhibition travels it

⁶ From October 2007 until January 2009, OTHER OPTIONS will have traveled to nine different cities in the U.S. and Canada (Chicago, IL; Grand Rapids, MI; Pittsburgh, PA; Syracuse, NY; New York, NY; San Francisco, CA; Portland, OR; Champaign-Urbana, IL; Montreal, QC)

creates a simultaneous network of similar practices dealing with issues of infrastructure and support for cultural production.

As a research project, OTHER OPTIONS considers two art historical projects with similar goals; Carol Goodden's FOOD and Haha's FLOOD, which includes an analysis of the political, social and economic milieus that influenced them. What aspects of these projects are potentially viable today? How does this research create a context for understanding similar contemporary practices? What does it mean to execute these projects today compared to similar projects of the past? How can artists offer fresh perspectives on administrative and organizational approaches? What are some other options?

and will culminate with a large exhibition in Chicago in 2009 exhibiting all the projects that have been a part of OTHER OPTIONS.

Chapter 2:

FOOD

A Short History of SoHo: The setting for FOOD

The Cast-Iron district, later to be called SoHo, in New York City provided a fertile environment for many subcultures in the 1960s and 1970s. The area from Houston to the north and Canal to the south, straddled by Broadway and West Broadway, embraced countless abandoned steel-framed factory buildings left behind from former secondary service industries such as box factories. These large spaces, which required minimal financial obligation, allowed artists of all media to experiment – from the Judson Dance Theater to George Maciunas and Fluxus artists, to the building-cuts of Gordon Matta-Clark. SoHo provided the backdrop for innovative artistic practices.

In the mid-19th century the residential neighborhood slowly transitioned into an important commercial site which continued to grow, sprouting up building with high ceilings made possible by the newest technologies, specifically the use of steel I-beams and cast iron facades, which re-defined modern architecture. This growth was halted during World War II when the lofts could no longer keep up production demands due to their relative

size and their ability to keep up with advances in mass production processes.⁷ During the time following WWII, mostly in the mid to late 1950s, many of these buildings were razed. Artists began to slowly move into the remaining empty lofts following this initial phase of destruction, living there illegally under commercial leases negotiated by the owners of these buildings.⁸ As Pamela Lee points out in her text *Object to Destroyed: The work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, a group of artists formed the Artists Tenants Association (ATA) in 1961 with the primary goal of attempting to ensure legal residency for artists in Lower Manhattan.⁹ As a result of the ATA's energies, they were able to oversee the passing of Article 7-B (chap. 939, sec. 276) in 1964 – the New York State Multiple Dwelling Law. Using the argument that artists were an enriching force for urban life and required unconventional housing provisions, they were able to legally live in the cast-iron structured lofts, which were no longer occupied by businesses and factories. As Lee continues with her description of the effects of Article 7-B, she is quick to point out the reality of the law beneath the surface, which initially seems like a positive achievement. In order for the law to be exercised, the state government is required to define “artist,” which they describe as, “a person regularly engaged in the fine arts, such as painting and sculpture on a professional fine arts basis, and so certified by an art academy, association or society, recognized by the municipal office of cultural affairs or the state council on the arts.”¹⁰

⁷ Pamela Lee, *Object to be Destroyed*, (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 2000), 91.

⁸ Charles Simpson, *Soho: The Artist in the City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 119. The average lofts consisted of roughly 2,500 feet of unpartitioned space, and were rented for \$90.00 per month up until the mid-1960s.

⁹ Lee, *Object*, 96.

¹⁰ Simpson, *Soho*, 155.

During this time, those in the Cast-Iron district worked with a time-bomb ticking over their heads, waiting for the neighborhood to be leveled by the city to make room for the Broome St Expressway (commonly referred to as the Lower Manhattan Expressway or LoMEX), a plan designed by urban planner Robert Moses, who influenced the destruction of urban fabric across the U.S. under the name of *urban renewal*, to connect New Jersey and Brooklyn. This plan included an expressway running through what is now SoHo. Due to the persistent retaliation of Jane Jacobs and other active community members such as George Maciunas, who owned many buildings in the area, and Julie Judd¹¹, Donald Judd's wife, the plans for the expressway were halted by 1967. The buildings that once were light manufacturing lofts and secondary industrial factories were here to stay. By the late 1960s, there was a strong community of artists in the neighborhood South of Houston, yet there were still plenty of empty buildings. Many of these buildings were still being occupied illegally by artists despite Article 7-B, who refused to comply with it due to its narrow definition of the term "artist" and their continued un-definable experimentation happening in SoHo.

In 1967 after plans for the Broome Street Expressway fell through, George Maciunas purchased 80 Wooster Street and named it the Fluxhouse Cooperative II, which was cooperatively owned by several artists. "It was a cooperative in the sense of New York's legal system, that is, a purchaser bought shares in the corporation which owned the building and the shares carried with them a proprietary lease to a particular space. Corporate by-laws and New York City's zoning law stated that purchasers had to be

¹¹ Carol Goodden, interview by author, email. (January 22, 2008).

artists needing large spaces in which to work. Fluxhouse imposed no artistic criteria.”¹² Artists bought into the cooperative by purchasing a floor, which was roughly 5,000 square feet, for \$8,000 or for less if they wanted a portion of a floor.¹³ Some artists such as Charles Ross recall that it all, “sorted itself out quite nicely,” while others remained skeptical for obvious reasons, such as Maciunas' interpretation of laws pertaining to cooperatives, and kept their distance.

In 1970, the City Planning Commission passed a resolution allowing artists to legally live in SoHo after meetings and negotiations with the SoHo Artists Association (SAA), organized by Maciunas and others, which began in April 1969. The resolution included that all artists file a prospectus with the Attorney General, which could cost upwards of \$10,000.¹⁴ Maciunas refused to file a prospectus for 80 Wooster Street or any other of his co-op buildings in the neighborhood. After a warrant was filed for his arrest, he created a series of disguises to evade personnel from the Attorney General's office and continued purchasing buildings and turning them into co-ops until 1975.¹⁵ Carol Goodden, who would go on to finance and run FOOD, recalls almost purchasing one of these floors in the Fluxhouse Cooperative, “I was also going to buy a floor, but then there were complications in legalities with the Attorney General who claimed that this was illegal marketing. Maciunas was saying these project were under ‘agricultural co-op

¹² Jonas Mekas, “Fluxhouse Cooperative,” Art Spaces Archive Project, http://www.as-ap.org/surveyorg.cfm?org_id=1090.

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Hollis, Melton. "Notes on SoHo and a Reminiscence." (Visible Language 26, no. 1-2, 1992), 180-201.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

laws' and therefore did not need to file with the Attorney General.”¹⁶

During this same time, Jeffery Lew, with the influence of Matta-Clark, was running the experimental performance space and gallery 112 Greene St in SoHo. Similar to the cooperative nature of Maciunas' Fluxhouse, Lew offered several artists free or very affordable studio space in his building at 112 Greene St, while at the same time offering a very democratic way of exhibiting art. Artists such as Gordon Matta-Clark, Chris Burden, Laurie Anderson, William Wegman, Phillip Glass and Vito Acconci, among others, were all early participants in performances and exhibitions. The unfinished, malleable space served as both a central social meeting place at the time, as well as an ideological inspiration for the possibilities of artists working together. Carol Goodden recalls 112 Greene St in her aspirations for FOOD:

[E]ven if I was the only one providing the money, I thought (hoped?) that there could be more of a sharing of the work, for the benefit of all. 112 Greene St. was even more so a socialist-system because the building was owned by Jeffrey Lew and he "gave" the space to those artists he liked and let them do whatever they wanted.¹⁷

It was within this milieu and time of transition in Lower Manhattan that Carroll Goodden, Gordon Matta-Clark and Tina Girouard opened FOOD. What were the goals of a restaurant that supported and employed artists, as well as catered to artists as customers

¹⁶ Carol Goodden, interview by author, email, (February 20, 2008).

¹⁷ *ibid.*

in an area populated almost completely by artists? What can we gain from looking at FOOD in this context? What can we gain from considering FOOD's administrative goals as a potential viable option for supporting artists today? Through a brief historical analysis of FOOD, I will attempt to answer these questions, as well as identify certain criteria for measuring its successes and failures.

The Beginning of FOOD: Art, Community, and Financial Support

The foundations of FOOD began with a casual conversation between Carol Goodden and Gordon Matta-Clark in 1971 at a dinner party hosted by Goodden in her home. This particular party was themed with flowers; guests came dressed as flowers, the food served was decorated with flowers and there were even edible flowers. Due to the popularity of the parties like this and Goodden and Matta-Clark's interest in cooking,¹⁸ both experimental and the quotidian, Matta-Clark suggested Goodden open a restaurant. SoHo had been legally zoned as residential at this point, but the conveniences of residential areas did not exist. At the time, there was only one restaurant – Comidas Criollas, a struggling Puerto-Rican restaurant located at the geographic top of the neighborhood¹⁹.

Goodden's inheritance and Gordon's charisma allowed the two to begin develop a solid plan for a co-operatively run restaurant with the primary goals of getting the dinner

¹⁸ Lee, *Object*. Gordon Matta-Clark was interested in the processes of cooking. During this time he had been frying photographs and cooking other materials with agar agar.

¹⁹ "They opened early and closed by 3 P.M., breakfast and lunch basically. I bought them out of the remainder of their lease," Goodden, interview, February 20, 2008. "They were happy to leave. The landlord's, fresh to SoHo, were thrilled to get rid of them," Goodden's memoir.

parties out of Goodden's home, providing a socially engaging public meeting place and eatery, and most importantly providing jobs with minimal demands, good pay and flexibility. "I was intending to relieve myself and nourish the community in the form of comestibles and finances."²⁰ Just months after the dinner party conversation, Goodden had arranged to buy Comidas Criollas out of their lease and re-negotiated the terms of the rent with the owners of the building. During this same time, Goodden was attempting to find others to back the restaurant financially, as well as curating a staff of artist-chefs with unique palettes and others in need of a steady paycheck. An early staff roster boasted artists such as dancer Barbara Dilley Lloyd²¹ as salad chef, musician Robert Prado as lunch chef, musician Richard Peck²² as dishwasher, and Gordon Matta-Clark as internal architect and an organizer and participant of the legendary guest chef dinners on Sunday nights.

Despite her efforts, Goodden became the primary financier of FOOD and in late 1971 Goodden, Matta-Clark, Tina Girouard, Dick Landry and others began to strip the storefront on Prince and Wooster of any evidence of its former tenant. During this renovation, Matta-Clark made one of his first cut pieces – which would later become one of his identifying modes of working.²³

On Saturday September 25, to mark the unofficial opening of *Food*, an

²⁰ Goodden, interview, January 14, 2008. Lloyd was a dancer with Merce Cunningham, a formidable contemporary dance troupe during the time

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Prado and Peck were both musicians with the Phillip Glass Ensemble

²³ Goodden, interview, January 14, 2008.

artist-run restaurant at 127 Prince Street, free garlic soup, gumbo, chicken stew, wine, beer, and home-made brats were served to friends, gallery-goers, and passers-by until late in the evening.²⁴

During the first year of existence FOOD was run as the utopian, socialist organization that its founders hoped it would be. The restaurant was a site for art to happen. One of the most written about of these happenings was one of Matta-Clark's guest chef dinners with Hisachika Takahashi, recalled here by Goodden:

It was a Bone Dinner. We drove my pick up to the meat market and filled the back (how amazingly unsanitary!!) with bones - backbones, neck bones, sawed up leg bones. We used some of the bones to boil down into aspic, which was made into a salad, we made an ox-tail soup, we stuffed bones in the center of the circle with wild rice and mushrooms and whatallesc [sic.] This was the meal that was served to the people and when they finished, (Gordon's idea), the plates were taken back to Richard Peck who scrubbed up the bones and then Hisachika Takahashi, a painter and jeweler, drilled holes through the bones and strung them on a rope. The rope-bone necklace was handed to the client so that he/she could wear their dinner home.²⁵

Just as famous as this dinner that actually happened, was the proposed guest chef dinner

²⁴ *Avalanche*, Fall 1971.

²⁵ Goodden, interview, January 16, 2008.

by Mark di Suvero who wanted to serve the meal through the front window with a crane he had recently acquired from a Guggenheim grant²⁶. Working in the physical space of FOOD was obviously an inspiration. Renovating the former Comida Criollas, inspired Matta-Clark's cut pieces and working in the restaurant influenced artists' work. For example Richard Peck of the Phillip Glass ensemble made tape recordings of the sounds created while washing dishes, and Robert Kushner staged performances involving leftover food from the restaurant, which consisted of friends wearing Velveeta epaulets and eggplant codpieces.²⁷

FOOD had begun to achieve its initial goals of getting the dinner parties out of Goodden's home, providing a decent exciting and nourishing place to eat and talk, and offering jobs for artists with little demands and lots of flexibility. But by 1972, FOOD started to lose some of the initial excitement, Matta-Clark was seen in the restaurant less and less and the reality of FOOD as a business began to set it in.

In 1972, at the age of twenty-two, Robert Kushner traveled from California to New York, showing up in the city with the ambition to be a working artist, but initially lacking the resources to live the day-to-day. Kushner quickly learned of FOOD and its reputation of employing artists and found out that they were looking for a dessert chef. "In order to work at FOOD, I was required to cook two dishes to try out. I cooked macrobiotic and it didn't taste good. The other person trying out brought cake mixes." Despite not being

²⁶ Catherine Morris, *FOOD: An exhibition by White Columns*, (New York. New York: White Columns, 1999).

²⁷ Alexandria Anderson-Spivy, *Gardens of Earthly Delights*. (Manchester, Vt.: Hudson Hills Press, 1997).

hired after the initial “try out,” Kushner was soon working at FOOD and within two months Goodden hired him as her assistant manager with two stipulations; hire artists and make a profit. As Goodden’s “right hand man in management,”²⁸ he realized the initial goals of the restaurant and his innate business-sense and cues from other business owners in the neighborhood allowed him to eventually make the restaurant a profit.

I knew that artists had a hard time with “jobs” because of the required schedules. Some even lost their jobs if they chose to leave for a week in order to mount and attend a show that they had been invited to, which was important, needless to say to their very survival as an artist.²⁹

Employees at the restaurant started out earning \$2.50 an hour plus tips, which approximately amounts to just over \$13/hr today.³⁰ As the wage was calculated to provide for the working artist, rather than derived from a budget for the restaurant, the hourly wage was much more than that paid by other restaurants. Kushner recalls realizing how well FOOD paid artists after talking with temporary workers hired from an agency, who worked faster and more efficiently than FOOD’s employees and were very satisfied with the money they made there compared to other restaurants in which they worked.

²⁸ Morris, *FOOD*.

²⁹ Goodden, interview, January 14, 2008.

³⁰ This number is based on the Consumer Price Index from January of 1971 and 2008. The annual inflation over this period was 4.61%. Inflation calculator is available at <http://www.dollartimes.com/calculators/inflation.htm>

During this time, Kushner was working full time as an assistant manager making \$320 per week (\$1,697 in 2008), “which was ridiculous.” Living in SoHo, he was paying an average rate monthly rent at \$380, so with the wage he was making at FOOD it was very affordable to live and create work at the same time.³¹ In 1972, during this period, Kushner staged a performance *Robert Kushner and Friends Eat Their Clothes* at the Mercer Street Loft (now The Kitchen), an interdisciplinary performance space, which had been formed just a year before. The performance was directly influenced by his time spent at FOOD (even the food used in the performance was surplus from the restaurant), and Kushner’s thinking and interest in the dematerialization of the object, as well as the basic necessities of life; shelter, food and clothing.³²

With the insight of other business owners in the neighborhood, Kushner was able to learn the unconventional record keeping that allowed businesses to stay open in a struggling city. Soon FOOD was in the black and, by the end of 1973, Goodden offered to hand over the restaurant to Kushner with the agreement that she with her friends would be able to eat there for free. Kushner returned to California for a brief period of time and contemplated the decision.

“I moved to New York to be an artist, not to run a restaurant.”³³

Upon his return to New York, Kushner turned down Goodden’s offer, but continued to

³¹ Robert Kushner, interview by author, email, (February 10, 2008).

³² Anderson-Spivy, *Garden*, 21.

³³ Kushner, interview, February 10, 2008.

work occasionally, part-time at FOOD through 1974. Once Goodden handed the restaurant over to another owner, FOOD, as its founders knew it, was over. It is during this time, from its inception in 1971 until the end of Goodden's involvement in 1974, on which I will focus my analysis.

Analysis of FOOD:

The writing available on FOOD³⁴ generally focuses on Gordon Matta-Clark's involvement and how it relates to his practices outside of the restaurant. For example, Pamela Lee describes FOOD as the site of Matta-Clark's first cut-piece and more recently Lori Waxman finds room for the project in the artistic-gastronomic trajectory, relating it to contemporary discourses around food as art and relational aesthetics. Approaching FOOD only as an artistic practice, a hub of social interaction or a recollection of patrons as a who's-who of early SoHo, though beneficial, would surely be deficient. By looking closely at the personal goals of those who ran the restaurant, I look toward them as a starting point in addressing the creative administrative aspirations. This type of creative administration can be identified by its lack of categorization as a business, not-for-profit organization or even an art project.

We were trying to feed artists cheaply, with good food, and provide them a means to make a living that would not interfere with their art.³⁵

³⁴ This includes various Gordon Matta-Clark exhibition catalogs, as well as Pamela Lee's Object to be Destroyed and more recently research presented by Lori Waxman in various articles.

³⁵ Goodden, interview, January 16, 2008.

Goodden's goals going into the project were quite simple: provide an engaging social meeting place for artists and people living in the neighborhood, as well as provide jobs and a positive work environment catering to working artists. This meant providing flexible schedules and wages which would support not only daily amenities, but everything else that involved being an artist. This approach was not typical for a restaurant, or any business, and had Goodden gone to work in a typical restaurant, as was advised by the managers of her newly acquired inheritance, it may have never worked out this way.

If Goodden and others were not devising their budget based on an economic cost/benefit analysis in terms of maximizing profit for the business, how do we begin to judge this aspect of the project as a success or failure? Do we consider it simply as a restaurant? Do we consider it simply an art project?

The Economics of FOOD

FOOD existed in a time when the National Endowment for the Arts was still a reflection of the Great Society³⁶ and before the Alternative Art Spaces movement was even a consideration for the NEA.³⁷ The ideal career track for an artist during this time was to attend school, and then either attract a gallerist or get a teaching job. If that was not a possibility, aspiring artists would attempt to work a day job and continue working in the studio during their free time. This was often not a conducive relationship, Goodden

³⁶ NEA was formed in 1965

³⁷ Grant Kester, *Art, Activism and Oppositionality*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 110-111. NEA's Workshop Program formed in 1972, "was instrumental in forming many of the early alternative artists spaces."

recalls,

artists had a hard time with ‘jobs’ because of the required schedules. Some even lost their jobs if they chose to leave for a week in order to mount and attend a show that they had been invited to, which was important to their survival as an artist.³⁸

As a working artist coming from such a milieu, Goodden opened FOOD with inspiration from rural utopian communities such as Mad Brook Farm in Vermont, with which the restaurant would later develop a relationship, and attempted to realize socialist organizational structures in an urban areas. As with many intentional communities, they are funded by an individual or small group of individuals with ideological aspirations. In the case of 112 Greene St., Jeffery Lew purchased the building and gave several artists access and free reign to work in the space, mount exhibitions and stage performances. The cooperative environment of 112 Greene St relied heavily on collaboration and was seen by many as a major shift from the previous generation of Minimalist work, which was very much tied to midtown galleries.³⁹ This break is evident in Lew’s recollection of how the space operated.

They would say, Jeffrey, could I have a show here? My answer would be “No!” but then of course they would have their show. They would just walk in and do it. That’s what I liked about it – the fact that there was no

³⁸ Gooden, interview, January 14, 2008.

³⁹ Lee, *Object*: 61.

administration. None... I was the head administrator. And, of course, nobody listened to me.⁴⁰

Though Lew's interpretation of what actually went on in the space may be somewhat of an exaggeration, 112 Greene St., despite its "no administration," was host to many exhibitions and performances. The way they were organized shifted the paradigm in which many young artists in New York thought about making art. Soon after opening, Lew's space became more than just an exhibition space. It became a social space - an incubator of ideas, relationships and projects such as FOOD. Just as Lew provided resources to artists living in SoHo at his own expense, Goodden envisioned a similar effort in opening the restaurant, but rather, hoped to create a more sustainable model that would potentially be self-perpetuating or at some level profitable. She recalls, "My 'inspiration' to make FOOD a community effort was firstly conservation of my capital and secondly conservations of my energies."

Gooden's aspiration to provide an alternative means of support for artists that was both empathetic to their unconventional lifestyles and obligations and, unlike Lew, based on a system of reciprocity rather than generosity, was unprecedented. The ideological framework for FOOD as a means of support had the potential to shift the field of power relationships that often predetermined and perpetuated certain modes of artistic production. As Pierre Bourdieu notes, "the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the

⁴⁰ 112 Workshop/112 Greene St. p. 2

writer and therefore delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer.”⁴¹ In regards to SoHo in the late 1960s and early 1970s, there is a forced shift, or reclamation, of possibilities in terms of who holds the authority to legitimize an individual as an artist. As Bourdieu also points out, it is because of the permeable frontiers and porous borders of the field of cultural production, as opposed to the economic or educational fields, which allows for such shifts to happen. By slightly lessening artists’ economic dependence on the gallery and university systems, FOOD created a new level of both economic and imaginative autonomy, as well as attempted to create a horizontal value structure, which differed from the nonlinear hierarchical structure of the established art world.

Setting up a comparison between 112 Greene St and FOOD begins to illuminate some of the aspects that set FOOD apart from previous avant-garde efforts. Continuing with Bourdieu’s *field of cultural production*, the avant-garde’s interest in economic autonomy becomes more apparent:

Thus, at least in the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers, the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of ‘loser wins’, on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and

⁴¹ Bourdieu, Pierre . *The Field of Cultural Production*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 42.

monetary gains), that of power, and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue).⁴²

Bourdieu's description clarifies many of the characteristics of 112 Greene St., in terms of how it fits within the larger field of cultural production. The audience and those who gathered around the space were primarily artists, despite its inclusive intentions. A frequenter of the space, sculptor Jene Highstein, recalls the general perception of the democratically organized, but often chaotic, space, "Actually, some people were very afraid of going into 112 Greene Street."⁴³ Not only was it aimed at catering to other artists, but the upside-down economic approach did not account or intend for any profit. This is also true for many of the artists who staged site-specific work, performance and ephemeral works. This disregard for profit and the approval of established cultural institutions allowed for projects to be realized that would not necessarily be feasible within the paradigm of the Midtown gallery world.

Similar in its egalitarian and inclusive nature, FOOD set out on a much different project. In its beginnings, "all anyone (artist) had to do was ask for a job and he/she got one."⁴⁴ As most people in the neighborhood already knew each other, hiring agreements were easily made initially, but the open structure also allowed for newcomers like Ned

⁴² Ibid., 39.

⁴³ Lee, *Object*, 61.

⁴⁴ Gooden, interview, January 16, 2008.

Smythe⁴⁵ and Robert Kushner to join FOOD easily. Not only did the restaurant constantly attract a staff of artists, but also a large patronage of artists from around the city as well as non-artists. Though, Goodden and others were not necessarily interested in maximizing profit, making a profit was still a goal.

As Lori Waxman points out in her recent article *The Banquet Years: FOOD, a SoHo restaurant in the early 1970s*, the daily procedures at FOOD were much different than any other restaurant during its time. For example, the latest restaurant operating procedures consisted of serving pre-cooked frozen dishes, rather than making food from scratch. The food served at FOOD was grown locally, the fish was fresh, and the meat was purchased from the local meat market. Even the bread was baked fresh daily by bakers from Mad Brook Farm, who were given free places to stay in exchange for their services. The menu was different each day, depending on who was cooking. None of these procedures were efficient, but Goodden and Matta-Clark aspired to create a particular aesthetic by designing everything from their own pots and pans to the kitchen cabinets, which they achieved – and in turn attracted a steady business. Though their tables would often be full throughout the day, it was still difficult to make money with such inefficient procedures.

FOOD's ability to create some level of autonomy and keep such a lively menu, along with still paying artists a decent wage and generally keeping the restaurant afloat in the

⁴⁵ Smythe presented a memoir on the occasion of Gordon Matta-Clark: Bingo, Apr. 10-May 8, 2004, at the David Zwirner Gallery in New York. He describes hitchhiking from Colorado to New York City being picked up by Keith Sonnier and Dickie Landry were both involved with early FOOD.

first year, was mostly due to Goodden's financial backing. It was not until almost two years into the project that FOOD pulled in a profit due to the creative accounting of Kushner.⁴⁶ In addition, Kushner also began to look at creative ways in which to reuse ingredients leftover from lunch and incorporate them into dinner. It is within this maturing transition that potentially viable economic models could have been developed, but by 1974 the FOOD project, as its founders envisioned it, was over. The initial cooperative nature of the restaurant had fallen to the wayside for many reasons, which includes the change in personnel. Before being passed on to a new owner, FOOD had reached a point that was much different from its outset. The fact that the restaurant even broke even, let alone pulled a profit, is a success in itself. From a purely economic standpoint, FOOD was successful by its own standards of providing cheap eats and solid wages, as well as providing the economic means and time for its artist-employees to work freely and seemingly autonomous.

What does it mean when the power to legitimize an artist shifts from gallery directors and institutions to restaurateurs? By taking control of the source of economics in providing for artists, FOOD was able to alleviate the need to meet obligations that had once defined the established powers within the field. Goodden, Matta-Clark and others were not necessarily redefining art, but rethinking the possibilities of where art can happen and how it can be supported.

⁴⁶ Details of this "creative accounting" cannot be discussed publicly in order to protect all persons involved.

Making Space for Art

In a recent essay, *Making Space for Art*, Mary Jane Jacob recalls working on an exhibition with an artist who helped Jacob define her role as curator.

... I make a space – the conditions and circumstances, intellectually, socially, physically, in whatever ways necessary – for the artist to make art: empty space, a space of experimentation, and more than that, a space in which the artist can linger not knowing.⁴⁷

This definition of the curatorial role and the idea of “making space,” can be beneficial in understanding Goodden’s and others’ role at FOOD. As I’ve pointed out numerous times, the history of FOOD is often written as a performance piece set in motion or a series of events orchestrated by a single artist, but what can we learn from FOOD when we consider it in terms of making space for art to happen? Considering the role of Goodden, Kushner and others as arts administrators reveals the creatively organized infrastructure, which inspired and supported new ways of working outside of the studio to museum continuum.

“It was Gordon's idea that FOOD was an art object. When Gordon made his early pieces of *Fry Fotos* and the *Pig Roast*, they were "events" in his mind. They were artworks that he created amongst many people and he wished to feed those people, either through their feasting eyes or their

⁴⁷ Mary Jane Jacob, "Making Space for Art," *In What Makes a Great Exhibition?*, edited by Paula Marincola, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2007), 135.

feasting stomachs.”⁴⁸

Waxman also points out, “the larger category of relational aesthetics, to which Rirkrit Tiravanija’s installation-events belong, arguably owes much to the precedent of FOOD.” Though I find this to be true on some levels, making some clarifications will help us better understand FOOD’s influence on contemporary practices. Tiravanija’s work doesn’t appear to owe anything more to FOOD than it does any other daily activity. Bourriaud describes Tiravanija’s work, and others whose work fits the rubric of *relational aesthetics*, as “an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interaction and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space.”⁴⁹ FOOD was a public social space where artists worked and gathered to eat - art was bound to find its way into the restaurant with them (and find its way out of the restaurant too), but it becomes problematic to identify the structure of FOOD as a relational work.

In response to Bourriaud’s discussion of relational work, Claire Bishop states, “relational art works seek to establish intersubjective encounters (be these literal or potential) in which meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than in the privatized space of individual consumption.” She continues, “Moreover, this audience is envisaged as a community: rather than a one-to-one relationship between work of art and viewer, relational art sets up situations in which viewers are not just addressed as a collective, social entity, but are actually given the wherewithal to create a community, however temporary or utopian this

⁴⁸ Gooden, interview, January 16, 2008.

⁴⁹ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (France: Les Presse Du Reel, 1998), 14.

may be.”

Granted, the customers of FOOD had an experientially collective encounter while eating their meals there, but did they perceive the *soup du jour* as an artistic gesture? Where is the line drawn between creating a community as an artistic practice and creating community as a way of supporting artistic work? Looking back at FOOD via the lens of *relational aesthetics* gives us a blurred vision of FOOD’s intentions. Surely, the guest chef dinners organized by Matta-Clark were received (and became complete) with a collective audience, just as some of Tiravanija’s gallery events, and sounds and scraps from the restaurant were used in performances outside of FOOD, but these were all smaller elements visible within the *mise-en-scene* of Matta-Clark’s documentary film.⁵⁰

FOOD not only provided financial and comestible support, but it created a social network that provided meaningful relationships and opportunities to think and work outside the institutional framework of the art world. It allowed Richard Peck and other members of the Phillip Glass ensemble to record sounds from washing dishes, provided money and time to produce their work and a social space to meet artists, dancers and other collaborators. It was a space for Robert Kushner to earn an income to live in New York, a place to meet new people and find emotional support, as well as inspiration for pieces like *Robert Kushner and Friends Eat Their Clothes*. FOOD was a place where Matta-Clark could continue realizing projects that bordered between art, life and play - most importantly a place where Goodden and others created a much needed support structure

⁵⁰ Food, Gordon Matta-Clark. 1972, 43 min, b&w, sound, 16 mm film on video. Available from Electronic Media Intermix, <http://www.eai.org>.

that was not only successful on their terms, but inspired future generations to consider making space for their work outside galleries, museums and the institutional paradigm.

FOOD lived on as an inspiration to future generations of artists who wanted to pursue non-object based artistic practices as well as find ways of working autonomously from large cultural institutions or under the influence of the market.

“FOOD gave us permission to do a project [like FLOOD].”⁵¹

FOOD offers a case study of how, potentially, a space unbound from the support and concerns of cultural institutions and the art market can develop and exist as a viable means of autonomous support. The restaurant’s success exists beyond the influence of Gooden, Kushner and Matta-Clark, but lay in the ways in those who worked at FOOD were able to look beyond the typical hierarchical structure of a profit-oriented business. The level of collaboration and flexibility of workers roles allowed the restaurant to avoid typical classification, and offered a rich context for building a community based around shared interests and values. Similarly, the needs and interests of individuals, rather than businesses or institutions, can be addressed within organizational structures that still partially rely on institutional support. Similar to autonomous structures, hybrid approaches assert their separateness by not relying on a single source of support. By leveraging a multiplicity of income sources, projects such as FLOOD are able to operate on multiple levels of reception simultaneously.

⁵¹ Laurie Palmer, interview with the author, (February 24, 2008).

Chapter 2:

FLOOD

The possibility of hybrid support structures for cultural production can be seen in Haha's FLOOD project. By reallocating resources, Haha was able to incubate a project into an organizational structure that lived beyond any institutional intention. This chapter considers the possibility of reallocating institutional support and utilizing a hybrid support structure to better meet the needs of artists working today. In order to better understand the various circumstances FLOOD operated within, I will investigate the project within the context of *Culture in Action*, as well as the AIDS crisis and the neighborhood of Rogers Park where it existed.

“The garden is a covenant, a tangible tie, emblematic of the complex and manifold links of care between community and an individual, and if it is given sufficient care, it will grow and survive”

-Haha

The Chicago-based artist group, Haha consists of four individuals with distinctive artistic practices; Wendy Jacob, Laurie Palmer and John Ploof. As a collective, they had previously worked with intentional publics. For example, in preparation for “Murmur” (1989), over the period of a year, Haha had developed a relationship with an African-American water-polo team on the city’s west side who trained at LaFollette Park Field house. The project dealt specifically with the utilitarian function of the field house as well as its social function by creating a dramatic multi-media display around the space where these athletes, now active participants in the work, would train.⁵² Audiences from the east side of the city, which were predominantly white, came to the LaFollette Park on the west side, which was predominantly African-American. Haha was not unfamiliar with social tensions that arose from participation in and spectatorship of their projects.

In 1992, Haha, was asked to participate in the upcoming public art exhibition *Culture in Action*, a program of Sculpture Chicago curated by Mary Jane Jacob. The stipulations of Culture in Action required the project take place over a year in Chicago and engage a public as participants, rather than welcome a passive audience. This approach established a very divergent platform from past Sculpture Chicago programs and public art programs in general. Haha’s contribution resulted in an indoor hydroponic garden and a social space dedicated to creating a community around addressing the needs of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

From an interview with Haha:

⁵² From the artists’ description of the project available at <http://www.hahahaha.org>.

“For a lot of us *FLOOD* was more than a kind of magnanimous gesture of providing something for someone else. It became a way of figuring out something for ourselves and then figuring out something collectively. AIDS is a situation, which, I think, impacts people very differently. But it’s something that everyone was and is dealing with now. I think that’s different than the production of food too. The social aspects, the networks, the conversations, the kind of information sharing and teach-ins that happened there were part of the whole project in very important ways.⁵³

From 1992 to 1995, FLOOD became an educational meeting place, an HIV/AIDS service a source of information on alternative remedies, a host for bi-weekly dinners, a hydroponic garden and the list continues. As Brett Bloom points out in his essay, *Alluvial Deposits*, FLOOD offered “distributed aesthetics,” as art it could not be defined to one center point, but only to a series of individual aesthetic experiences and meetings which created a larger social situation. Bloom writes:

There was no whole or undivided aesthetic experience that could be readily known and consumed. The people who encountered FLOOD had different levels of engagement with it, different subjectivities, different ideas of art. Some, indeed, refused to see the work as art.⁵⁴

FLOOD’s success in many ways, was just that: some refused to see it as art.

⁵³ *Group Work*, edited by Temporary Services (New York: Printed Matter, 2007).

⁵⁴ Brett Bloom, *Alluvial Deposits*, (2008), unpublished.

Not only did the project offer a *disbursed aesthetics*, but its execution and existence illuminated the constraints and boundaries of multiple support structures like state funded public health programs, small non-profit health organizations, and institutional support for the arts, while at the same time creating an organizational structure of its own, which, in some ways, more effectively met the needs of people with HIV, their friends and family than the public health system.

Sculpture Chicago: Culture in Action - the Setting for FLOOD

“Culture in Action presented a series of experiments in the urban laboratory of Chicago. The city served as a locus in which artists could explore pressing social and political issues, a canvas on which they could layer the concerns of individual communities.”

-Eva Olson, Executive Director of Sculpture Chicago (1995)

In the *Culture in Action* catalog published in 1995 (two years after the initiation of the project) Mary Jane Jacob provides a history of public art in the U.S. leading up to her organizing Sculpture Chicago. This history is helpful in understanding how Jacob’s curatorial premise was translated through artists’ projects, such as FLOOD.

During the mid-century in the United States, the concept of public art slowly shifted from the idea of monuments, memorials and celebratory mythic personifications to that of

giving the public access to the “best” contemporary art, as well as widening the contemporary art audience.⁵⁵ This shift is seen in the formations of state and municipal Percent for Art programs, the NEA’s Art-in-Public-Places Program and U.S. General Services Administration’s Art-in-Architecture program, all developed in the 1960s.⁵⁶ These programs were synonymous with the urban renewal movement in cities throughout the country and resulted in large abstract sculptures in the center of cemented public squares, often referred to as “plop art”.

“Plop art” thrived throughout most of the 1970s, complimenting the Modernist architecture built around them. Furthering this idea, by the late 1970s the NEA was encouraging artists to contribute to the overall design of urban areas, but now emphasizing that art should be “appropriate to the immediate site.”⁵⁷ As the focus of NEA commissions changed by integrating ideas of site specificity, the NEA’s Visual Arts and Design programs found it important to involve the artist in the overall planning of the work by encouraging “interaction of visual artists and design professionals through the exploration and development of new collaborative models.”⁵⁸ Projects under this new guise resulted in utilitarian works that were no longer seen as “just a sculpture.”⁵⁹

According to Jacob’s history, by the 1980s artists began to take site-specificity to mean

⁵⁵ Mary Jane Jacob. *Outside the Loop*, 53.

⁵⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, (Boston: M.I.T. Press, 2004), 64.

⁵⁷ Jacob, *Outside the Loop*, 53. Taken from the official Art in Public Places grant application guidelines of the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ An example of this work given by Jacob is the now demolished Pritzker Park designed by artist Ronald Jones, which existed at 350 S. State St.. The “park-cum-artwork” built on an entire city block slated for demolition.

more than just formal concerns and physical location, which resulted in more of a focus on themes such as social history and cultural identity.⁶⁰ This shift in the idea and definition of “site-specificity” becomes apparent in the controversy which surrounded the removal and proposed relocation of Richard Serra’s *Tilted Arc*⁶¹ when he responds to the situation by saying:

[T]he preliminary analysis of a given site takes into consideration not only formal but also social and political characteristics of the site. Site-specific works invariably manifest a judgment about the larger social and political context of which they are a part.⁶²

The situation surrounding *Tilted Arc* illuminated the closed process of implementing public works of art by the federal government and the General Service’s Administration’s Art in Architecture program, and its failure to involve the community or instigate a conversation between artists and the public during this process. *Culture in Action* can be seen in opposition to *Tilted Arc*, evidenced by its increased emphasis on involving, and even creating, community in the process of developing public art works.

According to Eleanor Heartney in a review of Jacob’s text:

"Culture in Action" is evidence of a major shift that has taken place in the

⁶⁰ Jacob, *Outside the Loop*, 54.

⁶¹ Kwon, *One Place*, 74.

⁶² Serra, “*Tilted Arc* destroyed,” 202. A detailed history of *Tilted Arc* and the implications of its removal are available in Kwon’s text, 69-84

dialogue surrounding public art since the debacle of *Tilted Arc*. While efforts to merge art and life through community service have been in evidence since the '60s, only recently have they emerged as an institutionally supported alternative to what is being characterized as the unresponsive, irrelevant and overly artist-centered tradition of public art.⁶³

Heartney's observation is accurate and illustrates a major point regarding institutional support for work that aims to blur art and life that is just briefly touched upon in Jacob's text. Rather than pointing out the benefits of institutional support, Jacob emphasizes the arts institutions' walls as hurdles for the general public and celebrates how art has extended beyond those walls in ways "that actualized their critique of culture."⁶⁴

In her essay, "An Unfashionable Audience," Jacob condemns contemporary art museums as sources of power and profit, which, "operate according to principles of connoisseurship derived from their eighteenth-century origins," yet still relies on these same institutions to support her curatorial endeavors.⁶⁵ How can artists working for social change not only leave the walls of the institution, but shed the weight of art institutions described by Jacob?

⁶³ Eleanor Heartney. "Review: Culture in Action: A public art program of Sculpture Chicago," review of *Culture in Action: A public art program of Sculpture Chicago* edited by Mary Jane Jacob, *Art in America*, June, 1995.

⁶⁴ Jacob, *Outside the Loop*, 51.

⁶⁵ A short list of sponsors for *Culture in Action* include The Andy Warhol Foundation, University of Illinois-Chicago, School of the Art Institute, Prince Charitable Trusts, etc. From *Culture in Action: A public program of Sculpture Chicago*.

Jacob continues:

This system of division and classification permeates the institution's class-oriented structure of patrons, trustees, membership, special events, and so on. Thus, when foundations or community spokespersons call for a revamping of the system to open up to new audiences, they are met with resistance or the inability to re-shape the museum's collections, facilities, exhibitions, programs, staff and boards; instead, a token representation or temporary trend occurs. In other words, reformers discover that at the very core such art institutions are at odds with new social agendas.⁶⁶

Jacob asserts that by simply departing from the confines of the physical institution, "new meaningful ways to engage a wider audience for contemporary art can be greatly multiplied." FLOOD remains a perfect example of this possibility, yet at the same time the project relied on the same institutional support as the museums that *Culture in Action* attempted to distance itself from. FLOOD's success is reflected in its hybrid approach of using institutional support in tandem with other forms of non-institutional support, which allowed the project to exist in multiple spheres of reception simultaneously.

Culture in Action provided a stipend of \$20,000 for Haha to pay for the project for an entire year.⁶⁷ Unlike many of the other *Culture in Action* projects, the funds acted as seed

⁶⁶ Mary Jane Jacob, "Unfashionable Audience." In *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacy, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 51-52.

⁶⁷ Laurie Palmer and John Ploof, interview, February 24, 2008.

money for a project that would go on to exist beyond the one year. According to Haha:

Sculpture Chicago was a galvanizing force for the project. It pushed us to formalize ideas we may have tried to do in another way. It also gave us support to get a storefront, which was huge – a place to meet and work. More than any other project we've done, it afforded us that ability to work full-time for a year.⁶⁸

Beyond the *Non-profit Industrial Complex*

Beyond *Culture in Action*, FLOOD became a point where the often overlooked or unreachable needs of small social service organizations could be met or at least addressed. As an organization, FLOOD was not held accountable to a board of directors like a 501c3 non-profit organization, which allowed them to imagine beyond by-laws or a mission statement. The storefront not only housed a hydroponic garden, which produced bacteria free produce for those with HIV/AIDS, but became a gathering point for representatives from various organizations. While working in Rogers Park, FLOOD collaborated with several different groups and included members of other social welfare organizations in the area with similar goals. For example, Open Hand Chicago, a non-profit food distribution network, acted as FLOOD's fiscal agent. There were also multiple organizations offering counseling services in the area, such as Howard Area Community Center, which had access to FLOOD's storefront space.

John Ploof of Haha recalls:

⁶⁸ Ploof, interview, February 24, 2008.

We invited [several organizations] to a meeting and representatives from the department of housing and the local bank to plan and project in a way that people didn't seem to be doing. So to answer your question about 'What is art's role or what can art do in that social process?' I think that was a really important part.⁶⁹

Haha's involvement and funding from *Culture in Action* permitted FLOOD to operate without categorization, which allowed several organizations to come together in a confused situation where new possibilities of imaginative collaboration and administration was encouraged.

Ploof continues:

We were a small potatoes organization, compared to these large social service agencies, yet there wasn't a fluid conversation happening between them – even though they had overlapping services in the same neighborhood. When we had that meeting, we felt it was a very dynamic moment. There was a lot of synergy that was happening between the programs and invited people to look together and project and figure out how to grow.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

We were a small potatoes organization, compared to these large social service agencies, yet there wasn't a fluid conversation happening between them – even though they had overlapping services in the same neighborhood. When we had that meeting, we felt it was a very dynamic moment. There was a lot of synergy that was happening between the programs and invited people to look together and project and figure out how to grow. FLOOD was able to simultaneously recognize the activity within the neighborhood and offer new perspectives and connections between these organizations. In the introduction to The Revolution will not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex, Andrea Smith articulates the restricted nature of non-profit organizations, which are evident in the situation of FLOOD. Smith asserts that, “ the Non-Profit Industrial Complex promotes a social movement culture that is non-collaborative, narrowly focused, and competitive.” This observation is one of the reasons for that lack of collaboration among these organizations in Rogers Park at this time. They were all competing for the same monies.

Like FOOD, FLOOD was able to create a new space outside the habitual practices, in this case, the routine of a social service agency.

According to Laurie Palmer of Haha:

It seems like there was already stuff happening, but it's true, it was a really chaotic system. There are lots of social agencies, but nobody really knew where they could go or the better place they could go. FLOOD acted as this focal point for those organizations to imagine how they could [work]

in a more integrated way, and even before that FLOOD itself was trying to act as another kind of focal point for individuals who were trying to figure out how to navigate all of this. We are so used to having the doctor tell us the truth and tell us what to do, but nobody knew. There wasn't any hardened facts or science or rules for when you got sick. There was something very exciting about trying to inform each other.⁷¹

FLOOD was made possible not only through the \$20,000 from *Culture in Action*, but because of the participation and resource allocation of all those involved and existed years after its one year project obligation.

People had become deeply invested in the project in very different ways. Part of the goal was of it was to do that, to share the agency of how to figure out where it would go. We knew that if it were to go on, someone is going to have to pay for it and work it and make it happen. So that really required a larger number of people. But we collectively made that decision.⁷²

FLOOD's collaboration resulted in the founding of a community center, which housed the multiple participating organizations. The coalition designed and built out a space in the Rogers Park neighborhood on Howard St., which included a food distribution center Open Hand Chicago, as well counseling services for BHIVE. In addition, the Haitian

⁷¹ Palmer, interview, February 24, 2008.

⁷² Ploof, interview, February 24, 2008.

American Association developed an alternative high school program in the same facility. This also marked the ending of FLOOD.

Hybrid Support Structures

In a conversation between Brett Bloom, Cesare Pietroiusti and Greg Sholette, *The Folds of an Institution*, they discuss the ramifications of working within institutions that can be seen as oppressive, rather than “‘dropping out’ of the art world.”⁷³ FLOOD seems to offer artists a third possibility, one of transition, which can be seen in the way they work both in and outside of the art world simultaneously through support from both a cultural institution and from the community. How can we learn from Haha’s project in order to plan ahead in ways that allow for reallocation of institutional resources in such a way that project oriented work or temporary cultural organizations can exist beyond the span of the institutional relationship? Is it possible to reallocate institutional resources in order to incubate new autonomous organizations or will they continually be absorbed back by the institution?

⁷³ Brett Bloom, Cesare Pietroiusti and Greg Sholette, “The Folds of an Institute,” *Groups and Spaces e-Zine*. July 2001.

Chapter 4:

OTHER OPTIONS

Grant Kester points out in his essay *Rhetorical Questions: The Alternative Arts Sector and Imaginary Publics*, “It seems apparent that paradigms to justify public arts funding in the United States are going to change.” He continues, “A great deal depends on the ability of the art world to reformulate the relationship between publicly funded artists and the publics they hope to represent.”⁷⁴ My dissertation attempts to identify artists’ practices, which critique these old paradigms and the infrastructures that support them, while simultaneously engaging publics in new ways. These examples are not meant to be models to be reproduced, necessarily, but offer temporary and contextualized practices, which have the potential to inspire practical changes in the way in which culture is supported on both large and small scales.

With the history of projects like FOOD and FLOOD in mind, I set out to identify similar practices that are being executed today in hopes to create a vocabulary of practical examples for re-thinking the current support structures that exist in addition to learning

⁷⁴ Kester, *Art, Activism and Oppositionality*..

how to operate outside of them. This research was conducted as an ongoing project of the Institute for Community Understanding Between Art and The Everyday (InCUBATE), a research group dedicated to challenging current infrastructures, specifically how they affect artistic production. InCUBATE consists of four individuals, including myself. As art historians and arts administrators, our goal is to explore the possibility of developing financial models that could be relevant to contemporary art institutions, as well as collective or individual artist projects working outside an institution. Particularly, we are exploring financial models that are less constrained by external controls and market concerns and which are more effective, more realistic, and more relevant to both art and the everyday. Our goal is to continue to conceptualize new possible situations, document these innovations, and make this information available to everyone. The information presented here is an analysis of this research project called OTHER OPTIONS.

Exhibition as Research

OTHER OPTIONS is both a research project and traveling exhibition that looks at artists, both historically and contemporaneously, who have re-interpreted, altered and created infrastructures, which have affected their everyday lives and artistic practice. Within the current climate of support, artists are increasingly incorporating new models of resource allocation, community building, funding structures and forms of exchange as part of their artistic production. OTHER OPTIONS is a way to share research, imagine solutions and create a simultaneous network of similar practices dealing with conditions of support for artistic production.

As a traveling exhibition, OTHER OPTIONS has identified contemporary artists' projects that incorporate ideas of support and infrastructure. These projects are then exhibited in cities where they are happening in order to create a local context for the entire exhibition, while simultaneously gathering information about similar practices along the way.

The projects featured in this chapter are considerably smaller in scale when compared to FOOD and FLOOD. Though, the focus remains on creating and identifying various methods and tactics used by artists to support artistic production. These other options not only recognize a transition in the ways that cultural production is currently supported, but illuminate the shortcomings of U.S. support for cultural production, as well as have the promise to bloom into larger networked infrastructures with the possibility of creating viable options on larger scales. The following offers analysis of projects highlighted by the ongoing OTHER OPTIONS exhibition by identifying a series of themes and similar approaches, which include new funding structures, imaginative uses of material and economic surplus, creative enterprise, as well as reallocation of institutional resources.

Artist as Foundation: Mimetic charitable giving

According to the National Endowments for the Arts, from 1999-2000 there was total of \$2.4 million available in direct financial support for individual artists from public agencies (national, regional, state and local) and foundations. At this time, there were an estimated 2.5 million artists working in the U.S., thus resulting in about \$1 for every

working artist.⁷⁵ The scarcity of financial support for individual artists has perpetuated a competitive environment of grant-seeking artists, which has resulted in more artists professionalizing their writing skills and increasing the amount of time they spend on administrative procedures needed to support their career as an artist. The processes and bureaucracy of the grant writing and allocation process can be burdensome and impenetrable, and for some artists, can suppress the desire or ability to experiment or develop unconventional practices.

Josh Greene: *Service Works*

In response to the decreasing amounts of available resources, San Francisco-based artist Josh Greene has essentially created his own personal foundation. For the better part of his artistic career, Greene has been supporting himself through service-oriented jobs. He currently works as a waiter at a high-end eatery in San Francisco, where restaurant-goers easily drop hundreds of dollars in a sitting. Greene has decided to set aside one night's worth of tips per month, which he then grants out to artists at the end of each month. The amounts vary and typically range between \$200 and \$500.

According to Greene, *Service Works* is an attempt to bridge the gap between his art career and his service-industry career,⁷⁶ yet it seems to blur this separation rather than connect the two. Just as the artists working at FOOD, Greene has not kept his artistic practices from his everyday activities. As part of *Service Works*, Greene records and describes the activities and tasks he performed through out the evening in order to make the money he

⁷⁵ Ann M. Galligan and Joni Maya Cherbo. "Financial Support for Individual Artists," *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society* Vol. 34 (Spring 2004), 23-40.

⁷⁶ From the artist's website: <http://www.josh-greene.com>

later grants. Documentation of projects he has funded are exhibited next to these descriptions:

I am most interested in funding small projects that may involve exchange, interaction, storytelling, and problem solving. I have a particular fondness for projects that grow out of and deal with real-life situations, be they political, personal, or environmental. I also enjoy work that incorporates risk, humor, pathos, and absurdity.⁷⁷

Greene's interest in art and the everyday is evident in his project. In 2000, out of the 2.4 million artists identified by the NEA's survey, 315,000 held secondary jobs.⁷⁸ Situations like Greene's are not uncommon. What are the benefits of funding your own and others cultural production through wages earned through a service industry occupation?

Stuart Keeler, an artist and recipient of a Service Works grant, begins to look more closely at the outcomes and possibilities of the granting project:

We don't have the National Endowment for the Arts like it was. Josh's work is really exciting because it borders between a socially based art agenda, a new genre of public art, and the other side where he's become an organization to instill work and be a benefactor in a really interesting, non-freaky, and non-controlling kind of way.

Keeler's description of the project also begins to illustrate another common complaint

⁷⁷ Jennifer Maerz, "The Tipping Point." *S.F. Weekly*, 7 July 2007, sec. Arts.

⁷⁸ Galligan, *Financial Support*, 23-40.

surrounding the minimal public and foundation funding that is available to artists. He continues:

With larger grants they'd want to know the gauge of steel, the font title, they'd want to see every plaque in advance. There's such a fine line between telling them too much and not telling them enough, which can kill a piece. [Service-Works] was a pretty open and democratic process.

Keeler's assessment of *Service Works* raises valid critiques of the way foundations, particularly in the U.S., operate in a way that can often make it more difficult to make their work, though it becomes problematic to point to Greene's project as one that solves these issues. Greene's success lay more in his gesture and ability to create a network of individuals around the desire to support certain types of work, and their interest in attempting to create new methods for doing so. Not only is Greene funding the projects he is interested in, he is investing in his career as an artist by building his reputation, or in terms of Bourdieu, his *social capital*,⁷⁹ which assists in legitimizing his own practice within the field of other contemporary art practitioners. Though Greene's process of reallocating his own personal financial resources may seem generous upon first observation, it is important to note the ways in which he absorbs the cultural capital of the artists who receive his grants. By claiming *Service Works* as an artistic practice, Greene's own actions of granting are brought to the fore, rather than primarily supporting projects and creating a platform for artists. The question still remains - can an artist reallocate monies to other working artists effectively by mimicking a charitable

⁷⁹ Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*.

foundation?

Joanna Spitzner: *JS Foundation*

Joanna Spitzner offers a similar approach to Greene, though in a much more formalized and economically substantial way. Spitzner is both a working artist and professor.

Teaching at a private university allows her to spend her summer months free from occupational daily responsibilities. Due to her privileged situation, she has decided to take on a new job each summer and deposit her paychecks into an account dedicated to granting to artists. In order to manage these funds and the disbursement of the funds, Spitzner has created her own 501c3 foundation complete with a board and advisers.

From the JS Foundation's mission statement:

The Joanna Spitzner Foundation seeks to expand creative knowledge through its support of contemporary art and ongoing research in art, economics, and philanthropy. The Foundation gives small grants to artists that are funded by wages donated from work performed. This funding strategy is used to demystify economic systems by connecting them to lived experience. The foundation is an art work in progress by Joanna Spitzner as well as a functioning private foundation. It seeks to generate dialogue about daily life, economics and giving, while furthering the creative and social possibilities of art.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ JS Foundation, "Mission," <http://jsfoundation.org/mission.htm>.

Similar to Greene, Spitzner both articulates her giving as an artistic practice, as well as emphasizes the relationship between the economy and lived experiences by keeping a running journal of the number of hours she works and the daily activities she performs in order to earn money for the foundation. Rather than giving lump some grants, the JS Foundation seeks to mimic the payment structure of most service-industry jobs with a direct correlation between the hours worked and payment:

I expect the artist to want and to be paid more than I will make per hour. I think this is where the value question comes in, as well as different economies. I would like to choose the artist based on his/her work, rather than on how much money they want. I will have to probably work 2 or 3x as many hours to meet the artist's wages per hour; and I will aim to start my work before the artist in order to make sure I can pay this person. I will ask the artist to fill out a time sheet, and be paid bi-weekly. I am not so concerned with a finished product from the artist, just an openness to exploring what his/her work process means.⁸¹

Beyond conflating an arts practice and service-industry occupation, the artist has made a conscious decision and concerted effort to closely mimic other foundations that artists are familiar with by creating a 501c3 non-profit organization. What are the benefits for a foundation, which disburses minimal funds to become entangled with such bureaucracy? It seems there are much easier ways for this process to be realized, but Spitzner's

⁸¹ Joanna Spitzner, interview with the author, March 3, 2008.

decision to formalize this process in this way allows her and others involved to better understand the infrastructure of larger foundations. The JS Foundation has documented their process of becoming a legally recognized foundation, sharing all official documents and processes via their website under the title “How to Start a Foundation.” This level of transparency and focus on administrative practices is much different than Greene’s approach, which allows the JS Foundation to function more like a foundation and less like an artistic gesture or practice. In addition, by developing a creative application of a 501c3 tax status, it allows for the potential of creating new possibilities for utilizing this tax-structure. The foundation structure allows Spitzner to support work she is genuinely interested in, but through the tax structure, she has simultaneously developed a legitimate structure, which allows her to deduct her contributions from own tax obligations. Through making her process transparent and accessible, it becomes a valuable resource to other artists and small organizations who wrestle with the decision to pursue becoming a non-profit organization.

Despite a transparent giving structure and formalized method, she still confronts the issues of funding and support from a privileged position. Spitzner may not have the same economic power or influence as a major family foundation, but her position, which allows her to reallocate her surplus (in this case both time and money), perpetuates the disparity between granters and grantees. Is it possible to create a structure where those with privilege and those without can participate equally when deciding how best to allocate expendable resources?

Geraldine Juarez: *The Tanda Foundation*

Outside the U.S., few are familiar with our unique tax structure that is in place to support non-profit and non-governmental agencies. Similarly, there is limited knowledge of alternative forms of support structures in other countries, both formal and informal. The Tanda Foundation is an attempt to integrate an informal economic structure with a more formalized structure of charitable giving typical in the U.S. This amalgamation is achieved through the development of a web 2.0 platform, most often synonymous with social networking sites.

A *tanda* is a free form of economy practice and rotating credit association common among illegal immigrants. The model works when a group of individuals pool money on a weekly or monthly basis by paying equal amounts into a pool. Each person is then assigned a number, which decides the order in which the funds will be disbursed. One payee will receive the lot for each turn of the *tanda*. This process is repeated until each person participating has received the pool of money. This informal economy traditionally comes from lower to middle class populations in Mexico, where individuals have limited access to bank accounts and utilizing formalized systems of credit.⁸² The same is true for illegal immigrants living in the United States.

The foundation exists as an online web 2.0 structure (i.e. Myspace.com, Facebook.com), which allows users to create personal profiles, avatars and upload project proposals in need of funding. The primary function of the site is to connect artists and with multiple

⁸² Donald V. Kurtz and Margaret Showman, "The Tanda: A Rotating Credit Association in Mexico." *Ethnology* 17, no. 1 (1978), 65-74.

fundes. This process is achieved through requiring users to deposit a minimum of \$1 USD and a maximum of \$1,000 USD into an account within the Tanda Foundation. By depositing the money, users are awarded voting privileges to decide which projects will be funded. The strategy differs from a traditional *tanda*, in that not every user receives payment, and relates to U.S. charitable foundations in the way proposals are received and funded based on the decision of a panel of interested individuals or patrons providing the funds to be dispersed. Though, within traditional foundations, panelists are not often held accountable to their funding decisions and provide minimal feedback to rejected applicants. The Tanda Foundation attempts to stimulate a productive exchange by requiring users to provide feedback on the proposals in addition to their vote.

In addition to providing financial support, the Tanda Foundation also offers “association grants,” which allows recipients to include the Tanda Foundation in their resume or *curriculum vitae*, which potentially, will improve their likelihood of receiving grants from other foundations or being considered for exhibitions. The more the network surrounding the Tanda Foundation grows or the popularity of grant recipients increases, the more valuable the affiliation becomes.

Understanding this project in the context of the practice of the *tanda* is important for several reasons. What does it mean that a creative community can learn and organize by using tactics of illegal immigrants? Looking to the fringes of the neoliberal economy may yield more possibilities than continuing to support the current infrastructures in place. Ned Rossiter’s concept of “organized networks” attempts to locate these new institutional

forms created by neoliberalism. These types of social networks are often championed for their horizontality and democratic intentions. Rossiter considers the real ramifications of these new networks and proposes ways to understand new forms of immaterial labor and economic exchange created by them:

The trick with a project like OrgNets is to treat it as a symbiotic device that both facilitates the generation of concepts and affects the allocation of economic resources. The latter may take the form of direct funding, commissions, participant fees for summer schools, or in-kind support by institutional partners – e.g. office space, use of equipment, personnel, etc.⁸³

Rossiter's treatment of this concept offers a valuable perspective to begin to assess the potential success or failure of a project like the Tanda Foundation. In using Rossiter's characterization of *organized networks*, the promise of the project's ability to both generate new concepts and allocate economic resources becomes clear. Furthermore, the Tanda Foundation attempts to employ the democratic nature of Web 2.0 by creating a platform for collective authorship, as described by Yochai Benkler:

At a more foundational level of collective understanding, the shift from an industrial to a networked information economy increases the extent to

⁸³ Ned Rossiter, "Autonomous Education, New Institutions and the Experimental Economy of Network Cultures," (paper presented at the School of the Art Institute – Chicago Masters of Arts Administration and Policy, Chicago, IL, March 25, 2008).

which individuals can become active participants in producing their cultural environment. It opens the possibility of a more critical and reflective culture.”⁸⁴

Trebor Sholz criticizes Benkler’s assertion of online cultures’ participatory nature for ignoring the fact that most of them, such as Myspace.com, are “the possession of businesses with the goal of profit”.⁸⁵ Though, in the case of Tando, the framework is held and controlled by its users, rather than a single person or concentrated group with privilege. Its focus is the reallocation of financial support rather than accumulation of profit or harnessing the immaterial labor of its users. The participatory nature and horizontal structure of the Tando Foundation and other Web 2.0 structures allows for potential that is absent from Greene’s or Sptizner’s projects.

Surplus and Excess: Materials for Cultural Production

Similar to the idea of the *tanda*, the quotidian utilization of material and systematic excess thrives on the periphery of neoliberalism. With the prices of goods rising due to the cost of oil, Americans are steadily becoming infatuated with material re-use. With the popularity of thinkers such as William McDonough, who coins mantras such as, “waste equals food,”⁸⁶ the United States is now host to a thriving new economy known as

⁸⁴ “The Web 2.0 Ideology,” Collectivate.
<http://www.collectivate.net/journalisms/2007/10/3/the-web-20-ideology.html>.

⁸⁵ Trebor Sholz, “The Web 2.0 Ideology,” Collectivate.
<http://www.collectivate.net/journalisms/2007/10/3/the-web-20-ideology.html>.

⁸⁶ William McDonough and Michael Braungart. *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Make Things*, (New York: North Point Press, 2002).

“green capitalism.” Despite the potential viability of such a concept as “green capitalism,” the interest in repurposing discarded materials and sustainability cannot be ignored. How can material and systematic excess facilitate artistic production?

Adam Bobbette and Geraldine Juarez: *Forays*

We both find waste inspiring. We like the idea of creating pieces that make you realize your space and environment in a more beautiful and accidental way. Since we come from different worlds we are constantly questioning what it really means to step into these arenas like activism, art, architecture. We are also really afraid of how art goes, and we don't know how to slip in and come out clean.⁸⁷

Adam Bobbette from Montreal and Geraldine Juarez from Mexico City work collaboratively in New York City under the name Forays – derived from their attempts of applying untrained skills within their artistic practice. Their projects consistently deal with excess created by urban infrastructures whether it is garbage, steam or traffic. They attempt to act as parasites gleaning from dumpsters or more formalized systems of managing excess such as *freecycle*⁸⁸ or *freegans*⁸⁹, both:

⁸⁷ We Make Money Not Art, “Interview with Forays: Geraldine Juarez and Adam Bobbette,” <http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/archives/2007/12/i-read-about-yo.php>.

⁸⁸ The Freecycle Network is made up of 4,331 groups with 4,860,000 members across the globe. It's a grassroots nonprofit movement of people who are giving and receiving stuff for free in their own towns. It's all about reuse and keeping good stuff out of landfills. Each local group is moderated by a local volunteer via an online forum, which connects givers and receivers. Membership is free. <http://www.freecycle.org>

⁸⁹ Freegan.info, “What is a freegan? “, <http://www.freegan.info>. Freeganism is an anti-consumerism lifestyle whereby people employ alternative living strategies based on "limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources. Freegans

Freegans would be impossible without the excess generated by consumer society. Their activism, and scavenging, which is a totally justified protest against this consumption at the same time depends on it. So, in their own ideal world they would not exist. In a way they are fighting for their own disappearance as a group. That's interesting.⁹⁰

Forays' situation and fate is similar to that of *freegans*. Their work ranges from mounting temporary dwellings in unused public spaces to creating ovens powered by excess steam pumped through city streets and escaping from manhole covers. One of their most recent installations in Pittsburgh, PA used energy created by passing traffic to trigger a pump, which was used to inflate a sculpture of an iceberg made from sewn together discarded plastic bags.

Forays' projects are not necessarily meant to be understood as feasible solutions, but attempt to create new uses for urban space and possibilities for the use of both material and immaterial excess created by one of the most frivolous cities in the world.

Constant Nieuwenhuis began exploring the possibilities for, "a temporary, constantly remodeled living area; a camp for nomads on a planetary scale," in his writings on his *New Babylon* project. He describes the possibility for the intensification of space:

embrace community, generosity, social concern, freedom, cooperation, and sharing in opposition to a society based on materialism, moral apathy, competition, conformity, and greed."

⁹⁰ We Make Money Not Art, interview.

[W]here the nature and structure of space changes frequently...space unused even for a brief time, and as one makes creative use of it, its aspect changes so much and so often that relatively small surface offers as many variations as a trip around the world. But this intensification of space is only possible due to the creative use of technical means – a use which we, who live in a society where use has finality, can hardly imagine.⁹¹

It is this dynamic engagement and intensification of space that Forays strives for in both their use of excess and discarded materials, as well as the ways in which they intervene within familiar urban fabrics. Through providing imaginative, yet practical applications and uses for excess, they are able to illuminate the inefficiencies of urban infrastructures and unused space, while constituting a valuable artistic practice. In addition, another layer is added to their practice by their commitment to share their methods in hopes that it will be useful to others. As described in a recent interview with Forays:

Open source architecture refers to the way that we hoped to distribute a process of building, not instructions on how to build a particular thing. We had to break codes and hack systems to [create our work] and what we are interested in distributing are the techniques we used. We don't think anybody would be really all that interested in reproducing the objects we produced, but the techniques could help people build their own stuff or at

⁹¹ Constant Nieuwenhuis, *New Babylon*, (1974).

least take an adventurous approach to buildings. We are just hoping to pass on a very basic program for experimental architecture.⁹²

Material Exchange

While Forays offers a more abstract and playful approach to repurposing materials, Material Exchange, a Chicago-based artist collective, considers the technical and economic ramifications of reuse. Their projects are manifested around the processes of collecting and utilizing discarded materials. They approach material excess as “misplaced resources,” “categorical errors,” and “byproducts of other processes.”

According to Material Exchange artist statement:

We work at the back end of production to re-imagine designed objects and materials that have been stripped of their utility, fulfilled their given purpose, have been replaced... We work to identify, extract, exploit, undermine, appropriate... the various and diverse types of value embedded in these materials.⁹³

Through this type of work, Material Exchange has developed relationships with local cultural institutions who will contact them before discarding used materials such as set designs and materials used in gallery exhibitions. One of these relationships, with the Renaissance Society, a contemporary art gallery, yielded hundreds of feet of astro turf, which existed as part of an installation of contemporary artist Martin Kippenberger’s

⁹² We Make Money and Not Art, interview.

⁹³ Material Exchange, <http://www.material-exchange.org>.

work.

Material Exchange proceeded to contact several local artists with the invitation to create a hole for a miniature putt-putt golf course. Their only curatorial stipulation required the artists to consider the life of the materials beyond the golf course; some have lived on as birdhouses, skateboard ramps and even bicycle pannier bags. Upon completion, multiple holes were installed in the same room and the public was invited to pay to play the course.

In addition to creating designed objects from refuse, Material Exchange has developed a relationship with a local reuse center, which stores used materials in a large warehouse. Through this type of work, the group has been forced to deal with the economics of material reuse; transporting materials, storing materials, preparing materials for reuse, and so on.

What does it mean to say that something is valuable? If artistic production is valuable, how should the labor and the object be monetized? And if there is no object...? Have artists enabled or perpetuated the cycle of exploitation by being willing to work for nothing, or very little? Is it the responsibility of policy-makers to support artistic production and resurrect state funding for artists or is the artist beholden to the market as any other producer? If these are two poles in a spectrum, what other possibilities exist? What are some solutions for addressing the problem of

financial stability for cultural producers?⁹⁴

In an introduction to “How to Provide an Artistic Service,” Andrea Fraser attempts to put forward a methodology for remuneration for artists, providing what Fraser terms “service provisions,”⁹⁵ project oriented practices, which produce little or nothing of material interest. Similar to other professionalized practices, Fraser finds it necessary to reconsider a system of value that is contingent upon the service being provided, which differs from a studio based practice where making objects is removed from the site of consumption. Fraser continues by invoking Bourdieu: “producers can be totally involved and absorbed in their struggles with other producers, convinced that only specific artistic interests are at stake...while remaining unaware of the social functions they fulfill, in the long run, for a particular audience, and without ever ceasing to respond to the expectations of a particular class.”⁹⁶

Sara Lewison continues with Fraser’s distinction between artist producing objects and those providing services:

What is the situation of the service provider? Unlike artists who produce objects that acquire an economic value as luxury commodities, service providers either need to survive upon payment for their services or by an

⁹⁴ From the catalog for OTHER OPTIONS: Grand Rapids. Gallery 106, Calvin College. Oct. 2007

⁹⁵ Andrea Fraser, “How to Provide an Artistic Service,” (presented at The Depot, Vienna, 1994).

⁹⁶ Pierre Bourdieu. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2007), 34.

outside source of income. In the machine of exhibition, criticism and investment, value and prestige are highly wrapped up in a disinterest as to the social use value of an object or artistic action. Institutions act to objectify art, so that it is presented as the output of creators operating as autonomous agents of their own desire and interests.⁹⁷

As a way of addressing these questions, Material Exchange has attempted to conflate a service-oriented practice with an object-oriented practice through producing a pinball machine, which becomes complete with user interaction or, in other words, users paying money to play the game. This critique takes the form of an analog version of an arcade pinball machine made from discarded materials for the traveling OTHER OPTIONS exhibition. Just as if one were at an arcade, users are required to pay \$1 to play. As the pinball machine travels, its intention is to make money to pay for the amount of labor that went into making the machine, “a machine that supports its own existence.” This machine provides a complicated critique of cultural institutions. By producing an interactive object, they are attempting to be reimbursed for their “service provisions,” out of the pockets of museum and gallery goers, rather than the institution hosting the exhibition.

⁹⁷ Sara Lewison, "Still Learning from Las Vegas," *Journal of Aesthetics and Protest* 1, no. 1 (2002).

Creative Enterprise: Entrepreneurial Models for Supporting Artistic Production

There are an increasing number of arts administrators, curators and artists abandoning the non-profit model, which once provided support for initiatives such as the alternative spaces movement of the 1970s and 80s. Similar to Carol Goodden's FOOD restaurant, arts administrators and artists are beginning to look towards entrepreneurial business-like structures in order to support their and their creative community's cultural production.

The Collective Foundation and Co-op Bar

In the April 2007, the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts hosted the *Collective Foundation*, an exhibition organized by curator Joseph del Pesco.

From the exhibition catalog:

The Collective Foundation is a research and development organization offering services to artists and arts organizations. The Collective Foundation focuses on fostering mutually beneficial exchange and collective action by designing practical structures and utilizing new web-based technologies.

Ultimately the central concern of the Collective Foundation is to serve as an ongoing experimental process and catalyst for new ideas. CF proposes 'bottom-up' and decentralized forms of organization and investigates the formation and distribution of resources. This means inventing new forms of funding and new ways of working together. Like the Art Workers'

Coalition, who proposed pragmatic solutions to problems faced by artists, the Collective Foundation seeks alternative operational solutions, while reducing the bureaucratic formalities of overhead and administration.⁹⁸

The project emphasized its temporal existence and hoped to act as an incubator of a network of artists working around issues of support. The exhibition included multiple artists' projects such as documentation of Josh Greene's *Service Works* project; in addition, curators of the exhibition organized panels around the issues at hand.⁹⁹ One of the more popular contributions to the exhibition was Steve Lambert's *Co-op Bar*.

Similar to the Tanda Foundation, the *Co-op Bar* is a business owned by its customers. The project existed as a functioning bar, serving alcoholic beverages. It operates on the investment of its customers: bottles of liquor. The *Co-op Bar* recognizes the high profit margins on a beverage served at a bar, and unabashedly takes advantage of this value system. Investors donate a bottle of liquor and receive 200 percent back on their investment. In addition, the remaining profits were then turned into an artist grant given to a Bay Area artist based on the review of the museum security staff in collaboration with the artist and exhibition organizers.

What is the interest of the consumer when a business is dedicated to reallocating its profits? What happens when a value structure created with the intention of increasing

⁹⁸ Collective Foundation, "Organization mission for the Collective Foundation", <http://www.collectivefoundation.org>

⁹⁹ InCUBATE participated in the first of these panels at the YBCA in April 2007 with others including the Present Group, Cadre Art, Ted Purves and museum attendees.

profits for a business owner is appropriated by a philanthropic intention?

Throughout this research, I, along with InCUBATE, set out to find answers to these questions by creating a business structure dedicated to supporting artistic and cultural production within the city of Chicago.

InCUBATE: Sunday Soup

Sunday Soup is a soup subscription service in Chicago, IL. Each Sunday InCUBATE offers a place where customers can meet at InCUBATE and enjoy a meal with other *Sunday Soup* subscribers or have it delivered to their home for \$5. Each week a different artist or project practitioner is invited to be a guest chef. Similar to the *Co-op Bar*, after costs are recouped the profits from the soup sales goes into a fund at the end of each month. The sum of the monthly profits are dedicated as a grant, which is given to an artist based on a submitted proposal. Each month, submitted proposals are sent to InCUBATE then redistributed to and voted on by each customer from the previous month.

The project not only mimics a business-like structure, complete with marketing and advertising, but also imitates a foundation-like platform where customers become jurors in the granting process. The dual function of the customer generated by this structure has created a small community interested in finding new ways to fund their own projects, as well as supporting work they find interesting. The potential for *Sunday Soup* as a viable model is vastly increasing, as those who submit proposals encourage their friends and

supporters to purchase support in order to cast a vote to fund their project.¹⁰⁰

Hybrid Models: Reallocating institutional support

Haha's FLOOD illustrates the possibilities for empowering uses of institutional support outside the institution, whether directly or indirectly through allocation of both monetary and non-monetary resources. As Mary Jane Jacob discusses in her essay "Unfashionable Audience," "new meaningful ways to engage a wider audience for contemporary art can be greatly multiplied," but what seems to be more interesting are the possibilities for incubating new projects outside of the institution or reallocating resources to existing non-institutional organizations and cultural projects. One context to begin to understand possibilities for formalized extra-institutional relationships can be seen in projects such as Civic Studio and TENT show. In both cases, artists interested in experimental pedagogies, new public art and transitory economies have entered academic institutions in order to find ways to extend institutional resources into non-affiliated communities.

TENT show: Art in context at Carnegie Mellon University

In 2004, artist Jon Rubin co-founded a "barter-based nomadic experimental alternative to traditional art schools."¹⁰¹ *The Independent School of Art (ISA)* in San Francisco, CA attempts to exist outside the boundaries of traditional academia, operating without degrees, a physical space or facilities, or public funding. Recently, Rubin has found a new home at Carnegie Mellon University as an Assistant Professor of Art where he has taken a new approach of questioning the infrastructures that support formal arts

¹⁰⁰ More information available at <http://www.incubate-chicago.org/sundaysoup>

¹⁰¹ Independent School of Art, <http://www.independentschoolofart.com>.

education. The artist's project-*cum*-college-course is called TENT Show, which Rubin describes as, "a roving institution that responds to whatever context it temporarily settles in."¹⁰² The project takes shape as a storefront space rented by the university and used to facilitate college courses teaching students about the effects and reception of a public art practice, as well as how value is questioned in project based work. Beyond Rubin's pedagogical purview, his approach, highly influenced by his experiments with the ISA, begins to build possibilities for extending CMU's resources through simple gestures such as students becoming patrons of local businesses surrounding the project space or providing a point for a community to come together over curiosity or abhorrence over newcomers in their neighborhood. Despite its efforts, TENT show remains problematic for several reasons, such as its ability to incubate projects which are not automatically re-absorbed by the institution. A similar project at Grand Valley State University (GVSU), under the direction of artist and educator Paul Wittenbraker, provides a more substantial example of expending university resources that directly benefit community members.

Civic Studio: Public practice at Grand Valley State University

Similar to Rubin, Wittenbraker came to Grand Rapids, MI in the 1980s to facilitate the founding of an alternative school, followed by working as a director of an alternative artist space, the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts, and sitting on the board of the National Association of Artists Organizations.

According to Wittenbraker:

¹⁰² Tent Show, "Mission," <http://www.tentshow.org>.

I've always seen my involvement with organizations as an extension of my studio practice. Civic Studio was informed by lots of ideas and experiences in both education and the arts, but the formation of it was in response to an initiative at GVSU that gave Faculty time and support to develop engaged learning programs. When this research began in the late 90's I was surprised that there weren't more programs in Universities given the prevalence of work being made and presented in public contexts. We did a pilot Civic Studio project in the fall of 1999 as part of another course. Starting in 2003 we've done regular studios and are in the 5th implementation now. For me, the project is informed by three things: learning theory, interest in public and institutional policy, and art that has requires such a response.¹⁰³

Though Wittenbraker's focus surrounds issues of artistic production being made and presented in public contexts, as the project-*cum*-class leaves the grounds of the university the support of the institution comes with it.

In 2005, Civic Studio operated out a former Rock Shop in a working class neighborhood on the city's northwest side, which specialized in polishing stones and catered to mostly stone-cutting hobbyists. The student projects that took place in the space not only dealt with issues of public and private space, but were directed by community members. For example, one studio member facilitated the cutting of "two final rocks," for a former

¹⁰³ Paul Wittenbraker, interview with the author, October 2007.

customer of the now extinct business. A letter from the artist to a former employee solicits his service after a chance visit:

“Last Friday, an elderly gentleman stopped in to inquire about the Rock Shop. We had begun discussing the idea of ‘clubs’ with people, and we asked Bill if he had any interest in being part of a club. If he did, ‘what interest would draw him to a club?’” Bill said ‘Rocks!’ He went on to say that he used to love to come to the Rock Shop to buy rocks that he would ‘cut and polish.’ You could tell that this was true from his response to the space, even though all the rock stuff was gone. Bill said his interest now has mostly to do with finishing his last two stones that he never got around to cutting. He then told us that he’s in hospice care, and does not expect to live more than a few months.¹⁰⁴

The letter resulted in a visit from a local rock cutter who, along with the artist and the elderly gentleman, carried out the project of polishing “his last two stones.” I bring up this story not to add a sentimental or nostalgic layer to the Civic Studio project, but to give a poetic example of the ways university resources via artist practice can benefit members of a non-affiliated community. In addition, as a more practical example, throughout the duration of Civic Studio’s time in the Rock Shop students spent a portion of their time building out the space per the request of the landlord, who intended to open a hardware store in the space. University resources provided materials for building out and students provided labor, while at the same time learning and improving valuable skills.

¹⁰⁴ “*The Old Rock Shop lives Again (sort of!),*” *Arrowhead News*. May 2005.

In some ways similar to *Culture in Action*, these examples provide an opportunity to explore real ways that institutional support can be extended into outside communities, as well as incubate programs, which can later exist autonomously. For example, Civic Studio has spawned such organizations and resources as G-RAD and Viget. G-RAD is a web 2.0 based community fueled by user generated content centered around civic issues and community interests in the city of Grand Rapids. Civic Studio offered the time, labor and other resources that allowed students and individuals to come together under unusual circumstances to create a participatory platform autonomous from the university aimed at addressing social and political issues in the city. Similarly, Viget, an encyclopedic wiki intended to compile a peoples' history of the city of Grand Rapids, developed out of the laboratory-like setting of Civic Studio. The wiki collects a user-generated history of the city via the web and is both developed and utilized by multiple local community organizations. Platforms such as Civic Studio, Viget and the Tanda Foundation allow for new possibilities for publics to support and influence cultural production.

Conclusion:

Though the social, political and economic conditions of the 1970s and the 1990s greatly differ from today, FOOD and FLOOD offer valuable concepts and practices that can be easily transposed upon our current situation. An analysis of these two projects has yielded a list of various effective and imaginative approaches for supporting the arts that exist outside typical methods - blurring the distinctions between market oriented and non-profit support. These varied approaches collected through this research include models based on creative enterprise, which re-invest and disperse profits in ways similar to non-profit organizations. Other approaches include inventive and resourceful uses of surplus and excess, reallocating institutional resources and creating temporary structures that meet timely needs, among others.

This research provides creative approaches and examples for developing, funding and supporting alternative infrastructure for commercial and non-commercial forms of art, culture and resistance that might be capable of fostering meaningful transformations of both self and society, which aim to instigate similar practices and networks of resources, rather than models intended to be replicated. As artists continue to interrogate the current infrastructures set in place to support both artistic and cultural production in United

States, new possibilities that address artists' needs in more effective ways will continue to be developed. Rather than support a system that impedes cooperation and encourages competitiveness due to limited resources, new organized networks based on collaboration and succeed due to varied sources of support are being developed in response to the failure of the non-profit organizational structure.

FOOD and FLOOD: Autonomous and Hybrid method of support

FOOD and FLOOD offer two distinct approaches for supporting and facilitating artistic practices. The influence of FOOD's attempt to create an autonomous infrastructure and offer the public a new way to support artistic production can be seen in many of the projects in OTHER OPTIONS. For example, InCUBATE's Sunday Soup project attempts to redistribute profits from the sale of food directly to working artists, and simultaneously redefines the role of the supporter from being a disconnected funder to an active relationship based on reciprocity. Furthermore, the Sunday Soup project adds an additional layer to the artist-support relationship, making a transparent connection between their contribution and the artists' work by having the opportunity give input on what projects can be funded. Similarly, the Tanda Foundation attempts to create an autonomous network free from the influence of any formal institutional influence. Projects like these directly connect the public with artists, rather than having their decision mediated by representatives. Though FOOD can be seen as a major influence on these projects, the differences between them is important. According to Carol Goodden, FOOD was never intended to be a political gesture.¹⁰⁵ The recent history of

¹⁰⁵ Goodden, interview, Feb. 14, 2008.

the NEA and heightened influence of private interests has caused artists interested in experimental practices, non-commercial practice, as well as artists interested in political or social change to create their own infrastructures and networks that have the capability to offer alternative methods of public support, such as the NEA, corporate sponsorship or support from private foundations.

The possibilities for reallocating institutional support are evident in Haha's project, but these possibilities rely highly on the influence of empathetic administrators. In the case of FLOOD and *Culture in Action*, Mary Jane Jacob was a proponent of taking contemporary art outside of the museum walls and into the public in ways that challenged traditional views of what public art should be, yet she was able to take with her the funding and support afforded by large cultural institutions. This provided the opportunity for Haha to take those resources and invest them into organization structures that existed within the Rogers Park neighborhood where they operated. In a similar way, artists such as Paul Wittenbraker express interest on the possibility of arts education outside the context of the institutions that have created and professionalized the field as a discipline, but at the same time they realize that these possibilities cannot be explored without the time, resources and financial support that the university provides. When asked about this, he responded:

“I think both the strength and weakness of academia [and its institutions] come from its separation from the world. It is what allows the time and space for contemplation, new understanding, and preparation for the

world, but also creates the artificial problem of reconnecting.”¹⁰⁶

Wittenbraker’s statement begins to get at the nature of the entirety of the practices presented in this research, that of transition.

The history of support for artistic and cultural production in the United States has shifted between wealthy individuals and private foundation, non-profit organizations, and corporate sponsorship to the current transition toward more participatory structures. This is best articulated in Yochai Benkler’s observation of “the shift from an industrial to a networked information economy,” which “increases the extent to which individuals can become active participants in producing their own cultural environment.” The projects presented in the OTHER OPTIONS exhibition illustrates this transition, which relies on self-organization, participation and imagination.

Through this research, it has become evident that there is a need for new infrastructures, networks and systems of support, which more effectively meet the needs of non-commercial artists working today. The practices outlined in this research reflect this transition as they relate to the fluctuations of capitalism and globalization. By creating situations controlled by a diversity of value systems, these hybrid approaches and rhizomatic structures allow for horizontal approaches to allocating resources and re-imagining possibilities for understanding the power structures that control them.

¹⁰⁶ Wittenbraker, interview.

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