9-24-2015

Professional Parody: An Examination of Artist Practices Parodying and Disrupting Business Models to New Ends

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Abstract

This paper identifies trends within visual arts practice in which artists have adopted corporate and organizational structures to be disrupted, blurred and interrogated. The research investigates artist projects that: parody corporations with the aim of "identity correction;" expose, critique and reveal the proliferation of corporate and legal language in culture; and mimic emerging business models with the intention of disrupting them in order to be applied in new ways to new contexts. Considering Delueze and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and the rhizome, this research suggests that art practices borrowing from business culture serve to simultaneously disrupt and recontextualize economic systems while offering opportunities to make new, unexpected connections. Beginning with a discussion of Conceptual art practices of the 1960s, this research explores ways artists have coopted and pushed the boundaries of business practices within the context of global capitalism. It proposes the term "re:organizational aesthetics" to describe recent aesthetic developments of artists repurposing business models, and concludes with the suggestion that such practices are paving the way for us to redesign our economic and cultural landscapes.

Keywords: disruption, appropriation, humor, aesthetics

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"Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art". – Andy Warhol[1]

Business culture has seen many shifts since the Industrial Era. From post-industrial Labor Process Theory management culture, as described by Braverman (1974), to contemporary organizational designs that include networks, horizontal process structures and distributed leadership (Adler et al., 2014), these shifts have both reflected and impacted upon changes in businesses' relationship to the social realm. We can see this in the growing interest in Corporate Social Responsibility (Kudlak and Low, 2015), as well as new forms of collaborative production that have risen within the burgeoning information economy.[2] These shifts are paralleled by changes in the ways in which artists are engaging with business. Situating artists against business structures of their time, we see William Morris' interest in the integration of art and life as a resistance to the social horrors of the Industrial Revolution, while Andy Warhol used assembly-line screen-printing to create mass-produced images of a consumer culture. The Artist Placement Group (APG),[3] active in Britain between the 1960s and 80s, explored the potential for artists to have a more direct social role by working within factories rather than merely using the objects created inside them as material for artworks. With present austerity measures, the Eurozone crisis, and environmental crises, the direct ways artists are engaging business are significant and timely to study amidst growing concerns around the sustainability of current economic practices.[4] This paper identifies contemporary art practices using parody and mimicry to adopt corporate and organizational structures as an artistic context to be disrupted, blurred, questioned and revisioned. Not merely a resistance to, but a reappropriation of, business culture, the art practices presented include projects exploring the embodiment of corporate identity, revealing the language and systems of corporate and legal structures, and the application of business models to new, non-business intents. These works all have in common an interest in the disruptive potential of art to challenge how corporations and management models have come to impress themselves upon personal, cultural and place-based identity. Whereas recent discussions about art and business have focused on the emerging trend of appropriating artistic practice or arts-based methodologies into management training or enactment (Biehl-Missal, 2013), or as tools of economic regeneration (Fletcher, 2008), this paper instead, explores how artists' practices mimicking business structures disrupt the status quo through a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This disruption has the potential to reveal dominant power structures, and create opportunities for active citizenry.

An Aesthetic of Administration

Bauman's comparison of the etymologies of culture and management provides a compelling starting point for the discussion of the interlinking of art and business. The term "culture" in the way we know it is a fairly recent entry in our vocabulary. Its origins lie in the family of terms linked with "cultivation" and "breeding" – think "agriculture" - which all have at their core a sense of controlling, and guiding towards an improvement

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[1] Andy Warhol, http://www.forbes.com/sites/dinagachman/2013/08/06/andy-warhol-on-business- celebrity-and-life/

[2] http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun.

[3] 2 APG, initiated in the UK by artists Barbara Steveni and John Latham, negotiated placements for artists within a variety of government and business institutions. Under the premise that art could offer something useful, placements were created where the artist functioned as an "Incidental Person," offering a creative perspective on all aspects of the organization's daily practice from the factory floor to the boardroom. For more information, see: Bishop, C. 2012. Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship. 163-191. London: Verso.

[4] It should be noted that the stance critiquing capitalism is that generally adopted by leftist artists, however this critique creates opportunities for reflection by businesses and individuals alike

(Bauman 2004: 63). "Managing," i.e. causing another to submit to one's control (Bauman 2004: 63), or guiding (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manage), Bauman says, is rooted in directing people or events to move in a way in which they might not do on their own (Bauman 2004: 63) - much like guiding a plant's growth with stakes or lattice might be performed in agriculture. Although of different natures and with different intentions (business with its intention of making profit for shareholders, and art with the intention of aesthetic and critical interrogation) management and culture shape, form, guide, and control towards a particular, "better" end. The question is what is deemed "better," and according to which logic. I draw attention to the similarities between culture and management in order to counter a binary discussion of art and business, and rather suggest a consideration of plurality and interconnectedness between the two contexts. Both management and culture have been highly influential within the complex context of dominant models, values and systems – what French sociologist Bourdieu might refer to as the "field". Our individual experience, subsequent internalization and replication of these models and systems are what Bourdieu calls "habitus" (Bourdieu 1984). The interplay of habitus at the individual level, and field at the larger societal level provides an interesting theoretical backdrop to consider how dominant systems are internalized and replicated, and how through revealing these dominant structures a sense of agency can be instilled to critically examine new possibilities for models of operation. Throughout this paper, I suggest using the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of deterritorialization and its related reterritoralization, and in particular their notion of the rhizome, to unpack the evolving interplay between art and business, and the impact this has in the social context.

Deleuze and Guattari discuss the concept of deterritorialization in both their books *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). The term evolves and changes across these two texts, however, it is from their use of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in relation to the rhizome in *A Thousand Plateaus* that I will draw. Deleuze and Guattari challenge the arborescence and its sense of linearity that dominates Western history, suggesting the rhizome and its multiplicity as a better way of understanding how things are interconnected and in constant flux. "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004:8), where one point connects to any other point. Through decentering, analysis can be undertaken and a greater understanding of interconnectedness is reached. As connections are made, ruptures occur on the rhizome and new "becomings" are formed. "Each of these becomings brings about the deterritorialization of one term and the reterritorialization of the other; the two becomings interlink and form relays in a circulation of intensities pushing the deterritorialization ever further. There is neither imitation nor resemblance, only an exploding of two heterogeneous series on the line of flight composed by a common rhizome that can no longer be attributed to or subjugated by anything signifying." (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004:11)

It may seem odd and perhaps antithetical to my argument that I am discussing artist practices that mimic and parody business structures,[5] while suggesting understanding connections between art and business through a process that sees neither imitation nor resemblance. However, what I aim to demonstrate is the borrowing from one to another, the simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization of art and business (two different natures) that leads to the "becoming" or the formation of new connections, new nodals, and new possibilities. The rhizome consists of "directions in motion" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004:23), ever-changing, and conflating language, signs and symbols. The art practices presented in this paper actively interchange, deconstruct and recontextualize these signs and symbols from business by mimicking them in order to challenge and create new connections.

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[5] Deleuze & Guattari (2004:12) "Mimicry is a very bad concept, since it relies on binary logic to describe phenomena of an entirely different nature."

In looking at trends in art production and business models during the post-war, post-industrial era, we can see strong examples of simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization taking place. Much like Deleuze and Guattari's orchid and wasp[6] the interplay between a growing management class and the visual arts saw a capturing of codes from business to art in which art could be described as "becoming-business," to borrow from the authors (p.10). Artists began identifying themselves as workers functioning within the wider system of capitalist America (Molesworth 2003: 27). As such, they began thinking differently about ideas of artistic labor, work and value, that translated into Conceptual art practices where artists positioned themselves as managers through the delegation of the labor involved in creating their artwork. Art historian Benjamin Buchloh described this as an "aesthetic of administration,"(Buchloh, 1990) with artists such as Sol LeWitt and his instruction drawings, Frank Stella and his exploration of an "executive artist," and Andy Warhol's "The Factory" as some of the most famous examples. However, contemporary artists such as Santiago Sierra[7] and his controversial works (employing, often vulnerable, people to perform labor or have actions taken on their body for a "going rate") confront global capitalism and inequality, thereby contributing to this tradition of artist as manager. Again, the rhizome is not linear, and such continuations of themes in art practice raise questions more broadly around what changes are and are not happening in business, and what impacts this has on the social context.

Parafiction

Where Conceptual artists of the 1960s enacted the management logic of a post-war economy, The Yes Men provide a contemporary example of artists challenging dominant multi-national corporate structures through parody. The Yes Men (Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno) are an artist duo using "... humor, truth and lunacy to bring media attention to the crimes of their unwilling employers".[8] They are well known for their radical parody of the World Trade Organization in 1999. Creating a slick, yet satirical, copy of the WTO's website at http://www.gatt.org/, The Yes Men were able to pose and communicate as representatives of the WTO. They published on their website press releases with outrageous titles such as, "WTO Announces Formalized Slavery Model for Africa" and "WTO to announce schedule for disbanding." The parody was so believable that Bichlbaum and Bonanno created personae who were invited to present at a variety of conferences, appearing as "substitutes" for actual members of the WTO. At the conferences they gave equally wildly absurd presentations that highlighted injustices and brutalities of international trade and economic disparity:

> As the World Trade Organization, Andy and Mike delivered shocking satires of WTO policy to audiences of so-called "experts." At an international trade law conference in Salzburg, Austria, they (i.e. the WTO) proposed a free-market solution to democracy: auctioning votes to the highest bidder. On the TV program CNBC Marketwrap Europe, the WTO announced that might equalled right, that a privatized education market would help replace Abbie Hoffman with Milton Friedman, and that there ought to be a market in human rights abuses. At a textiles conference in Tampere, Finland the WTO unveiled a 3-foot phallus for administering electric shocks to sweatshop employees. At a university in Plattsburgh, New York the WTO proposed that to solve global hunger, the poor should have to eat hamburgers—and then recycle them up to ten times. And at an accounting conference in Sydney, Australia, the WTO announced that in light of all its mistakes, it would shut itself down,

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[6] Deleuze & Guattari describe the process of the wasp pollinating the orchid as one in which both the plant and the wasp exist in reterritorialized forms, each simultaneously in a state of becoming the other. See Deleuze & Guattari (2004: 10) for a description.
[7] http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sierra-160-cm-line-tattooed-on-4-people-el-gallo-arte-contemporaneo-salamanca-spain-t11852/text-summary
[8] http://theyesmen.org/faq

refounding as an organization whose goals were not to help corporations, but
rather to help the poor and the environment.[9]

By using imaginary personae interacting directly with the real world as it is being lived
(Lambert-Beatty 2009: 54), The Yes Men exemplify Carrie Lambert-Beatty's term
"Parafiction". This methodology is interventionist in nature and sees the work "...act
disruptively outside the artistic context" (Lambert-Beatty 2009: 56).

Parafiction is an approach to art practice that blurs fact and fiction, causing the viewer to
seriously question what is real and what is not. Through this disruption, systems are
revealed that the viewer can then question and critique. The Yes Men were so successful
with their parody of the WTO that many of the world's economic experts were fooled by
their critical representations. They achieved the parafictional state through a blending of
images, conducts and contexts borrowed from dominant and accepted logics – the logic
of advertising, the logic of media, the logic of government agencies, the logic of the
Internet. The parafictional works that are the most effective are those that manage to
get the replications just right.

In 2004, The Yes Men gained even more international attention when they took on the
role of "Mr. Jude (patron saint of the impossible) Finisterra (earth's end)," a fictional
representative of Dow Chemicals, who made headlines by giving an interview on BBC
World TV where Dow took responsibility for the 1984 Union Carbide chemical spill in
Bhopal India.[10] It took two hours before the BBC realized the speaker was an imposter,
but in that time a massive impact had been made – on Dow's stock value, and on the
potential of activist art to challenge the ethics of corporations.

Yes Men video - https://vimeo.com/117931338 (copyright The Yes Men)

The Yes Men's methodology is radical, confrontational, and raises questions of ethics –
both on the part of the company and that of the artists themselves. They adopt the
identity of organizations and corporations, offering a "correction," or a "better" version of
the company imbued with "better" morals and taking "better" actions. Embodiment and
immersion are used as a form of resistance. The Yes Men serve as a contemporary
trickster, taking on and subverting the roles and rules of the dominant corporate entities
in an effort to force them to confront issues and persuade them to take action, or face
the (financial) consequences.

A comparison of The Yes Men's work to the artist collective 01.ORG's "Nike Ground"
project (2003) [11] offers another example of parafiction used to interrogate our
contemporary relationship to business and place. The project was comprised of a
fictitious campaign to rename Vienna's Karlsplatz, "Nikeplatz (formerly Karlsplatz)"
(Lambert-Beatty 2009: 59). 01.ORG created a website
(http://0100101110101101.org/files/nikeground.com/), an information booth with flyers
featuring a proposed Nike "swoosh" sculpture, and a map showing Vienna as one of
many European cities selected to be part of an international campaign to "Nike-ize"
public space. The entire campaign and its props mimicked the slick, corporate style of
Nike's already famous advertisement campaigns. The aesthetics were familiar and
convincing. By parodying and subverting the corporate advertising culture that we
already accept on a daily basis, the project raised issues of the corporate occupation of
public space and our complicity in allowing it. In both cases The Yes Men and 01.ORG
use disruptive methodologies in order to bring to light the social impacts of
corporatization. In revealing corporate action and corporate logic, the projects provide
an opportunity for their audiences (public and corporate) to consider consequences, and

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[9] http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/wto
[10] http://theyesmen.org/hijinks/bbcbhopal
[11] http://0100101110101101.org/nike-ground/

ultimately take action on their own terms. This aspect is important. These works are situated outside the traditional art spaces, entering directly into public and corporate space. This deterritorialization and simultaneous reterritorialization through a mixing of the fictitious and real creates a rupture: between reality and fiction, public and private. In this rupture, the individual is afforded an opportunity to confront one's own internalization of the field (habitus) and make conscious decisions in the form of active citizenry.

Nike Ground video - https://vimeo.com/18236252 (copyright Eva and Franco Mattes)

Systems and Language

Whereas the examples of The Yes Men and 01.ORG demonstrate a disruptive methodology that involves artists embodying corporate entities in order to open them up to critique and change, artists Carey Young and the collective Institute for Infinitely Small Things (The Institute) investigate corporate power through its use of language. Relating back to avant-garde work in the post-war context described as using the "language of work as opposed to that of art" (Molesworth 2003: 25), Young and The Institute creatively reveal and critique the impacts of corporate language in art and social contexts. They both seek to reveal corporate and legal structures by adopting their language and exposing them to critique through the creation of absurd scenarios. Harold Rosenberg spoke about the professionalization of art as rooted in a unique language. The more incomprehensible the language is to those outside of the context, the more the field is identified as a profession (Molesworth 2003: 33). By revealing and dissecting the language that corporations use, and through a process of deterritorializing this language by placing it in other contexts, Young and The Institute attempt to dismantle their power dynamics.

Taking the form of performances, installations and photography, Young has worked with a variety of professional specialists throughout her practice, including venture capitalists, lawyers and call center workers to appropriate and explore the interconnections between corporate systems, "legalese" language and contemporary culture.[12] In her multi-media piece, *Consideration* (2004-5), exhibited at Paula Cooper Gallery in New York as part of the Performa05 Biennial, Young investigated various forms of contractual relationships. Working with a legal team, Young developed texts, videos and performative pieces that intended to confront the viewer with a number of situations in which they were invited to consider the impact of legal language. In the piece *Artistic License*, viewers signed away their copyrights to prints made from their fingerprints. *Declared Void* presented a designated section of the gallery marked as existing outside the U.S. Constitution. The entire experience of the exhibition was an absurd choreographed contractual relationship; from accepting the exhibition invitation to the way the viewer navigated the space.[13]

In contrast, The Institute adopts a more activist approach to examining the impact of corporate institutions and language on how we experience place and social equality. Based primarily in Boston (USA) and spearheaded by artists Catherine D'Ignazio (kanarinka), James Manning, Jaimes Mayhew, Forest Purnell and Nicole Siggins, The Institute takes the form of a research laboratory, creating opportunities for participatory research and interventions in public space with the aim of catalyzing critical dialogue around issues of democracy and spatial justice within the everyday. The research conducted is then disseminated as a tool for disruption. "The Institute's projects use

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[12] http://careyyoung.com
[13] http://www.careyyoung.com/consideration-carey-young-in-conversation-with-defne-ayas/

performance, conversation and unexpected interventions to investigate social and political 'tiny things.'" [14]

In their various projects, The Institute has investigated the potential of selling patriotism, and has responded to the Occupy Movement by inserting miniature tents across Boston as a reminder of the Occupy Movement's continuing presence. Playful and ironic, the Institute's works disrupt corporate logic by intervening into public space with the aim of highlighting the (non-public) corporate agendas at play. This is particularly evident in its *Corporate Commands: Calls to Action in the Form of an Imperative* (2004-present) in which The Institute performs, as literally as possible, companies' advertisement slogans written as instructions to consumers. Ranging from Gap's "Go Play," to Sovereign Bank's "Enjoy Life" campaigns, The Institute investigates what happens when instructions are taken at face value and performed directly in front of the respective business.

In their *Corporate Command: Rollover*, The Institute laid down on the pavement in front of a Cingular Telecom store in Cambridge, Massachusetts's Central Square. Cingular's campaign was "Rollover," advertising the addition of rollover minutes on their mobile phone plans, in which customers could "rollover" unused minutes from the previous month.[15] As pedestrians attempted to pass through on the pavement, The Institute would announce "rollover" and roll out of the way. The playful, if not absurd, action sparked interest and conversation with passersby. Similarly, in their *Corporate Command: Run*, The Institute members took turns running back and forth in front of the Boston Nike Store's two windows that featured signs stating "Run." In each case, the aim is to disrupt the space around the business and emphasize the omnipresence of corporate logic that is extended by literally telling us what to do.

In deterritorializing the signs, symbols and language from a business context and reterritorializing them through an aesthetic process, Young and The Institute reveal the ubiquitousness of corporate and legal language in our everyday experience, and most importantly our tacit consent. The viewer is confronted with having to consider how individuals play a part in these dominant structures.

Goods to Services: The Social Turn

The Yes Men, 01.ORG, Carey Young and The Institute present artistic investigations of corporate dominance and its impact on global, local and individual scales. In addition to the prevalent corporate logic, the marketplace has also seen a transition from a goods-based economy to a service-based economy that includes large-scale and local businesses. As shifts occur in business, so they occur in art, and vice versa: simultaneous deterritorialization and reterritorialization. A genre of social practice has emerged of artists investigating the contemporary service economy by appropriating and mimicking elements of service industries. Steven Henry Madoff identifies this as "service aesthetics" in his 2008 Artforum article. The term references Relational Aesthetics, an essay written by curator and author Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) in order to describe art practices of the 1990s inspired by the social context. Whereas the artists discussed in Bourriaud's essay (including: Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez- Foerster, and Rikrit Tiravainija) emphasized the power and role of the groups that participated in their projects in challenging the status quo, Madoff suggests artists working within the notions of service aesthetics highlight the role of the individual in a post-industrial era (2008:165). He expands on this, saying, "... service art deploys its mimetic relationship

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[14] http://www.ikatun.org/institute/infinitelysmallthings/

[15] http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/cingular-takes-rollover-nationwide-theyre-your-minutes---keep-em-76756557.html

to the sites and actions it replicates - not to demolish with irony, but to rediscover and recuperate the service act's essential munificence" (2008:169). That is to say, this method of working is interested in the (potentially beneficial) one-on-one interaction inherent in the service industry, and as such creates situations in which viewers of the works are asked to directly participate in the artwork through an individual transaction or exchange. Madoff cites several artist projects as examples of service aesthetics, each reflecting varying aspects of today's service economy: clinics, hair salons, shops. Many of these projects, though not all, relocate the service into the context of the art institution. Artist Bert Rodriguez's project, *In the Beginning* (2008) demonstrates how these projects work. Rodriguez presents an imitation of a psychologist's office set up at the Whitney Museum of American Art's biennial exhibition. Borrowing the aesthetics of a stereotypical counseling office (leather chairs, a waiting room, a potted plant, and a closed door leading to a private room), Rodriquez constructed his office within the Park Avenue Armory site. Here, he invited "patients" (visitors to the Biennial) to a personal therapeutic session where he would counsel them on their concerns and assign them art projects as a treatment. The personal exchange between Rodriquez and the "patient" is what constituted the artwork, and the work was complete once the transaction had occurred.[16]

By mimicking these everyday service contexts, artists like Rodriguez create an entry point for the participant. The anticipated codes of conduct within these service settings and situations are familiar and understood, and therefore potentially make it easier for the participant to engage in the art that replicates them. We know what to expect when entering a shop, going to the doctor, or having our hair cut. By transposing service economy models into new (art) locations to ask unexpected or ironic questions, service aesthetic projects are able to illuminate the larger socio-economic structures at work, challenging the bureaucracy and homogeneity experienced in a corporatized economy. Conversely, these practices also highlight where so-called experience economy actually replicates aspects of Fordist-era mass production under the guise of individual customization. We have all had the experience of being made to feel special when giving the barista our name for our custom coffee beverage, however, the coffee shop chain is just another version of the "little boxes made of ticky tacky" that all look the same.[17] In either case, artists employing service aesthetics methodologies effectively deterritorialize aspects of the service industry, creating a direct link between familiar service experiences and the potential of critical art practices to disrupt and reveal embedded economic logic. As these artworks usually involve live interactions between the artist and participant, they are able to be responsive to the particular situation. In so doing, they create new and evolving connections along the metaphorical rhizome, and new possibilities for understanding the potentials of reterritorialising business practices.

Re:Organizational Aesthetics and Postcapitalism

The potential impact of individual exchange is further explored through contemporary participatory art practices in which artists borrow the language, skills and models of working business practices to speak not specifically about business itself, but rather to address issues that include: identity, globalization and the environment. It is here that I would situate my own artistic practice. As has been previously discussed, terms such as "aesthetic of administration" (Buchloh), "relational aesthetics" (Bourriaud) and "service aesthetics" (Madoff) have been applied to the various ways art has reflected changing relations of economy and cultural production. I propose the term "re:organizational aesthetics" as a way of describing a development within social art practice of artists mimicking and parodying business and organizational systems with the aim of collaboratively dismantling and repurposing these systems to new ends. Referencing

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[16] http://whitney.org/www/2008biennial/www/?page=artist_rodriguez&section=artists
[17] Words and music by Malvina Reynolds. Copyright 1962, Schroder Music Company by http://www.umbc.edu/che/tahlessons/pdf/Post-War_Suburbanization_Homogenization_RS_1.pdf accessed 25/1/15

Bourriaud's original term of relational aesthetics, "re:organizational aesthetics" is an aesthetic strategy of deterritorialization that adopts business and organizational logic as its medium and context. It considers artistic practice that takes on the form of organizational or business structures to collaboratively address site-specific and context-specific issues. The "re:" aspect of "re:organizational aesthetics" suggests the notation used in business documentation meaning "regarding," while also implying doing something again or differently. These artist projects are often situated outside the art institution and take the form of "bureaus", "institutes" and "offices." They may sound like institutional monoliths, but in fact their approaches are often very much rooted in a "mom and pop" ethos. Working collaboratively with local networks, "re:organizational aesthetics" projects aim to reclaim the local in the ongoing interrogation between local and global, and provide a particularly interesting model of how business and art might effectively respond to current issues.

Helen Molesworth talks about the "de-skilling" of the artist in the 1960s (as seen in many Conceptual art practices) as actually a "re-skilling" (Molesworth 2003: 31). I suggest the same is happening with re:organizational aesthetics practices in which the artist takes on a variety of roles such as facilitator, negotiator, and disrupter.[18] The nature of these projects is often cross-disciplinary and therefore requires the artist to collaborate with individuals and organizations from a variety of personal and professional backgrounds. Although they might be affiliated with an art institution, most of these projects aim to enter directly into contexts well outside the White Cube of the gallery or museum. Because of the scope of their reach, these practices are particularly well positioned to initiate opportunities for critical dialogue and action. In order to investigate re:organizational aesthetics and the potential of this model of working to impact site and context-responsive change, I present two projects: Natalie Jeremijenko's Environmental Health Clinic, and my own Mellor Management work. Both borrow models of the service industry (a health clinic and consulting firm, respectively) as a means to explore the possibility of these familiar constructs to foster active citizenry and support site-specific responses to issues.

Although discussed as an example in Madoff's essay on service aesthetics, I suggest that Natalie Jeremijenko's *Environmental Health Clinic* (EHC)[19] (2007- present) goes one step further than the other projects described. Locating *EHC* outside the context of the art institution, Jeremijenko aims to go beyond a merely dialogical approach to notions of environmental health, invoking a sense of agency in the project's participants to do something about the health of their neighborhoods. Based at New York University and modeled after university health clinics, *EHC* takes a broader understanding of what affects health, looking at its dependence upon local environmental factors. Participants (known as "impatients" due to their desire to make a change) are invited to make appointments to discuss concerns they have in their individual environments. "Impatients" engage in a one-on-one exchange with the *EHC* team, and are subsequently prescribed relevant actions to take in lieu of pharmaceuticals. The "prescriptions" might take the form of: "a distributed urban farm" providing urban-specific farming kits to improve environmental health and increase biodiversity;[20] a "Newsmotion Bike Messenger" system allowing the "impatient" to visually broadcast geolocative data on their bike wheels, such as traffic information or the amount of student loan debt;[21] or creating a "micropark" around a "no-standing" or "no parking" zone on a street to prevent storm water run-off, and replenish soil moisture.[22] As an "impatient", you might also be referred to a "specialist" such as a participatory art or

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[18] This isn't dissimilar to shifts in the market causing jobseekers to train in new fields or seek additional skillsets to be seen as a desirable candidate http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/29/technology/code-academy-as-career-game-changer.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=0
[19] http://www.environmentalhealthclinic.net/
[20] http://environmentalhealthclinic.net/farmacy/
[21] http://www.environmentalhealthclinic.net/bike-messenger
[22] http://www.environmentalhealthclinic.net/nopark

design project, or an organization that can make use of the data collected through the prescribed action. Jeremijenko's project remains firmly planted within an aesthetic discourse, yet she investigates the clinic as a way to catalyze dialogue and action that can be usefully applied to environmental change through the appropriate entities.

The *EHC* works by encouraging active citizenry through the development of local networks and partnerships: with local individuals ("impatients"), with local environmental and government agencies, with local universities and research centers, and with local art institutions. It reflects our contemporary Web 2.0 culture with its fostering of participatory, DIY projects that privilege the exchange of ideas and sharing of resources. This aspect of cooperation is key to the project's success and speaks directly to how social interaction and collaboration have become integral to labor activity as a whole in the current immaterial economy (Hardt and Negri 2001: 294). As Hardt and Negri describe in their book *Empire*, "In the passage to the informational economy, the assembly line has been replaced by the network as the organizational model of production, transforming the forms of cooperation and communication within each productive site and among productive sites. (2001: 295)" The *EHC*'s use of one-on-one transactions across a multi-platform format is reflective of this shift in economic models, one which we are currently seeing in places like Greece in response to austerity measures and an inability to rely upon top-down organizational systems. They are ultimately developing grassroots "'networks you can't default on,'" as one activist told Paul Mason.[23]

Mellor Management (2007-present) is an "interactive consulting venture offering innovative strategies of humor and play to redesign our everyday experiences,"[24] and draws upon my own experience of having worked in "Corporate America." This ongoing body of work mimics and responds to a contemporary working practice in the information economy and that of cultural production: the freelancer. *Mellor Management* parodies the structure and tropes of a corporate consultation business with the aim of providing opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection on the impacts of consumerism, technology and globalization on our personal and political relationship to place. Operating within the framework of one of *Mellor Management's* divisions ("Systems Development" – stratagem; "IT Strategic Development" – new media; and "Sustainability" – durational aspects of labor and work) and interrogating the notion of art as a process of consultation and negotiation, I perform the role of a consultant. Like Jeremijenko's *EHC* and other projects situated within both service aesthetics and re:organizational aesthetics, *Mellor Management* works by creating one-on-one exchanges with participants. This fosters a sense of active citizenry in which I, as the artist, engage with participants to co-create responses to the context-specific issues raised during the exchange. I seek to discover if these DIY and localized investigations might, as Gauntlett (2011: 8) suggests, foster a "making and doing" culture rather than a "sit back and be told" culture?

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[23] http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun
[24] http://alexiamellor.com/management

Figure 1. Mellor Management in Pontypool, Pop-Up Bakery (copyright Alexia Mellor)

Mellor Management in Pontypool (2012-2013) was developed within the context of a six-month pilot artist residency as part of a larger regeneration program. Based in a former mining town in South Wales (UK), the research aimed to reveal the changing needs and identity of the diverse communities in the area, and their relationship to the failing town center. My "studio" was a stall in the indoor market that became the project's headquarters. In order to set the stage for exchange I borrowed the aesthetics of corporate environments to transform the stall into a consulting office. A series of iterative projects were developed in response to the engagement of the local community. Beginning with a "dictation station," residents were invited to share and record memories of the town, ideas for what they would like to see occur as part of the regeneration initiative, or, equally, complain about the state of things. Collaboratively, we developed a DIY pop-up bakery in response to the concern that the town's former bakery and its social role were missing; created a temporary lounge area in a disused public square; worked with a local nursery to make a temporary park using plants to graph residents' notions of what is important to the town's heritage; and formed a temporary entrepreneurial space in an empty market stall for community members to experiment with commercial enterprises and social activities. *Mellor Management in Pontypool* was able to facilitate the creation of innovative responses and ideas from the community because it disrupted existing power dynamics and assumptions about space and place, and offered a DIY, community-driven problem solving methodology.

Figures 2 and 3. Mellor Management in Pontypool, Business Park. Participants at mobile office unit taken into town center creating a bar graph using plants to mark their opinions on what is important to the town's heritage. (copyright Alexia Mellor)

Both Jeremijenko's *EHC* and my *Mellor Management* projects build upon networked and community-based resources that are inherent in an information economy logic. In many respects, these projects could be seen as being akin to social enterprises where local businesses are developed with socially-driven aims, responding to local needs and contexts (DiDomenico et al 2010; Martin & Osberg, 2015)[25] In fact, one risk facing re:organizational aesthetics projects is that of being deterritorialized and absorbed into a social enterprise situation in which the project is asked to address business rather than aesthetic aims. However, where these projects differ from social enterprises is in their intention of critical, aesthetic interrogation as opposed to being an economically-driven social service. In terms of *EHC* and *Mellor Management*, both projects embrace working collaboratively with participants to decipher and make meaning of dominant systems as they exist within local contexts. They offer opportunities to disrupt "habitus" by empowering individuals to critically engage with and challenge their environments. These methodologies suggest that it is not the eradication of dominant systems that is necessary to effect change, but rather it is through a process of reapplication of these systems to new ends in order that habitus – the internalization of these systems and our disposition to them – might be challenged.

Alongside a discussion of Jeremijenko's *EHC* and my own *Mellor Management* projects, I would like to draw attention to the work of artist and designer Jennifer Lyn Morone and her long-term project *Jennifer Lyn Morone™ Inc*[26] which began as a response to a research brief at the Royal College of Art in London to "design a protest."[27] Morone's project reacts to a data-driven culture and takes re:organizational aesthetics and capitalism to their extremes through the creation of a business model that involves her legally incorporating herself. The project is a prime example of Deleuze and Guattari's wasp-cum-orchid metaphor. Morone went through all the legal and financial procedures to become a C-Corporation. She created another entity with her name, granting this corporation her skills, capital, experiences, possessions, intellectual property – all the aspects of herself that would be seen as assets and add to the company's value. Her identity is her trademarked brand, the value of her education and experiences are translated into financial figures, and her mental abilities, physical abilities and biological functions are assessed as processes, equipment and products, respectively, of the

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[25] Also see http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/8b2c00ac-e59a-11e2-ad1a-00144feabdc0.html - axzz3hIDBDtQIand http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/news/extraordinarya-rise-socially-driven-start-ups-unveiled-today-report-launched-vince-cable

[26] "Life Means Business - Jennifer Lyn Morone, Inc has advanced into the inevitable next stage of Capitalism by becoming an incorporated person. This model allows you to turn your health, genetics, personality, capabilities, experience, potential, virtues and vices into profit. In this system You are the founder, CEO, shareholder and product using your own resources."(http://jenniferlynmorone.com/)

[27] http://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/06/who-owns-your-personal-data

company. Despite different methods of production, Morone's tackling of the information economy's obsession with data resonates with Morris' critique of labor as a dehumanized commodity in the Industrial Age (Weingarden, 1985: 9). In the current information economy we, the consumers, ultimately become the unsuspecting laborers producing data (commodity) that is then sold for corporate profit,[28] By quite literally embodying the corporation, she both humanizes the commodity of her personal data and reterritorializes it for her own use. Jaron Lanier, a computer scientist explains that, "the dominant principle of the new economy has been to conceal the value of information … We've decided not to pay most people for performing the new roles that are valuable in relation to the latest technologies. Ordinary people 'share', while elite network presences generate unprecedented fortunes." As a result, Mr Lanier fears "a massive disenfranchisement will take place."[29] This disenfranchisement is what sent artist, Jennifer Lyn Morone to incorporate and reclaim her value.

Jennifer Lyn Morone video - https://vimeo.com/98300179 (copyright Jennifer Lyn Morone)

Morone's concern about the current era of datafication has also led her to develop a digital app as part of the *Jennifer Lyn Morone™ Inc. project*. *DOME (Database of ME),* captures all of the data that you generate and shares it with only you. She reterritorializes the arena of datafication that corporations are already exploiting in order to turn the system back on itself. The data is available only to the user of the app so that you might gain a better overview of your "operations." You are able to correlate this overview to events and activities that might seem unrelated, to then make links that can be translated into value. What is interesting about Morone's project is that her subversive tactics come from entering directly into the capitalist system and pushing it to its very extremes, what is referred to as Accelerationism. The term, first coined by Benjamin Noys in his book *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (2010) relates once again to Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization (in the *Anti-Oedipus* sense) and encompasses a range of political, economic and cultural interpretations that, at its extreme sees accelerating capitalism to its absolute limits as a way of collapsing it upon itself.[30] However, it is my opinion that artists such as Morone, The Yes Men, Natalie Jeremijenko, and the others mentioned throughout this paper are more accurately participating in the discourse of Postcapitalism rather than Accelerationism. Postcapitalism is the title and subject of a new book by Paul Mason in which he describes the current culture of a sharing economy as one that has allowed us to circumvent current exchange systems, and "define the route beyond the market system."[31] Although Mason suggests that the postcapitalist sector and market sector will continue to coexist for many years to come, he posits that we are in the midst of a major change – one that artists such as the aforementioned are experimenting with.

Conclusion

It is perhaps yet to be seen what impact, if any, these art practices will directly have on corporate culture. However, that is not necessarily the point. These practices disrupt our

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[28] Paul Mason, "Today the whole of society is a factory. We all participate in the creation and recreation of the brands, norms and institutions that surround us. At the same time the communication grids vital for everyday work and profit are buzzing with shared knowledge and discontent. Today it is the network – like the workshop 200 years ago – that they "cannot silence or disperse."
http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun
[29] http://www.economist.com/blogs/schumpeter/2014/06/who-owns-your-personal-data
[30] see also Williams and Srnicek's Manifesto for Accelerationism:
http://criticallegalthinking.com/2013/05/14/accelerate-manifesto-for-an-accelerationist-politics/;
Nick Land: and Gaen Moreno's editorial on Accelerationist Aesthetics: http://www.e-flux.com/journal/editorial%E2%80%94%E2%80%9Caccelerationist-aesthetics%E2%80%9D/
[31] http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/jul/17/postcapitalism-end-of-capitalism-begun

habitus by entering directly into the dominant systems and subverting them from within and confronting us with them. This deterritorialization of the signs, symbols and structures of business serves to open the discourse, and create new nodes of connection along the rhizome. Art and business form what Bauman calls a "sibling rivalry" where both are aiming for the same target – that of making the world different from what it is in the moment or what it is likely to become, by altering the status quo. They aim to make these alterations in different ways and define "different" differently (Bauman 2004: 65), but both are ultimately interested in reshaping the world around us. As Chantal Mouffe describes, the multiplicity of perspectives and their conflict (agonism) (Mouffe 2013: 1-18) is not only at the heart of democracy, but it is also the key to innovation. In this vying for control from one another, the potential arises for art and business to equally push forward and challenge one another to new ends. Paul Mason states that in this current transition to postcapitalism, work done at the design stage can potentially reduce mistakes down the line in the implementation stage.[32] I suggest that art practices deterritorializing and disrupting business practices construct just such an opportunity: to test, redesign and reconfigure the systems that shape our economic and cultural landscapes.

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