The Art of Interruption

Concepts of art as a cooperative citizen practice driving cultural innovation and social change

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen op gezag van de rector magnificus prof. dr. E. Sterken en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op donderdag 29 september 2016 om 11:00 uur

door

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geboren op 3 Juli 1962 te Maastricht
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Acknowledgements

On his own, man is helpless. Every man uses the tools his ancestors have developed long before him. And I’m not only thinking about paper and pencils or word processors; I’m also thinking about language and numerous other frames and concepts of thought and reason, and the discovery and refinement of coffee and tea. And after we have managed to arrange our thoughts and have become able to tell our own story, we test this achievement by presenting it, again, to our peers and community. Therefore I can’t determine what part of my intellect is solely mine and what part is a product of me interacting with my surroundings. Sometimes I tend to believe that I can only intellectually exist in and because of all those great minds that surround me, including you, my reader. So after thanking you as my most important counterpart I will also try to thank all the others that supported and guided me on this enterprise.

First I would like to thank my promoter professor Jacques Zeelen who encouraged me to pick up my study again after a long period of experiencing practice. And doctor Ben Boog for supporting me with his superb expertise in the field of research methodology and art education. I also want to thank professor Ruud van der Veen for introducing me to his international network of experts, especially to the research network “Plurality and Diversity in Urban Contexts” and to faculty and staff of Teachers College at Columbia University who supported my research in New York City. Amongst the many great minds in the Leuven network I was happy to meet professors Danny Wildemeersch, Astrid von Kotze and Gert Biesta who inspired me very much. And my fellow PhD student Gillian Cowell who has been a most valuable counterpart for me in the process of finding the right words for this dissertation. In New York I immediately received a warm-hearted support by doctor Lynda Hallmark and doctor Richard Jochum in getting a foothold in the overwhelming city of New York. And I was fortunate to meet professor Victoria Marsick, professor Lyle Yorks, mister Peter Neaman and professor Maxine Greene who appeared to be very generous teachers from whom I learned so much.
But this research would not have taken place without Albert van der Kooij, former principal of the Minerva Academy of Popular Culture, who put his trust in me as a researching member of his team that was part of the Centre of Applied Research and Innovation Art & Society at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, and Lector Anne Nigten who included me in her research team. They provided me with the precious time, references and means needed to make this research happen.

It would be impossible to mention all the artists I had the honor to work with and learn from. And it is probably even more impossible to mention all the colleagues and students I met during my work at the academy and who inspired me to write this. I am grateful meeting so many wonderful minds and beautiful people.

Finally I would like to thank my closest friends and family who expressed their support unconditionally, and always share my “trials and triumphs”. I am fortunate to realize there are so many of them and some I have been working with for such a long time I can’t thank them any more than to love them. From all of you I will just thank you, Peter, for turning my scribbling into pretty print, Luka, whose youthful wisdom makes me believe in the future and you, Nathalie, for being that other half of my brain and soul.

Introduction

0.1 Quintain\(^1\) of the study

The position of art in society is constantly changing, and so too the education of artists. In contemporary Western society, the education of artists is more often focused on art as a profession, a business, and a craft. This study seeks to contribute to the training of artists in a different role, as catalysts and carriers of cultural innovation and social change. Therefore it will appear that this study is not about the education we are used to know and not about the art we are used to show.

This dissertation will present and discuss findings and concepts drawn from three different sources. The first source is my - the researcher’s - professional experience as an artist and developer of art education from which the quintain, question and aim of the study are derived. The second source is the researcher’s participation from 2009 until 2011 in the research network ‘Plurality and Diversity in Urban Contexts: Interdisciplinary Study of Democratic Practices and Governance’ at the University of Leuven, Belgium. In this network during several symposia, many cooperative art practices, including researcher’s own, were presented, reviewed and discussed with experts of public pedagogy and social geography. The third source is the multiple case study of three other cooperative art practices in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and NYC, USA. These cases form a wider context in which the theoretical concepts as developed in previous practice and debate are further discussed and articulated.

In this dissertation we will firstly study contemporary Western views on the influence of art on society. Next we will construct a framework of pedagogical theory that aims to assist us in understanding art practice as a breeding ground for human development. From that perspective the study will report of three cases of artists who gathered people together who had a shared passion, desire, dream, fascination, or other forms of inspired mutual identification. The participants were inspired to interact creatively and to engage in an art practice where

\(^1\) - “Quintain” is “the arena or holding company or umbrella for the cases we will study” (Stake, 2006: 6).
they cooperatively learned and experimented. As a contribution to the education and development of a social practice of art, this study investigates the role that artists might play in the formation and development of such Communities of Creative Citizens and the way these communities might function as a learning environment and breeding ground of cultural innovation and social change. The research of these communities hopes to clarify the competences that artists must develop to become cooperative art practitioners, as well as delivering a pedagogical concept that might help these artists to evaluate and develop their practice.

0.2 Main concepts used in the study

0.2.1 Communities of Creative Citizens (CCC)
The people involved in the cases studied were either members of the creative class (artists, designers or professionals taking part in the art world) or dedicated creative amateurs. I call both “citizens” because they chose to come together of their own free will primarily to take part in public life as free subjects, not because they had to work for income or to labor under pressure. Having a sense of belonging together, these citizens regularly met for a longer period of time, exchanging information and ideas, and progressively developing a shared repertoire of meaning and actions. Ultimately they decided to engage in one or more joint creative enterprises. Although these creative enterprises produced art the distinction between artist and audience concerning participation in the production process and the ownership of the work of art was hard to make. Instead there seemed to be a division in levels of participation that varied from a more leading role of initiator and host or steward of the community, to regular visitor and observer of the practice.

Being a community of social learning in practice, the CCC resembles the well-known Community of Practice (COP), a concept coined by Wenger in 1998. However there is a significant difference. A COP is formed in an existing functional practice, often a work situation, and the participants in a COP attempt to improve this practice. Doing so a COP is developing learning trajectories turning apprentices into “old timers” while producing meaning and identity for the participants (Wenger, 1998). A CCC on the contrary seems to develop along a reverse route since there is no shared functional practice to begin with. Instead, the formation of the community is based on mutual identification, and through meeting regularly the participants gradually develop practice. Because this practice is creative and artistic it produces more explicit forms of subjectification in addition to the practical functions of education: qualification and socialization (Biesta, 2015a). And, more importantly perhaps, since this art practice is not tied to a pre-determined functional purpose, the CCC differentiates itself from the surrounding dominant rational community, and interrupts its routines and habits of mind by offering alternative ways of thinking and doing, and becoming a source of cultural innovation.

0.2.2 Cooperative Art Practice - (CAP)
Helguera notes that in the present day the term “Social Practice” is mostly used in the art world when referring to the practice of socially engaged art (Helguera, 2011: 3). To insiders of the art world the term “Social Practice” is automatically understood as an approach of art, but since this dissertation addresses a wider audience the word “art” needs to be explicitly added. “Social art practice” cannot be recognized by its medium or material. It may produce more traditional works of art such as artifacts and performances, but it also produces interventions or events, prototypes or applications, organizations or enterprises and more. “Social art practice” refers to art practices of any discipline that designedly include a social dimension in the work of art itself or in the process of its production.

By getting together in creative interaction and artistic experiment people can learn to understand who they are in relation to each other and discover their potential as public human beings. This learning is the product of an inter-subjective cooperation instead of a teacher-learner relation, and likewise social art practice can also be a shared and cooperative practice. Being specifically interested in this cooperative learning and inquiry this study focuses on these “Cooperative Art Practices” (CAP) that not only include a social dimension in the work of art but also share a practice of research, development and co-creation.

0.2.3 The Art of Interruption
According to the typology of Arendt’s vita activa this study is interested in action, as a beginning of something new, in contrast to labor or work (Arendt, 1998 [1958]). Action is not only the essence of the practice of the artist but also of the inventor, the explorer, the entrepreneur or the scientist. This study considers art to be a social practice that interrupts the way we perceive things, but also the way we understand them and choose to act upon them. Interruption refers to the source as well as the effect of action. It refers to the new beginning that transcends and surpasses habits, routines, beliefs and improvendent tradition. Art can be considered an interruption to the natural with the artificial, but also as an interruption of the cultural order involving disjuncture of many kinds: emotional, cognitive, ethical, rational, and suchlike. Theories of human learning explain how these disjunctions trigger personal reflexes as well as social reflections in order to harmonize disjunctions and dissensus (Jarvis, 2007: 1-9). Asking for attention to be given to the consideration and negotiation of meaning, art might challenge us to react with thoughts, words and perhaps even deeds.

From this perspective, art can be more than pleasant entertainment
or a fascinating pass time; art can be an innovative public experiment with cultural values, meanings and habits. Building a CCC as an enclave within the rational order expands the realm of the possible by presenting alternative ways of seeing, saying and doing. Such an art practice can be regarded as a ‘change strategy’ since it might inspire others to change as well (Friedman, 2011, 2014).

0.3 Background of the study

Rooted in my personal experiences as an artist, teacher and researcher, the research is focused on CAP and the building and maintenance of a CCC. As mentioned before the theoretical angle I chose in my approach to these phenomena is a result of personal experience as well. So before starting with the first chapter I feel obliged to inform you about my affiliations and former experiences.

In the early 1980s I studied Andragogy at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. After a few years I changed course and focused on new media and interdisciplinary arts. Getting involved in a network of peers I founded “The Society for the Improvement of Urban Wellbeing”, an interdisciplinary society of artists’ that, inspired by the Situationist International (SI) avant-garde movement, set out on urban expeditions seeking wonder and inspiration in unexpected encounters in the city. This network would form the cooperative art practice in support of my art school graduation.

After this graduation, Nathalie Beekman and I initiated the Pavlov media lab, a non-profit arts workshop and production company, to establish and support independent media art projects. Within this lab we did not treat new media as a new technology, or as new forms of instrumental interaction or enhanced sound and image. Above all we were fascinated by the massive socio-cultural change that new media had provoked. To us, new media was a new situation, an arena with a shifting power relation between transmitter and receiver, talker and listener, maker and taker, producer and consumer. And besides that, new media had time-spatial as well as socio-political implications, and therefore it had far-reaching implications for all art practices, including the old media.

In the Pavlov media lab we started to produce art projects that applied virtual phenomena to real-life situations. As an illustration I’d like to mention the project “Mobile” where people in the city of Groningen were invited to leave their doors and windows open so that a large expedition of thousands of fellow citizens could wander through their private domain for five days in the summer of 2001. And “Do the rooftop hop”, when an international community of artists colonized and inhabited multiple interconnected rooftop areas, creating a parallel city and detour of wander and play during the summer of 2006.

For many years the Pavlov media lab and its supporting scene were creating public situations of wonder, disturbance, excitement, confusion, intimacy, and more. In these situations we sought to intensify the qualities of our human togetherness, dealing with new social and cultural realities. The community of people working on these projects grew into a multi-disciplinary network with different levels of involvement and influence. By the start of the 21st century the network inhabited a former pudding factory in the city of Groningen together with the media-lab.

In 2003, I became a teacher at the School of Fine Arts, Design & Pop Culture Minerva, and was introduced to the practice of art education. Here, I am involved with the establishment and development of the department of Popular Culture, which approaches art as a democratic public experiment with cultural values and social meanings, as well as teaching popular art practice as a social constructive interaction. This alters the understanding of the art profession from craftsmanship towards its social role. And in the education of such artists the focus is shifting from the training of instrumental skills to the formation of a subject with many social, mental and emotional competences. For that purpose, the education in this institution is organized into situations of experiential action learning and social cooperative learning and inquiry.

In my attempts at explaining and applying the essence of my professional experiences as an artist in my practice and as a teacher at this institution, I felt the need to return to my studies of Andragogy, which I did in 2007. I followed a Master degree program in Lifelong Learning and Social Intervention by Professor Jacques Zeelen at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. In 2008 he introduced me to Professor Ruud van der Veen from Teachers College Columbia University (TCCU), who invited me to attend some international seminars of the Scientific Research Community”Plurality and Diversity in Urban Context: Interdisciplinary Study of Democratic Practices and Governance” at the University of Leuven, Belgium.

In this research group, pedagogues and social geographers were studying civic learning, democratic citizenship and the public sphere. Seeking alternatives for outdated modernist beliefs they also invited cooperative art practitioners and I was fortunate to be one of them. Among the pedagogues were Gert Biesta (already cited), Astrid Von Kotze and Danny Wildemeersch (whom I will quote in chapter two) and Victoria Marsick, who generously supported my research in New York.

2 - I would like to mention Niek Schutter and Peter de Kan as influential members of this society.

3 - The projects “Mobile” and “the Rooftop Hop” and many more a documented in Ledesma, A. (2012). Cities within your city: Situation Art in Public Spaces. Groningen: Pavlov.
City and introduced me to her fellows and students at Teachers College Columbia University. During these meetings, that took place in Leuven between 2009 and 2011, Biesta presented and discussed the pedagogical concept of interruption he was developing, whilst Wildemeersch and Von Kotze were elaborating on the effect of disjunction and dissensus that appeared in community art projects. During these conferences I developed the idea that learning in art practice follows a reverse trajectory from the well-known and extensively studied “Community of Practice” (Wenger, 1998), coining the concept of “Communities of Identity” or “CCC” as I prefer to call them now. These concepts, together with other presentations and discussions, helped me to form theoretical coherence within my own personal experiences as a cooperative art practitioner. Inspired by this emerging insight I decided to commence this research in order to further discuss and develop these ideas within the context of other cases of CAP.

0.4 Aim and approach of the study
The purpose of this study is to produce knowledge about CAP and CCC in order to support art students who are seeking to improve informal social learning as an advantage of their art. I consider it might assist emerging artists to develop their own CCC and CAP as a realm of professional research and development and lifelong learning, but it may also contribute to the development of contemporary art education and creativity training as a social practice. In the third instance, this study adds a new perspective to our understanding of the way the creative class develops itself and contributes to the development of the larger community it is part of.
In this research, existing CCCs are treated as a source of experienced information. Avoiding the pitfall of having to review works of art in order to understand them pedagogically, we will not study single art projects but rather investigate the organization of CCCs and their CAP. The cases that were selected for this study deal with CCCs that had already developed a CAP and were organized towards maintaining the community. In these communities the artists stage experiences and guide transformations as stewards of a community of independent human spirits that has set out on an explorative journey in search of new and other - maybe better - ways of doing and understanding through art. The aforementioned Pavlov media lab organizing collaborative experiments like “Mobile” and “the Rooftop Hop” is an example of such a creative community. Here the function of learning we focus on is not one of qualification or socialization in the service of the powers that be. Rather it is the function of subjectification of independent citizens to enable them to start something new of their own intent but significant to others. This study seeks to determine the role that cooperative art practitioners may play in contributing towards this pedagogical challenge. The research is an inquiry into the ways that both community and practice are developing in relation to each other, and create opportunities for learning and social change. Investigating these communities this study enters two fields of interest: 1) cooperative art practice, and 2) informal social learning.

Figure 1: Position of the quintain of the study within the fields of art and human learning
Both fields are more specific areas of the wider fields of art and education. “Informal social learning” focuses in on self-directed cooperative learning outside institutions and formal structures such as school and the workplace. It may even be learning without direction or intent. An important basic assumption is the understanding of art as a social practice, as a pattern of human (inter-) ”action”, instead of art as a concrete isolated “thing” like an artifact or performance. Setting the focus on informal learning, the study ignores the application of art in schools. The study also ignores the educational programs of art institutions that aim for a predefined learning effect, either as a result of the direct perception of works of art or the participation in their artisan production. Instead, the study will present and explore cases of cooperative art practitioners who created communities of informal - meaning “self-directed and egalitarian” - learning and inquiry through an emergent art practice. Through this inquiry the study hopes to reveal parts of the development and innovation of cultural production in informal, often hidden, communities of members of the creative class.

Although several indications of learning taking place were discovered during the research, this study does not intend to measure or prove the educational effect of a CCC. Focusing on the way artists organize these communities and their CAP s, this study does tell us about the strategies that experienced cooperative art practitioners have developed
tentatively through years of practice that have attempted to create their own community of learning, research and development. The CCCs studied might function as examples of social learning environments but also as examples of a role artists could play in a process of social change.

It is my hope that the reports will inspire and inform future artists who wish to create their own creative community of self-directed, cooperative learning and inquiry. In the analysis and conclusions, we will try to formulate some pedagogical insights that may contribute towards improving the quality of these enterprises, and which might contribute to the development of strategies for social change using CAP. The outcome of this study will deliver not only knowledge for the education of future cooperative art practitioners but also an understanding of creative learning environments that can be applied within the practice of art education and community development.

0.5 Research Question
In first instance the research question is formulated as follows:

*How can artists contribute to the formation and maintenance of a community of resourceful, venturous, independent citizens who cooperatively engage in a creative practice of critical inquiry, cultural experiment and public debate?*

Following a pragmatic approach this study seeks examples, and an understanding of these examples, in order to inform professionals, educators and policy makers to meet a certain practical goal. More specifically this study seeks to inform Cooperative art practitioners who want to learn to build creative communities that support cultural innovation and independent democratic citizenship, and art educators who want to build a creative learning environment that integrates art, education and society.

Inspired by the experiences of the researcher this study is seeking this information and inspiration specifically in CAPs that produce situated art and facilitate informal learning. Observation of such practices in the field and conversations with experts in the field can inform us and assist in answering this question. Inspired by participation in certain research communities, explained previously, this study also develops a lens of pragmatist theory for interpretation and analysis. To prepare this field study we will firstly study the literature and theory in order to articulate the focus of this study and to build a theoretical framework as a tool for interpretation and analysis.

0.6 Overview of the study
In the first chapter the study will be positioned in a context of literature on western art and contemporary society in order to explain the importance of this study and the interests it serves. On one hand, the purpose of this context is to illustrate contemporary Western occupation (social, political and economic) with the production of public symbols, drama and aesthetics. On the other hand, this context stresses the urgency to safeguard public space for independent citizen culture next to business and government, in order to promote and safeguard democratic values. This context and argument asks for the further development of a more social understanding of art that is already occurring in the art world. Based on this argument and a study of the literature the research question will be elaborated and the necessary concepts and definitions for this study will be further articulated.

Next, in the second chapter, the aforementioned concepts will be studied and combined into a theoretical framework. Theories of social learning in practice and art theory concerning social relation and situation will be explored. Regarding both art and learning as a situated social practice, a vocabulary will be gathered from the pedagogy of “situated learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991), (Wenger, 1998) and the theory of “situation art” (Debord, 2006 [1957], 1964 [1967]). Next Arendt’s understanding of the “vita activa” (Arendt, 1998 [1958]) and the view on “public pedagogy” of Biesta (Biesta, 2006, 2011, 2012), which is based upon the philosophical ideas of Arendt, will be used to support the concept of “The Art of Interruption”. Understanding this interruption as an interruption of social space as well as an interruption of a process or trajectory, the study will also include Friedman’s concept of the “enclave of expanded possibilities” in the theoretical framework (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014).

Starting off as an explorative study of context and theory in chapters one and two, the research will proceed from the third chapter onwards as a multiple case study using the information gathering techniques of participative observation and guided conversation. In chapter three the research question will be rephrased in the context of the developed theoretical framework, and the methodology of the research will be explained. After that three cases of CAP will be explored in chapters four, five and six. These cases comprise artists who create their own environments of experimental artistic inquiry and informal social learning. Reporting the cases, their social setting will be mapped out in terms of their basic sociological properties in order to present them in a comparable comprehensive way. Each case will offer a perspective on what Stake (2006) calls “the quintain”, and by describing the agency of the artists in this arena the research question will be approached from different angles of practice.

In chapter seven the social settings of the cases will be compared, combined and analyzed in the context of the constructed theoretical framework and the aforementioned theories of human learning. In the same chapter, the concept of “the art of interruption” will be discussed in the context of the cases. In chapter eight the research questions will
be examined, with the purpose of providing knowledge and pedagogical theory for cooperative art practitioners and students who want to create and maintain independent social environments of experimental cultural inquiry and informal social learning.

1 The power of imagination

“I am just an artist; I don’t teach, I don’t preach, and I don’t practice politics”. Many artists consider themselves to be working on the outside of society. This might be true if we consider art to be a break from daily worries as a way of amusing and entertaining us. In this view, art can be considered to be an illusion that leads us away from our daily concerns and makes us wonder, fantasize or dream. And after this break from reality we wake up to “real life” and get back to business as usual. As we will learn in upcoming chapters, others do not believe that art and daily life can or should be separated in this way.

We may tend to assume that art exists in a separated realm away from a rationalized - “realistic” - functional order but we have to admit that man’s mind is not as rational and his actions not as functional as we would want to believe. If we regard art as the production, distribution and perception of all kinds of aesthetic, symbolic, emotional and dramatic expressions, then art is everywhere in the world as a permanent element of our daily practice of life. Many of these artistic elements are deliberately and designedly produced on the basis of requirements of government and industry but also many are produced on the basis of the independent critical minds of artists.

In this study we chose to consider art to be more than entertainment, presenting artifacts and performances that dazzle and impress, and satisfying the need for pastime pleasure and excitement. Instead, it proposes to think of art as a staging of experiences that seek to guide the uncertain transformations of mood and mind of the perceiver. Regarding this relational aspect of art, we must recognize art as a social and political practice that may inspire people to see themselves and the world in a new perspective, and that through these effects art may change those people who may then change the world.

Thus, artists may ignore their social responsibility but they cannot claim to be outsiders of society. They may not be part of the rational order of society, and they may not appear to function in a sensible way, however they are nonetheless reproducing, alternating or even mutating the cultural values of their society. In these ways, they are intervening in the course of evolution of their society.
Still this research tries to demonstrate that this does not mean artists have to dedicate their artistry to a purposive education of or for the public (Biesta, 2012). Acknowledging the rich tradition of community art in relation to regeneration, urban planning and community development, this research is focused on artists forming communities that become culturally productive on their own terms and initiative. This research is also focused on understanding processes involved with the opening of a public space of creative cultural inquiry out of people’s curiosity and eagerness to learn and improve themselves and their lives - without knowing in advance of the artistic engagement what the purpose or form will be (Caris & Cowell 2016). Therefore, as a contribution to the education of social art practitioners this study seeks to explore art as a democratic breeding ground of independent human development and cultural innovation.

Before we study such positive developmental benefits we should critically assess this assumption and consider the different Western views on the influence of arts on society. Thus, in this chapter we shall firstly explore the Western philosophical debate that deals with the general influence of art on society. From that, in order to illustrate the seriousness of the impact of arts, we shall learn how artistic techniques were developed for use in modern politics and business as a way of manipulating the public. Next we will undertake a critique on this industry of consciousness by the modern avant-garde, in terms of how they attempted to claim their part in the public stage through the performance of free expression against the bourgeois submission to advertisement and propaganda. Then, as a main influence on the current state of the Western arts, we will study the contemporary experience economy and the different roles for artists who take a particular position in that economy. Summarizing, we shall finally define arts in a social constellation and regard its benefits as propagated in current Western public opinion, business and government.

1.1 Western philosophical views on the influence of arts on society
In ancient Greece there was no Greek word for “art” as Westerners have today. The word that was used to refer to the creation of works of art like, for example, famous Greek sculpture, was “techne”, a word also used for engineering and crafting. Opening up a critical-historical perspective on the influence of art on society, Belfiore & Bennett (2006) commence their review of the relation between arts and society with the European classics. The early philosophical debate on arts in Greece, and more specific on the impact of the arts on man and society, predominantly dealt with poetry and theatre. Leading figures in this debate were Plato and Aristotle (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 18). Plato argued against poetry and theatre as metaphysically, epistemologically and morally misleading, and therefore corrupting and distracting to our psyche. At the base of Plato’s argument lies the notion that poetry and theatre (and later on the arts in general) provide both weak and flawed representations of reality. Pessimists have interpreted this notion as proof that the arts were a misleading source of factual information and an unreliable guide to impartial understanding. It was perceived that eventually the arts would stimulate the irrational side of man, corrupting him and ultimately inciting immoral or dangerous behavior. If not this, then poetry and theatre would at least distract man from worthier matters, Plato argued, leaving him unhappy as he compares his own life to the exciting lives described in poetry, or the impressive characters staged in theatre (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 39-40). Belfiore & Bennett (2006) further explain how this mistrust was agreed upon by many famous great minds of European culture, for example Schiller, or Tolstoy who wrote in his essay, “What is Art?” that art masks the emptiness of the lives of the leisureed classes for the price of oppression and exploitation. And more recently the leading art critic Danto coined the concept of “psychic distance” in his famous essay, “The Transfiguration of the commonplace”. He expresses his concerns about a contemplative detachment, an attitude stemming from the practical that separates an audience from the object of attention as a result of an aesthetic experience. This way, art - even if it expresses ethic concern or spiritual depth - provides an escape from responsible action in real life (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 63-68).

However, these researchers also discuss a great number of thinkers who oppose the “Platonic stand”, and who claim that art can deliver human development - direct or indirect, and intended or not intended. As a response to Plato’s attack on poetry, his own pupil, Aristotle, wrote “Poetics” to put forward a more positive view of the impact and value of the arts. Giving a definition of what he termed “tragedy”, Aristotle used the word “kathairo” meaning “to cleanse” or “remove impurities” in ancient Greek (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 74). Although not at all prominent within his argument, and possibly because Aristotle was almost vague about its meaning, “catharsis” became a very influential concept in the debate about the effects and benefits of the arts (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 72-73).

Belfiore & Bennett review Halliwell’s classification of the main interpretations of the concept of catharsis in his work on Aristotle’s Poetics (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 75-85). They also observe that the dispute on the mental and social impact of the arts begun by Plato continues through the ages without concluding in a one-sided victory by philosophical argument. Extensive research into the relations between art and human habit, attitude or action, did not seem to settle the case either. Belfiore & Bennett, quoting James Harold, explain that it appears methodologically almost impossible to establish the direction of causation or to rule out other causalities (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 61). The positive or negative dispute regarding the civilizing mission of
the arts seemed to be rooted in a trust or distrust of the capabilities of the audience, often turning the debate into a believer or non-believer division, an option first noted in the century before Christ by the classic Roman poet Horace. Belfiore & Bennett (2006: 102-103) point out that Horace’s most distinctive contribution to the debate was his refusal to choose between pleasure and instruction. His synthesizing idea precedes the development of the arts as an instrument, and proposes that it is up to man, and not to art, to bring about good or evil. According to Belfiore & Bennett it took until the 18th century before intrinsic values of Art were explicitly recognized, when Kant admitted that art can only be understood as “a way of presenting that is purposive on its own and that furthers, even though without a purpose, the culture of our mental powers to social communication” (Belfiore & Bennett, 2006: 168). This way, Kant attributed an autonomous position to art⁴, making us understand that art is not intending to produce a view on reality nor on justice, but on the subjective aspects of a human being in the world.

With Belfiore & Bennett we may conclude that there is no shared understanding of what actually constitutes the arts. Nowadays many believe that the Western philosophical debate on the influence of art on society will never come to a conclusion simply because the concepts of “arts” and “society” are too complicated and dynamic. The course of debate described here - and this is just a fraction of all that was said on this subject - is not as consistent as it seems. I wish to conclude this section with the remark that it is hard to believe that man is passively submitted to the social forces of art, that this influence results in predictable human behavior, and that the relation between arts and society is to a certain comprehensible degree rational, transparent, and open. It seems more sensible to consider art to be an alternative form of human action, and that the way a work of art is perceived, and the way its meaning is negotiated, is constantly changing together with its social context. Art produces consciousness in the same way as other forms of human interaction, for example, news media, scientific inquiry or political debate.

From this viewpoint we cannot hold the “arts” - whatever that may be - to be responsible for the rise or decay of human morals. But those who produce art, including those who present it, perceive it and negotiate the meaning of it, should account for their contribution to the formation of public consciousness. So the responsibility of artists for the impact of their art is not just about the direct effect of a particular work of art. More essential is the responsibility of artists concerning their public position in the social realm as experts of public storytelling and shared imagination. What do artists do with this power of imagination? It is not just what they are saying but also whom they represent, whose interests they serve, what audience they address, and whom they enable, encourage and assist to take part in this public, culturally creative, conversation. To illustrate the weight of this responsibility we will explore a Western phenomenon called “public relations”, an industry that intentionally attempts to use aesthetics, drama and symbols to surreptitiously influence human consciousness.

1.2 The Peacetime Propaganda of the PR industry

The previous overview dealt with the philosophical debate on the influence of formal arts on man and society. But, as we explained in the introduction to this chapter, art also informally appears in everyday life and some of it is produced and used to manipulate the mood and mind of the public. As an example of the ongoing production of everyday aesthetics, symbolism and public drama in late modern society we will learn in this section how today’s production of advertisement and propaganda have become a very advanced industry, aiming at our subconsciousness and attempting to make people want or need what they did not realize yet.

Spivey (2005) explains that Alexander the Great was the first ruler to have his imperial portrait on a coin to confirm his rule over an unprecedented vast empire. It functioned as a sophisticated form of territorial markings. And so too are other symbols, for example, the national colors, monuments, canonic tales of glory, folkloric costumes and traditions. But these artifacts and ritual performances make the people look and move in the same direction in a rather explicit way, compared to the subtle art of “public relations” developed scientifically during the 20th century by the ‘industry of consciousness’.

“The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of” (Bernays, 1928: 9).

These are the words of Edward Bernays, a social scientist, political and corporate adviser, and nephew of Sigmund Freud. This statement sounds like the confession of an alarmist conspiracy theorist. However by the time Bernays wrote these words, published in 1928, he was a well-
The effectiveness of democracy:
justifies his Machiavellian approach by expressing his concern about
explains this situation as a necessary reaction to enlightenment and
dominate our society. Bernays claims that: “It is they who pull the
wires which control the public mind, who harness old social forces and
acceptance for a particular idea or commodity”. (Bernays, 1928: 18)
how it is manipulated by the special pleader who seeks to create public
“Propaganda” in 1928. The purpose of the book was “to explain the
combined this knowledge with Freud’s psychoanalysis. To promote
business and politics. (Curtis, 2002)
As a propagandist, Bernays had studied crowd psychology and he
presented himself as a “Public Relations Counselor”, inventing a new
profession that would definitely change the public practice of Western
business and politics. (Curtis, 2002)
In 1919 Bernays, 26 years old, was invited by the President of the USA
to accompany him to the post war peace conference in Paris. In the
same year Bernays also reopened his office in New York. This time he
represented himself as a “Public Relations Counselor”, inventing a new
profession that would definitely change the public practice of Western
business and politics. (Curtis, 2002)

Bernays started his career as an entertainment press agent. He worked
for different artists amongst who was the world famous opera singer
Enrico Caruso. During the First World War he came to work for the
Administration of President Woodrow Wilson and was employed in
the Committee on Public Information. Together with his colleagues
Carl Byor and John Price, Bernays was commissioned to influence
public opinion towards supporting American participation in the war in
Europe. In order to achieve this, the committee came up with the advice
that America’s war efforts should be explained as “bringing democracy
to all of Europe”. This public argument turned out to be remarkably
useful for US foreign policies up to the present day.

In 1928 Bernays published his book “Propaganda”. It is composed
for it by the group leaders in whom it believes and by those persons
people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up
sterility of which certain American critics constantly complain. No
serious sociologist any longer believes that the voice of the people
expresses any divine or specially wise and lofty idea. The voice of the
people expresses the mind of the people, and that mind is made up
for it by the group leaders in whom it believes and by those persons
who understand the manipulation of public opinion. It is composed

of inherited prejudices and symbols and clichés and verbal formulas
supplied to them by the leaders. Fortunately, the sincere and gifted
politician is able, by the instrument of propaganda, to mold and form
the will of the people” (Bernays, 1928: 92).

This molding and forming of the will of the people is achieved by the
application of all kinds of artistic techniques and aesthetically designed
expressions. In “Propaganda” Bernays suggests techniques to stage the
business or enterprise in an aesthetically attractive way, and he also
recommends its figureheads to mingle and associate with celebrities,
local heroes and to kiss babies (Bernays, 1928: 101).

Born a Jew in Austria and living in an age of violent anti-Semitic mass
movements like the Fascists, the Soviets, the KKK and so forth, it is
understandable that Bernays did not put much trust in the ability of
the masses to restrain themselves in order to build a safe and caring
civilization. On the other hand it seems also a little naive of Bernays
in turn to expect that elite politicians and captains of industry would
voluntarily form an enlightened and philanthropic regime.
Eventually Bernays was involved in normative questionable practices,
for example, on his work with the tobacco industry, encouraging
women to start smoking cigarettes. The profession of PR counselor
was developing more and more into a job of keeping up appearances
and providing fig leaves. One of the most important activities of PR
counselors became the manipulation of the public image of enterprises
that were unsuccessful, dangerous, harmful or otherwise negative in
order to turn them into something noble and admirable. Today these
“spin-doctors” as they are called can often be found in the staff or board
of large companies and in political parties (Curtis, 2002).

In this section we have discovered that while our Western worldview
expects modern enlightened citizens to remain calm, reasonable and
efficient, a storm of advertisement, PR, design and fashion proves
that there is much more going on in human decision making than
a calculative processing of factual information. The late modern
Western culture this study is dealing with is a culture of emotional
and aesthetic public relations. This contrasts with a social order of
impassive calculation and accurate measurement that establishes and
consolidates a capitalist technocratic rule. As an aesthetic, symbolic
and dramatic ingredient of our daily lives, a lot of art has also become
a tool to create a culture that embraces these new technologies and
markets, forming consumers who purchase its products, and citizens
who submit to the principles and beliefs that consolidate this techno-
economic order.
Over the course of the twentieth century almost everything, including
“High Art”, was commoditized by means of massive industrial (re-)

"High Art", was commoditized by means of massive industrial (re-)

production and distribution, and consequently submitted and adapted to the functional logic of western markets and technologies. This mass-produced culture seemed to grease the rational machinery of Western technocratic society with a continuous stream of aesthetics and emotions. In this constellation, art is not a commodity or industry but a means of shaping social togetherness.

This late modern spectacular mass culture has replaced traditional culture. Traditional community has crumbled and become fragmented into a collection of disembedded single individuals (Giddens, 1991). I would like to add to that observation that in our late modern society, consumption - especially the consumption of cultural products - has now become a way of expressing identity since people share little more than a culture of markets and technologies. The PR industry founded by Bernays was not only shaping public relations on behalf of their customers, they were also shaping the consciousness and identity of late modern man.

One could argue that we should not bother about propaganda because it has always been present as a stabilizing force of society necessary to keep the nation safe and secure. But it is more difficult to accept that in our modern democracies there is also an elite purposely manipulating the mood and mind of the masses in order to increase personal power or profit. For this, the same knowledge and propaganda techniques that were used against the enemy in times of war are applied to fellow citizens in peacetime for purposes other than public safety and security. One could also argue that considering the overwhelming dominance of manipulative messages serving exclusive commercial and political interest in the media and the public realm, it is equally important that artists contribute independent thought and voice to the formation of public values, dreams and ambitions. In the next section we will examine one of the most prominent critics of this “society of the spectacle” in Western art history. Besides an articulation of this problem they also tried to produce a form of “situation art” with the intention of liberating people from stupefying labor and consumer addiction.

1.3 Art against art; modern Avant-Garde fighting the Society of the Spectacle

The Situationist Internationale (SI) appears to be the first explicit reaction of artists to the increase of aesthetics, drama and symbolism in modern everyday life. The Situationist critique was expressed in artistic form and practice, as well as in art theory and critical philosophy. The main representative of the SI was Guy Debord. In a handwritten and stenciled pamphlet, he accused societies in which modern conditions of production prevail to be the locus of illusion and false consciousness. He stated that modern society is “an immense accumulation of spectacles.” Debord wrote in the first of 221 statements that make up the accusation: “All that once was directly lived has become mere representation” (Debord, 1994 [1967]: 12).

Debord tries to explain that the everyday life and personal identity of modern man has become a distant spectacle: we regard ourselves to be our jobs, our social status, our qualifications, our public image, and we manifest our spectacular self in public by making a personal choice from a menu of typecast consumer life styles. These representations are imaginative but also distant, spectacular and omnipresent, as they refer to a higher socio-economic reality we must live up to. In the second statement, Debord claims that: “The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life, and, as such, the autonomous movement of non-life” (Debord, 1994 [1967]: 12), meaning that in reverse, whilst we translate our being into techno-economic terms, we treat imaginative abstract concepts that only exist in the human mind as a self-evident reality. Money, time, government, economy, or the many forms of institutions, all are human constructs that are presented in public and imposed upon the private with an overruling urgency. It is considered to be “realistic” to align ourselves to them, thereby suggesting that they are given natural facts of life.

The assertion that the system world of human concepts forms reality and that the personal experience of existence is a delusion are what Debord calls the “inversion of everyday life”. According to Debord, the spectacle is not about the deceit of the image but about “a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (Debord, 1994 [1967]: 13). It is therefore not a product or a distortion of media technology but a “Weltanschauung that has been actualized, translated into the material realm - a world view transformed into an objective force” (Debord, 1994 [1967]: 13).

“UNDERSTOOD IN ITS TOTALITY, the spectacle is both the outcome and the goal of the dominant mode of production. It is not something added to the real world - not a decorative element, so to speak. On the contrary, it is the very heart of society’s real unreality. In all its specific manifestations - news or propaganda, advertising or the actual consumption of entertainment - the spectacle epitomizes the prevailing model of social life. It is the omnipresent celebration of a choice already made in the sphere of production, and the consummate result of that choice. In form as in content the spectacle serves as total justification for the conditions and aims of the existing system. It further ensures the permanent presence of that justification, for it
Debord (1958) notes: presenting a prefixed perspective or predefined opinion of the artist. As Debord stresses that these situations are not predesigned environments or ensembles of impressions determining the quality amongst them, the constructors “live” this situation. These collective environments or ensembles of impressions determining the quality of the moment must break up the spectators’ passive identification with the hero, inciting him to revolutionize his own life, and in turn destroying the bourgeois idea of happiness, Debord argued (Debord, 1957, in Knabb 2006: 39).

The suggested demeanor is the invention of new non-competitive forms of games “to broaden the non-mediocre portion of life, to reduce its empty moments as much as possible” (Debord, 1957, in Knabb 2006: 39). By multiplying poetic objects and subjects, and by organizing games amongst them, the constructors “live” this situation. These collective environments or ensembles of impressions determining the quality of the moment must break up the spectators’ passive identification with the hero, inciting him to revolutionize his own life, and in turn destroying the bourgeois idea of happiness, Debord argued (Debord, 1957, in Knabb 2006: 40-41). Evaluating and furthering the concept of situation art a year later, Debord stresses that these situations are not predesigned environments presenting a prefixed perspective or predefined opinion of the artist. As Debord (1958) notes:

“Our central purpose is the construction of situations, that is, the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature. We must develop an intervention directed by the complicated factors of two great components in perpetual interaction: the material setting of life and the behaviors that it incites and that overturn it” (Debord, 1957, in Bishop, 2006: 96).

The art and ideas of the SI were a source of inspiration for ludic and playful rebellion during the 1960s and early 1970s. The SI dissolved at the turn of the decade in a dispute over the lost revolt of 1968. Debord expelled one member after another and with only one fellow member left he disassembled the SI in 1972 after publishing recommended strategies for future insurgencies.

1.4 The Experience Economy and the challenge of the Creative Class

The SI and other artists opposing the Western industry of consciousness did not succeed in creating a counterforce strong enough to withstand Bernays and his peers. The blend of art and daily life seemed to have become reality before the avant-garde could get a grip on it. In late modern times the leisure and entertainment industries grew in pace with an increase in the spare time and income of the masses. As a result of the increase of consumption, markets developed together with the production budget for design and advertisement, and the latter became more or less decisive in capitalist competition.

Now, a rapidly growing amount of products that we handle in everyday life are shaped, designed and presented by artists. And last but not least, with the spread of mass media the public realm has become a theatre stage and many aspects of public life, for instance politics, have become more and more dramatized. The number of professionals producing this spectacle, the so-called “creative class” is rising in late modern Western society.

At the turn of the century the quest for creativity seemed to be more widely spread than ever. Publications of economists that emphasized the economic importance of creativity, for example Florida (2002) or Pine & Gilmore (1999), were at the desks of many policy makers and corporate managers. Artists taking responsibility for their part in the formation of public consciousness needed to understand this late modern economy.

Pine & Gilmore (1999) observed that a significant amount of value added to commercial products and services had to be recognized as of aesthetic and symbolic value. They labeled this added value “experience” and coined the term “the experience economy”. Doing so they used the example of a cup of coffee as served on the terrace of a special location like the San Marco Plaza in Venice, Italy. In the
Following on from Pine & Gilmore’s premises around authenticity, Arts & Business believes and advocates that just as the experience economy cannot exist (at least successfully) without authenticity, so the transformation or contribution economy will revolve around meaning and interaction in respect (Mermiri, 2009: 18).

Mermiri (2009) places the stages of product refinement as presented by Pine & Gilmore (1999) within the perspective of the hierarchy of needs as developed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow. Mermiri, proposing that meaning drives transformation, suggests that the impact of the experience on the consumer is indicated by duration (short term / long term) and nature (think, feel, act) of the response (Mermiri, 2009: 25).

Figure 2: The progression of economic value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999)

The diagram on the right clarifies that the harvesting of the resource and the production of the commodity add relatively little value, while the service of the cup of coffee by the waiter adds significantly more. And as we can see in this example, the most value is added by setting the stage for drinking: the architecture, the music, the interior design, et cetera (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 2). The experience economy is often explained as a shift of economic focus from the hard value of material commodities, goods and efficient services, to soft values concerning the look and feel of the product. Considering art to be a commodity one could argue that the “experience economy” is a form of integration of art with daily life. Considering art to be a situation, the SI would argue that the experience economy misleads people into a fancy but dulling form of consumer passivity. However, according to Pine & Gilmore the materially saturated consumer will look further than good looks and happy feelings. They foresee a growing demand for authenticity and human growth. Pine & Gilmore call the next level on the scale of product refinement “guidance of transformations”, as can be seen in the figure on the left, above (Pine & Gilmore, 1999: 168). To build and advance Pine & Gilmore’s analysis of the experience economy, Tina Mermiri, a research manager at the London based “Arts & Business” institute, argues:

“Following on from Pine & Gilmore’s premises around authenticity, Arts & Business believes and advocates that just as the experience economy cannot exist (at least successfully) without authenticity, so the transformation or contribution economy will revolve around meaning and interaction in respect” (Mermiri, 2009: 18).

An artist stages experience(s) and guides transformation(s) to move the perceivers and change their mood and mind.
When the practitioner does so on assignment for functional purposes, he is probably a professional in the creative industries, for instance a designer, copywriter or architect. But besides these applied arts we should also recognize autonomous art, a practice that is considered to be independent from any other person’s interest. An autonomous artist stages experience(s) and guides transformation(s) to move the perceivers and change their mood and mind on the artist’s own initiative.

In this section we have learned that in the transformation economy artists are expected to move beyond the production of the impressive and tasteful in order to initiate, induce, catalyze or guide social and personal change. These expectations not only consider artists to be producers of artifacts and performances, but also stagers of experiences and even guides of transformation. To illustrate these claims of human development, personal growth and social progress we need to undertake an inventory of the reported benefits of the arts in late modern Western society.

1.5 The benefits of art
The study “Gifts of the Muse” aimed at improving the understanding of the full range of effects that can be associated with the arts, in order to reframe the debate about its benefits (McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras, & Brooks, 2004). In its overview, the report places a distinction between “instrumental” and “intrinsic” benefits in the center and lists several subcategories derived from the literature. As we saw in the first section of this chapter, the historical debate on the benefits of the arts in Western civilization was flavored by moral judgment early on. However, McCarthy et al. refuse to prescribe standards for a correct approach or understanding of art, and choose not to formulate any required appreciation or proper emotional response to it. This way the researchers give way to an infinite number of possible experiences and appreciations of art.

Firstly, the report critically reviews recent studies on the instrumental benefits most popular among management and government. The subcategories treated are subsequently: a) Cognitive, b) Attitudinal and behavioral, c) Health, d) Social and e) Economic (McCarthy, et al., 2004: 8-17). Examining the available literature on these instrumental benefits, the researchers observed that studies of cognitive benefits focus on the development of learning skills and academic performance in school-aged youth (McCarthy et al., 2004: 8). The same goes for attitudinal and behavioral benefits. The researchers claim that most publications focus on the development of attitudes and life skills of - again - the young and - more specifically - “at risk” youth (McCarthy et al., 2004: 10-11). Effects on adult learning or on the growth of human capital are not mentioned by this study. For instance, the development of typical post-Fordist human assets like creative resourcefulness or cognitive flexibility is not explored. The economic benefits are studied on three instances: first, direct benefits like income through spending and taxes, or the creation of jobs; second, the attraction of entrepreneurs and companies, and third, a variety of public good benefits that make up property value (McCarthy et al., 2004: 17).

The researchers found several flaws in the available reports. Most of the studies do not demonstrate how art actually causes certain effects. “There is a lack of critical specifics about such issues as how the claimed benefits are produced, how they relate to different types of arts experiences, and under what circumstances and for which populations they are most likely to occur” (McCarthy et al., 2004: 68). Nevertheless, the report gives a good impression of wishes and expectations for society regarding the arts, and delivers a useful addition to the values presented in the former sections. Particularly, the intrinsic values are further specified and an otherwise very prominent value, money, which is ignored in the previous philosophical elaborations, is added to the instrumental benefits.

Considering the benefits popular to the public, McCarthy and his fellow researchers recognize that the intrinsic values are the very raison d’être of the arts: “People are drawn to the arts not for their instrumental effects, but because encountering a work of art can be a rewarding experience - it can give individuals pleasure and emotional stimulation and meaning. These intrinsic benefits are the fundamental layer of effects leading to many of the instrumental benefits that have dominated the public debate and the recent research agenda.” (McCarthy et al., 2004: 3) The categories of intrinsic benefits studied are subsequently: a) Captivation, b) Pleasure, c) Expanded capacity for empathy, d) Cognitive growth, e) Creation of social bonds, f) Expression of communal meanings. The researchers chose to rank the categories of intrinsic benefits in an order ranging from primarily private to communal values in order to “challenge the widely held view that intrinsic benefits are purely of value to the individual” (McCarthy et al. 2004: xv-xvi).

### Table 1: Inventory of benefits of the arts as reported by McCarthy et. al (2004)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumental benefits:</th>
<th>Intrinsic benefits:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Cognitive</td>
<td>- Captivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attitudinal and behavioral</td>
<td>- Pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Health</td>
<td>- Expanded capacity for empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Social</td>
<td>- Cognitive growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Economic</td>
<td>- Creation of social bonds</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Expression of communal meanings</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
On first sight, from a functional perspective the practice of art seems purposeless and the work of art useless. But looking at an inventory of benefits of art we found that many consider art to be a learning opportunity. As we discovered in this section, more than half of the intrinsic benefits (except for captivation and pleasure) and more than half of the instrumental benefits (except for health and economy) in the inventory of McCarthy et al. are pedagogical (McCarthy et al., 2004). This inventory seems to meet the substantial demand for staged experiences and guidance of transformations in late modern Western society, as witnessed by Pine & Gilmore (1999). This demand goes hand in hand with a quest for the development of social empathic skills. Quantitative economic research conducted by Florida and many others show a significant statistical relation between the presence of workers using these social empathic skills and local community progress (Florida, 2002, 2012). Together with the identified growth in demand for staged experiences and guided transformations, this economic research encouraged the belief that a flourishing culture produces, or at least attracts, creative human capital that in turn produces communal progress. Current expectations of artists to take a role in this arena challenges them to expand their professional practice from an artisan production of artifacts and performances for trade, towards an artistic production of staged experiences that both guide and provide a catalyst for personal and social transformations. This practice of staging experiences and guiding transformation can be interpreted as andragogy, a practice of adult learning. In this andragogical arena the artist is expected to create public situations of cultural experiment and to open up opportunities for human development. Since many theorists, including Biesta frequently quoted in this dissertation, keep using the term “pedagogy” in relation to human learning at any age this report also will use this term instead of “andragogy”. Still, in chapter two, we will elaborate on some specific properties of andragogy in relation to pedagogy. After that I will align to the use of the word pedagogy in relation to any age group of learners.

1.6 Concluding remarks

We started this chapter with a review of the debate on the apparent effects of arts on society, and came to the conclusion that this influence is not about the effect of an isolated work of art on the mind of the beholder. The actual responsibility of artists for the impact of their art concerns their position in the social realm as experts of public storytelling and shared imagination. Digging more deeply we discovered that drama, symbols and aesthetics are purposely used to serve late modern politics and business, not only to shape their public relations but also to turn the public into an audience of willing consumers and citizens.

Considering the overwhelming dominance of manipulative messages serving exclusive commercial and political interest in both the media and the public realm, we concluded that artists should contribute independent thought and voice to the formation of public values, dreams and ambitions. In a free market democracy, we cannot leave the formation of public consciousness to commerce and propaganda. For that we need free public space for the expression of the citizen subject - in public debate, critical inquiry and cultural experiment - towards developing shared values, dreams and ambitions. Therefore, the voice of the independent citizen needs equal weight and presence in the public domain of the media and the urban realm. As experts of public tales and imagination who are able to amplify and represent other people's voices, artists do have a responsibility for the position they choose.

Whilst art is developing more and more social dimensions, society seems to be becoming more and more artistic, as it is being shaped by the use of drama, symbol and aesthetics. Training future artists to establish a socially engaged art practice they should learn to understand these expectations and to relate to them, since expectation is the backdrop of perception. Recent research like Florida's (2002, 2012) and many others following him reveals the importance of creativity in economic development, raising expectations towards the so-called “creative class” but also delivering mainly quantitative information on the what, where and how many. This research seeks to add some qualitative color to that picture. In this first chapter we have observed that art can be more than an artifact or performance that is skillfully crafted or powerfully well presented by an outsider artisan in order to entertain, please or delight us. We came to the conclusion that art can also be a social practice of open cultural experiment in order to explore alternatives for our habitual ways of seeing, saying, thinking, doing and living together. Maybe not on first sight, but at least on second thought we may conclude that art has a function after all. Based on this literature study of contemporary views on the relations between art and society we will hold the position that a socially engaged art practice can be a breeding ground for human capital and societal progress. In the next chapter we will look into the theory concerning the potential pedagogical (andragogical) power of art.
2 Theory: The enclave of expanded possibilities

“It is not the transmission of the artist’s knowledge or inspiration to the spectator. It is the third thing that is owned by no one, whose meaning is owned by no one, but which subsists between them, excluding any uniform transmission, any identity of cause and effect” (Rancière, 2009: 15).

We will not study the use of art to instruct or socialize people, making them do and think as the artist tells them to. As change makers, artists can also bring people together and open shared perspectives on unexpected possibilities. This expansion of possible ways of seeing, saying and doing may inspire people to take action and change their world in their own unique way, on their own terms and in their own interests. This strategy meets the aim of this study in training artists as Cooperative Art Practitioners without turning them into teachers, spin doctors, therapists, social workers or anything else that is other than being an artist.

With this strategy in mind this study seeks to understand how art practitioners might bring together a community of resourceful, adventurous, independent citizens and inspire them to cooperatively engage in cultural inquiry, artistic experiment and public debate. Adapting an alternative order with new ways of seeing, saying and doing, such a community may become an enclave within the dominant functional society. In this enclave innovations can be developed that cannot be developed within the dominant order. Art seems to be a very appropriate practice to create such enclaves.

In the previous chapter we learned about the way art is used to influence public consciousness in the interests of business and government. We also learned, maybe as a reaction to the increase of manipulative spectacles in western society, that a seemingly growing number of artists develop practices of socially engaged art in which they independently investigate, challenge, alter, test or question society by means of art. We could consider this independent production of civic consciousness that is in the interests of personal development and the
improvement of the quality of human togetherness to be an alternative to the commercial and political use of art.

In this chapter we will study social theory to explore what kind of learning situation, what kind of art practice and what kind of pedagogical benefits we should seek in order to set up a socially engaged art practice that preserves artistic integrity and respects the spectator’s autonomy. This means that we will approach art as a cooperative practice in which the artists play a role of initiator, director, coach or steward of a community that has set out on a journey of discovery and development. From this social viewpoint the work of art as well as the pedagogical benefits emerge from the interaction between the artist and the public. Cooperative art practitioners tend to prepare or compose such a social situation – its settings and interactions - as (part of) a work of art. These works of art, as well as its potential learning opportunities, are situated in practice, meaning that they emerge from the situation in which they are applied and experienced. In the first two sections of this chapter we will study this situated learning and situated art. After that we will concentrate further on art as a social space and art as form of human action. From there we will build the theoretical framework of CAP as a strategy for change that establishes an enclave of expanded possibilities through interruption of the rational community.

2.1 Situated learning, learning outside school and without curriculum

In his trilogy “Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society” Jarvis (2006, 2007, 2008) explains how the recognition of adult learning or “andragogy” shifted the view on education. For a long time, the concern of education was on the preparation of siblings, children and adolescents for adult life and it was studied in the science of “pedagogy”. Andragogy was developed from a perspective of lifelong learning, pushing forward several revolutionary notions. First and foremost, andragogy deals with adults who are considered to be independent and self-directed learners with their own aims, ambitions and frames of reference. Inspired by adult education, the general objectives of education were also expanded with the development of the ability of the learner to play unfamiliar social roles and to solve unknown problems, in addition to basic conditioning and training. Preparing children for adulthood, they were now taught how to learn for themselves in order to become self-directed lifelong learners.

Adult learning also expanded the realm of learning outside the classroom by recognizing almost any situation in everyday life as a potential learning environment, developing the perspective from a lifelong trajectory to a life-wide activity (Jarvis, 2006, 2007, 2008).

Jarvis subdivides lifelong learning into three modes of formality: formal, non-formal and informal learning (Jarvis, 2008: 151-155). The first mode of Formal learning is organized within schools, and the education is mostly instrumental - based on a curriculum that is legitimized by unverifiable ends. In contemporary western society, this formal education is put under political pressure to organize formal education as a delivery service for the learning market, at a cost to liberal and egalitarian ideals of education.

The second mode of Non-formal learning occurs outside the formal context of the school, even though it is still organized by institutions that set up programs of mostly experiential learning in practice, for which a more or less hidden curriculum is developed. We find non-formal learning in the workplace where is it organized on the job by organizations for their employees in order to increase production efficiency. The third mode of Informal learning occurs in the community, mostly in affective relationships such as family or friends. This learning is self-directed or incidental and in the first instance more often experiential than cognitive. It might be (self-) organized but there is no school or curriculum that imposes the priority of a work-related qualification requirement or a socialization of citizenship according to the interest and opinion of others.

“It is through this informal learning that we embark upon the process of becoming persons - persons who are of moral worth. Learning then is not just the universal process by which we become persons and members of a people; it is a moral process which drives our human formation” (Jarvis, 2008: 151).

I want to argue that art can therefore be part of the learning situation in all three modes of formality. In formal education, for example, art is recognized as a means of developing certain sensory and cognitive skills, and art is also used as a didactic technique to explain matters or to aid the memorization of information. The latter application we also find in non-formal education that informs and instructs processes in the workplace or in public space. And of course advertisements and propaganda can also be considered non-formal applications of art - not for pedagogic but for demagogic purposes. In informal learning, art is a supportive companion on the walk of life for many people. Art helps to

6 - The word “ingestion” is used in the original. I read it as “ingestion”.

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perceive and understand things, to examine things or to make sense of the irrational, but also to keep up the spirit and to endure hardship. And although art may have a very private meaning, for many of us it is very useful in building social relations, identity and meaning.

Jarvis discusses informal learning specifically in childhood, although in his definition of lifelong learning he speaks of a trajectory that includes human formation:

“... we defined lifelong learning as the combination of processes throughout a lifetime whereby the whole person - body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs and senses) - experiences social situations, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotively or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the individual person’s biography resulting in a continually changing (or more experienced) person” (Jarvis, 2007: 1).

In the commercial education market, situated learning is interpreted as human resource development. Professional organizations recognize the importance of on-the-job learning and the improvement of practice. Wenger developed the well-known concept - “a perspective, not a recipe” (Wenger, 1998: 9) - of “Communities of Practice”. Learning is understood by Wenger as a characteristic of practice coming forth from the disjunction between participation and reification (Wenger, 1998: 63). Through negotiation of meaning the joint enterprise is tuned, and forms of mutual engagement evolve, and repertoire, styles and discourses are developed (Wenger, 1998: 73). Confronted with our influence on the world and developing our relations with others, identity emerges. This identity is constituted by all the practice we are participating in. Wenger calls this a multi-membership of communities with many different modes of belonging. Therefore, our learning is fed by the unfolding of many different perspectives and is influenced by all sorts of boundary activities, encountering what Wenger calls “boundary objects” and “brokers” (Wenger, 1998: 105). And so, as a result of practice, life becomes a learning trajectory; not a path but a continuous motion, Wenger argues (Wenger, 1998: 154). This learning eventually helps us to do things better as we regularly interact, and many have interpreted Wenger’s Communities of Practice as a useful manual for on-the-job learning.

In an earlier work of Lave and Wenger (1991), they considered learning to be a trajectory moving from the periphery to the core of the community, and turning apprentices into “old timers”. Developing the concept further, Wenger’s book on “Communities of Practice” is less work orientated. It is divided into two parts: “Practice” and “Identity” (Wenger, 1998). Doing so he still suggests an order of importance, dependency or occurrence. But the duality of thinking Wenger propagates (1998: 47-48) also invites us to consider a reversal of the direction of the learning trajectory. It is possible to imagine, and many of us probably have experience with the situation, that a group of people who share ambitions and beliefs come together regularly to enjoy this togetherness without sharing a practice. As friends or soul mates they might share and create forms of mutual engagement, developing repertoire, styles and discourses. And eventually they might also decide to engage in a joint enterprise and develop practice together.

In this study art practice was considered to be specifically suitable for this “reversed” community of practice since it does not need a functional purpose to begin with. In art it is quite common that people first relate through a shared identity and at a later point decide to become active and start a band, theatre company or any other form of organized creativity. In this situation, art is a public collaborative expedition into the unknown, evoking unexpected shared experiences whilst negotiating meaning and value of newly discovered things. Here art generates opportunities for change through creation, invention, experiment and enterprise.

I want to conclude this elaboration on situated learning by arguing that according to common interpretations, situated learning emerges from a rational reflection of a functional practice. In these COP, the development of a practice-related identity for the participants is a spin-off of that reflection. In reverse, considering art practice as an environment of situated learning, we observed that priority is given to the public expression of and reflection on people’s unique subjective identity, and that the primary function of the art practice is the expression, negotiation and development of that private identity. While it is commonly presumed that a purposeful functional practice is pivotal for COP, art practices seem to gather around an interest in the development of the human subject.

In addition to the understanding of situated learning in COP I would like to term this artistic perspective on a situated learning community a “Community of Creative Citizens” (CCC). We will use this concept of CCC to define the community this research is focused on. Next, in order to specify the situated nature of the art practice a CCC engages in we will study situated art.

2.2 Situated Art, the coalescence of experience and creation

In the third paragraph of the previous chapter dealing with the Situationist International we briefly mentioned the “construction of situations” as a suggested response to the “Society of the spectacle” (Debord, 1994 [1967]) and the “bourgeois idea of happiness” (Debord,
arena, Bourriaud remarks that:

“If Guy Debord’s diagnosis about the process of producing spectacles may strike us as harsh, the Situationist theory overlooks the fact that if the spectacle deals first and foremost with forms of human relations (it is “a social relationship between people, with imagery as the go-between”), it can only be analyzed and fought through the production of new types of relationships between people” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998]: 39).

Many artists, critics and theorists take the concept coined by Debord in 1957 to consider a work of art as a constructed situation further – to a generally accepted notion that art is not the result of an individual artisan fabrication process but a process of social construction. Along this line of thinking, Becker (1976) argues:

“Works of art can be understood by viewing them as the result of the coordinated activities of all the people whose cooperation is necessary in order that the work should occur as it does. This sets a distinctive agenda for our inquiry. We are to look, first, for the complete roster of kinds of people whose activity contributes to the result. As I have suggested elsewhere (Becker, 1974), this might include people who conceive the idea of the work (e.g., composers or playwrights); people who execute it (musicians or actors); people who provide the necessary materials (e.g., musical instrument makers); and people who make up the audience for the work (playgoers, critics, and so on). Although we conventionally select someone or a few of these as “the artist” to whom responsibility for the work is attributed, it is sociologically more sensible and useful to see the work as the joint creation of all these people (Becker, 1996: 703).

Understanding art as a state of encounter and analyzing its relational arena, Bourriaud remarks that:

“... artworks were first situated in a transcendent world, within which art aimed at introducing ways of communicating with the deity. It acted as an interface between human society and the invisible forces governing its movements, alongside a nature that represented the model order. (...) Art gradually abandoned this goal, and explored the relations existing between Man and the world. This new, relational, dialectical order developed from the renaissance on, ...” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998]: 12).

Bourriaud cites Godard, claiming that “it takes two to make an image” and explains that with this statement Godard was putting forward the notion of Duchamp that “it’s the beholder who makes pictures”, “... postulating dialogue as the actual origin of the image-making process” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998]: 11). As a recent step in the development of the relational arena of art, Bourriaud observes that:

“Today, this history seems to have taken a new turn. After the era of relations between Humankind and the object, artistic practice is now focused upon the sphere of inter-human relations, ...” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998]: 12).

At the dawn of the new millennium, Bishop observed that: “a subsequent generation of artists have begun to engage more directly with specific social constituencies, and to intervene critically in participatory forms of mass media entertainment” (Bishop, 2006: 13). Her review of the literature dealing with the subject of “Participation” in contemporary art focuses on “the social dimension of participation – rather than the activation of the individual viewer in so-called ‘interactive’ art and installation”. Bishop calls for attention to be paid to “the history of those artistic practices since the 1960s that appropriate social forms as a way to bring art closer to everyday life” (Bishop, 2006: 10). “Taking human relations as the theoretical horizon, art has developed from a transcendent and spiritual space - via a private and symbolic space - into a social and contextual space.

Regarding these elaborations on relation, situation and participation, I want to articulate three issues: 1) the “frame” of the work of art, 2) the “place of birth” of the work of art, and 3) the “ownership” of the work of art. Firstly, concerning the issue of the “frame” we may argue that traditional western art is focused on the composition of elements within a frame, whilst situation art brings the world outside the frame into the work of art, or - maybe better - has no frame at all. Secondly, we may argue that according to western tradition a work of art is completed in the studio by a single artist and then moved to a stage to be perceived by the wider audience, whilst a situated work of art brings together both studio and stage in order to merge creation and experience. Thirdly, in western tradition a work of art is considered to be the intellectual property of a single maker, whilst situated art cannot be owned by anyone.

Roughly sketching the western landscape of art disciplines for the sake of argument I want to distinguish traditional art practices as divided into “visual fine arts and design”, referring to the production and stylization of all kinds of 2D and 3D artifacts on one hand, and on the other hand the “performing arts” referring to the authored, directed and staged performances such as dance, music and theatre. Since
general to specific, consisting of understandings such as “context” or “site”. In the next figure, some of the main understandings mentioned in the literature presented by Doherty are positioned in relation to the parameters she proposes.

Figure 4: Situation as an environment of meanings

Like Doherty, Bishop (2006) also points to the 1960s as the most important years in the development of participatory art and situation art. In this period, a genre called “community art” was developed in the UK. As the name suggests this art was situated in the community and artists worked together with non-artists, who were often members of minorities or the working class. Participatory art allows the audience to engage in the creative process, allowing them to become co-authors, interpreters or editors of the work. Bishop explains that unlike interactive or participatory art, the genre of community art aims for social change by empowering the people involved.

Conclusively I want to argue that in the most common idea of art⁸, a work of art is a composition of concrete independent things that we can perceive and understand according to the substantialist logic of a material reality. Although Bourriaud, as cited in the opening of this section, considered Debord’s concept of the “Spectacle” to be an example of his concept of “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998] p.39) I still want to make a distinction with Debord’s concept of art as a “Situation” (Debord, 1958, in Knabb, 2006: 49-50) as cited in the third section of the first chapter in this thesis. I consider “relational aesthetics” to constitute a work of art as a composition of experiential elements that have to be mentally processed and socially negotiated according to a relational logic of a social reality, whilst Debord’s concept of “situation” (ibid.) considers a work of art to be an interaction of people and third things according to a situational logic of an emerging reality.
Further specifying these distinctions I want to summarize my argument in the distinction of three different aesthetic concerns. When limiting the work of art to its frame one might argue that this work of art is completed in the studio and owned by its maker. Here the artist is concerned with substantial aesthetics regarding the (re-)arrangement of the substances the work of art is composed of and the artist “speaks” to his audience through his work of art.

Figure 5: Substantial aesthetics

But when recognizing that a work of art is aesthetically altered by its presentation and its interpretation, we must admit that a work of art is a social construction that is re-defined and hereby re-created by the beholders. For that reason, artists may decide to design the social contexts and conditions of the presentational experience as a part of their work, composing and directing the way it is placed, contextualized and interactively experienced. With that the artist is concerned with relational aesthetics, a concern that sees as important the communicative potential of the work of art in a shared conversational space in which the meaning of the work of art is established.

Figure 6: Relational aesthetics

In situated art the artist does not create or complete a work of art beforehand. Instead, the artist creates a situation in which the work of art can emerge, mentally and physically, in artistic cooperation with the public. Here the artist is concerned with the creative potential and artistic quality of human togetherness, a concern that I want to call: situational aesthetics.⁹

Figure 7: Situational Aesthetics

2.3 Art as a social space

“Socially Engaged Art is concerned with situations, but not usually the kind in which a single individual interacts with an inert object. Rather, it concerns itself with situations that lead to a mode of social exchange - that is, interpersonal situations” (Helguera, 2011: 30).

In 2011 Helguera published a materials and techniques handbook for Socially Engaged Art. He argues that in a certain way all art is participatory since art requires at least one maker and one spectator. He observes that participation in art varies from a singular reflective and interpretative perception, to a multi-layered structure of participation. Helguera establishes a tentative taxonomy of increasing engagement: 1) Nominal participation, 2) Directed participation, 3) Creative participation, and 4) Collaborative participation (Helguera, 2011: 15).

Since we are specifically interested in the learning opportunities that enable people to begin something new, we stay aloof from roles and relations between artist and spectator that resemble the unequal teacher learner constellation and focus on more egalitarian constellations of creative (3) and collaborative (4) participation. For that reason this study focuses on CAP since these practitioners explicitly recognize the social context and relations of art, and designedly include these social dimensions in both the practice and the work of art. In order to answer our research question we approach learning as well as art practice as situated phenomena understanding both to be qualities of social space.¹⁰ This approach might be confusing because art is loaded with immaterial meaning and value, whilst we are used to thinking about space as an arrangement of physically present entities.

9 - This term intends to further the notion of situation as conceptualized by Debord in the late fifties [Debord, 2006 [1958], 2006 [1957]]. I am aware that Victor Burgin later used this term in 1969 in an essay elaborating on mere spatial arrangements of objects, ignoring Debord’s preliminary studies.

10 - Presenting several parameters he finds useful in understanding the interpersonal scenarios used by socially engaged artists, Helguera refers to an “Atlas of >
Friedman observes a similar tendency in social science that uses non-material spatial connotations such as “conversation space” or “relational space” to refer to social settings (Friedman, 2011: 235). Studying the use of the concept of space in organizational psychology, Friedman observed that:

“Space is not a physical concept, but rather a mental creation that can be used to think relationally about making order from any given set of elements (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014: 5).

(...) What makes social space such a useful construct is that it focuses neither on the individual nor the collective as the unit of analysis but rather on the processes through which individuals, in interaction with others, construct their shared worlds” (ibid.).

Studying social space in social science, Friedman traces the term “social space” back via Lewin’s Field Theory (1951) and Topological Psychology (1936), to the relational thinking of Ernst Cassirer (Friedman, 2011: 234-236). Friedman reminds us of Cassirer’s book “Substance and function and Einstein’s theory of relativity” published in 1923 and the way in which he explains how human experience of reality developed from a mythical, via a (rational) substantial to a (relative) relational way of understanding the world (Friedman, 2011: 240).

Inspired by Cassirer, Friedman explains how substantialism regards behavior or change as the result of the impact or displacement of bodies resembling the Newtonian mechanical forces, while the relational concept of electromagnetic fields attributed causality “not to the impact of one body upon another but by the influence of the field on a particular position within it” (Friedman, 2011: 248). Friedman defines a ‘field’ as “a space in which some force exists and exerts influence on the behavior of entities within that space”. With this turn of perspective we can adapt a relative or relational worldview that perceives something that is invisible by observing its effects on other entities in the field because “the behavior of elements is not only shaped by the field, but also influences the field itself” (Friedman, 2011: 248).

In agreement with Lewin, Friedman stresses that social field theory was not about applying physics to social science. Essential is the view on relative positions of elements in a system connected by relational rule or logic that can be applied to social interactions: “Social spaces

> interpersonal situations” [used/present in the work of] Harold Kelley, John Holmes, Norbert Kerr and others (Helguera, 2011: 31). Helguera is not the only one talking about art in terms of social space. Bourriaud for instance speaks of “relational space” (Bourriaud, 2002: 8, 17), and reviewing participatory art, Bishop uses a multifold of spatial descriptions such as “space of collective transformation” (Bishop, 2012: 101) or “space for communicational ambiguity” (Bishop, 2012: 155).

Friedman observes that many early adaptors had abandoned the concept of field theory because of Lewin’s persistent attempts at developing a topology of human behavior in an almost mathematical way, working on formulas to express laws of that behavior. His insistence on deterministic psychology was difficult to match with his original concept of a relational logic of social space (Friedman, 2011: 255).

Friedman also refers to a new generation of scientists discussing Bourdieu and Wacquant who developed a “reflexive sociology”. In this revised view on field theory, human behavior in the natural and social world is not a series of separate actions but rather a practice that produces and reproduces society. Field theory explained for Bourdieu the invisible influence of groups, organizations, institutions and entire (sub-) cultures on human action and vice versa (Friedman, 2011: 236). In this framework, social space is a set of points differentiated into “fields” (e.g. a professional field, artistic field, academic field, religious field), each of which has its particular “structure of difference” – that is, a unique logic and hierarchy that shapes the actions of different position holders (Friedman, 2011: 258).

Field theory does not only explain the invisible influence and interplay between participants and stakeholders in the formal art world. The relational logic of field theory also helps us to understand how art can be informally interwoven with daily life outside the art world, and it can also explain the invisible way that art has its impact on society. Thinking spatially about art we understand it better as a verb, something people do and undergo, instead of a noun, something people produce, own and trade. Considering art to be a field of social relations, it involves all kinds of actors besides the artist and his audience, and in order to continue on our quest we need to define what particular form of human activity the practice of art is.

2.4 Art as action

Arendt’s understanding of human beings as active beings makes a distinction between “action” as a social initiative as opposed to “labor” or “work” (Arendt, 1958: 7). We labor to sustain human life by attending to our biological needs of consumption and reproduction. We work to build and maintain a world fit for human use. Arendt explains that action means to actualize our capacity for freedom by performing what is infinitely improbable:

The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes
amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 178).

We disclose and distinguish ourselves as unique individuals in words and deeds, Arendt explains. This social function called “action” differs from production that only needs nature for its material and the world in which to place the finished product. According to Arendt: “action and speech are surrounded by and in constant contact with the web of acts and words of other men” (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 188). Action also means that others do take up one’s beginnings and doing so “nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word” (Arendt, 1958: 180). Therefore action has to appear in public:

“For us, appearance—something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves—constitutes reality. Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivitized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance. The most current of such transformations occurs in storytelling and generally in artistic transposition of individual experiences” (Arendt, 1998 [1958]: 50).

Arendt points out that such transformations may appear in everyone’s life. It happens at the moment we talk to others about something intimate and private. “…we bring them out into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality which, their intensity notwithstanding, they never could have had before” (ibid.). “Action” is the true creative human activity and it might be clear that art practice distinguishes itself from activities such as labor and work that first and foremost aim to meet biological and social needs. And “action” is not only the beginning of something new but is also the formation and expression of the subject. This formation of the subject can be understood as a learning opportunity. But what kind of education and what mode of pedagogy (andragogy) prepare people for “action”?

In the context of citizen education Biesta uses the term “public pedagogy”. Concerning art and citizenship I personally would prefer to use the word “andragogy” to emphasize the lifelong learning perspective but to avoid confusion I will also use the word “pedagogy” from here on.

In his book “Beyond Learning” (2006) Biesta uses Arendt’s concept of the “vita activa” to develop his theory for a more democratic public pedagogy. He criticizes the humanistic approach of education as a transaction between teacher and learner, turning the one who does not know into the one who does know according to a preconceived understanding of being human. For Biesta, public education should not establish and reproduce a notion of what a human subject is; this would be mere socialization. Instead we should be concerned with when, how and where the human subject comes into presence (Biesta, 2006: 6-9). Biesta recommends the creation of plural and diverse intersubjective spaces in which students can come into the world as unique, singular beings (Biesta, 2006: 27-31). Two years earlier Biesta concluded that “the community without community, which exists as the interruption of the rational community, is the most important, and ultimately the only relevant educational community” (Biesta, 2004: 307). Biesta used the work, above, of Jacques Derrida, and to elaborate further on this concept he turns to Alphonso Lingis who developed a similar concept entitled “The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common”. Biesta explains that according to Lingis this community comes into presence when the “rational community” is interrupted. In the rational community we speak with a representational voice. It is not important who is talking but rather what is said (Biesta, 2004: 311). The rational community is interrupted when one speaks with his own voice. Here it is most important who is talking to understand what is said. Referring to Lingis, Biesta explains that The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common exits within the rational community as a possibility to come into presence as soon as one responds to the uniqueness and the otherness of the other (Biesta, 2004: 319). With this argument Biesta develops a public pedagogy that considers the educator to operate neither as an instructor nor as a facilitator but rather as someone who interrupts. And Biesta suggests that such interruptions should take the form of ‘dissensus’: not a disagreement but a given heterogeneity. He even speaks of education as “a form of violence that interferes with the sovereignty of the subject by asking difficult questions and creating difficult encounters” (Biesta, 2006: 29).

In relation to theories of situated learning we already distinguished art practice as being not purposely functional unlike most practices in the rational community. The distinction Arendt makes between a biological, social and existential functionality of human action presses us to specify this position. I want to argue that in addition to the understanding of art as being purposeful in both a biological and social way, art can also be understood as an existential enactment of being alive, exploring and experiencing existence in the world to its full extent and expanding the range of possibilities and our potential to do things that matter to ourselves and to others. This study commits itself to the latter quest. Being concerned with the creation of a form of human togetherness in which the human subject comes into being and invites
others to do the same, Biesta proposes the pedagogy of interruption. To explore the use and meaning of this concept for the development of the pedagogy of Social Art Practice, our next theoretical step is to understand CAP as a practice of pedagogical interruption.

2.5 Art as interruption
Since 2004 Biesta has taken the concept of the pedagogy of interruption further by distinguishing three modes of public pedagogy:

“One way to think of public pedagogy is as a pedagogy for the public. The main pedagogical ‘mode’ in this interpretation is that of instruction. In this conception of public pedagogy, the world is seen as a giant school and the main role of educational agents is to instruct the citizenry. This involves telling them what to think, how to act and, perhaps most importantly, what to be” (Biesta, 2012: 691).

“... the second interpretation of the idea of public pedagogy, which can be characterized as a pedagogy of the public. Here, the pedagogical work is not done from the ‘outside’, so to speak, but is located within democratic processes and practices, thus leading to an interest in the learning opportunities provided by such practices (van der Veen, Wildemeersch, Youngblood and Marsick 2007). The pedagogical ‘mode’ in this interpretation is that of learning or, in more political terms, which of what Paulo Freire has referred to as ‘conscientization’, a process aimed at the generation of critical awareness and ‘critical consciousness’ (Freire, 1970). Here, we might think of the world as a giant adult education class in which educational agents perform the role of facilitator” (Biesta, 2012: 692).

“I argue that the first two forms of public pedagogy run the risk of replacing politics by education, either by conceiving of public pedagogy as a form of instruction, or by understanding public pedagogy in terms of learning. Enacting a concern for publicness, so I suggest, is not about teaching individuals what they should be, nor about demanding from them that they learn, but is about forms of interruption that keep the opportunities for ‘becoming public’ open” (Biesta, 2012: 684-685).

We can regard art to be an example of the latter mode of public pedagogy: functioning without teachers but with artists as initiators or mere stewards on a journey of (self) discovery, providing not an education of the people, nor an education for the people, but instead an education

“... where public pedagogy appears as an enactment of a concern for ‘publicness’ or ‘publicity’, that is a concern for the public quality of human togetherness and thus for the possibility of actors and events to become public. Becoming public is not about a physical relocation from the home to the street or from the oikos to the polis, but about the achievement of a form of human togetherness in which, to put it in the language of Hannah Arendt, action is possible and freedom can appear” (Biesta, 2012: 693).

In the following table, Arendt’s “vita activa” (Arendt, 1998 [1958]), and Biesta’s functions of education (Biesta, 2015a), as well as the modes of public pedagogy he distinguishes, (Biesta, 2011) are listed in parallel relation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vita Activa</th>
<th>Functions of education</th>
<th>Modes of pedagogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor</td>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>Socialization</td>
<td>Conscientisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Subjectification</td>
<td>Interruption</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: Three main constellations of learning (Arendt, 1958; Biesta, 2011; Biesta, 2015a)

In this table we can distinguish three main constellations of human learning:
Firstly, in order to cater to our biological needs of consumption and reproduction to sustain human life, students need to be provided with the knowledge, skills and understandings and often also with the dispositions and forms of judgment that allow them to “do something”. This function of qualification is shaped in the pedagogical mode instruction, or the pedagogy for the public.

Secondly, to build and maintain a world fit for human use, an education is needed that sees to it that students learn how to develop or become part of particular social, cultural and political “orders.” This function of socialization is shaped in the pedagogical mode of conscientization, or the pedagogy of the public.

Thirdly, to disclose the identity of our agency, and to actualize our capacity for freedom in order to perform what is “infinitely improbable”, the students need to be inspired, challenged and supported, to become subjects in their own right and not just remain objects of the desires and directions of others. This function of subjectification is a result of the pedagogy that opens up a “concern for publicness” through the pedagogy of interruption.
As “educators committed to deepening democracy and believing that art can play an important role in the creation of new perspectives on how to deal with matters of public concern”, Wildemeersch & Von Kotze (2014: 313) respond to a community art project with the remarks that: “Our experience occurs at the intersection of the inner self and the outer world and so learning always occurs at this point of interaction, usually when the two are in some tension, even dissonance, which I have always called ‘disjuncture’. In fact, the desire to overcome this sense of dissonance and to return to a state of harmony might be seen as a fundamental motivating force in learning, and the disjunctural state may be said to be one in which a need has to be satisfied” (Jarvis, 2007: 7).

Jarvis underlines two aspects of this questioning process due to disjuncture: 1) the inability to give meaning to the personal sensation, and 2) the not knowing of the meaning others give to it (Jarvis, 2007: 3). The harmonization process Jarvis describes is not by definition reasonable, moral or critical and it does not necessarily make us learn: “We are in harmony with our knowledge of the world in which we are acting, but also with the emotions that we share - when we know that we can repeat our past successful acts, we feel ‘at ease’ with ourselves in the world” (Jarvis, 2007: 9).

We might harmonize the disjuncture we experience by reviewing our habits and beliefs, and expanding our view on the world and repertoire of actions. In that case the disjuncture is turned into a learning opportunity. It is also very well possible that we harmonize disjuncture by the use of habits, routines, beliefs and tradition as a quick-fix response. Jarvis calls this harmonization “presumption” and the achieved harmony a situation of “non-learning”. Jarvis points out that society is generally structured on presumption (Jarvis, 2006: 27). Therefore Jarvis also distinguishes the learning of socially ‘given’ answers and the learning of a new response (Jarvis, 2007: 33). Learning a new response, the learner might become an agent of change in influencing others by externalizing the new view through action, speech and so forth. Here it is not only the person but also the relationship to others that is transformed. Jarvis quotes Giddens who talks about patterns of social relationships that he calls “situated practices”, and who argues that the functioning of relationships is both the medium and the outcome of these relationships (Jarvis, 2007: 33).

Conclusively the next figure seeks to summarize what we have learned from Jarvis regarding the harmonization process of disjuncture:
shared meanings and rules do not necessarily mean consensus, and that there can be considerable variation within a field. Friedman and Sykes suggest: “that there must be a kind of “meta-theory” or higher level logic that holds the field together despite variation”. (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014: 8)

Friedman also quotes Bourdieu who captured the force of meaning in his concept of habitus: a practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation - what in sport is called a ‘feel’ for the game. (Friedman, 2011: 238) “This feel for the game implies a knowledge of the rules of the game but also a set of strategies for how to play and how to interpret the actions of other players”, Friedman explains. (Friedman, 2011: 249) He concludes that change is possible because social fields always contain a certain degree of ambiguity and that habitus can be challenged.

Friedman also stated that Bourdieu regarded change processes in social fields as “symbolic struggles over the power to produce and to impose the legitimate vision of the world” (ibid.). Friedman adds to that:

> “Furthermore, as habitus becomes reified, it may also become drained of meaning. Gaps form between the meaning structures imposed upon people and how participants in the field perceive reality, enabling them to see things differently and to literally think ‘out of the box’” (ibid.).

Friedman argues that fields are dynamic and that we can identify trajectories of change in fields over time. Together with Sykes, Friedman researched these trajectories and so far they have identified six trajectories (Friedman, 2011: 251-253):

- **Differentiation**: the division of a large field into a configuration of smaller more specific fields.
- **Knowing one’s place**: the acceptance and settling of actors into the positions dictated to them by the rules of the game.
- **Migration**: the (attempt at) moving of agents from one position in the field to another.
- **Emigration**: the (attempt at) moving of agents from one field to another field with different rules of the game and new meanings.
- **Forming enclaves**: the differentiation of a new field within an existing field with its own configuration of positions and different rules of the game.
- **Transformation**: the reconfiguration of the field and of the rules of the game.

Whilst most sociological literature on change focuses on the struggle over resources and control, Friedman et al. try to frame change as “expanding the realm of the possible” in the construction process of the social world. As an effective change strategy, Friedman puts forward the
“forming of enclaves” (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014). Whilst some enclaves isolate themselves in order to preserve their uniqueness, others challenge the larger field by presenting, testing and promoting other meanings and ways of doing.

Approaching art practice as a form of human action, according to the theoretical framework of Arendt’s understanding of the human condition, we learned to understand art as an enactment of human agency that enables people to express and develop their subjective being (Arendt, 1998 [1958]). Inspired by Arendt and Alphonso Lingis, Biesta argues that the pedagogy supporting this subjectification is the pedagogy of interruption that opens up a “concern for publicness” (Biesta, 2011, 2015a). According to this argument therefore, this study considers CAP to be a practice of interruption of the habitual rational order. This interruption creates disjunction (Jarvis, 2007) or a space of dissensus (Wildemeersch & Von Kotze, 2014) and makes way for a community of subjective diversity (Biesta, 2004). In essence, disjuncture, dissensus and subjective diversity expand the realm of possibilities.

2.7 Concluding remarks

In order to develop a concept of pedagogy for CAP we began this chapter by looking into adult learning outside the format of the school and the curriculum. Wenger (1998) helped us to understand how people learn to improve a functional communal practice while they participate in it and socially negotiate it, producing meaning and identity. We also realized that art follows a reverse trajectory starting with a mutual identification instead of a purposive practice. Searching for a meaning of their togetherness people might decide to become culturally active as a community and start a joined creative enterprise. This way a community is built that is not driven by a rational functional goal but by an inspired desire to make a difference as a subject. CAP is a very suitable practice for such a community since it can adapt almost any form and is not limited by functional intentions. As with the well-known Community of Practice, a community that engages in a CAP develops shared repertoire, mutual engagement and a joint enterprise. The significant difference is that this community forms an interruption of what Lingis would call “the rational community”. The language that is used in this community is not the impersonal - and therefore interchangeable - serious speech of rational functionality, but the personal voice of each different member. In this Community of Creative Citizens (CCC) everybody has a unique voice. From Arendt (1998 [1958]) and Biesta (2006, 2011, 2012, 2015a) we have learned that in order to labor and work we need to be qualified and socialized through instruction and conscientization. But to become creators, entrepreneurs, discoverers or inventors - in order to actualize our capacity for freedom - we need to become subjects in our own right and learn to speak with our own voice. So for this subjectification, the pedagogy of interruption needs to be developed. CAP could be applied as an interruptive pedagogical intervention. Challenging habit of mind and habitual action, CAP creates a disjunction between the rational and the subjective, and between the public and the private. On top of that this interruption also creates a space of dissensus within the diversity of the unique human beings who are participating. Through harmonizing disjuncture and negotiating dissensus, new patterns of human action emerge, demonstrating alternative ways of seeing, saying and doing, and in turn “expanding the realm of the possible” (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014). In the remainder of this study the pedagogical concept developed in this chapter will be reviewed and discussed within the context of several cases of CCCs establishing CAP. The following chapter will explain the methodology of that inquiry.
3 Methodology of the research

“We should promote social sciences that are strong where natural science is weak – that is, in reflexive analysis and deliberation about values and interests aimed at praxis, which are essential to social and economic development in society. We should promote value rationality over epistemic rationality, in order to arrive at social science that matters” (Flyvbjerg, 2005).

3.1 Introduction and overview of the study
This study seeks to contribute to the training of artists as catalysts and carriers of social change and cultural innovation, and to support educators and policy makers to improve curriculum and policies for the education and support of young creative professionals. For this purpose it will attempt to turn the experienced knowledge of both researcher and peer experts into applicable knowledge for art professionals and art educators delivering practice-related outcomes, as well as contributing to the academic debate. It undertakes an inquiry into Communities of Creative Citizens (CCC) developing a Cooperative Art Practice (CAP) and analyzes them against a background of theory on public pedagogy and the social dimension of art.

Since the research question is a “how question” inquiring into human action and agency, we decided to use a qualitative research approach. Studying the way professionals think in action, Schön (1991) observed that their ability to act is based on a comparison of the actual situation with a repertoire of known cases; experienced cases within the personal practice as well as established model cases within the profession. So from the many genres of qualitative research approaches we chose to conduct a multiple case study. Developing theory not as a universal law that determines human behavior but as a concept of understanding human action in order to improve practice and agency, we will refrain from building any generalization from random selected cases. Instead we will select our
samples based on the information we seek. Flyvbjerg presents several strategies for the selection of samples and cases (Flyvbjerg, 2007: 78-81) concluding that it should be mentioned that these strategies are not mutually exclusive. Various perspectives provide various conclusions. This study will consider the cases as deviating from the traditional approach of art practice and human learning and as paradigmatic cases in order to develop a metaphor for the domain of western contemporary art and education. Flyvbjerg argues that:

“It is not possible to determine in advance whether or not a given case is paradigmatic. Besides the strategic choice of case, the execution of the case study will certainly play a role, as will the reaction to the study by the research community, the group studied and, possibly, a broader public (Flyvbjerg, 2007: 81).

(...) Like other good craftsmen, all that researchers can do is use their experience and intuition to assess whether they can provide collectively acceptable reasons for the choice of the case” (Flyvbjerg, 2007: 81).

When cases are particularly meaningful in context of, or in relation to, each other we are dealing with the meta-category of the multiple case study. With this research method multiple cases are studied with a shared or common characteristic or condition, such as members of a specific group or examples of a specific phenomenon. Stake calls this collective target of study the 'Quintain'. The introduction of this study previously elaborated on the quintain of this study.

In the first two chapters we explored literature and theory in order to partially answer and further articulate the research question. Using the concepts within the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two I want to rephrase the main research question of this study as follows:

How can artists contribute to the formation and maintenance of a CCC fostering a CAP that enables its members to develop their full creative potential as unique human beings?

Having started this chapter with a recap of the purpose and research question, and the rationale for the research genre chosen, we will continue by providing an overview of this chapter and the remaining part of the research report.

The middle part of this chapter will articulate the quintain and specify the research question, which will be divided into three sub questions, and explain what information was needed, how it was gathered and how it was processed. Therefore, firstly we will explain the procedure of case selection and briefly introduce the three cases created through this study. From there the technique of information gathering will be explained as well as the way the empirical results were focused and coded.

The last part of the chapter will describe the steps of interpretation, explaining how the empirical material will be ordered, how the conceptual framework will be applied, how the emerging topics, themes and issues were fed back into the research, and how this leads to adjustments of the theoretical perspective which form the basis of the conclusions and recommendations presented in the final chapter. The last paragraphs will give an account of the ethics of the design and execution, the trustworthiness of the information, and will close with a reflection on the limitations of the research.

In Chapters Four, Five and Six we will present a set of comparable reports of the cases in order to deepen our understanding of the quintain of the study, and to explore the bandwidth of the practice we are looking at before we discuss pedagogical theory. This means that we are first focusing in on the agency of the Cooperative Art Practitioners and then looking at their CAP through the lens of the theoretical framework we have developed in Chapter Two, approaching the empirical information subsequently in an inductive and deductive way. Therefore, following an inductive path of logic the first phase of the research will map out each CCC as a social setting using the same set of basic sociological terms so that we can present, compare and analyze them equally. We will try to distill the essential ingredients that establish and consolidate the CCCs and drive their CAPs. For that we need to know how the people involved in these CCCs were constructing, negotiating and managing their actions in these CAPs and we will therefore have to identify the artist(s) who took the initiative, and those who maintain the community, guide its practice and/or shape its identity. Once these agents are identified we will then have to observe what they are actually doing and investigate why they do this.

Next we will follow a deductive path of logic, discussing the theoretical framework in the context of the cases. The theoretical concept is not tested in context with the intention of proving it to be true. Instead we will examine the cases through the perspective of our theoretical concept in order to test: (1) if it actually helps to explain the case, (2) whether it produces perspectives on improvement of the practice, and (3) whether we can conclude that it can be helpful when we try to illuminate similar cases. Finally, we will combine the findings and conclusions from both approaches in order to further the pedagogical concept of art as a force of human development and social change.

3.2 Quintain and question revisited

The quintain is “the arena or holding company or umbrella for the
cases we will study” (Stake, 2006: 6). Now, entering the field for further explorations in addition to the study of literature and theory in Chapters One and Two, we need to formulate the quintain to help us to select and focus on relevant cases.

The quintain of this study is the Community of Creative Citizens that is forming a free - self-directed and egalitarian - enclave of interruptive artistic experiment and inspired inquiry in order to expand the realm of the possible for those involved and other members of the larger surrounding society.

To answer the research question we study this quintain by participative observation and situated conversation in order to gather information about the way these artists have formed and maintained a CCC and developed a CAP that offered several learning opportunities. We also seek to understand the social setting in a broader perspective: how it works as a whole and how it relates to wider society. And to meet our desire to understand what we should teach at our art academies, we need to focus in on the competences that artists could achieve these performances. With this the overarching research question that was rephrased in previous section can be specified into these three separate questions asking:

What actions and positions of the artists turn the setting into an informal social learning environment that offers opportunities for self-realization and cultural innovation?

What is the social setting of a Community of Creative Citizens, what role do artists play in this and how does this community relate to society?

What appear to be critical skills, knowledge and attitudes that social art practitioners need to develop in order to be able to build and foster a CCC?

In our conclusion we will elaborate on the answers to these questions and also seek to formulate their consequences for art, art education, pedagogy and governance.

3.3 Research sample

A number of possible CCCs have been investigated and three of these have been selected as appropriate examples of the quintain. The research started with a set of selection criteria derived from the opening rationale of the study. Here the focus was set on a long-term, living and working, community of members of the creative class engaging in CAPs as defined in the introduction. The selection criteria at the start of the research were:

- The case offers an accessible setting in which a dozen creative professionals or skilled creative amateurs form a community.
- The community regularly meets and exercises a cooperative art practice over a period of time of at least a couple of months.
- The cooperative art practice is open, including the social relations of production and perception in the design of the work of art.
- The community designedly stages experience(s) and guides transformation(s) to move the perceivers and change their mood and mind on their own initiative.
- The researcher has to be able to access the setting freely and blend in without being interfered by others who aim to manipulate the research findings.

In addition to the observations by the researcher and interviews with people involved, there are more sources of information available, such as archive records or press reviews.

There are no issues of hierarchy, faction or rivalry affecting the relationship of the researcher to the setting.

Physical, emotional, ethical and legal risks have to be limited.

In selecting the cases, several practical matters had to be dealt with in order to protect the quality of the research. A major pitfall of bias and error when studying a social situation is the fact that the researcher’s presence will unavoidably have an effect on other people present. Keeping a low profile and blending in may therefore help to minimize this effect, as well as establishing an understanding relationship towards the social setting as a committed peer. But being occupied with their public image, artists also have a professional interest in keeping up their appearance. So in order to retrieve valid information it was important to select the cases that would provide an entryway through the “back door”, bypassing mechanisms of commercial or careerist interest at the front.

The first case selected concerned the social art project “Freehouse” instigated by Jeanne van Heeswijk in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Anne Nigten, head of the research group I was participating in at that moment, was well acquainted with Van Heeswijk and informed me about this case. Van Heeswijk received several art and design awards which confirms the status of this CAP as a best practice, but more important was the notion that this case was thoroughly organized, documented and evaluated by several parties across various levels. Providing relevant and robust empirical input to the research, this practice could potentially function as an important and illustrative exemplar of practice to start with.

Since 1998 Jeanne van Heeswijk has developed public space as a work of art in cooperation with numerous artists and other producers of culture. In 2008 she initiated Freehouse,¹² a project located in the

Afrikaanderwijk in Rotterdam where she investigated local identity and human capital in order to look for opportunities to express and develop the cultural production of the neighborhood. In this project, creative experts from all over the world collaborate with locals to advance experiments and knowledge about neighborhood development that is implemented directly in the community, and which is presented in numerous publications, presentations and exhibitions in the art world. Studying Freehouse it appeared that the CAP was rooted in the everyday life of the neighborhood whilst at the same time the artist was strongly connected to and navigating through the institutionalized art world. This duality inspired me to focus my search for the next cases on both ends of that spectrum; I decided I would try to find one more case that was located in and originated from the art world, and one rooted in a DIY subculture.

Finding out that the number of suitable cases was rather small, the field of research had to be expanded beyond the Netherlands. The choice was made therefore to expand the field to New York City. This was done for several reasons, with the main reason being the availability of many network relations with Columbia University through professor Van der Veen earlier mentioned in the introduction of this study. The NYC cases were not selected beforehand, since it was not possible prior to arriving in New York City to investigate the cases in their particular situated context. Stake stresses the importance of contextual insight in the situation of the case:

“Qualitative understanding of cases requires experiencing the activity of the case as it occurs in its contexts and in its particular situation. The situation is expected to shape the activity, as well as the experiencing and the interpretation of the activity. In choosing a case, we almost always choose to study its situation” (Stake, 2006: 2).

For this reason, I started the selection process after my arrival on location so that I could select the cases by direct observation, being led by information from insiders active on the spot. Seeking a case in an art institutional setting I encountered a project called “the Colony” at Ps1, the experimental subsidiary establishment of the prestigious Museum of Modern Art. The Colony was designed by the Argentinean architecture firm “a77” on invitation of the MoMA curator of architecture, Pedro Gaganho. It actually formed a living space for artists, scholars, architects, and other cultural agents within the Ps1 premises. During the course of the summer several guests were invited by curator Jenny Schlenzka to live at this colony for a week whilst organizing and hosting public activities.

Artist Anne Apparu would live at the colony permanently as a hostess for these visitors. I visited the colony and talked to Apparu and many others involved during the rest of the summer. Besides my observations and conversations, I also became involved in the debate, presenting my work as an artist and researcher and participating in a think tank session on the last day of the colony. Still, whilst focusing the empirical material I found the dynamics and parameters of the case so significantly deviant from the selection criteria (b) and (c) as listed in the opening of this section that I decided to drop the case.

Seeking a setting explicitly outside the art world I attempted to become involved with the Occupy movement, and tried to track down artists who were intervening with art in order to inform the public about political issues in the community. I encountered some of these artists during a so-called Jane Jacobs memorial manifestation organized by the Metropolitan Art Society. During the manifestation, these artists of “occupy the pipeline” were informing the public through music and theater about the dangers of a natural gas pipeline to be built in the Meat Packing district in downtown NYC. After contacting them I joined their organization for a couple of weeks and attended various meetings and rallies. However, these gatherings appeared to be politically troublesome. I was concerned that my investigations could reveal sensitive information and potentially get some of the people involved, or maybe also myself, into trouble with the authorities. Considering this observation to be in conflict with the selection criteria (e) and (h) I decided not to continue with this case either.

I also visited the “Gramsci Monument” a public art project by Thomas Hirschhorn located in the Bronx. Hirschhorn had built a complex of tree houses in a park amidst one of New York’s poorest housing projects. The complex consisted of a cafeteria, a library and a lecture theatre. Hirschhorn had decorated the complex with quotes of Gramsci and organized political lectures on a daily basis. Although the local community participated in the building process they were absent at the lecture that was going on when I visited the site. I did not triangulate this observation but the one-to-many set-up of the conversation space did not seem to meet the selection criteria (b), (c) and (d) which made me decide to drop this project as a possible case for this study that is specifically focused on self-directed learning.

In the meantime both the Flux Factory and the BHQF were brought to my attention by the professors of the Art and Education program of the Teachers College, and later by several other informants in the
field. After a few visits, the Flux Factory appeared to be a very good example of a case of a CCC rooted in everyday life. On its website Flux Factory introduces itself as a “not-for-profit arts organization supporting innovation in things”.¹³ Investigating the history of the Flux Factory I found out that Flux Factory had organized many projects of social art over the years. It started twenty years ago when a community of youngsters settled in an old factory at Kent Avenue in Williamsburg. There they formed a community of students, bohemians and dropouts who wanted to be part of the myth called New York City.

After adapting this “everyday life” case I persisted in my approach of the Bruce High Quality Foundation. The Bruce High Quality Foundation, also called “the Bruces” by insiders, is a group of rather successful New York artists who were recommended to me early on in the process by Professor Justice. The reason I kept this case pending was that the group was hard to approach through other channels than the art-agency of Vito Schnabel. The Brooklyn based arts collective “Bruce High Quality Foundation” (BHQF) claims to preserve and promote the heritage of the late social sculptor Bruce High Quality who died on September 11th 2001.¹⁴ The identity of the “Bruces” as the founders and producers of the BHQF is kept secretive, although their agent, Vito Schnabel, son of the world famous New York artist Julian Schnabel, sells their work very well. This way the Foundation has substantial capital that can be invested in experimental and innovative art related projects.

The BHQF was mentioned over and over again by those amateurs and experts advising me. So I took a second look at the group, and through visiting their retrospective exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum I found out that Flux Factory had organized many projects of social art over the years. It started twenty years ago when a community of youngsters settled in an old factory at Kent Avenue in Williamsburg. There they formed a community of students, bohemians and dropouts who wanted to be part of the myth called New York City.

3.4 Research Design
A case study is called “intrinsic” when the main and enduring interest is in the case itself. Like most multiple case studies, the purpose of this study is to go beyond the case. Such case studies are called “instrumental” (Stake, 2006: 8). Still, in a multiple case study each case is a unique and complex entity located in its own situation, and with its own context and issues. And even when each case is thoroughly studied, the research questions will not be fully answered. However, some assertions can be made that partially answer the question, and new questions that require to be asked will become apparent (Stake, 2006: 14).

Stake urges us to look for more than similarities when comparing multiple cases. It might be interesting to find what is common between the cases but it might be just as interesting to find what is different because these differences expand the view on the matter studied (Stake, 2006: 39).

As a multiple case study into learning processes in creative practices, this study resembles other studies performed in the research group of Lifelong Learning and Social Intervention under the supervision of Jacques Zeelen at the University of Groningen. Van Beilen (2012) explains the output of this type of research as follows:

“The case study research in this thesis does not serve to generate general, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge – analytical generalization – but concrete practical knowledge (context-dependent), which is by no means less valuable (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 224).¹⁸ The results of practice-related thinking may not be generalizable, but of individual outcomes, which, again, is not inferior to “pure theoretical thinking” (Van Strien, 1986, 198)” (Van Beilen, 2012: 66–67).

The use of this type of knowledge is to gain insight into participatory concepts and approaches that can only be obtained through a certain level of participation by the researcher. Therefore an in-depth study of the cases was made visiting the sites several times over an extensive period of time, not only talking to the participants but also taking part in the activities and enterprises. However this study did not practice participatory research which would have meant that the researcher would have to feed back his findings into the same practice that is studied and have to include the participants in the decision making process of the study. In this study findings were fed back into the development of the study, setting the focus on theory, topics and issues and feeding the analysis.

In the following flowchart the trajectory of case studies is depicted parallel to the trajectory of information processing. This process in turn is feeding the third parallel trajectory of knowledge gathering and knowledge production on the subject of the study.

to funders. But most archival records consisted of interviews with the artists and reviews of their art published in art magazines or websites presenting portfolios, biographies and curriculum vitae hosted by the artists themselves or their public relations agents. In this study, this material has been used as a secondary source with the purpose of double-checking the information retrieved on site.

The research was developed from the opportunity to become a participant in and a witness to the lives of others, and so an anthropological style of information gathering was chosen. The main feature of a field study is the task of developing the research - selecting topics, raising questions and forging interest - being performed in the course of the research itself. In this way the process of data focusing - the aims and concerns of the social scientific analysis - is linked with the process of data gathering, making field studies by an emerging design (Lofland et al., 2006).

The observations and interviews were not techniques to catch the ignorant subject in the act of revealing knowledge they themselves do not know about. Instead the observations and interviews sought to deliver topics and raise questions in a reflective conversation between experienced experts. Therefore, the interview technique used in these inquiries is open in trying to present an involved but modest researcher, and at the beginning of the research the role of researcher in the conversation was that of an interested expert asking for information and explanation. This approach delivered distinctive and a reserved conversation, which does not necessary mean that the material retrieved is unreliable but that it is very well possible the conversations did not get into the more vulnerable mode of self-reflective considerations of ambiguities and doubts. During the research it became more and more apparent that the practices of these artists were far from professionally distant but rather tightly interwoven with their personal identity; trying to obtain information about their practice was an engagement with the realm of personal sensitivity. So in the course of the study the role of an involved and well-informed conversational counterpart was developed, and the conversation gradually developed into an appreciative curiosity and an affirmative understanding. The importance of the interviewee’s expertise was emphasized and permission was asked to share that expert knowledge through this research with others. And instead of articulating precise and critical questions that might be interpreted as an expression of misunderstanding or disbelieve, the researcher revealed his familiarity with the subject by setting up a mode of insider understanding encouraging the interviewee to go deeper into detail or express more personal reflections:

Jean: Yeah! But also I think it is a, part of it is what you offer to the public. Like how much of your time. But it is also what the public is wanting to give. So what I said, there is a bargain made, from the get

Figure 9: Trajectory of development of the study

Although the arrows in the chart indicate a flow from experienced practice to conclusions, answers and recommendations, I want to emphasize that the research is a holistic system and all relations within the system are more or less iterative, which is not visible in the linear representation of the trajectory.

3.5 Empirical material

Since the focus was set on self-organized CCCs, the research had to be taken into the field. The observations were reported on the spot in audio format, using a smart phone as a voice recorder. When incidental conversations with people present on location turned out to be a rich source of information, an appointment was made in order for a more extensive and guided conversation to take place. Memos on methodology and theory were recorded in the same way and every now and then when useful photographs were taken and some video recordings were made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hours of audio record</th>
<th>Pages of transcript</th>
<th>Numbers of photographs</th>
<th>Minutes of video record</th>
<th>Number of archive doc’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshhouse</td>
<td>15h 27’</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>551’</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flux Factory</td>
<td>29h 22’</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>401’9”</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHQFU</td>
<td>30h 16’</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>627’2”</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Colony</td>
<td>17h 41’</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>706’8”</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memos</td>
<td>7h 3’</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Inventory of empirical material collected

In this study, researching specifically informal settings, archival records and documentation appeared to be limited. To a certain extent the artists kept an account of their budget and took a census of participants, visitors and business partners as part of their reports...
go they are giving their time. In the museum there is no bargain made. They pay their 1.0 Euros but they are not saying I will give you like anything, they're not there to give they are just there to take. And the interaction is more like, I hate the term, but it is more like a consuming work. I feel like this work is a real surprise to get away from that sort of consumption and let sort of the public really participate in it.  

Res.: Yeah, I understand, I get it.  
Jean: I mean in a different context the interaction would be ... (does not finish sentence)  
Res.: Do you choose to be part of the art world? You know what I mean?  
Jean: Well, I feel like I am very much unfit for the real world so ...  
Both: (laughing)

The interview technique was open, starting off with questions like: “What are you doing here/now?” or “What is happening/going on?” Through talking further elaboration was encouraged by affirming their statements with a simple “yeah” or “I understand”, or by asking for illustrations or explanations of the things said by the interviewee. And when relevant the researcher would add affirmative ideas to the conversation that would relate to the things the interviewee was saying.

Louis: I try to wake up earlier ’cause I have to work too. I don’t know. For us it was all about to realize potential. It is being able to say yes to everything. That’s why we started doing [inaudible] I, yes I could do that! Can you code? Oh yes, of course!  
Both: (laughing)  
Res.: And then you immediately after that you’re calling your friend. Do you know how to do C++? Ha-ha.  
Louis: Seriously!  
Louis: We said yes to anything and then figured it out.  
Res.: Yes, but if you have the network it works out. That’s quite similar to my story.  

Still in this research the personal story of the researcher is not used as evidence data but as a context for trust and understanding. The mode of guided conversation developed during this research has many similarities with what Nicola Smith calls “engaged listening” (Smith, 2010). Smith considers engaged listening to be “an approach to inquiry located between the ethnographic and the auto-ethnographic” that helped her to “create an informed and generative space for conversation and for the exchange of understanding” (Smith, 2010: 7, emphasis in original). Smith uses this term exploring “the conversational space between participant and researcher as friend(s), relation(s) or close family member(s) within the context of informal or ‘social’ interviews and the struggle to capture this more deeply embedded empirical and intuitive data for analysis” (Smith, 2010: 2). Still, this research is not looking for hidden information but uses the mutual understanding based on a shared background as a reference frame that facilitates the conversation and encourages the interviewees to go more deeply into detail. This way some of the artists active in these cases became participants in the research, thinking along about the quintain of the study in relation to their own practice and experience. Tapping into multiple sources of information, the perception and interpretation of the researcher is unavoidably pointing the focus of this study. The explicit identification of voice tries to secure the interpretative validity of the account.¹⁶ The trustworthiness of the information was secured by triangulating multiple cases and sources.

3.6 Analysis and synthesis
The focus on agency and improvement of practice in this study make up a reality that is not subjected to universal law; it is mentally constructed through reflection, and the knowledge we are seeking is not a cumulative and predictive theory but rather consists of socially negotiated reconstructions of reality that may teach us how to act differently.

Hammersley argues that ethnographic descriptions cannot be theories because descriptions are particulars and theories are about universals, whilst on the other hand all descriptions are structured by theoretical assumptions (Hammersley, 1990: 598). The hypothetico-deductive method that tries to extract theory from these descriptions operates under conflicting requirements that seek representation of concrete situations in their complexity and the production of general theory at the same time (Hammersley, 1990: 604). The alternative of analytic induction, Hammersley continues, contains very few examples of its full and explicit implementation and the form of research that it requires; a large number of cases that vary the independent variable and control relevant extraneous variables is at odds with most ethnographic studies and very difficult to conduct. Hammersley concludes:

“What is required is that the relevancies and the factual and value assumptions that underlie ethnographic descriptions and explanations be made explicit, and justified where necessary. Overall the conclusions of this discussion are that the goals of analysis need rethinking, and that some major changes may be required in the methods and theory to which they are applied.”

¹⁶ - As Lofland et al. pointed out: “Human perception is always human conception: What we ‘see’ is inevitably shaped by the fact that we are languaged; by our spatial, temporal, and social locations (by culture, history, status); by our occupational and various idiosyncratic concerns; and, especially relevant here, by the scholarly discipline within which our ‘looking’ takes place.” (Lofland et al., 2006: 83)
precepts and practices of ethnographic researchers. Above all we need to answer the question of what purposes ethnography should be designed to serve” (Hammersley, 1990: 610).

Therefore, the main research question is articulated into questions that, subsequently, seek to understand the quintain and the role that artists play in that setting, look for supportive ingredients and agency and tries to detect possibilities to improve practice. With these questions we approach the empirical material both in an inductive and deductive way, as stated in the first section. The inductive phase considers the description of the cases to be a form of explanation¹⁷ that could in turn be considered a first stage of theory development. The deductive phase applying theory on the cases exposes judgments about relevance and value assumptions.

So first to feed the inductive analysis, three comparable sets of empirical material were created by elaborating on eight major classes of possible sociological questions concerning the social setting of the cases:

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17 - Hammersley quotes Williams on this argument (Hammersley, 1990: 605)
3.7 Ethical considerations
I would like to inform the reader that this study was conducted as an assignment of the Hanze Minerva Art Academy in Groningen, The Netherlands. In The Netherlands art academies remain under universities of applied sciences and follow their own code of ethics in research (Andriessen et al., 2010). Conducting research in the USA demands additional approval from the IRB (Institutional Research Board), an ethics committee protecting the integrity of human beings involved as subjects in research. Therefore, the researcher has completed an online course “Protecting Human Research Participants” by the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI). Participants were informed beforehand, asked for their permission and were protected from physical, mental and social harm, according to the three basic principles that the IRB is based upon: respect for persons, beneficence and justice. The subjects were offered the guarantee to remain anonymous in the report and that their responses would be handled in strictest confidence, but none of them claimed this protection. However, I have used names only when necessary, and preferred to use first names and nicknames as they were used in real life. Only in the case of the μη as the identities of two artists made anonymous, since this anonymity is an essential part of their art.

3.8 Trustworthiness
Quoting Hammersley, Lofland et al. explain that in social science we understand truth in a “subtle realist” tradition that is looking for accessible “independent knowable phenomena” to overcome “naive realism” (Lofland et al., 2006: 169). Referring to Snow & Morrill they conclude that this “subtle reality” includes the notion that reality depicted is never an exact or perfect representation of the one examined. Getting to the truth scientifically means securing a close approximation of the empirical world (Lofland et al., 2006: 90). However, the scientific approach of this empirical world is problematic for social science because in social science the objects of study - human beings - have their own will, while the natural sciences do not have to deal with subjects. Stake argues that the “qualitative researcher is interested in diversity of perception, even the multiple realities within which people live” (Stake, 2006: 38).

As is customary in case studies, this study used a significant number of varying sources of evidence and information in order to construct validity. The main source of experience in field research is direct experience through social action and talk. Archival records, photographs, audio recordings, maps and census taking can be used in addition to the field notes and interview write-ups. Case studies use multiple techniques of data collection that cover a long span of time, enabling the researchers to provide good reliability through corroboration. According to Stake: “triangulation is mostly a process of repetitious data gathering and critical review of what is being said” (Stake, 2006: 34). In this study cross verification is applied between multiple sources of empirical information (persons and documents) and settings (occasions and locations) within the different cases facilitating data and methodological triangulation. The information and findings in the reporting chapters were assessed by multiple members of the setting, which offered another opportunity for triangulation of the empirical information. Stake distinguishes between different levels of urgency to use triangulation. There is little need to triangulate descriptions that are trivial or beyond question, and instead is more necessary where the description is relevant or debatable. But “the author needs to repeat key assertions in several ways. He or she needs to give illustrations. He or she will leave some of the work for the readers to do, but should give them the makings of understanding” (Stake, 2006: 35).

Member checking was done after the empirical information was processed and summarized in a report. Besides safeguarding reliability, the member check also protected the artists researched. To prevent accusations such as spying on fellow artists, revealing the craftsman's secrets, or demystifying their work, the researcher has engaged the artists concerned in an open relationship where the ownership of their contributions to the study was shared. Descriptive validity is secured by the extensive use of the memo recorder. I used the memo recording function of my mobile phone to record direct observations in a low profile way. Talking into a phone draws less attention than taking notes on paper. When meeting people on location I would ask them what was going on, what they were doing and how they got involved. Permitting myself to react in an appreciative way I maintained the conversation - without steering it by asking intentionally prepared questions.

When the people I'd met would recommend to me to contact certain experts I would do so by inviting them for a personal conversation. I used the same device to record talks and interviews. When recording observations and conversations the subjects were informed about the research according to the IRB regulations. But in the end the trustworthiness of the study relies on the transparency of its design and execution. Most important is the clear distinction between the observations, the quotes of the interviewees, the memos and
3.9 Limitations of the Study

Building and maintaining community and practice is a clear form of human development, but it is also very likely that people at the periphery of these communities have learned from this CAP. To establish this effect, it would have been very interesting to observe and interview passersby and neighbors of the community in order to find out how they have experienced the CAP. But the cases are complicated enough for a one-man investigation researching the agency of the initiating artist and their direct collaborators, without adding the experience of the wider, more or less passive, “audience”. Since the artists in these cases have built up experiential knowledge over several years, the study relies on their judgment as experts, assuming that the strategies they have developed are well informed by practice and through feedback from their social environment. Whether these strategies turn out to be the most effective could be a subject of further study.

The idea that case studies would not provide enough support for scientific generalization is a common misconception, according to Flyvbjerg (2007: 66-67). He admits that case studies do not produce predictive generalizations in support of epistemic theory but adds to that observation the comment that social science can only provide context-related knowledge. Stake argues that we should be modest about generalizations in case studies and suggests labels as “petite generalizations” (Stake, 1995: 7).

In a single case study one could argue that generalization is limited to the case itself. Based on facts in the case and a certain amount of theoretical principles the case is reconstructed. When studying multiple cases actual problems can be approached, improving the ability to act based on conception. Stake argues that case studies provide positive examples and counter-examples (Stake, 1995: 7-8). These examples may increase or decrease the confidence in existing generalizations and theory, but they also provide us with more nuanced and practical wisdom that help us to make the right decisions in similar situations in the future. In the final Chapter Eight the research will be critically evaluated and new positions will be proposed. In addition to the recommendations this final chapter will treat possible new approaches of art and art education adding the perspective of CAP and CCCs. Stake points at the “Case-Quintain Dilemma”, meaning that there is tension between the particular of the specific case and the tendency to the general of the quintain (Stake, 2006: 7-8). The more we get to know about the single pieces the more complex the quintain as a whole containing all these pieces becomes. To handle this dilemma, the number of variables and sources had to be limited, and, most of all, focusing and zooming in helped to handle the growing complexity of the quintain.

So first of all this study wants to reveal the CCC as a community that organizes its own development and the development of its members in CAP. It also tells us about the strategies that artists have developed over a long span of time in interaction with many people involved to initiate and maintain such a community. However, the scope of the study is limited to the western world and even within the western world it is limited to urban areas and societies with a cultural tradition of liberal citizenship.

For these reasons the study cannot claim to deliver guaranteed recipes for success. Still, the strategies revealed and their relations to theories of human learning and social change deliver a useful and well-developed vocabulary for reflection and evaluation. These reflection and evaluation practices might inform and inspire new practices, and indeed may help to improve existing ones. Delivering positive and counter examples this study may add more nuances to existing theories of human learning environments.

However, the study focused on the design of the learning environments, whilst the learning outcomes in these cases have not thoroughly been tested. Therefore, this study does not deliver specific conclusions about any relations between the learning environment and the apparent pedagogical results. Further research could however entail a study of an application of these pedagogical concepts together with the evaluation of their learning effects.

Flyvbjerg argues that social science should give up the pretention to emulate natural science since it “never has been, and probably never
How radical can the local become? Is the global rooted in the local? Is it that simple? Or is the local an in-between, an ‘inter’ between the global and something else? Is this ‘something else’ coming to the fore once we radicalize the local? These questions disclose a perspective that reveals the micro political foundation of new organizational forms.¹⁹

With its high rises and extensive harbor, Rotterdam is the Dutch city with the most metropolitan of features. Still, like all other Dutch towns, it does not have more than a million inhabitants. The people of Rotterdam are known to be down to earth and hardworking. Migration is a recurrent theme in Rotterdam’s history, beginning with ‘immigrants’ from adjacent provinces. Nowadays the city is colored with people from all over the world who are attracted to the intense economic activity in this rich harbor city. The harbor area, Feyenoord, has one of the oldest multicultural communities in the Netherlands and was the scene of race riots in the 1970s. The setting of my first case is situated in and around the Afrikaander Market. This market is located in the Afrikaander neighborhood close to the Maas-harbor of Feyenoord. Since the riots this neighborhood has gained a negative reputation and the police are prominently present. Reading the numerous pamphlets and posters on display it appears that culture is permanently produced or offered to the public.

Former real housing cooperation, now real estate investment company, Vestia, also seems omnipresent. I understood it owns a vast amount of the real estate in the neighborhood. Vestia tries to upgrade this property with investments in both the local economy and culture. Jeanne van Heeswijk is an artist working in this part of the city. At the moment she is dealing with three main projects: (1) ‘Freehouse’ here in...
Rotterdam, (2) a new project in Liverpool, and (3) some preparations for a future project in Germany. In between she is doing presentations and small projects at biennials or other art manifestations, such as award shows and other initiatives. Jeanne van Heeswijk is well known in the Netherlands and abroad. For more than 20 years she has been exhibiting and publishing internationally. Her CV consists of exhibitions at prestigious biennials and dozens of publications ranging from articles to catalogues and books. She is considered to be an authority on art in social context, or so-called ‘social design’. For this she also received several prizes (Jeanneworks, 2015). Jeanne van Heeswijk’s practice forms two dimensions of output: community development and works of art for the art world.

Vestia had offered Van Heeswijk space to house her office and workshop in one of the new housing projects in the Afrikaanderwijk. Here with a staff of three people, Ramon, Annet and Mariska, she is working on a project called ‘Freehouse’. Ramon is communications manager and takes care of press and communications. Annet is a historian managing the Freehouse project, and Mariska is an artist monitoring the market. Freehouse began with research into the local cultural production of the neighborhood. Next Van Heeswijk organized a series of artistic interventions in cooperation with fellow artists in response to this cultural production. Linking up locals with her network of professional artists and designers, Van Heeswijk formed communities with the purpose of starting joint enterprises. Some of these enterprises took the form of workshops and others the form of event, meeting space or service.

Besides Jeanne and her staff, I had conversations with many people working at these enterprises. I also talked with people working for the organizations adjacent to Freehouse. I will introduce some of these in the next section when reporting on the different projects in this practice. When I started this research in May 2012 the Freehouse project consisted of five main production units: the kitchen, the community shop, the sewing workshop, the Market of Tomorrow and FFFast electric transport services. The first had just opened, and the latter is not active any more. These initiatives were developed in the neighborhood after an extensive research period of studying the dynamics of local production. This local production concerns not only straight industrial production but also a much wider range of production that includes the private realm as well.

At the Afrikaander Market Square also lies a former pump station now called “t Gemaal”. After being renovated it was used as a restaurant, however it went bankrupt. Freehouse took over the kitchen and the rest was turned into a gallery functioning as a bridgehead for the local museums in a hard to reach neighborhood. At the beginning of 2013...
Picture 3 - Feijenoord housing project

Picture 4 - Jeanne’s office

Picture 5 - ‘t Gemaal exterior

Picture 6 - ‘t Gemaal interior
the joint venture of the local museums failed. So Jeanne and her team seized the opportunity to take over the complete venue and develop it as a Cooperative Value Store, presenting, staging and discussing the special qualities of the neighborhood.

Within the kitchen the volunteers share knowledge about cooking and work on catering assignments. Some cooks also try to sell their cookies, chutneys or jams in the community shop and elsewhere. This community shop also sells homemade clothes, jewelry, towels and bedding. Next door to the shop is the sewing workshop where locals produce fashion both for themselves and for sale. They also organized fashion shows at the local mall or the market. One of these shows took place during the manifestation called ‘Market of Tomorrow’ in 2009. This project was a series of artistic interventions in the market that culminated in a two-day event. In the end a process of negotiation of changes in design of the public space and in regulation and organization of the market took off.

4.1 Typology

The works of art Jeanne van Heeswijk is producing can be labeled as ‘situation art’ or ‘project art’. “I mold reality”, Jeanne explains in an interview, “Just consider me to be a contemporary portrait painter. In collaboration with others I portrait reality - society…”²⁰ Farida, who works in the sewing workshop, adds to that:

“She goes deeper than the canvas or the hall. This art can’t be seen with the naked eye. She passed on her art to all the people who came here, without mentioning it and without people realizing what this place was doing to them”. (...) “She secretly painted something in the heads of this woman or man, making them see the other with different eyes”.²¹

I respond by quoting Jeanne comparing herself with a portrait painter, but Farida disagrees: “She is more likely a painter of thoughts I would say. People change from the inside”.²² In a comparable way Jeanne denies that the manifestations of Freehouse are the ultimate work of art. “The fundamentals of my work are the visualizations of a location by means of confrontation, creating new complicity. You call that shared imagination? I prefer to call it seized imagination”.²³ Jeanne states

²¹ - Conversation with Farida (2012, October 24)
²² - Conversation with Farida (2012, October 24)
²³ - Bertina, D. (2010, May 19). Noem mij maar portretschilder; Een gesprek met »
that she cannot see things as being static. After briefly reading parts of my journal she tells me that it makes her laugh and argues that she thinks very differently to the way I perceive things. “I think in terms of permanent exploration”, she explains, “Documentation - what I always say - noticing, creating, debating, propelling, taking snapshots, putting lenses on it, opening discussions, creating movement, densification, in a continuous curiosity, without truth - or better - without exactness.”

Jeanne has developed an explicit set of terms to distinguish the people who are part of her network. Firstly there is a definition of the two main target groups with whom Freehouse engages, secondly there is a typology of involvement of people in the Freehouse activities, and thirdly there is a distinction between different types of stakeholders. Communication manager Ramon explained to me how they recognize a primary and a secondary target group. First he mentions those who are interested in Freehouse as a project or as an event. These are people interested in art, politics, urbanism, social development, and suchlike. They want to understand what is going on and wonder what they might learn from Freehouse. The second target group consists of those people who are interested in the products and services that Freehouse delivers, such as fashion or catering for instance.

Jeanne explained to me how she distinguishes between the people involved in the activities of Freehouse. People who are incidentally witnessing or participating in an activity of Freehouse, Jeanne calls ‘visitors’, whilst people who participate on a regular basis, by taking part in the production process or by trying to improve the product, are labeled as ‘participants’. At the core, almost situated next to her production staff she perceives ‘collaborators’. These are people who are deeply involved and committed to a certain part of the project through a serious investment. They co-produce on a regular, almost daily, basis. To distinguish stakeholders in the environment of Freehouse Jeanne talks about ‘actors’, ‘agents’ and ‘angels’. The first ones, the “actors”, are those who are active in the same field as Freehouse. Besides these actors there are organizations with specific interest in the development of the neighborhood around the market. Jeanne labels them agents’, of the neighborhood around the market. The second target group consists of those people who are interested in Freehouse as a project or as an event. These are people interested in art, politics, urbanism, social development, and suchlike. They want to understand what is going on and wonder what they might learn from Freehouse. The second target group consists of those people who are interested in the products and services that Freehouse delivers, such as fashion or catering for instance.

Although this study is not a quantitative inquiry into the composition of the social setting, the dominance of the female gender was already obvious at first sight. There were no men working in the kitchen, just a couple of male ‘participants’ in the sewing workshop and only one man - Ramon - working in the core of collaborators and staff. The visitors who came to see the art project, such as the journalists and the officials shown round by Jeanne van Heeswijk, were predominantly expensively dressed and white. However, the population of participants and audience visiting the workshops and manifestations was ethnically diverse, with ages varying from between young adult to middle aged.

4.2 Magnitude and frequencies
One of the first things Ramon explained to me was the fact that it takes a long time for a project like Freehouse to become embedded in the community, stating that it takes a lot of work with slow progress on a detailed level. He says he can understand that many people cannot persevere with/in such projects. He also noticed that there is both a consistent part and a part that is in constant flux. Dealing with these short and long terms simultaneously is quite complex because in a conceptual sense these perspectives fluctuate between the very abstract and the very ordinary, to the almost banal.

“To some people six months is a long term,” Mariska elaborates. To her and to Jeanne this is a short term. Jeanne is switching between the long-term projects and the short-term biennales, design contests and other exhibitions. Still, these so-called short-term projects take up to six months. The other projects take from a few to many years. Freehouse took quite some time to develop, starting in 1999. Relatively the Market of Tomorrow was ignited in an instant. “But the fire is still spreading and the level of planners hasn’t been reached yet”, Mariska observes.

The amount of people involved in the Freehouse project is high. “I try to get a hold on everything Freehouse does, but it seems a lot”, I said to Dennis, who is one of the local fashion designers working in the sewing workshop. “It is a lot indeed”, he replied, “I find it hard to explain the range of it”. His colleague Farida estimates the number of neighborhood volunteers to be fluctuating between 30 and 60. Most of them are linked to designers and artists. They come here also to take these businesses further.

Jeanne claims that the number of co-producers (she probably means those she earlier referred to as “collaborators”) in the Freehouse project is relatively high also. Besides that, there are hundreds of participants following courses, acting as models or helping in some other way. The number of people witnessing the interventions and manifestations
in this project I would prefer to work with an economist”, Ramon muses. “We find it interesting to identify the value of certain collaborations, calculating costs and assets, so in the end you can also point out the economic gain besides the artistic benefits”.³⁴ Project manager Annet elaborates on the importance of being able to switch focus from the individual to the bigger picture and back:

“It is very big and very small at the same time and it really feels that way. I’m constantly zooming in and out. And on this individual scale it is enormous while at the same time you hope it is reaching further”. (...) “So you have to zoom in and out all the time there to prevent getting lost in the details of everyday life, wondering things like ‘do we have the proper colors of thread in the sewing workshop? Do we have enough spoons in the kitchen?’ And you must remember that this is all part of the work of art you’re making”.³⁵

Following this concept of a multi-level approach the Freehouse project is quiet diverse in its activities and connections. It reaches a wide variety of people and organizations indeed and compared to other art practices its outreach is considerable. Still, on a societal level the project has quantitative limitations. Kitchen chef Lisa observes that until now their lunchroom annex exhibition space is hardly visited by locals. It seems to work the other way round: outsiders visiting the opening parties of the gallery discover the market and the colorful neighborhood.³⁶

Mariska is Jeanne’s extended right arm on the streets. She regularly patrols the market taking pictures and sometimes recording stories. But most of the time she simply talks to the vendors in order to maintain relations and their trust for upcoming interventions or initiatives.³⁷ As a producer Annet has frequent contact with the ‘collaborators’. Together with Mariska she regularly visits the shop, the workshop and the kitchen. Annet and Mariska both function as Freehouse figureheads for the collaborators and participants. I discover that some are dealing with Annet and others are dealing with Mariska.

I also discover that at the moment few people in the neighborhood are dealing with Jeanne. Jeanne explains that people do not know her on a daily working basis but that they might know her as someone who comes along to stir up debate, rather than as someone steering the organization.³⁸ Jeanne works on the public relations together with Ramon, and she deals with the government and the art world. The few times I saw Jeanne in the field during last year’s observations, she

Figure 11: Detail of the network map on www.jeanneworks.net

As a social design artist Mariska is intrigued by the unique way Jeanne links expertise and experienced knowledge on all kinds of societal levels. “When you want to change human relations you also have to change architecture and infrastructure”, she emphasizes. “You have to work on the action and development of both bricks and people. We could intervene forever but if you do not change the circumstances nothing will really change. So you have to work at different levels at the same time. All Jeanne’s work has these layers”.³³ So besides artists, Freehouse also worked with architects, scientists, researchers, “Depending on the people you run into but at the moment

31 - Second conversation with Jeanne (2013, January 21)
32 - Second conversation with Ramon (2012, October 23)
33 - Conversation with Mariska (2012, October 23)
34 - Second conversation with Ramon (2012, October 23)
35 - Work floor conversations (2012, April 4)
36 - Conversation with Lisa (2012, May 16)
37 - Opening neighborhood kitchen (2012, April 4)
38 - Second conversation with Jeanne (2013, January 21)
was accompanied by officials, reporters or other guests. I was told that this used to be different when they were exploring the neighborhood in 2008/2009.

Upstairs in the meeting room I also found around a dozen books documenting her previous projects. Besides that, Jeanne appears on web sites, web-casts and in hard copies of art and architecture magazines. Jeanne also engages the public through her presentations that take place in the academic circuit of universities and art schools, or in the art world at biennials, exhibition openings or events such as design contests.⁴⁹ She considers the biennials a testing ground for small, experimental and more performance-based projects.⁴⁰

So as an artist Jeanne engages the public with and through her art. This work of art is the situation in which people participate. And whilst every now and then this process ‘densifies’ into certain things that in turn confront the public - who often do not know they are dealing with art. In Jeanne’s practice this chain of reactions, and its manifestations that proceed almost permanently, are far more extended than can be seen at the biennials or other expos.

For example, at the market there were things to be seen like decorations, signs with poems, fashion shows, an innovative vendor tent, exotic snacks or actors mimicking visitors. In the environment of the market things were built, such as the teahouse or the food-van, and enterprises like the sewing workshop or the cake shop were undertaken. Jeanne claims that in reaction to this, vendors take over some elements of these ideas while neighbors inhabit the changed environment and change it whilst participating. When the spirit is right these cultural impulses may ripple out through the community and leave the neighborhood boundaries. Jeanne constantly monitors this process and highlights or places a focus on - Jeanne uses the word ‘lenses’ - certain effects or results. And so the results are fed back in the system once again because quite often Jeanne invites others to react to it once more in order to take it further again, and again, and again. Jeanne calls this process ‘permanent curation’.⁴¹

Right from the start Jeanne suggests that Mariska should accompany me on my first reconnaissance of the market. She predicts that if I just move into the market and start asking questions I will not find any answers. She also explains that the developments in the market will not be discovered on first sight. I understand that an earlier research project completely missed the point by observing interventions in such a way before.⁴²

Most visible for me was the activity in the sewing workshop and in the adjacent community shop. As pivot of the sewing shop Farida observes that a lot of people from outside the neighborhood are attracted to the enterprise. So every now and then in the window she puts the Kaftans she makes in order to attract the attention of the locals. On market days people from the neighborhood come in when the door is open and the lights are on. Occasionally they buy things in the community shop but more often they ask for information about the clothes produced or the training offered in the workshop. On those days Farida is never able to finish her work. She expresses her amazement that Freehouse is not better known among the neighbors.⁴³ Most of the times when I wandered through the neighborhood there were people at work in the kitchen. I hardly ever found any other customers for lunch. Numbers peaked at special occasions such as the vernissages or other events. Still there is always work to do for the kitchen crew because of the many catering jobs.⁴⁴ I must admit that at first I was looking for the more aesthetic and less pragmatic commercial activity. The aim of the artistic interventions I witnessed was the promotion of sales, while I was looking for interventions aiming at an augmentation of public imagination. For that reason I mistakenly suspected an eccentric passer-by as well as a flamboyant market vendor to be artists working for Freehouse.

4.3 Causes and motivations

Jeanne’s practice is shaped by an extensive set of functional, ideological and reflexive considerations. In this section I will distinguish them for the sake of analysis, noting that in reality these considerations blur and interact in a complex, iterative and reciprocal way. The considerations shaping Jeanne’s practice also differ in their interest and urgency. Meaning and destination are constantly negotiated and drive the Freehouse enterprise.

Annet explains that it is not their ambition to gentrify the area. “Eventually we can’t avoid it”, Annet argues, “But we will not actively cooperate to be used for that purpose. We prefer to propagate civil disobedience and promote a critical attitude I hope. But in the end you have to play the game”.⁴⁵ She concludes that she simply enjoys being occupied with society this way. “I want to put my work in a bigger social frame, in the world, whether it has to do with art or not”. Mariëlla explains that: “It has to look perfect, the whole complete thing, just everything”. “And that’s the difference between Freehouse and a

40 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
41 - Second conversation with Jeanne (2013, January 21)
42 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
43 - Conversation with Mariëlla (2012, October 24)
44 - Kitchen observations (2012, August 22)
45 - Conversation Annet (2012, May 10)
neighboring neighborhood barbecue”. Ramon adds: “We’re open for any challenge and if something does not happen it was probably impossible.”

Fuelled by passion and idealism, the project follows a fluid course that navigates opportunities and threats. The Freehouse project itself for instance would not have happened if there had not been the opportunity of a local Dutch funding arrangement for artistic mediators. Besides that, there were opportunities like the restored pump station that had to be turned into a public facility, and in the background the need by the housing cooperation to look for ways to gentrify the neighborhood.

Instead of explicit targets and issues there is a more general goal of (re-) connecting people with their (urban) environment. “We’re not here to solve things”, Jeanne emphasizes. “I think all these final solutions have become a burden for this area. Whether they work or not, at a certain moment they come to a standstill. What we want to do is to develop an attitude that keeps things moving”. But it is not movement for movement’s sake. The reflexive pragmatism is submitted to a carefully developed and consistent set of principles and values. Jeanne proclaims that people do not experience public space as their habitat. They feel they do not take part in public life and Jeanne wants to change that:

“Well I regard the ‘cultural’ or the ‘ability-to-visualise’ to be an extremely important quality that people have lost at the moment. Far too many people have lost the feeling to be connected to the place where they are. They are convinced they’re not in the picture, nor can they picture themselves in charge of the world that surrounds them. To do so you have to inhabit your life world. Inhabitation is a form of annexation, meaning that you’re allowed to design a place. This ownership is lost for many people. Even the very thought of it is lost. But I think this is an important asset of citizenship. One could say that this design is an aesthetical practice, a typical task for the arts”.

For Jeanne the visual arts are the most suitable for this job. “I’m convinced that the image is determinant as a means of getting a hold on the surroundings and a way of imagining oneself in the environment. To be able to control this image one needs to become visually productive”, she argues. These artistic ideals seem to be leading the economic concepts shaping the project. “There are still things to settle for the local economy, the relation between high and low culture, between money and inclusion”, Jeanne states. In practice though, talking to the people involved, the leading targets seem to fluctuate. In some way most of the people in the core of the project are socially or politically motivated in addition to their aesthetic and economic objectives. As Ramon states: “I think every one of us feels the need to change the world. You must see the higher cause”. “A better world”, Mariska adds, and explains, “But it is very hard to indicate this change, even harder to quantify it. How do I quantify the fact that we’re nominated in China for a design prize?”

4.4 Structure and process

Taking extensive care of funding and publicity Jeanne’s tasks lie next to Ramon’s. Together they write reports, plans and applications for funding. Ramon is very busy with the websites and he also takes care of all the print work. Together they spend quite some time in the office. Mariska and Annet are Jeanne’s arms, eyes and ears on the street. Mariska explains her task as follows: “I’ve been building the project bottom up from the market. Talking with the vendors, documenting, reporting and connecting”. The other parts of the project are taken care of by Annet: “I consider myself more of a producer, that’s what I do, making things work”. I ask Ramon to elaborate on the way they combine the public interest with their interest in the art world. Ramon tells me they split this focus within the team. Jeanne is not involved in the workshops on a daily basis. She functions as a director with a bird’s eye view, observing and thinking along in general. When the enterprise was starting up Jeanne was prominently present in producing concepts, inviting designers and so forth. Now others take over this job at an operational level. Jeanne considers herself quite useless as a tailor or cook. She argues that she is of greater use through visiting conferences and spreading the word to raise money than when answering the door or pouring coffee. This explains my observations of her always being accompanied by officials, artists or other visitors, and often followed by photographers or a film crew. I cannot recall her ever talking to a passer-by and only a few times I saw her mingle with the workers on the work floor. I also saw that the presence of the media, especially the cameras, kept the public at a distance whilst not only Jeanne but Mariska and Annet too, were quite occupied with providing the reporters with material.

Jeanne is also very much aware of power structures, not only in her team but also in her projects and in society. In the past she regularly sought feedback from a philosopher / psychoanalyst about the relational aspects of her work. “It seems so easy”, she says, “You step into the arena, you become part of the game but still you are initiator. So what about that? What about your own subject position?”

50 - Second conversation with Ramon (2012, October 23)
51 - Work floor conversations (2012, April 4)
52 - First conversation with Ramon (2012, May 12)
53 - Second conversation with Jeanne (2013, January 21)
54 - Observation Intervention (2012, September 1)
55 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
Jeanne seems to be too strict on herself, according to the testimonies of her co-workers. Being actively involved in Freehouse, Farida attributes the success of the enterprise to the freedom and trust Jeanne gave her and other co-creators. She contacted Jeanne with a very modest idea about making purses and ended up running the training program in the workshop together with Annet. The trust Jeanne has placed in her she passes on to her students, she concludes.⁵⁶ I ask Ramon how Jeanne directs Freehouse artistically. He replies:

“Jeanne develops a project. Then she sees in what direction it is developing and what qualities are needed to realize and design the project. (...) it is up to Jeanne to decide who is involved based on her judgment of qualities needed to meet the challenge. The core team knows by now where Freehouse is heading towards artistically, and what Jeanne's intentions are. We try to execute things in that spirit and in our turn we direct others”⁵⁷

I ask Annet what makes Jeanne the figurehead artist instead of her. She answers:

“(…) she has a different vision, not opposite but further. Her goals are always lying far ahead and we try to get there. It is very important she sets the course’ (…) “I know how she thinks and make the same decision 9 out of 10 times. But when I get stuck then I’m happy she’s the artist and the one to give the answers. So maybe I’m opting for the easy way out”.⁵⁸

On a local operational level as well as on a meta-level, Freehouse is positioned amongst many other organizations. In the neighborhood there are the real estate company “Vestia”, and non-profit organizations like social work organization “Kosmopolis”, community center “t Gemaal”, social enterprise “Kus & Sloop”, and artist collective “RAAF”. Next there are the regular social and cultural workers, primary schools and high schools.

At a city level there is of course the municipality, institutions like the museum, the local art academy, some businesses and a couple of commercial organizations such as the association of market vendors. And then on a national and international level there are fellow artists and art funds. Freehouse depends on these organizations as funders, co-producers or as customers.

Jeanne tries to avoid being dependent on only one funder. There is the concern that a single funder might act as a principal issuing orders. Whereas when more funders are involved it is hoped that you might establish a relative independence. At an operational level Freehouse depends on a circuit of local organizations. Kus & Sloop for instance order bedding for their bed and breakfast from the sewing workshop, the kitchen caters the events of Kosmopolis, Vestia buys presents for their business acquaintances in the community shop, and teachers or social workers bring their pupils to the activities of Freehouse.

Ramon suggests: “I think this built-in space for chance is typical for Jeanne's work. You expect something unexpected to happen. So you look for it, create space and allow things to happen”. So I ask him: “Is this built-in space your goal or a means to an end?” Ramon thinks and smiles, answering, “It is a goal to achieve something new, something you could not do on your own. But it is also a means to make Freehouse what it is”. He explains that the space is used to intervene, take action or start enterprises. For this many ideas came from artists, designers and students who were invited, but also - and Ramon emphasizes the importance - from the vendors.⁵⁹

An important aspect of these experiments is the different way of thinking about innovations, Annet points out. “It is different because to us it is the primary goal. In the end we are not aiming to maximize profit. We try to redesign society differently”. I ask, “Different in what way?” Annet replies, “With more people involved, including those who are excluded”.⁶⁰

In an earlier talk Annet explained that Freehouse treated the market as a laboratory.⁶¹ Mariska uses the same analogy when I ask her to elaborate on the position and role of the spectator in this art practice. She replies they are partially viewers as well as actors. Nobody is merely a viewer. She states they consider the market to be a life-sized model.

They study it by hanging around, developing on the fly and gathering feedback in action on the spot.⁶² Each process Jeanne initiates is intensely manipulated. It is steered towards all sorts of output that she calls “agglutinations” or “densifications”. I ask Jeanne where they can be seen and by whom. Jeanne responds as follows:

“That depends. It might be a fashion show at the market or a presentation for a design contest”.

(…)

“At these platforms debate, confrontation or other things happen with a certain outcome. These things have a certain shape and become a platform for discussion themselves. So loops are formed with nodes. These nodes are things. This can be new regulation, a book, a platform for discussion themselves. So loops are formed with nodes. These nodes are things. This can be new regulation, a book,

58 - Conversation with Farida (2012, October 24)
57 - Second conversation with Ramon (2012, October 23)
56 - Conversation Annet (2012, May 10)
an artifact, performance, a letter, a movie, practically anything, even a good meal. Important is that these densifications have a quality of their own.

(...) It is a constellation of densifications, something real you can talk about. Where I am thinking about now is how to create such constellations of densifications in such a way that you can show them in the context of a museum and create discussion there too.⁶³

The Freehouse project has many faces. One might argue that it has as many faces as there are people involved. But there are two different faces that are thoroughly monitored and taken care of by the staff. One is turned towards the people involved and the other is presented to the funders, in this case the government and art world. The invited artists experience the practice of Freehouse in a participative way that is comparable to the way that locals become involved. Other representatives from the art world are guided through the neighborhood by Jeanne or attend special occasions like vernissages. Many others only know Jeanne’s presentations and publications.

Studying the project from both these angles I observed that the project is so much different when experienced in the long run at street level. In practice I see lightness, energy, emotion and unpolished, spontaneous, authentic people, which is not reflected in the abstract gravity of Van Heeswijk’s accurately formulated serious speech in the interviews and publications.⁶⁴

Understanding the project depends on the level of participation, and nobody, not even Jeanne, can oversee everything that is happening. Distant spectators - representatives of the art world incidentally visiting the site, visitors of biennials and exhibitions, as well as public government informed by official reports - will obviously perceive something completely different from the people involved.

The production units, such as the workshop or the kitchen, seem easy to enter. I have seen a lot of people coming in and out of the shop and the workshop. In the kitchen I regularly met a new face behind the counter. Their work and their enthusiasm formed a bridge that was easy to cross both ways, providing opportunities to relate to each other.⁶⁵ The permanent presence of Mariska and Annet on the work floor and on the street also makes the organization of Freehouse quite accessible.

63 - Second conversation with Jeanne (2013, January 21)
65 - Kitchen observations (2012, August 22)
Kitchen chef Lisa is very enthusiastic about the production units of Freehouse and the network spun around them. The kitchen and the sewing workshop in particular are well connected. They exchange their experiences as local entrepreneurs. Lisa concludes that all this has a deep impact on the lives of the crew. They are very proud and satisfied, and form a tight team.⁶⁶ The ties become stronger when participation turns into identification. Ramon describes how Farida got involved and ultimately became ambassador of Freehouse out of her own experience-based conviction.⁶⁷ These forms of identification lead to a transfer of ownership. People involved do not talk about what Jeanne is doing but start using the word ‘we’, such as the young local fashion designer Dennis when he explained his experiences with Freehouse:

“Last year we all got together, the shop, the workshop, and we gave youngsters the opportunity to develop their talents. We were using the new tent of Freehouse, did you see that? It is a big black and white tent, ideal for the market, against the rain and the wind you know. We demonstrated that too then. We do all this at the same time”.⁶⁸

At the same time Jeanne becomes invisible for people like Nina who is working in the community shop for Kus & Sloop. When I explained to her that I was investigating Jeanne van Heeswijk’s practice she asked me what Jeanne was doing. She was really surprised when I told her that Freehouse is actually her creation.⁶⁹

4.5 Consequences and results

Besides artifacts, performances and services, Freehouse also has an outcome of the achievement of adaptations of local policies, regulations and a certain rearrangement of the local public space. Within the nexus of these extremely different perspectives a multi-fold work of art is produced with a fluid shape that varies in time and in space according to the angle of approach. Jeanne is the spider in this web, sensing the movements. From this position she is working on the inside as a participating leader, whilst at the same time she is also telling stories to the outside as a reflective figurehead. The outcome is both art and participating leader, whilst at the same time she is also telling stories to the outside as a reflective figurehead. The energy source detected here was joy, enthusiasm and self-esteem, not money. Thus, Freehouse did not provide income for the entrepreneurs but did provide hope as a result of a positive change of perspective that was offered through the interventions. Mariska confirms this but explicitly adds that all these elements - the interventions and changes of perspective - are backed up with a change of conditions, infrastructure and regulations.⁷³

Jeanne definitely rejects the role of scholar. “I consider myself an artist in public space, more than a community artist. I have a big problem with that term and absolutely hate this pedagogy - the so-called empowerment of community art. Educating the lower classes with culture? I consider that now far too presumptuous”.⁷⁴ Mariska also explicitly maintains a detachment from the word ‘Emancipation’. She observes that people are changing for the better while taking part in Freehouse, but immediately emphasizes: “It is not my aim to emancipate”. Mariska argues that emancipation is something these women achieved for themselves. After all, working for Freehouse is actually her creation.⁷⁵

Annet however does not have too many problems with the term ‘emancipation’ but rather describes it as something Freehouse is not actively occupied with:

“Last year we all got together, the shop, the workshop, and we gave youngsters the opportunity to develop their talents. We were using the new tent of Freehouse, did you see that? It is a big black and white tent, ideal for the market, against the rain and the wind you know. We demonstrated that too then. We do all this at the same time”.

⁶⁶ - Conversation with Lisa (2012, May 16)
⁶⁷ - Second conversation with Ramon (2012, October 23)
⁶⁸ - Encounters in the workshop (2012, May 12)
⁶⁹ - Encounters in the workshop (2012, May 12)

70 - Conversation with Mariska (2012, October 23)
71 - Conversation Annet (2012, May 10)
72 - Opening neighborhood kitchen (2012, April 4)
73 - Conversation with Mariska (2012, October 23)
“That is what Freehouse does. By formalizing the informal economy people are pulled into a process of emancipation that opens the front door of their houses further and further so to speak”. (...) We did not make a choice for this strategy. It simply evolved ceasing the moment”.⁷⁸

It seemed that the staff, as well as the crew of collaborators were quite unanimous about the importance of the local economy and were very determined not to patronize others involved. Only Lisa placed a critical note on this policy by wondering whether the result of this economic activation could lead to an alignment to the dominant policies of economic functionalism without further questions.⁷⁷

Although Jeanne rejects public pedagogy but does not talk much about the local economy either. When dealing with the inclusion of people in her art practice her main concern is their subject position, or - more precisely - the release of their subject position into the formation of public space.⁷⁸ And when classifying the people involved in Freehouse, Jeanne considers not only degrees of participation and commitment but also the firmness of their subject position in the local community. People have to learn how to relate to the community and how to behave as a subject who lives with other subjects without striving for the most individual of needs, Jeanne argues when describing the process participants in her projects go through.⁷⁹

Jeanne articulates that the ability to make one’s own identity visible in public space is a fundamental right. According to Jeanne this is not about governmental tolerance towards popular culture, but about ‘inhabitancy’, meaning the actual possession of public space. “Art in public space is not about a public clay modeling workshop with Moroccan immigrants”, Jeanne argues, “I’m talking about slightly more aggressive ways”.⁸⁰

Still, at the occasions Freehouse had organized I experienced these public confrontations to be quite friendly and warm. For instance, being served an exotic meal by the cook herself at the neighborhood kitchen made it easy to show and share mutual empathy and appreciation. This way it appeared to be easy to socialize across different groups and cultures.⁸¹

Farida prefers to understand this interaction not as a strengthening of identity and community but as a confirmation of the self. “It is not an ethnic get together”, Farida explains, “Because in the end you just see people, and once you’ve reached that point you have become a scholar for yourself and your children”, she concludes.⁸²

Farida illustrates the impact on their private lives by explaining how some of the women involved have to delegate their household tasks to their husbands or children, having appointments with important people concerning their occupation in Freehouse. For example in early 2013 the workshop was invited by the local museum to contribute to an exhibit on the famous fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier. Three of the workers demonstrated their needle skills by producing a dress designed by Gaultier live at the museum.

Annet explains that this cultural production is not about joining in but about raising voices. By joining Freehouse people become more visible at other locations and occasions. She argues that this voice is different from the voices of people having their say at a public debate, because they are involved at a deeper level in the community. They are not just becoming public but have acquired a public function other than the traditional social function that was already given to them.⁸³

4.6 Agency

Freehouse was established in a more or less difficult neighborhood of residents and encountered an audience who were socially and economically challenged. This audience was not told what to do or think, how to behave or who they should become by confronting them with art. Instead the audience was listened to and interest was shown in their own creative cultural productivity. The art that was presented to them was a response to their subjective being engaging in dialogue from the beginning.

With Freehouse we are dealing with an artist who is not only located in a neighborhood community but who is also developing their practice within an inclusive situation that formally functions as a learning opportunity. Listening to Jeanne and her staff the term “situation” seems not to be accurate since this term suggests a shorter span of time, or a moment or instant far shorter than this project was running. I would say that Freehouse is not a created and designed situation but rather a series of co-created situations.

As an artist Jeanne picked up the task to work with local people in order to assist them to (re-)design public life as an act of their inhabitation of public space. She considers this action to be an aesthetic practice that makes up a fundamental aspect of citizenship. At the same time she observes that people are losing the power to act out this form of citizenship in present late modern times. So with this project Jeanne...
van Heeswijk also picked up the task of renewing both art and social work. As a result, Jeanne has a lot to explain and many will question either the artistic or the social aspirations of the project. In Jeanne’s opinion too many people feel excluded from public life. They consider themselves being “invisible” at the margins of public attention, and they find it hard to picture themselves as being in charge of their own habitat. So Jeanne’s art practice basically focuses on the enhancement and visualization of both local people’s public positions as subjects and on their own local cultural productivity. Jeanne explains that especially in the start-up phase, the process of negotiation is very intense because the interests at stake are fed by quite urgent needs:

“There is the research phase, the propelling phase - and you have to be on location to do so - and then the - rather boring - consolidation phase like we’ve been into now here in Rotterdam during last year”. (...) “These processes are just always very intense and you’re part of it yourself too. It is important at such a moment to develop a set of questions that create a field of interaction I can step into like all the others. Then, within this field of interaction, relations start to move, creating critical mass. You have to monitor this very well to see if that everybody steps up, really takes part, gives and takes, and thinks outside their own immediate need. (...) This is always a very complex set of negotiations”.

Jeanne believes she can evoke positive social change by “radicalizing the local”, as she prefers to put it. The local should also be a field of development and democracy next to the everyday tensions. Therefore it is very important to Jeanne that local experts are involved in her projects. This expertise can be anything, like knowing how to bake bread or understanding what it is like to live in the neighborhood. These experts are teamed up with each other, introduced to external experts and confronted with challenges or ideas. Once such a network is built and functioning it has to become consolidated and self-sufficient. Mariska describes Freehouse as a foundation that tries to support neighborhood economies by stimulating creative enterprises. She considers it to be a task for artists to raise questions about society. And by asking those questions new possibilities may be created, and that is what Freehouse does according to Mariska. Ramon considers the Freehouse concept to be an attempt to activate people as citizens by means of cultural production. Freehouse links them up with other cultural producers, turning it into a public enterprise so that people get involved in the realization of public space. According to Annet, Freehouse seeks to encourage people to reclaim the public realm, challenging public regulations. In order to do so, Freehouse challenges public order by breaking the rules with art. To this extent Jeanne confronts the political order.

4.7 Topics and issues emerging during research

During the conversations, Van Heeswijk showed a special concern for the accurate positioning of her art and practice in relation to the art world and other societal sectors, more specifically the economy and the realm of public education. Although Freehouse is concerned with the neighborhood economy and although there is a lot of social learning going on, Jeanne van Heeswijk considers Freehouse first and foremost to be an art practice, but with economic, social and personal development side effects.

Jeanne clearly crosses the borders of traditional art by moving into everyday urban living and into the economy. When she started Freehouse the economy was a no-go area to the art world. Jeanne remembers: “Nobody dared to do it because it was a blasphemy”. She also explains that many people in the art world consider community art a no-go area as well because it is instrumental and therefore possibly corrupted. Jeanne seems to agree or otherwise to align herself with the latter since she expresses the desire to be an artist not a scholar. Still it cannot be denied that Jeanne’s practice is aiming at a certain change. And although this change is not primarily personal but rather cultural or economic, Jeanne is intervening socially with a purpose. Focusing on subjectification and acknowledging the subtle differences between formal, non-formal and informal learning as introduced in chapter two, the dilemma of aiming for social change without acting pedagogically can be solved. This way the artists’ agency of change is turned into a subtle delicate relational art. This social art practice is becoming an art form that tries to position itself opposite to applied community art programs but also opposite to purposeless autonomous art.

The ability of people to publically express themselves is of the greatest importance to Jeanne. For this very reason Freehouse does not educate people, in the sense that they do not teach people how to do that. What they do is to support people who are already culturally productive. This distinguishes this art from the traditional community art.

In this ‘learning while producing’ community there is no division between learners and teachers. Also, the staff, including Jeanne, are learning all the time. This learning is not organized as such. It happens on the fly, often without being noticed, while having lunch together. At such moments I observed the crew briefly updating each other on

84 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
85 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
86 - Conversation with Mariska (2012, October 23)
87 - First conversation with Ramon (2012, May 12)
88 - First conversation with Jeanne (2012, March 13)
Jeanne is very much aware of the learning processes in her projects. There are phases when things get intense and everybody starts to realize that things are getting serious, for real, and that it might hurt to go on.

“That is a process of collective learning. Learning from others how to move on”. (...) “Such friction is productive. In this friction the project takes shape”.⁹⁰

Jeanne is convinced that the visual arts can play a crucial social role through the imagination of a collective future. Human relations and collective narratives are shaped by these images. The confrontation and repositioning of subjects shaping public space, and the inhabitation of this space by these subjects as a result of this action, is what Jeanne puts forward in her publications, presentations and lectures. Mariska considers it to be a task for artists to ask and raise questions about society, and that is what Freehouse does with this practice. And by asking questions new possibilities may be created. This is fundamentally different to what organizations like the housing cooperation or the employment office do. They might want to stimulate the economy and enterprise but they do so within the status quo without questioning it. Mariska muses:

“What happens here is the creation of scenes through interventions, but these scenes are not created in search for beauty. Traditional fine art aims for pleasure or certain aesthetic experience in the perception of the composition. That is not the primary issue in Jeanne’s art”. (...) “The art she wants to offer to the public is not asking for a judgment of taste but inviting to think about the questions that are raised as a result of the situation that is created”. (...) “It is not enough to keep on posing questions as an artist. You have to show alternative things”.⁹¹

Jeanne considers her work to be a visual art practice. When I ask her if she considers the art world to be her home base she answers: “Well, I do consider it a toolkit and my critical faculty. I reckon the things I do if she considers the art world to be her home base she answers: “Well, I do consider it a toolkit and my critical faculty. I reckon the things I do among the visual arts”. (...) “It is my frame of reference. I develop my thoughts from there and bring it to the public realm”.

Jeanne's art also gets very close to a 'Gesamtkunstwerk'. This does not fit the dominant profile of the star-artist, or star-designer, shining at the top of the lonely pinnacle of talent. Even when collaboration in art becomes accepted it is still understood as a singled-out unit, like an artist initiative or an avant-garde movement, separated from the common world and the common people. “People seem to prefer that”, Jeanne observes, “I prefer my work to be more famous than myself”.⁹²

Jeanne is convinced that art is more than an artifact. As a result of this consideration Jeanne came up with a definition during our last talk:

“It is also what is said and written, and the way it is exhibited. Art is the production of aesthetic relations. That is all in the game. Within this field I create projects and processes with a certain dimension in time. You might say that the process is the work of art, but that may suggest that anything goes, and it does not go on forever”.⁹³

Seeking connection with the visual art world Jeanne has to put things on display. Returning to an earlier conclusion I suggest that she could claim to act as a curator. Jeanne refines:

“Compiler. That’s why I talked before about a practice of permanent curating I am actually performing. You act in the neighborhood and synthesize that to a compiled shape (...). For the Market I deliberately chose to compile an exhibition. (...) That does not make me a curator. Making a book does not make me an author. You know?”⁹⁴

4.8 Concluding remarks

Freehouse was a well planned and thoroughly executed situated art practice that started with a research phase followed by a series of strategically staged artistic interventions. Observing cultural production in the neighborhood and listening and talking to the locals Jeanne van Heeswijk picks up inspiration for artistic response either by herself or by other artists and designers she decides to invite. This artistic response takes shape in action as a public intervention or in the creation and design of a public platform, channel or production facility. Jeanne van Heeswijk is driven by her sensitivity for the aesthetics and meanings of public space and her concern for the quality of human togetherness in that space. The project Freehouse created opportunities for the citizens to manifest themselves publically and claimed public space for the locals to shape and inhabit. Until that moment many of these locals lived and worked anonymously at home. Being involved in a public enterprise expanded their identity and opened up perspectives on/possibilities for a public career as an artist, designer or another sort of creative entrepreneur.

On the direction of Jeanne van Heeswijk, professional artists and designers would team up with local producers of culture to produce artifacts and performances that were presented and experienced
through the formation of public space in the same local neighborhood. For Jeanne, it was not these products or interventions but rather the new identities, relations and - as she called it, ‘complicities’ - that were the actual work of art she intended to make.

And so Freehouse built a CCC that started several joined enterprises such as a community kitchen, a sewing workshop and a neighborhood shop, all located in or around the market. All these venues were open for the public on a daily basis and each one of them had their own team of volunteers working there. With these enterprises Freehouse did not only publicly present its participants but it also formed an enclave of expanded possibilities within the surrounding order of the harbor, the market and anonymous urban life. Within this enclave it demonstrated new ways of seeing, saying and doing, and by getting involved in these new ways of seeing, saying and doing many participants have to reconsider and renegotiate their identity and status to harmonize the disjunction between their former and present lives.

In the slipstream of Freehouse other venues like a pie shop, a communal market vendor tent and a teahouse were established in the neighborhood. And at the end of the research period Freehouse was about to open a community hall they called the ‘Cooperative Value Store’. This way Freehouse spread out across the neighborhood like ripples in the water, making it hard to determine the exact dimensions of the project but still the relational effect on the social field of the neighborhood and the city became clearly visible this way.

For the formal art shows Jeanne van Heeswijk would present information about these projects in text and image. Often she would also put items on display or invite participants to come and present themselves and their work. Occasionally she would organize expeditions into the public space where her art was produced and shared. Jeanne van Heeswijk considered herself to be a producer of portraits of people by publicly interacting with their cultural practice. Still these portraits were actual living human beings and their identity was indissolubly connected with their community and their daily practice. Van Heeswijk’s art is definitely situated at the coalescence of creation and lived experience, and therefore cannot be exhibited in its full extent.

As a first case, Freehouse did not only deliver robust empirical information about the CCC and its CAP but also supported the theoretical concepts as developed by the research community at Leuven University. Pivotal to the theoretical analysis by Van Heeswijk appeared to be Arendt’s view on the Human Condition and more specifically the process of public subjectification, a theoretical focus that coincided with the theoretical considerations of Biesta on public pedagogy as explained by Caris & Cowell (2016).

5 Flux Factory: A Collaborative Free Fall

“I don’t know of most people would consider it art and I think that’s great. I think ok about it. But it was like really … making people curious. Wanting to see these things, wanting to be surprised, to be wondered. To … it’s that, the most important thing: to wonder!”⁹⁵

New York City is one of the strongest magnets on this planet for people with big plans and dreams. The vast cultural richness of this city is not the product of the labor of the born and bred New Yorkers but of the extraordinary people who gather here from every corner of the world. Flux Factory (FF) is a rallying point of such people with dreams and ideas. It was founded as a living commune in 1994 by Morgan Meis who came to New York with the romantic notion of the artist living the bohemian life in a downtown Manhattan loft. He soon found out that in the late 1990s this was no longer possible on Manhattan Island due to exorbitant real estate prices. So he went in search of similar facilities right across the East River in Brooklyn. Along with a few friends, he ended up living in an old spice factory on Kent and Metropolitan Avenue in Williamsburg, organizing art parties, gigs, exhibitions and a weekly art salon.

Morgan: I always tell people the story that the first year we moved into Flux I would get off the L-train at Bedford Avenue on a Friday night, let’s say 9 pm, and three other people would get off the train. One person will go that way, the other one that way, and then I’ll be walking down Bedford by myself, literally like a tumbleweed going by. There was no ATM out there. You had to go back into Manhattan to find an ATM. There were two restaurants. There was the L-café, and the first version of (…), which was just a little place where only just six people could eat in. And that was usually closed. I mean that was a totally different world out there. Our block was still a major trucking avenue, which is now being closed down. You can’t drive trucks down there anymore. So all night long the trucks would come through. Huge…

⁹⁵ - Wrap-up conversation with Jason Eppink (2013, November 20)
Stefany Ann: It was a big site for prostitution.
Morgan: And the truck prostitutes all hang out along that block on Kent Avenue so the truckers would stop. And that was the only reason anyone came to that area of Williamsburg. So that was a totally different world, completely different. You can’t even imagine.⁹⁶

We can regard the inhabitants of the FF as early settlers from the creative class who turned Williamsburg from a rough waterfront area into the hip and happening designer district of today. But after several years this process of gentrification pushed its settlers further away into the margins of the city. The rapidly growing community of so-called “Fluxers” had to move into the not so hip but far less expensive Long Island borough of Queens. In 2002 they moved into their next settlement, a warehouse at 38-38 43rd street. And in 2009 they ended up at their present address of 39-31 29th street near to Queens Plaza, and just a couple of subway stops from Manhattan Island.

Now FF is located between a mish-mash of urban functions: factories, shops, churches and offices together with the typical wooden Queens Borough houses, and is intertwined with traffic lines of streets, freeways, bicycle paths, underground tracks and fly-over trains.

Although Morgan might be considered/identified as the initiator of the Flux Factory, many others were taking the community further and further on a path of permanent experiment and development - or “flux” as they call it. From the start, Stefany Ann Golberg - alias “Shuffy” - manifested herself as a kind of anarchic executive director. At that time they were still busy finishing their college degrees. Today, Shuffy and Morgan are married and have left New York to work as writers and teachers.⁹⁷

Jean Barberis, a self-taught artist, came all the way from France to join the FF in its very early stages. When he moved into FF he was completely broke and could not afford a studio. So he built himself a pretty cardboard log cabin on the rooftop of the warehouse. Jean introduced a lot of radical artistic ideas and activities into the community, and became a natural leader of the informal art platform that FF was in the beginning.⁹⁸

FF is not a typical hierarchical art organization led by directors and curators. FF is a flatly organized community where “hard core” residents such as Jason Brown - alias “Phunkey” - or Jason Eppink are influencing the development of FF, in the same way as loyal visitors like Daupo Gassaway. Altogether hundreds, maybe even a thousand, people

⁹⁶ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
⁹⁷ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
⁹⁸ - Conversation with Jean (2013, September 4)
lived and worked at FF. It would therefore be impossible for me to name
them individually and do justice to their efforts and talents.

In May 2013 when I started my study, FF had evolved from a living
community into a non-profit art venue. Christina Vassallo was
Executive Director, Doug Paulson Residency Director, Georgia
Muenster press and curatorial fellow, Carina Kaufman was Residency
Coordinator, as well as two more administrative assistants and
an intern who formed the FF administration. Of these seven staff
members, only two members remain at the present time: Douglas
Paulson is now interim Executive Director, and Carina Kaufman took
over Doug’s position as Residency Manager. Presently they are assisted
by long-time community resident Aliya Bonar who is taking care of
marketing, and the brand new residency artist Jung In Jung taking care
of administration matters. This team is called Flux ‘Admin’. Behind
this front desk exists Flux ‘House’, which is the community of about
12 people who inhabit the studios at Flux Factory.⁹⁹ They foster the
original pioneer spirit of Flux and support and take part in the public
venue of Flux Factory. During the research, Flux veteran Jason Eppink
was their spokesman and apparent natural leader.

5.1 Typology

Insiders speak of first, second and third FF (FF1, FF2 and FF3). The
foundations of FF were laid out in FF1 located at Williamsburg. It was
more of an underground party-spot than a non-profit art collective.
Nevertheless it was here that the famous “Flux Thursdays” were
established almost right from the beginning. Originally these were
weekly salons where residents and visitors were allowed to present their
work almost without any pre-selection process or restrictions. Other
public events in FF1 were art parties with performances, extraordinary
decorations, and an abundance of underground music.¹⁰⁰

As a grassroots non-profit organization, FF did not have many financial
or political obligations. Laws and regulations concerning safety
and working conditions were not strictly observed. This way highly
experimental art projects were possible, especially after they had
moved to the second location, which was much bigger and offered the
community the chance to reinvent the FF as a public art space.

More than once FF2 was radically redecorated to turn the whole
building into an adventurous maze, a Luna park ride or a giant music
box. Cottages were built within the factory hall as self-sufficient retreats
for poets and writers (‘Novel’).¹⁰¹ FF2 attracted a lot of different artists

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⁹⁹ - Conversation with Douglas Paulson (2013, June 13)
¹⁰⁰ - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
a-living-installation/
and as well as others who were specifically interested in participating in a collective project group. In this stage a residency program was also developed.¹⁰²

As a new kid on the block, FF was invited by Queens Museum to stage a show. The whole community moved into the museum to both live there and turn the given space into a temporary version of FF (‘When Everybody Agrees It Means Nobody Understood’ 2002).¹⁰³ The Fluxers secretly redecorated the museum, creating hiding places for people and time capsules with containing objects. They also secretly modified some of the artifacts on display. Jean for instance added a tiny building to the giant scale model of New York, the famous showpiece of the Queens Museum.¹⁰⁴

Until then the income of FF consisted of the sublet rent and income from the parties and shows. The Queens Museum show was a form of public recognition of FF as an art venue, and FF started to apply more often for art funding. Still their shows remained, like their parties, quite anarchic and unorthodox.¹⁰⁵

When FF2 had to shut down in 2008 there was no new space available, yet there was still a requirement for FF to put on the shows as promised to the funders. Therefore a school bus was obtained as a moving venue. Artists and curators were invited to take the wheel, ‘Going Places Doing Stuff” as the series of shows was called.¹⁰⁶ Visitors were instructed to take things with them such as some money, food, sunscreen, a bathing suit and a cucumber, and were told that they would be away for a day, sometimes longer. The Flux Thursdays could not continue however the community of Fluxers regularly gathered at several of their parents’ homes.¹⁰⁷

Moving into FF3 the organization has become more or less formalized as an art institution. FF does not offer informal housing anymore. The studios for rent are formally for art production only. Still the living room, library and large kitchen and dining room recreate the atmosphere of the living community FF once was. The artists occupying the FF studios are not the typical nine to five workers, and so the building is used 24-7.

Present Creative Executive Director, Christina Vassallo, describes FF as “a very loose group of people who just want to do stuff, and I think, ¹⁰² - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹⁰⁴ - Conversation with Jean (2013, September 4)
¹⁰⁵ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹⁰⁷ - Conversation with Jean (2013, September 4)
I like to say FF always is changing and moving and that is what ‘Flux’ means.¹⁰⁸ This straightforward uncomplicated motivation is confirmed by the statements of the founders Morgan Meis and Stefany Anne Golberg (a.k.a. ‘Shuffy’), and by an early resident such as Jason Brown (a.k.a. ‘Phunkey’).

Long term FF resident Jason Eppink claims that when he joined FF he, “didn’t even know that Flux was pushing itself as an artist residency. For me I was like, I become part of a collective. And I still don’t even understand what art residency is. I am not interested in it. Ha-ha”.¹⁰⁹ To put this quote into context it is important to understand that Jason is a curator working for the Museum of the Moving Image in Queens and is contributing substantially to FF’s cultural production. With this claim, Jason, being far from ignorant, wants to emphasize that FF is not just about the production and public manifestation of art. FF is also, or as he suggests, primarily, about the production and public manifestation of a community of independent minds. The art FF is showing in public can predominantly be labeled as visual art. In the old days, music gigs used to be staged, however from FF2 onwards, music as well as literature and theatre always were part of multi-disciplinary art shows that were contextually situated as events, encounters, experiments or spectacles, instead of well-rehearsed recitals or performances. When I learned of FF they were working on a project called ‘Kitty City’, which was announced on the website as:

“Kitty City is an inter-generational experiment in collaboration and pedagogy, designed to encourage shared decision-making power and challenge the way we think about the urban environment. Artists and city planners will collaborate with elementary & middle school students to design and build a humane metropolis fit for its kitten citizens. (...) After our shared vision is approved by committees and review boards, we’ll build Kitty City in the Flux Gallery. On June 1st, we’ll flood Kitty City with kittens during a ribbon cutting ceremony that will double as an adoption drive”.¹¹⁰

Looking back on this project Christina concludes that the entire project was a participatory experience about exploring in what ways the artist becomes part of this larger group. These projects balance out the other model of cultural production FF uses, in which they invite artists or curators to make or display their ‘regular’ work. Still only a few individual art shows at FF resemble the classic “pinned to the wall” fine art exhibition.¹¹¹ Residing artist Chloë Bass for example tried to create a temporary settlement out of a traffic jam in her show called “Traffic Disruption Village”.¹¹² In the early years not every project worked out the way it was intended but I understood from graphic designer and cartoonist Daupo that this has been typical for FF shows:

“... we have got lots of great projects that really didn’t work out but they are great projects. But you feel differently about the ones that came together and it just feels you are right about something and that is properly an illusion. You do different stupid things fifteen times and there are two times that people are: ‘oh my god’”.¹¹³

Much of the art produced at FF is about the process rather than the product. When FF was having their show at the Queens Museum dozens of Fluxers moved to live there for three months and invited numerous people for tea. It seems like FF is creating community life as a form of art. The demographics of FF are totally dominated by a white and young adult population from Northern American and European backgrounds. This used to be more extreme in the early days when FF consisted of a number of young white would-be intellectual American kids aged around their 20s. Now this population is one or two decades older, and alongside a significant number of Europeans there are some Asian and Latin American - but just a few African people - participating. Still the majority are born, raised and educated in the Western world, including Australia, and when I observed a presence of significantly more people of color or a different age group the occasion was specifically organized for that purpose. For example, Kitty City was focused on children and drew 18 children with their parents from the neighborhood to FF. And when Marco Castro was invited to host Flux Thursday Potluck in June he invited several immigrant artists and artists affiliated to Latin America.¹¹⁴ To stimulate cross-cultural exchange and connectivity with the neighborhood, Flux admin assigned a Community Resident Artist. During this research this was Dylana Dillon who hosted the Potluck in October. She invited community workers from black neighborhoods to come along and discuss matters of citizen empowerment.¹¹⁵ Part of this event will be discussed in section seven of this chapter.

### 5.2 Magnitude and frequencies

When Morgan moved into the spice factory at Kent Ave in 1994 there were up to 10 people living on one floor. That amount doubled once...

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108 - Conversation with Christina (2013, July 18)
109 - Wrap-up conversation with Jason Eppink (2013, November 20)
111 - Conversation with Christina (2013, July 18)
113 - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
114 - Observations second Flux Thursday (2013, June 13)
115 - Observations fifth Flux Thursday (2013, October 10)
they got hold of the second floor. By 1996, they had to move to another location that was actually a warehouse. FF2 offered much more space than FF1 and so FF exploded in size, becoming an army of bohemian youngsters. Jean estimates that in FF2 there were about 50 bedrooms, a library, a huge kitchen, 2 bathrooms and a photo studio. “I had over 350 roommates since I lived there”, Phunkey jokes. He estimates that the number of people staying at FF for at least one month must be a thousand or perhaps even more.¹¹⁶ This explains why many more people consider themselves ‘Fluxers’ than the already dozens of Fluxers officially listed on the FF website.

Moving to the present address, FF drastically changed. They formalized as an art non-profit and the word ‘residing’ now had a different meaning; the ‘apartments’ were legalized as ‘studios’, not for bohemians to live but for professional artists to work. FF3 counts 14 studios, a kitchen, a library, a gallery space, an office, a workshop and several bathrooms. The number of ‘admin’ workers was changing continuously when I was around but remained between 3 and 5. Douglas and Christina were consistently present, however.

Additionally, a varying number - up to a dozen - of visiting residents and four long-term community residents occupy the studios. The population is very dynamic: “If I’m not around the first three days at Flux, in the beginning of the month, I ... it’s really ... like the rest of the month I’ll just be seeing people I don’t ever know”, Eric explained to me.¹¹⁷

FF used to have a weekly potluck and open stage on Thursday during the first five to six years. Sometimes there were less than 10 people present, reviewing each other’s notes or sketches. On other occasions there were 30 performances taking four hours, with hundreds of people in the audience partying for the whole night. There was also a tradition of celebrating the holidays together in their own ‘Fluxy’ way: ‘Flux Giving’ and ‘Flux-mass’. In addition to this regular program, FF held concept parties and produced quite extraordinary collaborative art events such as ‘Cartunnel’ (2004) when a multi-level maze decorated with cartoons was built all the way throughout FF2.¹¹⁸ Just like ‘Novel’ and ‘Fluxbox’, such projects would take months of work by dozens of people, with a serious risk of failure.

Nowadays FF puts on a show or event at least once a week. There is a monthly potluck and four major, more or less collaborative, shows or events a year. These projects are interchanged with solo shows of residing artists. On top of that there are workshops and lecture series dealing with varying subjects such as, for example, robotics, art

¹¹⁶ - Conversation with Jason Brown (2013, July 18)
¹¹⁷ - Conversation with Eric Petersen (2013, November 7)
funding, urbanism or fame. Finally there is the traditional ‘Flux Giving’ and ‘Flux-mass’, and an annual fundraising event with the ‘Not-So-Silent Auction’ of works produced by residents and visitors of FF.¹¹⁹

The size of the audience differs from a handful to one or two hundred, and occasionally even more. The original art parties attracted a couple of hundred people, as do the major events up until today. The potlucks I visited gathered at least 50 people, the solo shows only a few people. At solo shows there were mostly volunteers serving the personal friends of the exhibiting artist and not more than a handful of ‘real’ visitors. Workshops attract around a dozen people. Overall I observed only a minority of loyal visitors; most visitors were new or incidental. However, in total there are thousands of people visiting FF each year and Eric estimates that the annual budget of today must be at least $250k but more likely to be $300 or $400k.¹²⁰

I understand that there has always been an informal but explicit FF membership. On their website there is a list of 18 “Present Fluxers” and 148 “Past Fluxers”.¹²¹ From early members like Phunkey, Morgan and Shuffy I understood that there are many more people who stayed or worked at FF and therefore consider themselves a “Fluxer”. There are also many different typologies used to differentiate between the Fluxers. Daupo told me about a distinction between the “cool kids”, the “bad boys” and the “mensas” that was applied to the Fluxers scene during the early days of FF.¹²² The most used distinction I observed was based on the level of involvement in FF. Within this involvement there was also a difference in focus: the FF community residents who stay there permanently are focused on the house, and the short stay visitors in the residency program are focused on the gallery.¹²³ At the core of FF there are two centers of power. One is called ‘admin’, a handful of Fluxers who have permanent administrative, organizational tasks. These days they also receive payment. The other power center is ‘house’, formed by another relatively small population of community residents. They inhabit their FF studio permanently, without specific obligation towards the cultural output. These community residents echo the time when FF was first of all a commune. Now they are a minority and have to reapply for their studio every year. Still they form the backbone of the FF and safeguard the organization of everyday life. They actively support the collective cultural production as well as the individual projects of visiting artists. Rooted this deeply in the structure of FF they also consult ‘admin’ in the process of assigning projects and residencies to applicants.

Around this dual core power center there is a circle of artists. Most of them have applied for the residency program and come to live at FF for a few months, delivering an individual show, contributing to the Flux Thursday Potlucks and supporting the collaborative projects. Other artists come to FF on commission or as part of an exchange or funding program. They are working on shows or projects that are initiated by Flux Admin or Flux House and stay at FF for only a few days or weeks.

In the background there is the Board and the Advisory Committee. Some of the former figureheads of FF stay in touch by taking part in this background organization. Veteran Fluxers Morgan and Phunkey are on the Board, Jean Barberis is now on the Advisory Committee. Many board members also take part in the scene of loyal audience, together with influential “outsiders” like Daupo or Eric Peterson. Eric is in a relationship with one of the residents and so he hangs out at FF several days a week.¹²⁴ Daupo has been visiting FF for a decade or more and has collaborated in several projects.¹²⁵

One step further outwards there is a circle of participating visitors, contributing to projects or potlucks. Furthest outwards there is a circle of incidental visitors; some are curious neighbors, others colleagues from the art world or friends of the artists, curators or potluck MCs. FF has regular meetings with other not-for-profit art collectives in NYC. Fall 2013 I visited a playful basketball tournament of Long Island’s art non-profits called “DIYBA”, at Cooper Park.¹²⁶ Here I saw Jason Eppink leading the FF team dressed in a cape, wearing a cone hat all in flamingo pink. They were playing against a team dressed as zombies in a contest for an oversized handmade trophy.¹²⁷

5.3 Causes and motivations
The current mission as stated on the website states:

“Flux Factory is a non-profit art organization that supports and promotes emerging artists through exhibitions, commissions, residencies, and collaborative opportunities. Flux Factory is guided by its passion to nurture the creative process, and knows that this process does not happen in a vacuum but rather through a network of peers and through resource sharing. Flux Factory functions as an

¹²⁰ - Conversation with Eric Petersen (2013, November 7)
¹²² - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹²³ - Conversation on factory life during Reactor expedition (2013, November 5)
¹²⁴ - Conversation with Eric Petersen (2013, November 7)
¹²⁵ - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹²⁷ - DIYBA Tournament (2013, October 27)
incubation and laboratory space for the creation of artworks that are in dialogue with the physical, social, and cultural spheres of New York City (though collaborations may start in New York and stretch far beyond). The central guiding concept of Flux Factory is that innovative new works are created out of a rigorous commitment to collaborative processes. It is thus a forum that encourages participants to work with new collaborators, with unfamiliar media, and within a stimulating and unique social environment. As an artist-run organization, Flux Factory is a distinguished cultural component of its Queens neighborhood and the greater New York art world. Flux Factory produces four major and dozens of smaller exhibitions per year, runs a residency program, and presents monthly events that serve the artistic communities and general public of New York City.¹²⁸

Morgan came to NYC with a dream of joining the bright bohemian youngsters living in the lofts of Manhattan. He enlisted as a student of Philosophy at the New School and next he linked up with fellow students with similar ambitions of looking for a place to live this perceived intense and exiting life. In the beginning they dreamed of writing a manifesto and recording a high concept punk rock album. In addition to a place to sleep they also required some rehearsal and recording space. To pay for such communal overheads they started to throw parties to raise money. More and more these parties became conceptualized and turned into artistic events. Street credibility and word of mouth would draw hundreds of youngsters to the FF in Williamsburg that was not at all hip and hot at that time.¹²⁹

Having a place to stay and party was not enough for the early Fluxers. They chose to experiment with some explicit utopian desires. Morgan elaborates:

“We also had to have something to do that held us together, and to make something meaningful that all of us could participate in, and that all of us could feel. My feeling at that time was that it actually matters how you live your life. My feeling now is still that. But at that time I felt like I don’t want to just be in the world of that bullshit. I want to be in someplace where real life is being touched on in some way or another. And somehow in the end I think doing art together felt like a way that made that… that felt maybe like the most appropriate thing if you want to live a real life together. We could have gotten together and done commercial products or what else. That was in a way the thing we all want to resist without a big ideology behind it.”¹³⁰

Shuffy adds to that:

“We could have, as a group of people, gotten together and made commercial products. And that could have helped us together as a group but that we would have been a company. And there are many things that hold people together on a daily basis. But it doesn’t mean that they are all communities”.¹³¹

FF became slightly more institutionalized only partially because these youngsters had some positive notion about it. The most important reason was to obtain some financial relief in a city that is “so expensive and so competitive and so angry”.¹³² Obtaining funding meant that FF had to plan and design its activities beforehand, targeting an audience they also had to define. To do so they had to set up an administration and a PR network, and soon they decided to become an art institution administered by artists. FF has been a balance between the utopian dream of essential community life and the opportunistic institution ever since. Morgan contemplates:

“You are on your own and no one gives a shit. If you fail and cannot pay the rent, the landlord kicks you out and that’s it! You are done! There is no wiggle room. There was a pressure there. And I don’t know if that was a good thing or a bad thing. Sometimes I think it produced good energy. Sometimes it produces bad energy, and worries that would have been better not to have. In a way it doesn’t matter because that was the way it was. The fact. And we always had to deal with that. So as we started to think like, ‘Ok! How do we get some support for Flux? How do we get some grants or whatever to make some art projects? How do we do all these kinds of things?’ we had to figure out a way that made Flux more into an institution. At the same time we created an institution that in some ways deeply didn’t want to be an institution. And it was hosted out the idea that it’s becoming an institution. I think that that was good. Personal. I think that having an institution that resists being an institution being in many ways, and has… Even now as a board member when I talk to the Flux people who are trying to run Flux now, it comes up just as the way it did 14 years ago”.¹³³

Today the administration of FF still practices this art of balance between the institution and the utopian community. The present Executive Director, Christina, states:

¹²⁹ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹³⁰ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹³¹ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹³² - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹³³ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
“I always had a subversion to a huge institution. I just think that, you know, no matter what level you are at in an institution, it is very hard to have any impact because it is like a massive machine. (...) With Flux Factory it is even at a volunteer level your impact could be felt. Your ideas could somehow be materialized, if they are feasible, sometimes even when it is not feasible. There is something really exciting about that. Because why spend your time doing something if it is not going to matter? If it is never going to be honorable, if it is always overshadowed by getting bigger projects or democracy, who knows what can overshadow it, but I think we all want our creative work to be fund and materialized and effective. I think that with Flux we do that”.

Over the years FF managed to avoid becoming a simple top-down institution. Residency administrator, Douglas, claims:

“Every single thing about Flux exists because of things that we as a collective have done, out of need, or by choice, or... there is, like regardless of what - like - regardless whether it was institutional or whatever they mean when they say that, I think that the way it exists have come out of our own needs and decision-making”.

Douglas observes that: “It means a lot of different things to different people”. For him personally he was attracted to FF because to it was “an amazing way to - to take on a kind of like engagements and protests and make a new way of being together”. Other artists at FF agree with that, such as Marco Castro, one of the residing Fluxers during the period of my study. He argues in his web log that: “Art is not only a form of creative expression or social commentary — it is also a vehicle for social engagement.” Sarah Witt another artist in residence at FF paints the same perspective but with different words when reflecting on the bike tour she organized:

“I want it to be more of that kind of conversation. (...) I want to be able to produce a space where that happens. (...) Where everybody can contribute and has knowledge to share, (...) I want to be the kind of person that knows how to facilitate that”.

I also observed a less utopian and more pragmatic kind of resident at the FF. I heard conversations of artists exchanging all kinds of information on how to obtain cheap or free material and how to travel and stay at low cost. Between artists and non-profit institutions an extensive network and bartering system is woven:

“I continue talking to Robert. He appears to be from Tasmania. He is staying in FF but is working elsewhere. So besides the house Fluxers and the residents there are also guests that stay here without specific obligations. He is making a lot of stuff - paintings, video - but he does not want any pressure: “Even if I have one show a year I feel like I rush myself”. He stays at FF because of the inspiring atmosphere. He is helping the Fluxers as well with a lot of things. We talk about how we gather materials, where you can get interesting stuff for free and how much stuff we tend to keep in stock for too long. We talk about the places we’re from and the places we’re going to. (...) We talk about the footloose bohemian lifestyle of traveling artists, visiting each other, exchanging information and opportunities to get around the world cheaply. Bartering seems to be an important ingredient of the local and international network of artists. It’s a form of solidarity on the level of primary needs, sharing food and shelter”.

I know from observation in my own practice that several artists succeed in turning a network of residencies into an opportunity for a lifestyle of seemingly permanent vacation. Sarah is somewhat annoyed by that:

“... what it is, is that a lot of artist coming together... being an artist community. It’s not so much a place for let’s say the German visiting here for six months who has a gallery at home. It’s not a good place for them but they are attracting people like them. And I think it’s a conflict, it’s a problem. You can see it in between the residents. There is a lot of tension between the Europeans who come here for six months on holiday. Working holiday... thinking it’s one of those kinds of residencies. (...) I think there is some mission statement issues that needs to be worked out. That’s my personal opinion about flux factory, it’s a little foggy right now but they are trying to accomplish! I think the administration wants to accomplish one thing and one of the longer term residence that being there for a while... see it differently. Hmm”.

5.4 Structure and process
The formal structure of FF is predominantly flat. There are a lot of people involved who have almost entirely equal authority. Besides the staff, or “admin” as they are called on the work floor, there is a board of nine and an advisory committee of 24 members. They form a valuable network in the art world and beyond, a body of knowledge and experience on all kinds of administrative and intellectual challenges, and an ideological memory of FF.

134 - Conversation with Christina (2013, July 18)
135 - Wrap-up conversation with Douglas (2013, November 13)
136 - Wrap-up conversation with Douglas (2013, November 13)
138 - Conversation with Sarah (2013, September 1)
139 - Observations third Flux Thursday (2013, July 11)
140 - Conversation with Sarah (2013, September 1)
On top of that, as I mentioned in the introduction, residency artists and temporal visitors can have their say at the weekly house meetings as well. Formally FF asks for a commitment in return for their say in the management of daily practicalities. Informally their influence is commensurate with their dedication. The website informs residency applicants that FF expects them to take on a responsibility they call ‘Fluxhood’:

‘As a part of a community run center for artists, Flux Factory residents are asked to take part in the creation and maintenance of its facilities and programming. On Monday nights, all Flux Factory residents and administrators attend a weekly meeting (which also includes a gigantic dinner!) so that we may foster a sense of community and discuss the evolving needs of the program. Residents are asked to put in volunteer hours toward space renovation and a weekly chore. We are frequently renovating our building – a process that would be impossible without our dedicated network of volunteers. A constantly changing physical and social environment, Flux is always a work-in-progress, and there are many opportunities to leave one’s mark’¹⁴¹

I had no access to the staff meetings or the weekly Monday night meetings. I did, however, obtain information on the latter in conversations with the residents. An important part of these meetings is the distribution of household tasks and program assistance. Furthermore, there are some practical and technical household issues: water, electricity, heating, noise, dishes, rubbish and privacy. Occasionally there is an ideological discussion, such as when ‘The L Magazine’, a local online art magazine, published an article entitled, ‘Why Aren’t There More Flux Factories?’¹⁴² However, besides these formal bodies and gatherings there are numerous small get-togethers where ideological, political, personal and artistic matters are discussed. There is a committee that is reading and discussing the large number of residency applications and project proposals. A lot of business is taken care of during dinner or whilst doing the dishes. Staff members who do not stay at one of the studios have a schedule with many small group meetings and personal appointments. Long-term community residents do not talk much but rather resolve many things in a quiet and efficient way. And that is how it was intentionally set up in the beginning. As Morgan recalls:

“I was studying sort of Frankfurt school, post Marxist philosophy, and would sometimes try to really think about it theoretically. Then I

¹⁴² - Conversation on factory life during Reactor expedition (2013, November 5)
realized it’s not about that. There somehow is a kind of community here that functioned and can do different things. In a way just letting that thing have its space and its room and creating an environment like our weekly meetings and, you know? Very loose… never having people in roles or absolute authority. Always having a situation that anything can be overturned. Accepting the chaos of that!¹⁴³

This way FF was highly dependent on the support of the FF population. Over the years this dependency shifted towards support from government funding and collaborations with other art institutions. Present tensions in the organization are rooted in the concern over that dependency of FF. But not everybody is seriously worried. Elaborating further on the anarchic roots of FF, Morgan argues:

“But over time I think that that allowed Flux to actually work itself out, instead of having a strong outside structure. And I feel that that has served Flux. Now it is in the DNA of the organization. Flux has definitely become much more a structured institution. Now we have employees and kind of stuff. When we were doing it, it was much more a freefall. But I think that spirit is just written into the DNA deep enough that it kind of keeps Flux able and flexible to do all that art”¹⁴⁴

Therefore the structure of FF is a flexible dynamic system that relies on reciprocity, solidarity and mutual generosity. Being in such a ‘Flux’ is part of the FF ideology. Douglas Paulson suggests that if you take this “Flux thing” as a credo you behave in an institutional way and that you might as well claim that nothing has really changed in FF:

“I like to think of it as a kind of an organism, it has its own, kind of like life cycles and moods and needs and it is slowly growing in a really natural kind of way. So, I do not believe there is any kind of artificial kind of change happening here. (...) Then, of course, we have our own conventions, (...) I like some of our big shows are a sort of nostalgic approximations of what people think what Flux used to do in the old days, and I think that is a form of being institutional.”¹⁴⁵

Original and long-term visitor Daupo suggests that perhaps the next version of FF should be a curatorial project for non-curators or a curatorial program of “groovy organizers”. However, this will not happen simply by itself. The absence of a consistent structure demands that FF requires “somebody pushing that ball”, as Daupo puts it.¹⁴⁶

Although the load of daily worries is shared, I observed that the Executive Director is participating in practically every aspect of FF. Morgan and Shuffy confirm that, especially for Shuffy, administration was a 24/7 occupation.¹⁴⁷ Maybe that is the reason why her successor Christina chose not to occupy one of the studios. Nevertheless, Eric testifies to the enormous involvement of Christina. He also expresses his respect for her ability to work in such hectic circumstances and explains how she has to be protective of/strict with her time and attention.¹⁴⁸

Christina in turn emphasizes collaboration. She claims that even the generation of the exhibition concept is a collaborative process at FF.¹⁴⁹ Phunkey points out that a lot is dependent upon the chemistry of the personalities involved in this collaboration:

“Every time you begin a new project that involves collaboration, the thing, the formula shifts a bit. I mean there are some underlined things that you could sort of rely on but it truly is the case that the combination of personalities you are working with on any of your projects can create chaos when there is order in other projects. It’s a really beautiful thing. (...) It’s literally about taking a step and say: we are going to do this. Basically putting a metaphorical stake in the dirt and say: This is what we are doing! Who’s on board? And then just start moving forward and see who comes with you”.¹⁵⁰

Just like Morgan, Phunkey uses the word ‘freefall’ to describe this process. Phunkey called it a ‘collaborative freefall’ to be precise. With this expression he points out the: “History of happy chances, a lot of luck, a lot of people with good spirit and good will” on one side and the building of “collective energy momentum” on the other.¹⁵¹ As far as I was able to reconstruct these happy accidents I understood that “happy” does not refer to a smooth and effortless trajectory; the history of FF and its projects are marked and shaped by a lot of disruptions and adversities. The poor living and working conditions in the buildings forced the community to work together on a daily basis. Having to move three times also forced the community to cast off the burden of the past and reinvent themselves under new circumstances.

On a personal level the Fluxers had to overcome uncertainties and discomfort as well. They had to accept primitive living conditions

¹⁴³ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹⁴⁴ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹⁴⁵ - Wrap-up conversation with Douglas (2013, November 13)
¹⁴⁶ - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹⁴⁷ - Conversation with Morgan & Shuffy (2013, November 8)
¹⁴⁸ - Conversation with Eric Petersen (2013, November 7)
¹⁴⁹ - Conversation with Christina (2013, July 18)
¹⁵⁰ - Conversation with Jason Brown (2013, July 18)
¹⁵¹ - Conversation with Jason Brown (2013, July 18)
to become part of the community to begin with. And in the cultural production process they had to step forward, pitching an idea and asking for the public to choose whether they liked or disliked the idea being put forward. Daupo’s girlfriend hated it and did not want to attend the Flux Thursdays. He admits that it were potentially unsafe social gatherings to a certain extent and speaks of a useful selective pressure.¹⁵²

But not all of the insiders consider this unsafe feeling as hostile. Phunkey speaks in a certain way of “a great example of non-stop desperate energy”.¹⁵³ Community resident Jason Eppink considers these confrontations as good learning opportunities:

So there is regular conflict and I have grown a lot learning how to deal with that, and sort of confront that, and how to negotiate. And I think being vulnerable is something we don’t do a lot, and I think actually Flux creates a space that is safe enough for a lot people.¹⁵⁴ Summarizing I observed intense interaction and mutuality between the Fluxers in their daily pursuits as well as in the cultural production process. I observed that the disruptions and adversities almost immediately created team spirit. Joining labor and endurance at FF worked as a form of ritual entry into the social setting.¹⁵⁵

5.5 Consequences and results
It is amazing how many people gathered around Morgan’s dream of living an intense and exciting life on the rough outer edges of NYC. And it is heartening to see the crazy, playful activity and the clever, ingenious resourcefulness that is generated in the projects. Besides the collaboration in the art projects I experienced a significant amount of spontaneous interactions among visitors that cannot be labeled as “collaboration” but nonetheless still contribute to the building up of the “collective energy momentum”. I experienced this fertile social atmosphere most intensely at the potluck gatherings. Visitors and presenters were constantly exchanging ideas, information, advice, feedback and commentary. Very interesting encounters were taking place while preparing food, doing dishes, and sitting at the table in the kitchen, or looking at the cityscape from the roof terrace.¹⁵⁶

And I must admit that during the solo shows, often seriously funded and announced with high expectations, I had a difficult time attempting to interact with the artists or other visitors. The artist and curator, if present at all, were very selective with their attention. They seemed to focus on their inner circle and were interacting with the most influential visitors present.¹⁵⁷ Set up as “one too many” or “few too many” engagements, the educational program was not remarkably collaborative or participative either. As a result, these classes, lectures and workshops did not appear to me as very generative of new possibilities for the Flux community. Still they were technically and professionally informative and useful on a personal level.¹⁵⁸

Alongside the formal output of FF there is a lot of informal output too. FF generates an activation of visitors and participants, building up a momentum of shared inspiration and community response. On top of this wave of collective energy, togetherness is strengthened and personalities are expressed and positioned. As a result, participants become more experienced and perhaps even empowered.

5.6 Agency
FF was established on the margins of NYC as a free haven for adventurous youngsters trying to gain a foothold in the big city. In this community there was no dead end routine or social problem to deal with but rather a strong desire to live exciting, big city life. The intuitively developed CAP of FF appeared to be the creation of a suitable platform to make this happen, and as a group they took a relatively safe leap of faith into the unknown, trusting their peers and their creative resourcefulness.

In the relatively safe environment of the community, members would step forward and state their opinion or intention. As well as steering the group energy towards a certain momentum, it would also invoke group activity and enterprise often with quite an uncertain outcome. This activity seemed to have no sensible functional purpose other than the creation of an opportunity to demonstrate and test the quality of their togetherness through creativity - whether as a group or as individuals.

5.7 Topics and issues emerging during research
During my observations at FF and the Colony at MoMA PS1 - a case dropped later on in the research process - a landscape architect called Gil Lopez appeared in several instances in both locations. He was living on an undefined patch of land in between the subway train parking lot, a police station and other industrial property. Here he started

¹⁵² - Conversation with Daupo (2013, Augustus 29)
¹⁵³ - Conversation with Jason Brown (2013, July 18)
¹⁵⁴ - Wrap-up conversation with Jason Eppink (2013, November 20)
¹⁵⁵ - Observations event Kitty City (2013, June 13); Observations event Meat You Half Way (2013, August 12); Observations event Bridges to Beaches (2013, September 1)
¹⁵⁶ - Observations second Flux Thursday (2013, June 13); Observations third Flux Thursday (2013, July 11); Observations fourth Flux Thursday (2013, August 12); Observations sixth Flux Thursday (2013, November 14)
¹⁵⁷ - Observations Exhibition Current Model (2013, October 12); Observations Exhibition Fluxington (2013, October 30)
¹⁵⁸ - Lecture My diamond shoes (2013, May 15); Workshop Make it till you Break it - first session (2013, June 29); Workshop Make it till you Break it - third session (2013, July 20)
After talking to Eric I move on and find Gil on the roof terrace talking to a group of people about urban farming. (...) He is explaining how this movement is intertwined with politics and real estate interests on one side and reclaiming public space and food justice on the other. He talks about the right to grow your own food and the struggle to get food-producing seeds retailed on food stamps. He explains possibilities to reclaim urban property for gardening, food production and social gathering. He also informs the audience about lawyers and organizations specialized in supporting civil action on this behalf. Then he talks about his own “farm” on a forgotten slice of land in Queens. People in his audience ask questions and discuss possibilities and problems. There are more people of color in his audience than normally (...) From the audience the issue of class and race is brought forward. The whole green movement is a typical white intellectual phenomenon so far and some Afro Americans in Gil’s audience wonder if they can copy this format to their black ghetto communities. Gil admits he tries to avoid an explicit political stand in order to get his message out but does not want to disqualify his movement as a white hipster lifestyle. He tries to profile himself as an outsider of the dominant white community without claiming to know all about the black community. After balancing his words for a few minutes and probably sensing the right words and approaches, he can feel how sensitive the indications of wealth and poverty and color of skin are. It seems to me that Gil agrees with the subtle critique but does not want to disarm his movement as a white hipster lifestyle. He tries to profile himself as an outsider of the dominant white community without claiming to know all about the black community. Gil gets into some kind of rapture. He depicts an irresistible energy that can catch a community and lift it up. He also claims that when it starts at the root of a community that really needs it, it is much stronger and more resilient than the “green hipster lifestyle” initiatives. He depicts some initiatives of white folks who let go once they get a new job or partner. “This is a broad kind of blanket statement that I’m making - don’t quote me on this shit - but the thing is there’s different ways that people come at things and it is all engraved in the ways they are raised and the situation we’re facing on a day to day basis”. Gil gets fired up: “It is really, really empowering and once they’re empowered to grow food, they’re empowered to do other things. (...) they’re empowered to lead their community in all sorts of different issues. (...) once you’ve started being involved in your own food choices, and realizing what you’ve been fed from the bodegas (...) you start figuring out that you can play an active role in every aspect of your life, and different people have different issues that they lash on to”. A discussion about poverty unfolds. Someone in the audience tries to explain that poverty is not just about being on food stamps, that it is a state of mind that ultimately kills you. Gil gives away his stage: “So what else guys, I feel I’m just dominating this conversation, there are so many other smart people here that can talk.”

Quite soon Gil was offered a residency at the FF in order to support him in the development of his ranch and cultural enterprise.

5.8 Concluding remarks
FF was home to a rather intimate community that produced quite radical projects of situated art with unpredictable outcomes. It was up
to the initiators of these projects to mobilize enough support within that community to make the project happen. Once a number of "Fluxers" got involved in the project it was up to them as a group to turn it into a success or otherwise. Ultimately a wider audience became involved in the project and then it was up to these visitor-participants to finish the work of art. And so FF produced artistic situations of joint adventure that one of the Fluxers summarized as a "collaborative freefall". The projects were documented and presented at the Factory and sometimes in other venues. The presentations created confusion and debate over the question of whether the actual work of art was the event that had taken place or the documentation and materials that remained as a witness.

FF emerged from opportunities initiated by creative youngsters in their attempts to gain a foothold in NYC. Inhabiting a factory, artistically redecorating it and organizing art parties, concerts and happenings it became a hangout for creative talent, contributing to the revitalization and gentrification of Williamsburg that is now hip and happening. The initiators of FF were primarily concerned with them selves and driven by the more or less romantic dreams and ideals of communal living. These dreams and ideals were as diverse as the community of Fluxers themselves, and early attempts at writing a group manifesto failed. Still, they managed to rally and unify as a creative community under the undefined banner of the word "Flux" and created many situations of play and intensified experience.

Through the FF many youngsters encountered a cosmopolitan life world they could not afford otherwise. But they did not buy and consume this lifestyle; they created it by themselves and for themselves. This way Fluxers became hip in Williamsburg before Williamsburg became hip. Most people spending time at the FF witnessed that this life episode changed their identity forever. This transformation concerned not only the surface of their public image but also their self-esteem through reflection in collaborative creative action.

While Van Heeswijk was 'portraying' her neighbors and creating platforms for subjective expression, the artists of FF were presenting themselves as individuals or as a group. Still, both were concerned with the quality of public togetherness that consisted of collaborative artistic experiment and cultural inquiry and innovation.

In this case the Fluxers did not reflect on their practice in the same systematic way as Van Heeswijk did. Van Heeswijk was constantly reflecting on her practice, and building a theoretical and conceptual framework that she shared with the art world and policy makers through numerous publications. It took the Fluxers 20 years before they published one book about their art. While Van Heeswijk was building a career in the international art world, the Fluxers were first of all citizens seeking an exciting creative lifestyle and approaching art as an everyday way of life. Only later on did FF develop the ambition to become a nonprofit art organization and to become more engaged with their neighborhood. Their rapprochement with the formal art world, however, is the result of financial considerations and is generally limited to applications for government funding and art auctions to raise money for the maintenance of the Factory. Their program of community outreach is inspired by plain idealism without any pedagogical aims of community development or explicit political goals.

Despite these institutional tendencies and their reputation amongst New York art lovers and intellectuals, FF remains underground - albeit that many Fluxers have become creative professionals and many creative professionals frequently visit Flux Factory. From studying Freehouse as a neighborhood CCC of anonymous citizens and FF as an underground CCC of creative young intellectuals, the next case will be a CCC of creative professionals whom I consider are successfully taking part in the art world but who are also trying to change this art world by forming an enclave within it.
6 BHQFU: An alternative to everything

It also means there is no getting completely outside of it. An alternative to everything is nothing. (...) It is like, it is the logical end to being alternative for being radical, or being outside.¹⁶³

Alphabet City in the lower east side of Manhattan is one of the few remaining rougher areas of the New York Island since Rudy Giuliani “cleaned” the city during his mayoralty from 1994 till 2001. During the observations conducted for this case during fall 2013 there were still people sleeping on the sidewalk and hundreds of people lining up at nearby Tompkins Square Park for free food supply.

In this neighborhood on a third floor on Avenue A, right above a martial arts gymnasium, you can read on the windows in four foot letters: 'BHQFU'. This stands for 'Bruce High Quality Foundation University'. Behind these windows is a 300, maybe 400-m², loft with white walls, aluminum spotlights, and the typical wooden flooring you find everywhere in old New York. It is one big space with a tiny backroom and a large kitchen right in the middle. The furniture consists of a blackboard, a large table and several handmade chairs.

The present location of the Bruce University is not too far from Cooper Union (CU), one of New York’s oldest institutions of higher education in “Arts and Crafts”, nowadays arts, architecture and engineering. The founding fathers of this university are the BHQF whose members wish to remain anonymous. The anonymity of 'the Bruces' does not only work as a marketing technique but also as a method of social interaction, artistic production and institutional critique.¹⁶⁴ Since this research wants to respect that anonymity, some detailed information of its members in this report will remain intentionally vague. However, their affiliation with the CU is publicly known and we can accept the fact that most members of the BHQF studied at the CU and that many visitors of

¹⁶³ - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
the BHQFU are also affiliated to this institution. CU is known for its free tuition policy thanks to its idealist philanthropist founder Peter Cooper. For more than thirty years Hans Haacke was one of the most prominent teachers at this institution. Haacke is well known for the development of a form of art practice that is called “institutional critique”.

Everybody in the NY art scene knows the Bruce High Quality Foundation (BHQF) or “the Bruces” as insiders call them. The BHQF is a group of anonymous artists who produce multi- and interdisciplinary art, mainly sculpture, photography, video, performance and public intervention. According to the Foundation, the artist Bruce High Quality perished in 9/11 while most of his work was destroyed, and they now consider it their task to preserve his memory.¹⁶⁵

“It’s up to artists to make the art world they want.” On the Acela Express from Penn Station to Providence, Rhode Island, with two members of The Bruce High Quality Foundation, it suddenly feels like the sealed windows are thrown open and a gust of cold air rushes into the rolling train. The effect of these words, spoken mid-interview, is like a sharp slap in the face. In a year that has seen wealth and power consolidate ever more—bigger galleries, the transformation of art into financial instruments, concentrated global wealth, the unmasking of Big Data—there is, apparently, at least one group of artists in New York determined to raise whirlwinds by imagining that the world can be different. Created, according to its insistently puckish literature, ‘to foster an alternative to everything’, The Bruce High Quality Foundation has taken the art world by storm since its founding in 2004. An artist collective that revels in anonymity”.¹⁶⁶

The Bruce practice is split between the big money art world and the art underground of New York. At the Bruce University I talk to Steven, one of the frequent visitors and a former ‘teacher’ of the BHQFU. Steven elaborates on the Bruces and their work:

“They’re very shrewd but, you know, a lot what happened, you know, they established a reputation for their iconoclasm, but also for being intellectual and critical and kind of braggy but cool about it. And then Vito got, came - you know Vito Schnabel. He actually helped their market place a lot - I mean - they put out the signals and eventually he became interested and he has a lot of connections because he is

Julian Schnabel’s son. But they did it well. I’m not saying they did it with complete careerist plan, but it worked out well for them. They’re producing an interesting body of work, sometimes more interesting than others but they did a couple of performances and interventions that became very well known. And then they were on the Whitney Biennial. So you know, one thing ads to another. So they know a lot of people now, collectors, and of course these collectors know who the Bruces are. There are two or three central ones, used to be four, and then there are like satellite ones.¹⁶⁷

I was informed - and my observations confirmed this information - that there is a form of natural leadership among the Bruces. The founders are at the top of the hierarchy and also within this core there seems to be one Bruce who has the final say if necessary. Different sources mention different numbers of members of the BHQF, mostly between five or eight and some suggest they rotate. Insiders told me that nine people have a key to the production studio where the artifacts are made and these nine people also have an @thebrucehighqualityfoundation.com e-mail address.¹⁶⁸

6.1 Typology
The BHQFU purportedly emerged from the mist in the year 2004 and caught citywide attention with their project “the Gate” in 2005. The earliest BHQFU “alternative” I managed to trace back was the ‘Brucennial’ in 2008, an alternative to the Whitney Biennial that is considered to be the main local visual arts event exhibiting New York artists.¹⁶⁹

The concept was an anonymous “horage d’image”. The walls were completely covered with pictures without any identification. Works of famous artists like Condo or Basquiat mingle with no-name, under-employed, under-recognized artists. The first Brucennial was held at the Bruces own studio. The last Brucennial was held in 2014 exhibiting only female artists. The Brucennials are well visited by a young, talented and merry crowd and it became the focus of attention by the New York art avant-garde. “If you can’t beat them, join them”, the curators of the Whitney must have thought, and so when the BHQF hosted their third Brucennial in 2010 they were simultaneously invited to appear at the Whitney Biennial.

The BHQFU was founded in 2009 with a lecture-performance at the Harris Lieberman Gallery in New York followed by a BYOU (Bring Your

167 - Conversation with Steven (2013, October 16)
168 - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
Own University) course at their studio.¹⁷⁰ This free university could be considered to be an alternative for free universities like the Cooper Union.¹⁷¹ But while the Bruces gained recognition in the art world in 2010 they had to shut down their university that same year due to the exorbitant rent of their location in Tribeca in lower Manhattan. Nevertheless, a few students stayed together and continued the self-directed learning experiment, wandering from one improvised location to another. In 2011 the BHQF went on tour through the US with a performance they called ‘Teach 4 Amerika’, and action program “For anarchy in arts education”.¹⁷² In 2012 the BHQFU was reopened in Alphabet City. It is not difficult to perceive the BHQF itself as an ongoing art project and many people consider the BHQFU more an art project than an educational institution. In the beginning the Bruces explained that they did not know yet whether their university was an art project or not, but nowadays they present it as “a learning experiment”.

“The BHQFU is a learning experiment. It’s an experiment in the sense that we are trying out ways to learn from each other, we’re evaluating the results as we go, and we’re refining our approach. We don’t expect to develop the perfect method. But we do intend to continually perfect our method”.¹⁷³

In present practice the BHQFU is a meeting place of a scene of hundreds of bright, mainly young, NYC artists and art lovers. They form a community that generates inspirational group energy, fueled by an interest in contemporary art and its social context. Some “students” are from the in-crowd and some are outsiders. Some of them step forward offering help or pitching ideas for the University. Others are invited to do so by the Bruces. Such initiative often leads to temporary membership of the “faculty” paid for by the BHQF. The Bruces themselves organize an occasional lecture or teach one or two courses. More than once students and teachers swapped roles within and in between courses or semesters. Still the university has no certificate, and it should not be characterized by its curriculum but by its practice. Most important is the fact that it is a form of self-directed lifelong learning and a test ground for artistic (thought) experiment for the Bruces. The Bruces share this learning experiment because they know that art and knowledge are social constructions, and by giving it away for free they want to make a public statement consisting of a critique of the institutional. To understand this critique it is important to know that the Bruces all studied at the Cooper Union.

6.2 Magnitude and Frequencies
The Bruces employ many more people to assist in the production of the shows and events and in the operation of the university. All in all the whole of BHQF hires dozens of professionals. These professionals are not staff or management but are builders, editors, programmers, technicians, teachers, etc. Many of them are former students of the Cooper Union and many of them attend the classes of the BHQFU. They often have their own art practices but they seek and find inspiration and knowledge in the vibrant scene of the Bruces.¹⁷⁴

In addition to this professional assistance team I estimate that about the same amount of people are loyal participants of the university and frequent visitors of the art shows. Some of them were former employees of the BHQF and some of them will move from this inner orbit to the professional assistance team, and back again.

Around these inner circles of professional production, active participants and frequent visitors, is a wider audience. Quite a few times I heard people mention the “Bruce list” as an inside information channel of importance. Events posted on this list were very likely to be well attended by ‘interesting’ and ‘important’ people from an art careerist point of view. Within the wider audience of the Bruces there is an invisible division between those who are on the list and those who are ‘outsiders’¹⁷⁵

The circles around the BHQF expand in powers of ten: the hard core of almost ten Bruces collaborate with around a hundred professionals, who attend to the university together with other “students”. This student population is expanding and growing towards a thousand since the BHQFU, established five years ago, now offers courses on a daily basis for classes of between ten and fifty people. At a certain moment during my research period the BHQF had three shows running in NYC at the same time: “Ode to Joy” an overview of their work at the Brooklyn Museum,¹⁷⁶ “Meditations” a show of their

¹⁷³ - Retrieved November 13, 2015 from http://bhqfu.org/about
latest work at the gallery of their agent Vito Schnabel in the West Village,¹⁷⁷ and a contribution to the art manifestation, “Come together Sandy” at Industry City in Brooklyn.¹⁷⁸ And while these shows were running in NYC, the Bruces split themselves between several fairs and shows in the US, Europe and the Middle East. Together with the broadcasting of some of their workshops and lectures, and the many news items and press releases, I estimate that the BHQF must reach an international audience of at least ten thousand.

This teamwork also enables the BHQF to produce an enormous quantity of work. The Brooklyn museum announces: “A retrospective of less than 17,000 works created by The Bruce High Quality Foundation”.¹⁷⁹ To arrive at this number they must have counted the separate elements of the installations, such as the pile of casted wax noses and penises (“The Sack of Rome”, 2011), the painted ready-made figurines with cigarette butts (“Public Education...”, 2012), or the series of Play-Dough pottery fragments (“The Greek and Roman Collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art”, 2013).

6.3 Causes and motivations
I cannot single out a major reason why the BHQF was founded, why the students maintained it while it was temporarily closed and why the growing number of different teachers and students keep coming to the courses and classes. The needs and motives I heard people express during my stay there were very diverse.

To begin with the Bruces, I want to point out that they started as a group of like-minded youngsters who worked together whilst trying to gain a foothold as artists in New York. They met at the Cooper Union and their collaborative practice developed over the years while they discovered their chemistry as a group. As one of them describes, they were hanging out together, at school, and more often at their local bar not too far from Cooper Square.¹⁸⁰ Their thoughts, feelings, opinions and dreams were adding up and multiplying into ideas that became collective projects. This creative interaction generated a group experience and a notion that together they could break away from daily routine or the established order, and do things differently.

¹⁸⁰ - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
Res.: What does it mean to you?
B9: Bruce?
Res.: Yeah, and the university, both.
B9: Well, the relationship is something that means something. The university means something very different to me. The practice does mean something very different to me. It is complicated, because there are a lot of people who interpret it in a lot of different ways. Like, it still retains a core of a group of artists working together to provide a space for them selves, in New York, kind of specific. I mean, it is Bruce. The whole origin of the Bruce thing is a very genuine, authentic place of working together. And then that started to work, and decisions were developed, like that work in a larger landscape, and that became successful to a certain - you know - it is a slow process of like getting there. And I was there at the time, like active involved and watching that perform itself and even, even some of the school, this is where I think representation is important, it is like, on a certain level it doesn't matter what we actually do here. It matters that we - like - persist, and - like - stay and like perform - like - the possibility of an alternative. Even, even, even, even the criticism they launched at it, people wouldn't do critical work if it was not there. You know what I mean? Just maintaining the presence of an alternative. Even there is a lot of things and like doing it for ourselves and I kind of explained my personal adjustment is one of engaged in an institution building and being engaged in what education can be and what artists together (inaudible) being experimental, which is not anything you get anywhere else.¹⁸¹

The alternatives they created can be seen as an experiment, a critical contribution to the public discourse on art and its institutions. These alternatives also form a sort of safe haven or homeland. During a meeting in which the last semester at the BHQFU was evaluated it was noted that some students considered the content of the curriculum less important than the quality of the gatherings that were organized. The opportunity for getting together in an open setting was the reason to come to the Bruce University.¹⁸²

Of course the main subject at the BHQFU was art and so the participants learned a lot about art. But it was also a meeting place of talented young art professionals pursuing the establishment of a career in NYC. So the BHQFU was a chance to meet colleagues and rivals, to get updates on the local state of the art world, to promote one self, to share interesting information, experiences and connections. Lectures and classes by famous teachers would draw an audience of students who remained rather passive and docile in these sessions.

¹⁸¹ - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
¹⁸² - The Line Conversation during last “Family Diner” (2013, November 17)
The more self-directed part of the program would draw the activist students, who would engage the class in debate and interaction. For them the BHQFU was a base camp for student activists who were opposing the apparently failing leadership of the Cooper Union and were campaigning for free education. “Free” in the sense of financially independent from banks or companies and also “free” in the sense of establishing a democratic ownership of education.¹⁸³

And so the BHQFU hired three leading activists and asked them to organize lectures on Sunday afternoon, together with a course on education on Wednesday late afternoon. These activists were put on the payroll as university fellows so they did not have to worry about their income while being occupied with the campaign. They also provided them with free access to the loft and office facilities. So at night, when the scheduled BHQFU classes were over, new students came in to organize and debate the campaign, to learn how to tactically use social media, or have group sessions to strengthen their community.¹⁸⁴

Every now and then I sensed a certain amount of irritation among the activists towards the more or less careerist fellow students and teachers at the BHQFU. And in a way there were two trajectories of learning going on. One trajectory was about the present condition of the arts in NYC and beyond. Art critique seemed to be the leitmotif. There was a course series on “painting critique” and one on “performance critique”. Both were mutual reviews by the participants of each other’s work. One of the most popular courses was “Writing about art” with David Salle, a reputed New York painter. All these classes were explicitly focused on a professional art practice.¹⁸⁵

The second trajectory was focused on education with its political implications and on “free”, more democratic alternatives. During the BHQFU hours the weekly “They can’t kill us all” course presented many different cases of self-organized education and many critics of institutional and commercial education were invited to speak. After these finished, the activists were hanging out at the loft in a secluded atmosphere, sitting together for a long time philosophizing and talking about personal growth and awareness. Additionally, they more or less lived together and organized group activities like yoga sessions.¹⁸⁶

The Bruces themselves seem to strike a balance in between. In their public statements and their art they refer to critical artists such as Joseph Beuys or radical thinkers like Marshall McLuhan. Their anonymous

¹⁸³ - Observation third They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, October 23)
¹⁸⁴ - Group discussion at Fellow Diner (2013 November 13)
¹⁸⁵ - Observation Class Performance Critique (2013, November 15), Observation Class Painting Critique (2013, October 15), Observation First Class Writing About Art (2013, October 14), Observation Second Class Writing About Art (2013, October 28)
¹⁸⁶ - Observation second They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, October 16)
within the way their policy or strategy played out in practice. Only after a while did I discover that behind this democracy and meritocracy there is a leadership that employs people and finances production and facilities but does not step into the light. The Bruces describe this leadership as a form of ‘enlightened despotism’. One of the younger Bruces who is deeply involved with the university as a teacher and a facilitator explains:

B9: You just have to have one person in the room, there is no ... self-organizing group system that I have seen that works better than what Bruce1 calls the enlightened dictatorship. Like, you are completely open to like anything to be able to have a subject to your ability to say no to it. Do you know what I mean?
R: Yes.
B9: It is like: ’I am in charge, you are gonna do whatever, but I am going to be, I am going to be the agent of limitation.’ [...] I would say like 20 percent of people, 10 percent of people (...) have any idea of my exact involvement, with my exact relationship with the Bruce(s), but at a certain point it doesn’t matter, because when I am there, my specific role, specific power, specific task sort of doesn’t matter. What does matter maybe, or what happens or what is happening is that people have a vague idea that I have a relationship to this project. Just like: “Oh he is not just here for this” and that is okay. And a lot of people ask me specific questions, like in a knowing way, but they don’t, like it really comes down to that I don’t have an exact title. I don’t introduce myself as: “Hi, I am ..., I do this specific thing for this specific institution”. It is obvious I care a little bit more than the rest of you about the bigger picture and that is all that matters. And clearly have a voice somewhere in the mix. And that is like an aura, you know, that is like known, whether though my demeanor. I probably enforce, I probably cultivate that a little, probably because I believe in the productive space of having someone there who somehow represents that, but more in a gaseous, more in an amorphous way. Does this make sense?
R: Yeah, yeah.
B9: In class people know, like, “Oh, that guy who kind of has to do something with the space, could be the ...? Or whatever, I don’t fucking know”. But it is the social function of what the space actually make it happen, it doesn’t matter what I do, it is just that I am someone who does something. You know what I mean?
R: Yeah.
B9: Like, so it is funny how that operates. Yeah, and people do like all these rules and a sense of authority, people sometimes do have very specific questions, and they just know: “this guy is whom you can ask these questions to”.¹⁹⁰

6.4 Structure and process in the case of the BHQFU
I witnessed interplay between the BHQ as an art producing organization and the BHQFU as a knowledge or innovation-producing organization. I was told by one of the Bruces that legally the BHQF is an LLC (a semi commercial 'Limited Corporation') while the BHQFU is a non-profit. A veil of secrecy covers both organizations and I could not find information published on the identity of their artistic leadership or members of the board. The only information I found was that Vito Schnabel is the agent of the BHQF and that Haley Melin - a visual artist with a practice outside the BHQF - is the Dean of the BHQFU.¹⁸⁹ The artworks produced by the BHQF are publicly anonymous. The group of professionals producing these works of art has grown over the past few years: four Bruces started the BHQF, one of them left and six more joined. Many other professionals were hired incidentally. Since I had no access to the studio I am unable to check this information through direct observations, as I was able to do at the BHQFU.

Form and content of the BHQFU is shaped in dialogue with the students, and the Bruces can be found in the role of teacher as well as student. This organization is even more open to input from outside and I would say that the Bruces chose to foster it more than to direct it. I had full access to the BHQFU as a student; I participated for one semester, and took part in every available course at least once. This way I could confirm by observation many of the claims and statements of the organization and - even more interestingly - I could experience from within the way their policy or strategy played out in practice.

¹⁸⁸ - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
¹⁸⁹ - Group discussion at Fellow Diner (2013 November 13)
He describes his practice as a teacher of the BHQFU as maintenance of relationships: “a lot of (...) like social work”:

One of my major, kind of mental projects these days with teaching is what I do notice in all of the different classes is how people perform their student-selves. Like, even people who have been out of school a couple of years they kind of like put on their student hat and sometimes it is clear like: this is a frat hat, this is a Cooper hat, this is my (...) hat, and they kind of have their way of engaging in class. And it is really cool to watch those things to start to mix (...) but people are still kind of like (...) doing their show. Like, not engaging in a true social sense. (...) People like continue to dialogue with their own personal practices and agenda that is a part of it. But what I like to see and what I like to do in my (...) class is to like build a bit more of an organic, like, social situation that isn’t about competition and failure and success. And that is why my classes are moving a kind of slow, in terms of my original curriculum.¹⁹¹

Most courses at the BHQFU commence as informal social gatherings: people come in and almost immediately start socializing. They throw bags and coats in the corners and on chairs like they have come home. Many of them bring food, snacks and drinks. Some use the kitchen to store things in the fridge or to cook the food they have brought with them. At a certain moment someone speaks up loudly, makes some suggestions for the agenda for the night and starts to moderate the group’s interactions. It is apparent that this must be the teacher and almost everybody focuses on the interruption. The group discipline is remarkably tight.

Several students read out loud pieces of text they have written. After that, B9 - let me call him moderator of these sessions - is leading a group discussion about what to do next today. Several suggestions come from the audience, request for debate and ideas for acting exercises. As soon as it is decided what to do B9 turns to me and another visitor who just came in and invites us to introduce ourselves.¹⁹²

Other classes are smaller and therefore less moderated:

The session has the shape of a group discussion of experts. There are not that many works but they spent quite some time going into deep detail of the paintings. It seems to me that these are all professional artists. They criticize the works hanging on the wall. Compared to my experience in the Netherlands with such sessions of experts these talks now focus on the physical painting, dealing with technique, while the discussions I know from Dutch academia focus on the person and deal much more with content and context. Every now and then a woman summarizes the talk and asks for attention to be paid to the new work. She’s the teacher I presume.¹⁹³

The most traditional setting is the ‘Writing on Art’ class. Teacher David Salle is situated at a desk in front of a group of students who are sitting on chairs in a row facing him while taking notes as he speaks. A class like this is not too much hard work in a social sense. But still, in a very different way Salle observes that his practice is a very social practice:

“The art world is a very social world and you want to be invited for the openings and parties so you will be able to write on. You also want to be quoted to become known. Most of the time you’re quoted for sales and promotion purposes”.¹⁹⁴

("

“...Persuade the reader to your point of view. Your real job is to be charming, even when reviewing negative”¹⁹⁵"

In one course called “Family Diner” teacher Louis is cooking for the students. His course is a workshop on curating art shows and the class has to produce four different types of art shows during the semester. Once the food is on the table the whole group stops talking in order to eat, and Louis takes the opportunity to speak and set out the targets for the workshop session. The rest of the evening Louis monitors the deadlines and tries to steer the group dynamic.

Louis approaches his class very practically. He seems to work on a list of decisions to be made and he presses the group to do so in a more or less democratic way. But before working on that list he evaluates the previous activities and thanks people for their contributions, creating a kind of happy, upbeat atmosphere. (...) Then the rest of the meeting is spent on discussing preparations for the next shows. Different teams are formed with rotating tasks for different upcoming shows. Louis is a kind of experienced organizer of shows and events. He tells them all kinds of practical things he learned himself.¹⁹⁶

The open debate seems to be predominantly the basic format of the BHQFU. The first class that was organized at the BHQFU in 2009 was called ‘Curriculum’. During this course the form and content of the BHQFU was discussed. Now as it approaches halfway through the

¹⁹¹ - Conversation Second Class Writing About Art (2013, October 28)
¹⁹² - Observation Class Performance Critique (2013, November 15)
¹⁹³ - Observation Class Painting Critique (2013, October 15)
¹⁹⁴ - Observation First Class Writing About Art (2013, October 14)
¹⁹⁵ - Observation Second Class Writing About Art (2013, October 28)
Picture 41 - Students, teachers and Bruces discussing next year's curriculum
opposite direction by evaluating the possibility for the BHQFU to become including public space. And after a while the discussion goes in an question. The discussion expands on possible learning situations to curriculum and method. B1 puts the traditional class room setting into question. Several students and teachers come up with suggestions according to their personal research but also appreciate the social pressure cooker interaction. B1 concludes that most ideas brought forward are curricular models more than subject material. He suggests that we should continue the discussion in smaller groups and then get back together again to try to set out a course for the future all together. During the discussions I noted that there was no tendency towards a forced consensus. The discussion was more about the search for common ground and the possibilities to make everything work together or to find ways to serve every need. In the final general discussion it was decided to try to combine most suggestions into a curriculum that would turn out almost the same as the last semester.

After the meeting, just like after many other classes, many students and teachers go to the local Bruce Bar. I hung out at this bar several times and observed how the activities at the BHQFU continued here and sometimes were shared with others. I noted:

“To outsiders, art might seem to come out of a black box of genius. Today I recognized the inside of this box. It’s a scene of friends hanging out in a pub with an atmosphere and an audience they can identity with. They talk for hours and inspire each other to the level that they decide to stick together and work together. It feels like what Einstein described as ‘intelligence having fun’.”

6.5 Consequences and results

Perhaps the most important output of the BHQFU is a mutual encouragement to become active: socially, politically and artistically. One of the most articulate supporters of this activation is Louis. Louis is probably the youngest “teacher” at the BHQFU. His biography states that he has been visiting art shows ever since he learned to ride the subway. As a teenager he hung out in the Brooklyn “all ages” music scene, a DIY underground scene that organizes concerts in venues where they serve no alcohol so that minors can also attend and see the band. Growing up in a DIY scene he started to make music and visual art himself. He and his friends founded a teenage art collective, organizing shows to exhibit their own work. They would organize these shows in Chinatown for instance, in shops and other businesses that were family owned.

L: “The reason that I mentioned the collective is because they kind of taught me lessons. Outside of school there are a lot of lessons how to organize things, just by doing. And that’s all I’ll ever be able to teach. All I ever want to teach. That’s all I ever want to learn honestly. It is just how to do. And no matter what you want to do, it is more… in the end. Whether it is an art show or whether it is a music show or an online project. It doesn’t matter. It is just about the headspace of being like ‘oh I don’t need to work within this larger system’. I don’t need to wait for the galleries to call me. I don’t need to rent a space for 5000 dollars a week. You don’t need to do any of that. In fact you can do a show for five dollars. You can do it for 50, for 5000, you can do it for 5 million - it is still just a show for one night. You know? I don’t know. I am saying that there is potential enough. If you are good about it, it is all about
In attempting to produce an alternative for everything, the Bruce University is seeking to produce not only an alternative way to distribute the same body of knowledge and skills that the formal art schools distribute. They are also seeking to create an alternative, more democratic canon, credo and language for art that is independent from the commercial and institutional art world. The Bruce University also tried to produce alternatives to established forms of education. Set up as a learning experiment, the BHQFU hosted debate about the deeper social and political implications of education. To develop the BHQFU as an alternative, several other learning experiments were investigated and their initiators were invited to attend and present their experiences at the university.

One of these guests was Sean Dockray of the “Public School”. Sean started a website called AAAAArg.org through which he and his friends exchanged literature on art, philosophy and society. Soon people started to review and debate this literature and after a while people formed reading and discussion groups. Sean found out that access to knowledge and information was just the start. The debate in which the meaning and value of the knowledge established was considered to be much more important by the participants. And quite soon Sean’s small private reading group grew out to an international community organizing readings and debate all over the world - without any form of institutional organization.

Another guest was Dorothy, a so-called “Wikipedian”. She presented Wikipedia as an online encyclopedia that is written through a process of open democratic debate. Dorothy explained how Wikipedia volunteers produced editorial workshops in which moderately educated people who had hardly ever read a book would take part in the writing of articles about their own life world. People learned that they are keepers of knowledge and history as well as anyone else and that knowledge and history are social constructions in which anybody can take part.

So besides an exciting curriculum exploring contemporary art practice, the BHQFU hosted a program involving intensive thought on education and its social and political implications. On a philosophical level the output of the BHQFU is a form of consciousness of the struggle over the possession of the public realm: not only public space but also culture, and cultural output of the BHQFU is a form of consciousness of the struggle over the possession of the public realm: not only public space but also culture, and political implications of education. To develop the BHQFU as an alternative, several other learning experiments were investigated and their initiators were invited to attend and present their experiences at the university.

The collective energy that is built up in these gatherings at the BHQFU and the Bruce Bar is not just fed by an aesthetic passion. There is a belief that their ideas matter and that it will be noticed when these ideas are put into practice. The Bruces turn critique into “real” alternatives and friendly rebellious action. With this they draw public attention and stir up debate. By stepping back into anonymity and at the same time by creating the platform of the BHQFU, the Bruces give others in their network the opportunity to step forward into this conversational space.

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6.6 Agency

The BHQF was established by a group of new MFA graduates in order to create independent authentic creative space within an art world that they consider becoming more and more commercial, career driven and glamorized. For that purpose they tried to obtain the necessary means by skillfully dealing with the same commercial art market they had actually previously attempted to change, or at least had tried to escape from. At the same time they had to preserve their street credibility as art world rebels.

Although their agenda is not a real secret and the insiders of the art world know their carefully hidden identity, the use of stealth is an important part of their strategy. The covertness of the Bruces creates an atmosphere of underground heroism everybody can be part of by visiting their shows, events and university, or by buying their art. This way many of the visitors, buyers and participants are ‘converted’ to the conspiracy even before they really know what the BHQF mission actually means.

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The three activist fellows are a very clear example of others using this space. At the same time their attitude towards the Bruce University is most radical. All three of the fellows are more or less experienced in the ‘occupy movement’ where they learned how to deal with fundamental democratic processes. They seem to be aware of the group dynamic, and interrupt conversations with remarks such as, “Should we focus the discussion?” and then one of the other fellows answers, “Let’s focus and then un-focus again”.

One of them points out that the Bruces are critical but not political.

6.7 Topics and issues emerging during research

An important context that helps to understand the identity of the BHQF is the context of the NY avant-garde. The Bruces and their entourage have strong ties, even blood ties, with the NYC art establishment that...

200 - Chat with Louis at the fourth “Family diner” (2013, November 21)
201 - Observation fourth They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, November 6)
202 - Observation third They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, October 23)
204 - Conversation Bruce 9 (2013, November 22)
205 - Group discussion fifth They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, November 20)
provide them with well-connected professional support of their talent. For instance the agent of the BHQF is Vito Schnabel, son of the very influential NY artist Julian Schnabel. The BHQF also gained support from, and still collaborates with, Creative Time, a reputed New York art organization that proclaims: “Art matters, artists’ voices are important in shaping society, and public spaces are places for creative and free expression”. These connections helped the BHQF to become financially successful and, to some extent, influential in the local visual art scene.

It is also important to note that the CU is financed by the legacy of Peter Cooper - inventor, industrialist, multi-millionaire and philanthropist - who rejected the concept of a tuition fee. In the US these fees exclude poor students from good education or force them to accept suffocating contracts with companies in return for a scholarship. So in 1859 Peter Cooper founded a “Union for the Advancement of Science and Art” to finance his university not by tuition but by gifts, legacies and income from special projects such as the income of the Chrysler Building. After one hundred and fifty years, through mismanagement by the current board of directors, CU is having financial problems. It was decided to construct a new highly modern building for the CU that turned out to be far too expensive. The president of the board now argues that they have to break with their main principle and introduce a tuition fee. For quite some time now students have been protesting and many famous artists and former students have joined them, including the Bruces.

I attended the BHQFU in fall 2013 while student protest was flaring up. These events colored the debate and shaped the curriculum at the Bruce University. Many lecturers referred to the CU, and one of the courses called “They can’t kill us all” addressed subjects such as free education, self-organized schools and new forms of participative construction and distribution of truth and information. And so for the same reason, the radius of my research into the BHQFU was a little bit larger than the loft at Avenue A. I also visited CU and a bar where the Bruces and many other Cooper students and activists were hanging out.²⁰⁶

The affiliation with the CU and its emancipatory principles feeds the expectation that the population of the BHQFU and their university might be more diverse than the white, male, highly educated, elite population inhabiting the power center of the art world. My observations of the BHQFU do not meet these expectations, however.

As I highlighted before there is some friction between the activist and the careerist tendencies of the BHQFU. Casey, one of the fellows, describes Bruce University as “the world’s most casual school where they have an unlimited flower budget that is used for beers”. He loves what he calls “the night school” when the activists use the BHQFU space for political purposes. He hates the tendencies towards institutionalization and the almost automatic self-evident continuation of the BHQFU experiment.²⁰⁷

“(…) the casual part really doesn’t work for me. And it is not that I think it is dangerous to have a casual learning environment, but I think, maybe it is dangerous for something. It isn’t, like something about it grosses me out, you know, it is like, in some ways in the organizing stuff we talk about like how, if you’re kind of neutral on a social issue, you are with the dominant power structure. (…) So, I think that I really prefer the stuff like Cooper where it is all living together, all eating together, working together, we have a goal. We are working hard. People are freaking out. They are doing the best work of their lives. And on the other hand you have people who drop in, like a TED Talk once a week. (…) So, for me, like, and in the end especially when I thought about the things that they asked, you know, they say that they are very experimental, that it is an experiment, with experimenters. You know? They are like, they love to, they love to talk about it, but at the end of the day they have hired someone that is asking for a teacher and asking for classes and is asking for, like a class proposal curriculum and is asking for reports and documentation. So…”²⁰⁸

Therefore, at the evaluation meeting Casey interrupted the debate and asked that before they continued forward blindly they should debate whether the BHQFU should go on or be destroyed. The students who attend the BHQFU as a support for their art world career use the Bruce University for completely different purposes. In the safety of the informal atmosphere they find opportunities to share their doubts and feelings with their peers, as evidenced in this plenary discussion I picked up during one of the critique classes:

“Hot topic seems to be the Halloween party at one of the big art institutions in NYC. Bruce 9 shows pictures of the event and several students of the class can be recognized. Their outfits are sexually suggestive and some of them are half naked. I understand that they were hired as performance artists to come to the party dressed as daringly as they could. Tickets for the party were sold to fund the institution. Sponsors who paid significantly more would be treated as VIPs and be escorted by these sexy creatures. Somebody wonders whether this is some form of erotic dancing or prostitution and a discussion about sexual exploitation in the art world unfolds”²⁰⁹

206 - Observation third They Can’t Kill Us All free education class (2013, October 23)
207 - Group conversation at fellow diner (2013, November 13)
208 - Group conversation at fellow diner (2013, November 13)
209 - Observation Class Performance Critique (2013, November 15)
6.8 Concluding remarks
As with the Fluxers, the Bruces operated as a team. The significant
difference is that while the Fluxers stayed at the periphery of the New
York art world, the Bruces were breaking right into the very heart of
it. And so did Van Heeswijk, although with a completely different
attitude. Van Heeswijk was seeking dialogue and cooperation with art
world experts in order to share and further develop ideas and visions
on Socially Engaged Art. The Bruces were expressing critique and were
playfully provoking the art world with their urban interventions and
their iconoclastic sculpture, photo and video art depicting comment
and parody on art history and public affairs. The BHQF seemed to
start off as an art project but it soon became a creative community
its members would use as a professional network or home base for art
education, personal development and activism. Constantly seeking
and producing alternatives, the BHQF creates situations that playfully
disturb the established order.
The BHQF have a studio in Brooklyn where the nine of them work, and
they also use a loft in Alphabet City where a similar amount of “fellows”
organize classes for the BHQF on a daily basis. Here the Bruces and
their supporting scene meet, as well as in the occasional art shows in
NYC where the BHQF is involved. During the semester I enlisted at the
BHQF there was a New York vernissage of the Bruces almost every
month.
One single artist cannot match the scale, pace and quantity of
productivity of the BHQF. Although the Bruces are initiators and
directors of the production, many more people are involved - and
indeed their involvement is on different levels in the production process
- and the work is never signed with a single name but always under
the name of the BHQF. Besides a source of knowledge and inspiration
the University also forms a pool of creative professionals the Bruces
can recruit for their projects. This way the BHQF fosters a learning
community, as well as a producing community.
The BHQF met the immediate needs of young artists to be introduced,
informed or become experienced in the New York art scene. Many
students were using the Bruce University first and foremost as an
opportunity for education, but also for networking and sometimes as a
public stage on which to perform. But many also just enjoyed hanging
out with the Bruces and their scene of bright and talented people. The
Bruces in turn would use their University as a source of inspiration and
a pool for recruitment. However, on an ideological level the Bruces opened this free self-directed
art school “to create new communion between artists, to develop and
depth the exchanges artists have with their work and each other”.

210 - Retrieved November 13, 2015, from http://bhqfu.org/about
The reason for this is that, “When artists have to take on debt so that they might spend time learning from each other, conversations about art are overwhelmed by conversations about art careers”.²¹² From this perspective the Bruce University was also a meeting place for Cooper Union students protesting tuition fees and activists trying to promote affordable independent education free from commercial interference. But at one of the lectures organized by the fellows of the CU activists, Bill Powhida criticized higher education as well as the elitist art world:

First there is a discussion going on about the amount of tuition fees to obtain an MFA in relation to the income of independent young artists. Second there is another discussion going on about the composition of the commercial art world along lines of race, gender and class. The problem is that the art world is not open or egalitarian or democratic or horizontal or however you would understand the notion ‘fair’. The present art world (education and trade) favors young artists from the upper class and does not breed the elite of independent minds one would prefer - and the art world pretends to bring forward.²¹³

Compared to the other cases almost all participants in the BHQFU were socially and financially privileged. One of the teachers called it the “lucky sperm club”²¹⁴ explaining that many of them were the next of kin of successful New York artists, intellectuals and creative entrepreneurs. So we cannot therefore speak of the activation or emancipation of these participants. Being part of the social elite these people were creating situations of reflection and introspection for their participants, as well as for the establishment they were subtly confronting with playful rebellious alternatives.

Van Heeswijk was creating and facilitating a public platform for fellow citizens to perform on. With this performance they positioned themselves as free and creative citizens. The Fluxers were creating their own platform for the same purpose. As the fortunate offspring of successful members of New York’s creative class, the Bruces already had access to such a platform but they used it for critical self-reflection of the art world. Still, all three CCCs were forming enclaves critical to the surrounding habitual functional order around them and were proposing alternatives for future action.

²¹² - Retrieved November 13, 2015, from http://bhqfu.org/about
²¹³ - Lecture Bill Powhida & Jenn Dalton (2013, October 27)
²¹⁴ - Chat with Louis at the fourth “Family diner” (2013, November 21)
7 Understanding the Art of Interruption

In the next section we will first systematically compare and analyze the main properties of the cases studied and attend to interpreting and ordering them inductively. Approaching the cases as social settings we will take a look at each property separately and then create an overview of the diverse approaches of the common ground of the quintain. This quite unique insight into the hidden world of art gives us “a perspective, not a recipe”, as Wenger would call it (Wenger, 1998: 9), on one of the ways that the creative class creates opportunities for cooperative learning, inquiry and eventually cultural and social innovation. In the second section we will look at the cases through the lenses of the theoretical concepts developed in Chapter Two, in order to get a more deductive perspective on the quintain. Finally, in the third section we will try to further the concept of the “art of interruption” as developed in Chapter Two and also consider new theoretical insights. We will follow a course of abductive reasoning from a functional explanation of the observations towards a deeper philosophical understanding of the “art of interruption” as an existential quest.

7.1 Analyzing the main properties of the social settings in the cases studied

In table 4 the main properties of the social setting are listed for each case separately. Focusing on each property will help us to articulate the different angles of approach and interpretations of the common ground of the quintain. We will discuss them one by one.

### 7.1.1 Initiators of the CCC

One single experienced professional artist undertook the initiative of Freehouse. Flux Factory was initiated by a handful of bachelors of philosophy and their friends. The Bruce High Quality Foundation University (BHQFU) was initiated by a group of fresh masters of fine art. To kick start these communities it took an additional group of people identifying with a bigger enterprise that was open for input: “let’s boost and pimp the neighborhood economy”, “let’s create a cool place to live and work”, or “let’s create an art world that is authentic and exiting”.

| Table 4: Main properties of the social setting observed in the cases studied |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| **Freehouse**               | **Flux Factory**            | **BHQFU**                   |
| 1 Initiator                 | Individual Artist           | Group of Students            | Group of Artists            |
| 2 Type of art               | Art intervention            | Art intervention             | Art intervention            |
|                             | Neighborhood Curation       | Collaborative Adventures     | Performances                |
|                             | Fashion & Design            | Art Parties                  | Visual Art                  |
| 3 Daily Engagement          | Workshop / Kitchen          | House / Kitchen              | Class / Kitchen / Pub       |
| 4 Demography                | Talented Locals             | Talented Locals              | Professional Artists         |
|                             | Cultural Minorities         | Cosmopolitans                | Cosmopolitans               |
|                             |                             | Bohemians                    | Activists                   |
| 5 Needs and Motives         | Neighborhood economy        | Urban Living conditions      | Authentic art & education   |
| 6 Power structure           | Low profile leadership      | Low profile leadership       | Low profile leadership      |
|                             | Enlightened despolisism     | Oligarchy                    | Oligarchy                   |
| 7 Organization              | Layered outward from core   | Layered outward from core    | Layered outward from core   |
| 8 Strategy & Agency         | Radicalizing the local      | Collaborative free fall      | Alternative to everything   |
|                             | Dualism art / daily life    | Dualism art / daily life     | Art friends with benefits   |
|                             | Consortium of stakeholders  | Non-profit network           |                            |
| 9 Output and impact         | Art and Design Cultural production, subjectification | Not for profit Art Cultural production, subjectification | Commercial Art, Art education, subjectification |
Since these artists were not presenting a completed work of art as a personal statement but rather were inviting the audience to join a quest, they did not gather distant spectators or participants expecting guidance but instead pro-active co-creators who wanted to join their enterprise and contribute to it. Once a certain level of effect, benefit or success was experienced this company became its own source of satisfaction, motivating its members to maintain their gathering as a community. Experiencing a degree of co-ownership and a place of belonging, this community became a platform for its members to stand out in public. The role of the initiators in these cases was a social role such as the role of assembling liaison or of the supportive steward, much different than the romantic role of the master genius or the mystic medium. As a result, the company unfolded as a diverse fellowship of cooperating adventurers with plural useful talents.

7.1.2 Type of Art
There are many definitions in use to specify social art practices, such as “community art”, “co-creative art”, “participative art” or “participatory art”, which are hard to fit together in a consistent typology. For this study of the more specific Cooperative Art Practices (CAP) the interactive space in and around the production and presentation of a work of art are essential. Therefore, in order to determine the type of art in these cases we will use the typology of substantial, relational and situational aesthetics as studied and explained in section two of the second chapter of this dissertation.

Most of the BHQF’s interventions were iconoclastic gestures, such as the tackling of public art or the re-enacting of a famous painting in public space. These interventions might provoke discussion but the artists offered no space for response or reaction on the spot. However, the BHQF’s creation of alternatives for historic art collections, biennials and art schools were, conversely, more open for the public to comment, intervene or cooperate. Freehouse initiator Van Heeswijk would start at the other end of the artist-spectator relation by responding to the cultural expression of the audience. With this she started dialogue right from the beginning. Artistically responding to local cultural production in the Afrikaanderwijk, van Heeswijk described this method as a permanent curation of the neighborhood.²¹⁵ The art of the Fluxers was less directed, and was highly dependent on group dynamics. Their cooperative adventures and art parties would start and end in an ongoing artistic negotiation and co-creation.

It is interesting to note that while cooperatively producing art as a component of their personal life world, these communities also produced more traditional artifacts and performances as a way of presenting themselves as professional artists on the platforms and channels of the formal western art world. For instance, in their annual auction to raise money for their art initiative, the not-for-profit Fluxers would occasionally sell artifacts made by individual Fluxers and residents. Van Heeswijk and the Bruces turned their situational and relational works of art into substantial works and presentations that could be finalized, signed, exhibited and traded.

It appeared that these artists operated within a field of tension between two seemingly incompatible value systems concerning the value of art in the personal life sphere and the value of art in an institutional system world. Both value systems demanded different types of relations between artist, media, aesthetics and the public. Therefore, the CAPs studied did not consist of one singular type of aesthetics. Instead, the artists were actually operating on different stages with different aesthetics at the same time.

Involving others in a CAP, the artists produced situational aesthetics; exhibiting artifacts, performances or documentation of interventions and situated art they produced substantial aesthetics - and through initiating debate and discourse they produced relational aesthetics. In practice these different types of aesthetics were not separated but rather formed a larger iterative process interconnecting different aesthetics stages, constantly altering the work of art, its context and its ownership:

Figure 12: Altering aesthetic stages

At the more covert stage of these CAPs, works of art would emerge as a result of co-creation and an informal situational aesthetic interaction (a). Still, some artifacts, performances and documentation of the projects would be singled out and exhibited for a larger audience as substantial aesthetic works of art (b). These works of art would be discussed and interpreted in a relational aesthetic discourse among a more exclusive circle of peers and experts, re-creating and formally positioning the work of art (c). Fed back into the CAP, this discourse would have an influence on new cultural production as part of the initial informal situational discourse. Still, in these cases we saw very different approaches of these diverse formation stages of aesthetics. The early Fluxers for instance would already hesitate, or maybe just forget, to continue beyond the first
situational stage (a). Old timer Jason Eppink suggested that presenting their activities as art would render it harmless. They often skipped the substantial and relational stages or rushed through them in order to quickly return to the co-creative stage of situational aesthetics. In a later phase, the Fluxers would offer the Factory as a stage for individual presentations of substantial works, but in a way this was organized in support of the larger co-creative project of the Flux Factory as an ever-changing work of cooperative art.

The Bruces created inclusive situational stages (a) at the Brucennial and the BHQFU. Still they chose to limit the co-creation of their substantial work presented at stage (b) to the select circle of the Bruces. Part of the relational discourse (c) was staged at the Brucennial and the BHQFU, however most of it was staged at formal art institutions such as museums and Biennales all over the world.

To the outside world, Van Heeswijk was considered to be the designer of the greater work of art called Freehouse, and so the substantial presentations at stage (b) were ascribed and awarded to her as a single artist. Van Heeswijk would promote her substantial work to purposefully present substantial works, but in a way this was organized in support of the larger co-creative project of the Flux Factory as an ever-changing work of cooperative art.

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7.1.4 Demography of the communities

The demography of the western art world is mainly a white upper class featuring predominantly male artists, and the demography of the communities studied generally fitted this profile, although with some remarkable exceptions. Freehouse managed to include people from varying cultural backgrounds in its enterprises. Also, Freehouse initiator Van Heeswijk is female and so were the majority of her staff and cooperators in the joint enterprises. The artists involved in the other cases were aware of the mono culture of the western art world and tried to break from it with limited success.

One remarkable observation in the cases studied was the deep involvement of highly skilled and artistically talented amateurs, many of whom would not even identify themselves as artists at all. Freehouse recruited these cooperators from the neighborhood, and the early Flux Factory was founded and populated by a significant number of students who developed an art practice only much later on.

As we observed, the Flux Factory was set up by cosmopolitan youngsters in an effort to establish a habitat and make a living in the metropolis of New York. This was also an immediate need of the students of the Bruce University. The Fluxers were mainly artistic bohemians, and the BHQF started off with a slightly ludic activist agenda, whereas many people involved in Freehouse were creative amateurs becoming local entrepreneurs. Either way, there were other ambitions at stake than building a career in the established art world. This is perhaps why the art produced in these cases often also referred to popular culture like fashion, film or popular music.

7.1.5 Needs and motives

Albeit for different goals and purposes, all three communities were (re-)claiming their share of public life. Freehouse was claiming room to move and deregulate public space in order to give space to local cultural production and creative enterprise. Flux Factory was claiming affordable living space and a platform for a bohemian subculture of not-for-profit art and community entertainment. The BHQFU was claiming space for free accessible art and education without too much interference from commercial and careerist interests.

The members of these communities stepped forward as active citizens taking their part in public life and seizing their share of the power of public imagination. With this they became creative citizens with an art practice that designedly had a social, perhaps even political, effect. In an article with Cowell I have called this cooperative art practice a form of “artistic citizenship”:

“a practicing of citizenship in community settings that engage in playful and unknowable-in-advance artistic interventions in everyday life, thereby testing the quality of the public sphere and setting conditions for pedagogies that have the potential to be ‘politically significant’ (cf. Biesta, 2012)” (Caris & Cowell, 2016).

Van Heeswijk did not know what to find when she started her investigations in the neighborhood, and she could not foresee the outcomes of the interactions between the locals and the invited artists,
nor the final products that would be the result of the enterprises. In their turn, the Fluxers did not know what the outcome would be of their “collaborative free fall” projects, and the Bruces could not tell either whether their University would become a work of art or a learning experiment or both.

Each of them were testing the possibilities of their public environment and their creative competence and power as artists to find artistic methods and strategies that would bring forth some form of social change. Their motives were specifically nonfunctional and subjective in an artistic sense; these people were not laboring or working, doing their job, but they were intentionally staging experiences and attempting to change peoples’ moods and minds, including their own.

7.1.6 Power structures
All three communities were more or less dependent on funding, which formed a utilitarian powerbase for the leadership of the communities, and in all these cases it was clear who held this power. Still, authority was hardly ever exercised with any veto - nor dictated - but rather by argument with the intention of convincing and inspiring. The hierarchies were mostly based on the level of involvement and the responsibilities that come with the tasks. Therefore, building, activating and maintaining these communities required a subtle art of leadership that kept a low profile while working hard alongside all others. This modest leadership created an open space or vacuum that allowed people to step forward.

7.1.7 Organization
Analyzing the organization of the communities we have observed a layered structure rippling out from a core of initiators and staff to the joined enterprises of the community. Comparing the structures of the three cases we have observed that all three communities had a decision-making group of between five to ten people, with the initiators in the core of the community. The group size at the level of companions and visitors of the enterprises was between fifty and one hundred. Within this circle of the community practically everybody knew each other. At the boundary of this community, artists came and went, for instance the residents at the Flux factory, the guest artists taking part in the neighborhood interventions of Freehouse, or the lecturers at the BHQFU. With these activities the communities reached a local audience of incidental visitors like people from the neighborhood or peers living in the same city. The wider audience and larger society at the outside of the community only learned about the art initiative from secondary sources of information such as exhibitions, publications or lectures. For them it was hard, maybe even impossible, to experience and understand the social and artistic dynamics within the CCCs.

7.1.8 Strategies & agencies
The strategy of the Bruces seemed to be rather straightforward. Supported by the agency of their powerful and well-to-do ‘friends with benefits’ the Bruces used the established art world to finance its own opposition. The interventions of the Bruces were critical interruptions of the commercial and glamorous habits of this art world, and the production of exciting and interesting alternatives attempted to change it. Out of the alternative enterprises the BHQF had developed, the Bruce University became the most consistent and powerful community in support of this mission.

As a non-profit organization, the Flux Factory operated on a far more modest level in terms of trying to turn private life into an artistic endeavor. The art of Flux Factory was an art of living: art would interfere with daily life and daily life would interfere with art. Turning this duality of art and everyday life into a communal mission, the Fluxers occasionally engaged in what they called “a collaborative free fall”, challenging each other to improvise as a collective and to reinvent their own lives in an artistic way.

In the first instance, Freehouse interrupted the daily life of the neighborhood both in the public and in the private realm. Supported by a consortium of local stakeholders, Freehouse confronted the everyday cultural production in the neighborhood with a response consisting of artistic interventions by resident artists. What happened was what Van Heeswijk called “a radicalization of the local”. Van Heeswijk theorized her practice and presented her musings to the art world in order to receive critical feedback on her everyday practice in the neighborhood. By discussing redirected and redesigned local culture as a work of art, Van Heeswijk also interrupted the habitual understanding of art as the production of artifacts and performances - forcing the art world to rethink art practice as a social practice merged into daily life.

7.1.9 Output and impact
In Chapter Two we defined art as the staging of experience(s) and the guidance of transformation(s). With this definition we can accept the postmodern proposition that any “thing” can be art the moment we stop perceiving that “thing” as an ordinary thing and stage it as an aesthetic, dramatic and symbolic gesture. It is important to note that when we state that “anything can be art” this does not mean that “anything is art”. Only the right artistic gesture will cause an experience that moves the perceiver’s mood and mind.

The art produced in the cases studied was the experience of an aesthetically, symbolically and dramatically designed togetherness that guided those involved towards an exposure of their public subjectivity, which in turn transformed them as human beings on a personal, social
and/or existential level. In the cases studied these works of art revealed themselves as multi-faceted gemstones.

From the first angle, the work of art exposed itself as a situation in which artifacts and/or performances would be intentionally positioned and arranged within a certain physical and social space, revealing the most recognizable facet of the work as an art intervention. From the second angle, the work of art was an aesthetically, dramatically and symbolically composed and arranged form of human togetherness, including the audience in many different roles such as interpreter, editor, director or co-creator. From the third angle, the work of art was a revelation and portrayal of the cooperators being transformed as a result of the intervention and togetherness staged by the artist.

In the case of Freehouse this could mean for instance:

- the interventions of designers at the Afrikaander market;
- the togetherness of the artists, vendors and visitors at an adventurous marketplace;
- a vendor decides to start redecorating his own stall in his own way.

In the case of Flux Factory this could mean:

- a fluxer starts building a hut out of cardboard tubes within the factory space;
- a plan is developed to build a hamlet of cottages within the factory in which writers are allowed to reside and write a novel;
- the novel is written by one of the writers.

In the case of the BHQF this could mean:

- a tour involving the limo school bus crosses the US, visiting art schools with their art history performance;
- the foundation of the BHQFU;
- the student who becomes lecturer at this BHQFU.

Here we have presented these examples as three-stage rockets but in practice similar chain reactions were taking place in many directions at the same time, forming a multi-fold nexus of artistic interactions. These chain reactions started with an interruption of habits and routines of the established order as well as of the CCC itself. With these interruptions, public space - social and physical - was claimed, created, opened, liberated or occupied.

7.1.10 Concluding remarks on the comparison of the cases

In the following figure the properties of the CCCs discussed are mapped out in overlay. As far as some properties are similar they should be studied more extensively to claim such a feature to be a universal hallmark or condition. Still, we can observe how different initiatives approached a certain common ground from diverse angles. Each case had its own specific circumstances and each case had also developed its unique strategies that deliver some interesting insights. The dialogic strategy of Freehouse for instance is a remarkable approach of art production. It is quite normal for artists to take their own experience or impressions as a starting point for their creative process. However, this practice does not guarantee dialogue between the artist and the world. Taking someone else’s cultural expression as a starting point for artistic production is rather unusual but it establishes dialogue right from the start.

Another remarkable approach was the refusal of Jason Eppink, one of the Fluxers to identify the CAP of Flux Factory as an art practice. He perceived that calling it art would give the passerby the opportunity to trivialize the use of the enterprise and the sense of the questions raised. Not calling it art would leave the witness with a puzzling disjunction that would challenge him to reflect and reconsider.

In the following figure the properties of the social settings in overlay...
But even though these artists were operating in different circumstances and working with different strategies towards seemingly different results, they were all building and maintaining communities that were operating on the middle ground between a distant formal system world and their directly experienced informal life world. Seeking a foothold between these two worlds, the members of these communities were not seeking consensus nor synthesis but a platform to perform and test their uncompromised subjectivity in public.

7.2 Looking at the cases through the lens of theory
In the next section we will study this trajectory through the lens of theory as developed in Chapter Two concerning: (a) situated learning (Wenger, 1998), (b) the public pedagogy of interruption (Biesta, 2004, 2006, 2011, 2012), and (c) the formation of social enclaves as a strategy for social change (Friedman, 2011, Friedman et al., 2014). With this we will try to further the concepts of Situational Aesthetics, Communities of Creative Citizens (CCC) and Cooperative Art Practice (CAP) that were also developed in Chapter Two.

In this study I believe to have observed that the art initiatives developed along a certain consistent trajectory of cooperative learning and cultural experiment towards social change. Of course, these stages blur and mingle but it appears that the previous is more or less conditional for the next one to appear, and so I would like to summarize this trajectory as follows:

   cultural experiment, inquiry & informal learning

Figure 14: Four steps towards opportunities for social change

After an initial call the artist and respondents set out on a joint enterprise. The basis of this enterprise is not urgent labor or a paid job but an identification with a certain mission or dream. As the enterprise continues an organized collaborative art practice emerges, and on this practice a CCC is built. Over time this communitydifferentiates itself as an enclave holding the middle ground between the personal desires of its members and the functional logic of the surrounding system world. Within this enclave, community members can manifest themselves publicly with their own ways of seeing, saying and doing, possibly also inspiring the environment to change according to their example.
Presumably the art interventions opened incidental one to one interaction between the intervening artists and the audience but I did not witness such encounters during my observations. Promotion and PR activities would mostly use the traditional one to many media. In all three cases, spaces were established where many creators, participants and passers by could communicate with each other on a regular basis, such as at the kitchen table, the potlucks, the local pub or social media. These different spaces of interaction supported the various monologic, dialogic and plurilogic modes of conversation that occurred in the different stages of aesthetics as treated in the previous section.

7.2.3 The emergence of community
Getting involved in artistic enterprise, an intensified experience was shared that could either be fun or impressive but also had the potential to be engrossing or stressful at the same time. Either way these intense shared experiences created bonds, and offered social learning opportunities and perspectives on transformation that often made the company gathered decide to stick together and continue or expand the enterprise. From then on, without any functional reason, a community was taking shape of people who initially did not have anything in common except their identification with the artist’s call.

To build community around the joined enterprises, forms of mutual engagement and a shared repertoire were developed that resemble Wenger’s view on community (1998: 73). The following table dissects and organizes the activities into engagement, enterprise and repertoire.

Table 6: Properties of community observed in the cases studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interaction space</th>
<th>Freehouse</th>
<th>Flux Factory</th>
<th>BHQFU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One to many</td>
<td>Publications, websites, exhibits</td>
<td>Book, website, exhibitions</td>
<td>Catalogue, websites, exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many to many</td>
<td>Workshop, kitchen</td>
<td>Flux House, Potluck, Art situations</td>
<td>BHQFU classes, Pub, Brucennial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Spaces of interaction observed in the cases studied
7.2.4 Forming an enclave with different rules of the game

Once the CCC was consolidated, their CAP took shape as an alternative order of new ways of seeing, saying and doing. Differentiated within an existing field, with its own configuration of positions and different rules of the game, the CCC formed an enclave (Friedman 2011: 253). The next table lists the properties of the different cases that resemble the critical properties of an enclave, as presented by Friedman et. al. (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014: 7-8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enclave</th>
<th>Freehouse</th>
<th>Flux Factory</th>
<th>BHQFU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agents</td>
<td>local producers and stakeholders</td>
<td>bohemians and intellectuals</td>
<td>young and prospect artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Meaning</td>
<td>multi-culturalism produces social economic benefits</td>
<td>“Flux” when everyone agrees none understand</td>
<td>art is an ode to joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules of the Game</td>
<td>contribute to the neighborhood economy</td>
<td>build up social creative momentum</td>
<td>communion of authentic artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispute</td>
<td>art or social work?</td>
<td>living commune or art venue?</td>
<td>career or activism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher logic</td>
<td>reclaim public stage for local voice</td>
<td>survival in metropolitan jungle</td>
<td>rejection of the name and fame game</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Properties of enclave as observed in the cases studied

As far as these CCCs appeared to be socially influential, it was because of their differentiation in relation to the surrounding established order. As observed in the previous section these communities were organized along a layered structure rippling out from the core of initiators, staff and enterprise to the wider audience and society via a boundary of visiting artists and local visitors.

The core of the community was established around a continuous CAP, while at the boundary of the community visitors came and went. These visitors were functioning like brokers according to Wenger’s description (Wenger, 1998: 108-110). In these cases, some brokers were coming from the surrounding local community and creating discussion and negotiation of meaning, while other brokers were visiting peer artists and exchanging views on and information about other creative communities and collaborative art practices in wider society. In these cases, we saw alternatives developed, demonstrated and presented for the neighborhood economy, for local urban living conditions and for western art and education. On a personal level these alternatives expanded the repertoire of action and the range of opportunities for the individual, and many community members experienced their lives being changed because of their cooperation in these CAPs.

It is important to note that primarily these CAPs were not driven by the wish to improve existing practices or personal career opportunities. Instead, they started as an act of citizenship claiming a share of the public realm in order to make a personal mark in public by demonstrating one’s alternative ways of seeing, saying and doing. On a higher social level, the shared alternative communal order of these CCCs formed enclaves as interruptions to the larger societal order, offering “refuge” for a subculture and expanding the repertoire of possibilities for the majority. Bringing an alternative subjectivity into the open, a (re-)negotiation of cultural values became apparent. Pushing forward cultural innovation the CCCs also carried and supported economic and educational innovations. It is very likely that many more varieties of social change and cultural innovations can be achieved by the development and formation of CCCs.

But within these CAPs the artists also created moments of opportunity for the participants, or “companions” as I would prefer to name them, to move away from the securities they had accommodated to and begin to explore other possibilities. These moments were the result of a deliberate disruption of what appears normal, natural and ‘given’. The companions were responding to the interruption as well as to an invitation or challenge called forth by the artist (Wildemeersch & Von...
7.3 From artistic citizenship to subjectification

7.3.1 Artistic citizenship

In an article with Cowell I introduced a concept of ‘artistic citizenship’ to refer to an offering of art to the people “as an opportunity to enact their right to manifest themselves as subjective members of society, to present themselves as citizens” (Caris & Cowell, 2016). The CCCs studied did indeed try to claim their share of the public realm and managed to establish enclaves with their own different meanings and rules of the game. Establishing this platform between the private daily life and the public system world these enclaves formed an artistic version of what Biesta recently called “the middle ground between world-destruction and self-destruction” (Biesta, 2015b: 200). He explains that when we commit ourselves completely to the world we have to give up our personal integrity, whilst ...”

“when we withdraw ourselves from the world we will end up existing only with and for ourselves - which is a rather poor and self-absorbed existence, if it is an existence at all. To exist in and with the world then raises the question of the relationship between my existence and the existence of the world” (Biesta, 2015b: 195).

Quoting Levinas, Biesta argues that our human being comes into existence in the friction between the private world of the immanent self and the public world, which reminds us of the distinction made earlier between the “rational community” and the “community of those who have nothing in common” (Biesta, 2004). In this writing, Biesta considered the interruption of the rational community the realm in which the subject comes into being:

“The latter community is the community in which we are all strangers for each other. I argue that the language of the latter community is the language of responsibility. It is this language that enables us to speak with our own, unique and individual voice” (Biesta, 2004: 307).

Inspired by Rancière, Biesta had elaborated on this pedagogy of interruption as an interruption of “existing orders” (Biesta, 2010: 12) specifically in a political sense. In his 2015b article, Biesta adds an important nuance emphasizing the task of education to be about overcoming the resistance human beings experience while being in the world. Dealing with this friction, Biesta argues, the most radical solutions could be total retreat, destroying the world, or total integration, destroying the self. Biesta concludes that “it is ultimately only in the middle ground that existence is possible”:

“The middle ground is therefore not a place of pure self-expression, but rather a place where our self-expression encounters limits, interruptions, responses - that all have the quality of the frustration Arendt talks about and the fracturing of my immanence Levinas refers to. But with Levinas we can also say that these experiences awaken us from our drowsy state of being outside of the world, of being just with ourselves. These experiences tell us that we are in a situation that is ‘for real’ – where what I do matters, where how I am matters, and where I matter (Biesta, 2015b: 202).

In all three cases, a middle ground between the immanent self and the system world was developed by the enactment of artistic citizenship. Freehouse formed an enclave of neighborhood production within the larger economy, enhancing the authentic local brand in competition with anonymous global markets. Without Freehouse these local cultural producers would remain anonymous behind the front doors of their homes and neither the locals nor larger society would ever discover their potential as public human beings.

Flux Factory formed a bohemian enclave within the current order of expensive cosmopolitan living in New York City by establishing their independent, self-designed and self-organized bohemian home base. Without the Flux factory a lower or middle class youngster would never be able to live in New York without giving up their personal freedom and join one of the many metropolitan citizens who have to work two jobs to make ends meet. Now they had established their own unique living conditions with a considerable amount of personal freedom for experimenting and developing their talents.

We can observe the same development of middle ground between the immanent self and the system world when studying the BHQF. The BHQF’s University formed an enclave of self-directed free art education within the larger field of money-driven higher art education, because the Bruces and their followers were not satisfied with the options of either giving up their authentic artistic integrity in order to fit in the commercial art world, or giving up their dream to become a professional artist. Instead they created their own alternative art world where they could create their own communion of artists. Biesta’s recent view on the pedagogy of interruption seems to be supported by the observations of this study. The quests of these CCCs were not just about solving disjunctions or negotiating dissensus, but ultimately about overcoming the friction of being alive in this world as unique human beings. Therefore, the CAPs developed within these CCCs did not only interrupt the order of the (rational, system-) world but also the immanent self.
art critique.

Bruces organized their own academy of person to person, peer to peer, factory inhabitants to become part of an uncertain art situation. The human beings in the audience. The Fluxers called upon their fellow artistic intervention that was specifically addressed to irreplaceable At Freehouse the artists went into the neighborhood to perform an happened in all three of the cases.

them or take them further (Biesta, 2015b: 197) - something that of this action depends on others to take up these beginnings, reproduce that brings something new into the world, and argues that the success Biesta refers to Arendt's ideas on "action" as an initiative or beginning and became able to position their "self in the world" (Biesta, 2015b).

system world as a laborer or apprentice of a disposable workforce. By

Before the CCCs studied were built, their members were traveling between the private life behind closed doors and the anonymity of the system world as a laborer or apprentice of a disposable workforce. By building or joining a CCC they found a way to gain a foothold on the middle ground between the "lack of the world" and the "lack of the self" and became able to position their "self in the world" (Biesta, 2015b).

Biesta refers to Arendt's ideas on "action" as an initiative or beginning that brings something new into the world, and argues that the success of this action depends on others to take up these beginnings, reproduce them or take them further (Biesta, 2015b: 197) - something that happened in all three of the cases.

At Freehouse the artists went into the neighborhood to perform an artistic intervention that was specifically addressed to irreplaceable human beings in the audience. The Fluxers called upon their fellow factory inhabitants to become part of an uncertain art situation. The Bruces organized their own academy of person to person, peer to peer, art critique.

Thus, the members of these CCCs did not only manage to stand out in public and make a personal difference in daily work but they also managed to do so in a non-functional and existential - in these cases artistic - way. These artists created art situations as existential situations, because in these situations their uniqueness was "at stake" to put it in the language of Biesta. In his reference to Levinas, Biesta argues that:

"The situations Levinas has in mind are those where someone calls upon me in such a way that the call is addressed at me and no one else. These are situations where the call comes to me, and where it is only I who can respond. They are, in other words, situations where we encounter a responsibility, which is the reason why Levinas suggests that responsibility is ‘the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity’ (Levinas, 1985: 95)” (Biesta, 2015b: 199).

And although these art situations and interventions were often playful, sometimes even absurd, they were not infantile. As Biesta puts it: "An infantile way of existing is one that is entirely egocentric or, with a term introduced by Levinas, ‘egological’, that is, just following the logic of the ego, not the logic of the other”. And according to Biesta, the main ‘principle’ of education to overcome this infantile state is that of interruption, or more precisely, the event of subject-ness appears as an interruption of one’s ‘immanence’ (Biesta, 2015b: 203-204).

Thus, the members of these CCCs did not only manage to stand out in public and make a personal difference in daily work but they also managed to do so in a non-functional and existential - in these cases artistic - way. These artists created art situations as existential situations, because in these situations their uniqueness was “at stake” to put it in the language of Biesta. In his reference to Levinas, Biesta argues that:

"The situations Levinas has in mind are those where someone calls upon me in such a way that the call is addressed at me and no one else. These are situations where the call comes to me, and where it is only I who can respond. They are, in other words, situations where we encounter a responsibility, which is the reason why Levinas suggests that responsibility is ‘the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity’ (Levinas, 1985: 95)” (Biesta, 2015b: 199).

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7.3.2 Subjectification

In the same paper, Biesta emphasizes the difference between identity and being-subject or that which he calls "subject-ness": identity is about who we are, while subject-ness is about how we are (Biesta, 2015b: 194).

I want to add to this distinction that the nuance of identity refers to the social status of a person within a functional context, while subject-ness refers to the social quality of personal life in an existential context. Both notions imply a relation of the first person singular to others and in all cases of this study an intermediate role of art could be observed as concerning both qualities of togetherness.

In the art "game" of commerce and canon the unique otherness of a work of art is often explained as rareness, meaning that only a few can make it, will posses it and be able to understand it, tilting the balance of supply and demand towards exclusive and therefore expensive. In contrast, in the "personal" appreciation of art the unique otherness is the result of very private subjective relations and associations of such a diversity that everybody has access to it in their own special way. Referring to Levinas, Biesta argues that subject-ness is not about rareness - “what makes me unique?” - but about irreplaceability or uniqueness-as-a-difference - “when does it matter that I am I?” (Biesta, 2015b: 198).

Biesta highlights the insight that “to a large degree our subject-ness is not in our hands, which may even mean that it is not in our hands at all” (Biesta, 2015b: 196). Maybe that is what the Fluxers mean when they describe their CAP as a “collaborative free fall”; they start a project with great uncertainty, but rely on their own and others dedication, competence and resourcefulness so that even if the project will fail the adventure will be rewarding since it will reveal maybe just a glimpse of their subject-ness.

Before the CCCs studied were built, their members were traveling between the private life behind closed doors and the anonymity of the system world as a laborer or apprentice of a disposable workforce. By building or joining a CCC they found a way to gain a foothold on the middle ground between the “lack of the world” and the “lack of the self” and became able to position their “self in the world” (Biesta, 2015b). Biesta refers to Arendt’s ideas on “action” as an initiative or beginning that brings something new into the world, and argues that the success of this action depends on others to take up these beginnings, reproduce them or take them further (Biesta, 2015b: 197) - something that happened in all three of the cases.

At Freehouse the artists went into the neighborhood to perform an artistic intervention that was specifically addressed to irreplaceable human beings in the audience. The Fluxers called upon their fellow factory inhabitants to become part of an uncertain art situation. The Bruces organized their own academy of person to person, peer to peer, art critique.

And although these art situations and interventions were often playful, sometimes even absurd, they were not infantile. As Biesta puts it: “An infantile way of existing is one that is entirely egocentric or, with a term introduced by Levinas, ‘egological’, that is, just following the logic of the ego, not the logic of the other”. And according to Biesta, the main ‘principle’ of education to overcome this infantile state is that of interruption, or more precisely, the event of subject-ness appears as an interruption of one’s ‘immanence’ (Biesta, 2015b: 203-204).

7.3.3 Concluding remarks on the art of interruption

Judgment closes the mind, while good questions open it. The disjunction and dissensus created by these artists are in fact such openings. Fluxer Jason Eppink hesitated to call their events “art” to prevent this closing of the mind. It was important to him that the artistic gesture would remain indecisive, hanging in mid air waiting for response, rather than that it was presented as art so it could be set aside as a dysfunctional pass-time. So maybe we should consider the art of interruption as an interruption of art as we 21st century westerners know it: the covered production of artifacts or performances that is skillfully crafted or powerfully well presented by an outsider artisan in order to entertain, please or delight us.

I want to conclude that in these cases we have observed interruption of the rational community, as well as interruptions of the immanent self and interruptions of art as we know it. Within these interruptions the realm of possibilities was expanded for the selves of the people involved as well as for the world outside. Therefore, we should consider the art of interruption not as an art of transformation but as an art of revealing of unknown possibilities for the world as well as for the existential self. The art of interruption as we learned to see it in this study is the art of sharing multiple and persistent art-driven creative explorations, alterations, innovations and everyday revolutions.
8 Conclusions, recommendations and discussion

On reflection as an art educator, I tried to reconstruct my own trajectory of learning as an artist and creative professional. In doing so I had to admit that I learned a lot outside the formal learning environments. Consulting peers and art students it appeared that practically all of them took part in some sort of informal learning community in which artistic R&D is shared and art is co-created. Publicly some of these circuits become established as a “collective”, “band”, “school”, “company” or “movement”. I propose to call this creative type of informal learning community a Community of Creative Citizens (CCC). The existence of these circuits of informal R&D and co-creation can explain how so many artists manage to be successful without a formal art education and why so many blind spots appear in the formal circuits of the art world and the creative industries when it comes to the development of cultural trends and innovations. Considering the amount of self taught artists and cultural innovation happening out of sight of the institutions and industries, we must conclude that the informal circuit of informal learning and inquiring communities must be larger than is publicly apparent.

Being familiar with these circuits I decided to study artists creating and maintaining informal learning environments for creative inquiry and cultural innovation. I did this for several reasons; firstly, to prepare young artists to initiate and maintain their own self directed learning environment, secondly, to open up perspectives on better connections between formal and informal art education, and last but not least in response to the growing demand for artists operating as social change makers.

Studying my own practice I developed the idea that informal learning in a CCC resembles a kind of conversed version of Wenger’s Community of Practice (COP) (Caris, 2010: 46 &: 58), meaning that whilst Wenger’s COPs (1998) are rooted in practice and develop identity for their members according to their functional position in this practice, creative professionals and lay experts in a CCC initially identify with a shared dream or mission
and then decide to stick together and develop a practice in the second instance. The new cases in this study are examples of such social settings.

Studying social theory on processes of change I decided to articulate the “quintain” of this study as a CCC forming free (self-directed and egalitarian) enclaves in which they developed an experimental Cooperative Art Practice (CAP) in order to expand the realm of the possible for those involved and for wider society. Both concepts form a duality: a CCC is a community that gathers around a mutual identity developing practice; a CAP is a practice that needs a CCC to succeed. Both are two different faces of the same mode of human togetherness. The concept of creative citizenship further developed in this study is the main property of the membership of a CCC. The new concept of situational aesthetics is the main property of a CAP.

The argument for studying such a quintain was simple: if we want to know how artists bring forth communal progress and social change by stimulating others learn and engage in experiment we should particularly study the way they organize such a practice for themselves. In this study we have observed three examples of an intense, sustained duality of CCC and CAP proving that this type of learning environment is not an incidental engagement but rather a robust self organized setting.

Observing a number of these CCCs we found some unique inspiring strategies and approaches of the quintain. We also determined a certain general contour of their appearance and a certain consistency in their trajectory of development. In analysis this study has interpreted the emergence of CCCs as “the creation of plural and diverse intersubjective spaces” in which the CCC members “can come into the world as unique singular beings” (Biesta, 2006: 27-31). The study also managed to explain the CCC as an enclave or “the differentiation of a new field within an existing field with its own configuration of positions and different rules of the game” (Friedman, 2011: 253). That is, as Friedman et al would say, “expanding the realm of the possible” (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014).

Considering the positive correlation between the presence of bohemians and members of the creative class on one hand, and social progress on the other, the concepts of CCC and CAP can also explain how a covert subculture of creative citizens can induce and support social change. However, until this point we had not established an understanding of the urge to form such a CCC and specifically develop a CAP instead of any other kinds of social activity. In analyzing the cases we discovered that all of these gatherings started with a claim of a certain part of the public realm in order to create a human togetherness in which people would be allowed and able to express themselves with their own authentic voice, and to develop their own subjective-ness in a meaningful relation to others.

In the previous chapter we analyzed the formation of these CCCs as the establishment of middle ground between the extremes of immanent alienation and conformist capitulation that would ultimately lead to either world-destruction or self-destruction. Operating on this middle ground the CCC members experienced that it mattered they were acting as unique human subjects relating to the world and their fellow human beings. This existential self-realization explains why these citizens appeared to be willing to commence such a risky tour de force without substantial and instant gratification.

Now in this concluding chapter, the research questions will be answered. These questions were formulated to answer the main question of this research:

How can artists contribute to the formation and maintenance of a CCC fostering a CAP that enables its members to develop their full creative potential as unique human beings?

Subsequently, conclusions and recommendations will be formulated for considering contemporary art, art education, pedagogy and governance.

8.1 Answering the questions

8.1.1 Situational Aesthetics in Cooperative Art Practice

What actions and positions of the artists turn the setting into an informal social learning environment that offers opportunities for self-realization and cultural innovation?

The artist’s agency of change as revealed in this study is essentially different from the role of teacher or interventionist that we know from social art projects, where the artist has already developed his new ways of seeing, saying and doing beforehand and uses his work of art as an instrument to transfer this perspective to the consciousness of the audience. Starting right where they were, the artists in the cases studied mobilized the creative potential of their community, raising questions that mattered and seeking cooperation even when goal and outcome were still unclear and uncertain.

The work of art that emerges from this practice is experienced in the same situation as it is produced and expressed. According to the typology developed in Chapter Two, these aesthetics can be determined as “situational”. According to this typology the substantial aesthetics
concern the work of art as an authentic extraordinary consistent thing. According to relational aesthetics a work of art is an authentic extraordinary social conception. Here, according to situational aesthetics, the work of art is an authentic extraordinary existential togetherness, or “communion” as the BHQFU calls it. This existential togetherness is a communion of diversity since the subject needs the otherness of others to be unique. By sharing not only a functional practice but also their dreams, passions, fears, desires and all other movements of mood and mind, the companions of the CAP do not only learn who they are but also how they are in the eyes of the others. Here art can enable people to get to know themselves in an existential context that is in addition to their functional and social context, and thus completing the full range of one’s potential of being alive in this world. The art of interruption is about the creation of such a human togetherness.

The artists in these cases facilitated and stirred up interaction, making artistic gestures and challenging others to enter the creative arena. Since they left decisive action and final conclusions or solutions to the CCC, an opportunity for an enactment of creative citizenship emerged which is more than an incidental response to an artistic invitation or provocation to interact as a perceiver. These artists sought to rearrange public conditions in order to allow and enable citizens to perform their own alternative subjective action. For that reason we should not talk about ‘participants’ but about co-operators, co-creators, co-researchers and co-owners. And neither should we talk about ‘social art practice’ but about a co-operative art practice.

8.1.2 Communities of Creative Citizens and the art of interruption

What is the social setting of a Community of Creative Citizens, what role do artists play in this and how does this community relate to society?

Although gathered by artists, the CCC soon became self-organized and developed facilities and events of regular engagement, such as workshops, study gatherings, shared experiments and by eating and drinking, sometimes even living together. In this togetherness the CCC further developed a shared mission and vision, constructing its own alternative higher logic with its own ways of seeing, saying and doing. The role of the initiating artists turned from liaison into steward, guiding the transformations as experienced fellows. Being interested in learning opportunities for people to begin something new that matters to others, we were looking for instances of interruption of the social setting and its practice. These instances appeared in multiple occasions on different levels. Firstly, we understood art as the interruption of the rational community and in this study we saw this interruption reified as a Community of Creative Citizens (CCC). Then we observed these citizens interrupting the immanent solitude of traditional western artisanship by developing a Cooperative Art Practice (CAP). We also observed these communities interrupting their own habits of mind and action, offering others the opportunity to share ownership and responsibility of the projects. Interrupting both the self and the world, an enclave emerged on the middle ground between the self and the world, creating opportunities for both to change and develop. On this middle ground the self and the world collide, meet and negotiate. The art practice allowed those involved expressions that were other than functional meanings, including even irrational and disjunctive thoughts and feelings. Here it creates an opportunity to enrich the rational community with the resourcefulness, creativity and sensitivity of the artistic mind and on top of that also enriches the system world with the emotional values of the existential human being.

Although the initiating artists were holding some form of utilitarian power, their leadership was modest and low profile. Giving way to spontaneous contributions and collaborations they shared ownership of the practice as well as responsibility. The decision-making hierarchy within this community was distributed according to these levels of involvement. The artistic leadership was occupied with the staging of experiences through the construction of artistic challenging situations and with inspiring contributions to the internal and external artistic discourse. As an ultimate consequence these artists had to share their artistic leadership and authorship with the cooperators who entered the situation. So the artist did not only interrupt the rational society and the habitual routines of the community involved, he also had to interrupt his own artistic immanence and adapt a social role in support of his community. Firstly, the artist, alone or with a companion, would use symbolic action and dramatic gestures to call for a gathering of likeminded spirits. Next, the role of the artist in these gatherings was that of designing, setting and dressing the situation in which a creative togetherness could be staged. Handing over the ownership of this stage, their role would change to that of guide or - more modestly - steward, accompanying the community on their shared journey of discovery. The CCC that started off as a rally point for this traveling company became a subjective stronghold developing alternative ways of seeing, saying and doing for its own community and for larger society. In the long run this CCC and its enterprises provided proof and examples of alternatives for the rational order, inspiring others to develop their own alternatives. In general, one could regard a CCC as an active presence of the creative class in society and its CAP as an informal laboratory of public cultural innovation.
This art of interruption has a modest indirect, but ongoing and multifold, effect on markets, technologies and politics as we have observed this in the cases studied. I want to argue that technological innovations or political change need cultural innovation, new ways of seeing, saying and doing, to become successful. Businesses, engineers and politicians who seek development should enable and allow artists to interrupt their practice in order to create opportunities for change. For that purpose CCCs have to be allowed to emerge everywhere and export their new perspectives to larger society.

But ultimately as we have observed the raison d'être of the CCCs studied were not their contribution to markets, technologies, politics, or even to the art world. Although these CCCs did have their functional benefits this was not the reason why they were established. On the contrary, the very reason why the CCCs studied were formed was the fact that they made it possible for people with all their irrational and emotional dimensions to appear in public as unique human beings who mattered - not because of their functional use but because of their subjective-ness.

8.1.3 Competences of Artistic Citizenship

What appear to be critical skills, knowledge and attitudes that social art practitioners need to develop in order to be able to build and foster a CCC?

It is very important to note that this artistic citizenship is much more than the acquisition of creative skills and knowledge of cultural heritage. It is also more than the formation of a cultural identity in artistic practice. The enactment of “artistic citizenship” appeared to be not only the concern for one’s own public subjectivity but also about the quality of a subjective togetherness that includes a concern for the public subjectivity of others. Engaging in a CAP as a member of a CCC we enter the middle ground between our immanent self and the world, and express and articulate a relevant relation as a subject to other subjects. Learning when and how our subjectivity matters to others we also learn how to act as an authentic human being bringing something into the world that matters to others. Artistic citizenship is the concern for the quality of human togetherness that allows and enables people to discover, reveal and negotiate their potential as authentic “beginners” (creators, inventors, discoverers, change makers, and suchlike).

Creating a platform and arena for this creative citizenship, the artists studied were fostering the togetherness of unique individuals to create trust and a mutual recognition and respect for each other’s needs, safety and desires. The members of these communities were not just working together as a group of professionals relating to each other through functional logic, uttering jargon and serious speech. In order to built and maintain such communities its members had to find the courage to lower their defenses and show their personal emotions, feelings and weaknesses, whilst at the same time exerting their fair-mindedness to protect and respect those who did the same - majorities and minorities alike. Within certain limitations these artists managed to establish a social environment with a sufficient level of social safety to sustain a community for a considerable period of time.

I want to argue that this level of affective togetherness sets the condition for the community that has to engage in the socially risky enterprise that exposes one’s creative potential as a human being. To establish such togetherness it takes affective care of a modest, open leadership. Everyday activities such as eating, drinking, working together on a regular basis, having good deep conversations, as well as doing silly things and having fun, all of this group activity created a culture of solidarity. The artistic leaders in these cases took part in that community culture as peers.

But in order to advance this affective togetherness towards a CCC the artists had to move beyond entertainment, amazement and pleasure. The cooperative practice of art would enable the members of the community to tell their own stories and share their mood and mind even if their thoughts and feelings were ambiguous or unclear. Engaging in artistic experiment and exploring the unknown, these communities entered a realm of uncertainty and at the same time created an opportunity for new perspectives to open up and unexpected possibilities to emerge. So besides staging an experience and guiding transformations of the perceiver’s mood and mind, the additional tasks of the artists observed in this study were: a) fostering the CCC as a communion of social agency, b) understanding art practice as well as a work of art in social dimensions, c) approaching the CAP as a nexus of subjective perspectives, and d) artistically expressing their own as well as others’ thoughts and feelings. I consider these tasks to make up the practice of Creative Citizenship and I want to argue that this practice is cooperative by definition.

The research does not provide the information needed to further articulate the competences required to perform these tasks. But regarding my previous argument for affective care for the quality of human togetherness I want to conclude that alongside artistic competences such as creative resourcefulness, conceptual consistency and aesthetic sensitivity, the main competences required are social competences, to include constructive agency, subjective fairness and compassionate empathy.
8.2 What do these answers mean? Conclusions and recommendations

8.2.1 What do these answers mean for art?

Applying such a social value system to the concept of art, this study views artists as co-creator and co-owner of the work of art. They should open themselves up, let it in and give it every chance to move our mood and mind. However, reflection should not only consider whether it amused or impressed us but also establish whether it really moved us in such a way that it altered our ways of seeing and understanding, and maybe even changed the way we want to say and do things. Studying this art as a force of social change we have been regarding art practice and the work of art in the context of a social value system that is significantly different from a commercial, canonic or technical value system. Traders will probably use a commercial value system, critics and curators a canonic one; but those interested in the social benefits of art as studied in Chapter One will specifically evaluate works of art and art practices in the context of a social value system. Seeking additional value and benefits outside the habitual commercial, technical and canonic value systems, we paid attention to artists who did not specifically engage in “Art” in the most recognizable or indisputable form. Instead we were looking for artists who built a creative community and who created artistic situations - out of which unexpected and therefore possibly new forms of art could emerge. Here we observed that many people involved in the cases studied were not formally recognized as “Artists”. Still, as far as these practices were staging experiences and guiding transformations I propose to call them Art.

The observations and findings in this study demonstrate art as an act of citizenship next to and on the basis of its formal and commercial practices. Only a smaller part of these communities were building a professional career and were acting out of concern for their formal status and professional income as an artist. In these cases the cultural innovation and social change were generated from the need to build community out of a concern for the quality of human togetherness. Evaluating a work of art from this perspective, it definitely matters whose experience is being staged and whose mood and mind are being transformed in whose interest. Or in other words, to establish the social value of a work of art it is important to ask whose experience is being expressed, established and consolidated with and also through this work of art. Being concerned with a quality of togetherness that enables people to become publically human, it matters whether the perceiver is allowed and enabled not only to respond but also to become a participant. And, ultimately, it matters whether the artist is willing to interrupt his own act and share the stage with the participants - making them co-creator and co-owner of the work of art.

Applying such a social value system to the concept of art, this study has developed the concepts of CCC and CAP together with the related concepts of Creative Citizenship and Situational Aesthetics. In this social value system, the quality of the design of the social space in and around a work of art is the most important, and the most characteristic value this study tries to add to contemporary art is the value of inclusion. Looking at the development of the art practices studied in this research we saw artists finding ways to pick up tasks such as building or reinforcing community and accompanying it on its journey through the world, cooperatively staging shared experiences and guiding communal and personal transformations. Entering an age of social media and worldwide connectivity it is very well possible that art will further develop this inclusive dimension.

8.2.2 What do these answers mean for the education of artists?

The art academy could develop their position as a hub between the CCCs of their students, teachers and alumni and their role as institutional counterpart of informal innovative CAPs. Next to the training of young artists to become solo artists in the institutionalized art world or the entertainment industry, and alongside the training of designers and media experts to work in the creative industries, art academies should also offer training for artists who choose to develop a CAP. This training is important for two reasons: (1) It helps all artists to develop their own R&D, and (2) It responds to the demand for artists who are able to intervene socially and bring forth change.

Helguera, Director of Adult and Academic Programs at the Department of Education at MoMA New York, published a handbook for the education of what he refers to as “socially engaged art”. In this compact booklet he introduces definitions and techniques for this type of art practice (Helguera, 2011). In the last chapter called “Deskilling”, Helguera tries to open up a perspective on the development of a curriculum for socially engaged art. He observes that:

“Assuming that socially engaged art requires a new set of skills and knowledge, art programs engaged in supporting the practice have quickly begun to dismantle the old art school curriculum, which is based on craft and skills - ranging from what remained of the academic model (figure drawing, casting, and the like) to the legacy of the Bauhaus (such as color theory and graphic design). What is replacing it is tenuous at best, and the process often creates a vacuum in which the possibilities are so endless that it can be paralyzing for a beginning practitioner.” (Helguera, 2011: 85).

In support of this development, Helguera argues that in post-minimalist practices, including socially engaged art, craft is placed at the service of the concept. But he also suggests that as a result of this deskilling, students might become disenchanted, with no sense of purpose, and
dissolve into other disciplines such as education or social work. So Helguera concludes that something else must fill the void:

“It may take years to establish the best way to nourish Socially Engaged Art practices. In this book I have made a case for education processes as the most beneficial tools for furthering the understanding and execution of Socially Engaged Art projects. However, any new art curriculum for Socially Engaged Art needs to be multidisciplinary in its reach and creative in its individual development” (Helguera, 2011: 85).

Helguera suggests that a methodology of socially-centered disciplines and art history should be part of the new curriculum. He also suggests that students should be exposed to the experience of how art works in a social environment. But besides this program the students should also be empowered to reconstruct and reconfigure the curriculum (Helguera, 2011: 87). Helguera not only introduces new skills and knowledge to the curriculum of the art school he also calls for a new pedagogical approach that matches contemporary developments of pedagogy in art:

“In the expanded field of pedagogy in art, the practice of education is no longer restricted to its traditional activities, namely art instruction (for artists), connoisseurship (for historians and curators), and interpretation (for the general public). Traditional pedagogy fails to recognize three things: first, the creative performativity of the act of education; second, the fact that the collective construction of an art milieu, with artworks and ideas, is a collective construction of knowledge; and third, the fact that knowledge of art does not end in knowing the artwork but is a tool for understanding the world” (Helguera, 2011: 80).

In agreement with Helguera I want to conclude that to prepare artists for a more social role than the traditional artisan production of artifacts and performances, we must not only add social empathetic and constructivist skills and knowledge to the curriculum but must also develop a new pedagogical concept in our approaches with students. This pedagogical approach should not only inform the students about the way art works as a public pedagogy, it should also enable the students to experience the way it works for themselves and help them understand how they can further it according to their own needs and beliefs.

Still, this study chose to focus on Cooperative Art Practice, which is a more specific form of socially engaged art. Teaching artists to become such practitioners we have to practice what we preach and so art education needs to be situated as well. After demonstrating and explaining CAP, after making artists conscious of their own potential in their own specific context and situation - and after challenging them to interrupt their own safeties - we should step back and interrupt ourselves as teachers watching our students begin their own trajectory of experiment and discovery. Students must be encouraged and enabled to engage in artistic social interaction with the public within the public realm, developing their own CCC and CAP. Ideally art school should be the middle ground where the CCC of the apprentice practitioners meet and overlap with the CCC of experienced experts (the teachers), and of other communities that share phenomena, subjects and objects at their boundaries.

Figure 16: The art school as a nexus of creative communities

Here practitioners can learn and inquire how to do things and become aware of other ways of seeing, saying and doing. But most essential is that being confronted as a subject with the outer world they learn how their potential and actions as individuals make a difference and matter to others. By connecting their own CCC with art school, students are not just instructed and socialized as professional artists but are also assisted in the development of their subjective-ness. They learn to develop their CAP as a social context and learn to understand why and in what way it matters that it is them, and not someone else, who is initiating and stewarding a specific human togetherness.
8.2.3 What do these answers mean for pedagogy?

Considering art to be more than a tool for training human capital educators should recognize art as a realm of public debate and democratic education. This study considers creative agency to be the ultimate goal of human learning and development. To take action in order to get a grip on our own life course, to protect what matters to us and to take a stand for our values and principles, we need to learn from others in order to move further than before. Next to functional qualification and socialization we need to learn what our existence means to others and how we can bring things into the world that matter to them as well as to ourselves. This is the lesson we need to learn in order to become the explorers, discoverers, creators, scholars, parents and other social change makers who help to make the world a happier place to live.

In artistic immanence as well as in the art world there is a lot to learn from materials, media, theory and history, instructing us and making us conscious of technologies, markets, philosophies and traditions. Still we could learn similar or maybe even the same things from other practices that are not specifically artistic. I want to argue that the unique learning opportunities that art offers us are the opportunities to publicly express, test and inquire into one’s subjective-ness as an interruption of both our immanent selves and the functional world. In this study we have observed how art may help to establish a middle ground where the self and the world meet, creating opportunities to find out when, how and why it matters who we are and how we are. While communities of practice teach us who we are as functional practitioners, our participation in cooperative art practices teach us how to take action and begin something new in cooperation with others and how we exist in relation to the world.

Regarding the difference between learning as reproducing predefined ways of seeing, saying and doing, and learning as co-creating new ways of seeing, saying and doing, we may conclude that the social field and power relations in and around an art practice determine whether the learning will either reproduce or innovate. A monologic setting of production and presentation of art will very likely support learning that reproduces, while a dialogic or ‘poly-logic’ setting of production and presentation of art will be more supportive to co-creative learning. When approaching art as a pedagogical domain we should recognize that art, more than any other practice, offers us sheer endless opportunities to express and articulate our experience of both the outer and our inner world. But unless we reflect on it and decide to change, there is a serious risk that this expression is mere artificial reproduction and repetition of what is already there. So besides an affirmative conservation of the world, and ourselves, art may also open perspectives on unknown realities that enrich and expand that same inner and outer world.

8.2.4 What do these answers mean for governance?

Governance should consider art to be more than an industry, an entertainment business or an instrument to maintain public order. This study took as a starting point the assumption that quantitative economic studies performed such as Florida (2002, 2012) delivered an indication of a positive influence by the creative class on economic and social progress of society. Still, in the art practices studied the organized interaction with society was limited to one-way exhibitions and publications addressed to a selective audience. It seemed to be hard to facilitate a multi-directional interaction space of learning, inquiring and experimenting on a larger scale. So our first conclusion should be that as far as art affects sustainable social change it is a product of a widespread ecology of multiple CCCs and CAPs, instead of one or a few advanced art initiatives or institutions.

It appears that the progressive influence of a CCC is primarily local, so it is not likely that one CCC can change the world. Setting up and supporting large cultural institutions or companies with a mass audience might promote a city or nation as being sophisticated or fun, but the innovative effect might be limited considering the passive, receptive mode of the audience in such “one-to-many” constellations. In order to support the positive influence of the creative class as creators and beginners of new ways of seeing, saying and doing it makes more sense to support a multitude of CAPs that generate a dynamic landscape of diverse CCCs of a moderate size, as we saw in the cases studied.

Developing vision and future policies concerning the value of art in society we may argue that the social essence of art is actually about the situational aesthetic quality of a human togetherness that allows people to develop new ways of seeing, saying and doing and ultimately bring something new into the world. We have learned that this action can only happen on the middle ground between the subjective self and the functional order. And so politically this means that we must allow our rational and functional order to be interrupted with an alternative logic of subjectivity and diversity in order to expand the realm of the possible. Cultural innovation is not about producing new ways of seeing, saying and doing but allowing and enabling them to appear and develop. The right approach of governance is not to want to create and control them but to cherish them the moment they appear, and the best way to engage them is to cooperate with them. As irreplaceable nests of free spirits these CCCs must be set free to grow and bloom. Moving into an age of aesthetically intensified social reality and an expanding symbolic virtual public space that is shaped and controlled by commercial and political interests, it is important for a healthy diversity and independence of culture that autonomous artists take their position as independent experts staging experience and guiding
which is already there. Instead, art offers us unique opportunities to disclose unpredictable possibilities of our unprecedented potent selves and enables us to open new perspectives that escape the deadlocks and impasses of habitual functional existence. Still a work of art alone cannot change the world and neither can a single artist. But if we would abandon our conception of a work of art as a substantial commodity, and reject the practice of art as an individual performance proving extraordinary talent, we could embrace art as a shared responsibility for the quality of human togetherness that enables people to rise above the daily toil and moil and reveal themselves as unique human beings with a potential to begin something new. I am convinced that only then, as a cooperative creative endeavor, can art make a difference that matters and that lasts.

8.3 Epilogue: How can art make a difference that matters?
The goal of this study was to better understand art as a power of change. For that reason we were not focused on art as supporting the educational functions of qualification and socialization that would teach people how to do things and how to understand things according to the established views and values. Instead we were interested in opportunities and environments in and around art practices that would help people to find out how to begin something new that matters to others while still remaining loyal to their own visions, values and interests.

I want to argue that the immanent realm of very personal experience of art will not make a difference to the world unless it reaches out to others. While on the other hand the dominant mass consumer culture, either commercial or canonic, does not breed change makers since it encourages people to align, follow and mimic established ways of perceiving, expressing and acting. It is right between these extremes that the subject meets the public in an artistic experimental situation that offers us the opportunity to learn how to make a difference that matters to others. This research has shed some light on this realm, and its observations have been consistently interpreted and explained by the use of pedagogical and philosophical theory that offers us a context and vocabulary to discuss and further our understanding.

At the basis of this theoretical construct lies the notion that being in the world is shaped by a duality of the sovereign self and all that surrounds it, bringing forth an ongoing, almost impossible, negotiation between two incompatible value systems, and entangling veiled fears and desires with endless power struggles. As a result it takes our greatest effort and dedication to learn to deal with the polysemic nature of conflicts, paradoxes, contradictions and dilemmas that we are confronted with just by trying to exist in the world as an authentic and independent human being. Functional rationality does not solve all of these disjunctions since these are far too complex constellations of personal preferences, political beliefs and acts of arbitrary will, as well as polysemic, unarticulated, ambivalent, emotional urges. Being concerned with this realm of the unmentionable and unexplained, art transcends the reflective reconstruction and reenactment of that transformation. The subjectification of people is not just about training human capital for the creative industries; it is about raising and consolidating a citizenry that is able to maintain the democratic values that buttress a fair and free society. Art reminds us, maybe more than any other practice, of the fact that being human is not just about being a technically functional element in an economic system world, but is foremost about being a surprising free spirit in an amazing plural and diverse community.


This study will present and explore cases of art practitioners - members of the creative class and skilled amateurs - who created communities of informal learning and inquiry through an experimental and emergent art practice. This inquiry hopes to reveal the development and innovation of local cultural production within these often hidden communities that in turn contribute to more general cultural trends and innovation.

In this study these communities are called a “Community of Creative Citizens” (CCC). The term “citizens” is used because these people chose to come together to take part in public life as free subjects and not because they have to for economic or utilitarian reasons. Their learning is the product of an intersubjective cooperation rather than a teacher-learner relation, and likewise the art practice can also be considered to be a shared and Cooperative Art Practice (CAP).

This report will present and discuss findings and concepts drawn from three different sources. The first source is the researcher’s professional experience as an artist and as a developer of art education. The second source is the researcher’s participation from 2009 until 2011 in the research network ‘Plurality and Diversity in Urban Contexts’ at the University of Leuven, Belgium. The third source is the multiple case study of three other cooperative art practices in Rotterdam, the Netherlands and NYC, USA.

The context of the study is a political and commercial interest in the transformative power of creativity and arts that seems to be the result of quantitative economic studies at the turn of this century. These studies have developed theoretical concepts such as “the experience economy” (Pine & Gilmore, 1999) and “the creative class” (Florida 2002), that significantly influenced both the public position of artists, as well as their practice and education.

To reframe the emerging debate about the benefits of art, McCarthy et al. (2004) presented an overview derived from the literature of the full range of effects that can be associated with the arts. More than half of the intrinsic and instrumental benefits in McCarthy et al’s inventory appear to concern human development. However, the researchers observe “a lack of critical specifics about such issues as how the claimed benefits are produced, how they relate to different types of arts experiences, and under what circumstances and for which populations they are most likely to occur” (McCarthy et al., 2004: 68). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to produce knowledge about CAP and CCC in order to support art students who are seeking to improve informal social learning as an advantage of their art. It might assist...
emerging artists to develop their own CCC and CAP as a self-directed learning environment. It may also help to develop art as a force of social change. In the third instance, this study adds a perspective to our understanding of the way the creative class develops itself and contributes to the development of the larger community it is part of.

THEORY
In the cooperative setting of the CCC and CAP we are dealing with situated learning and situated art, meaning that the work of art as well as the learning opportunities are situated in practice and emerge from the situation in which they are applied and experienced. In this public artistic experiment the distinctions between teacher and learner, and between artist and audience are blurred. According to common interpretations of situated learning in “Communities of Practice” (Wenger 1998) practitioners on the work floor learn from a rational reflection of a functional practice developing their identity as a professional. In reverse a CCC is not based on a functional practice but on a mutual identification of the participants who might only later on develop a shared practice. With identity preceding practice the CCC appears to be a flipped version of the Community of Practice. Considering situated art, I want to argue that the most common idea of art - the production of skillfully crafted artifacts or impressively well executed performances - considers a work of art to be a composition of concrete independent things that can be perceived and understood according to the substantialist logic of a material reality. However, Bourriaud’s concept of “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud, 2002 [1998]) considers a work of art to be constituted as a composition of experiential elements that have to be mentally processed and socially negotiated according to a relational logic of a social reality. In addition, Debord’s concept of “situation” (Debord, 2006 [1957]) considers a work of art to be an inter-action of people and things according to a situational logic of an emerging reality. Accordingly, in the situated art practices studied the artists did not always create a complete work of art beforehand. More often they created situations in which the work of art emerged, mentally and physically, in artistic cooperation with the community and its context. Approaching learning and art as situated phenomena we understand both to be qualities of social space. “What makes social space such a useful construct is that it focuses neither on the individual nor the collective as the unit of analysis but rather on the processes through which individuals, in interaction with others, construct their shared worlds” (Friedman et al., 2014: 5). By thinking about art as an interactive space we understand it better as a human activity, something people do and undergo, instead of something that people produce, own and trade.

In “The Human Condition” (1998 [1958]) Arendt distinguishes three modes of human activity: labor, work and action. According to this theoretical concept, Biesta distinguishes three functions of education (Biesta, 2015a), as well as three modes of public pedagogy that belong to these functions (Biesta, 2011). First, in order to sustain human life, students need the competences that allow them to “do something”. This function of qualification is shaped in a pedagogical mode of instruction. Next, to build and maintain a world fit for human use, an education is needed that sees to it that students learn how to develop or become part of particular social, cultural and political “orders.” This function of socialization is shaped in the mode of conscientisation. But to become independent citizens that are able to act freely - so they can create, invent, explore, lead and undertake - we need to disclose the identity of our agency, and to actualize our capacity for freedom in order to perform what is “infinitely improbable”. For that students need to be inspired, challenged and supported, to be(come) subjects in their own right. This function of subjectification is a result of the pedagogy that opens up a “concern for publicness” by means of interruption. In this study we will interpret the “infinitely improbable” universe of art as an “interruption” of the basic functional order of labor and work, offering a stage for the subject to manifest itself publicly. As Wildemeersch (2014) suggests: “The experiments of public art and public pedagogy (…) are critical — not because they show the right way out, but because they create a disjunctive or a space of dissensus” (Wildemeersch & Von Kotze, 2014: 322). Challenging habit of mind and habitual action, CAP creates a similar disjunctive and space of dissensus. According to Jarvis (2006/2007) disjunction lies at the basis of each learning opportunity. The pedagogy of interruption developed by Biesta (2006) is indeed about creating disjuncture and also about revealing dissensus, although the learning opportunity it creates does not automatically imply the harmonization of this disjuncture or dissensus; it may also teach us to cope with plurality and ambiguity. Disjuncture and dissensus are in fact expansions of our consciousness with multiple perspectives and possible actions. Whilst most sociological literature on change focuses on the struggle over resources and control, Friedman et al try to frame social change as “expanding the realm of the possible” in the construction process of the social world. As an effective change strategy, Friedman puts forward the forming of enclaves (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014). Whilst some enclaves isolate themselves in order to preserve their uniqueness, others challenge the larger field by presenting, testing and promoting other meanings and ways of seeing, saying and doing.

METHODOLOGY
Studying the way professionals think in action, Schön (1991) observed that their ability to act is based on a comparison of the actual situation with a repertoire of known cases. Therefore, from the many genres

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of qualitative research approaches a multiple case study design was chosen. Developing theory not as a universal law that determines human behavior but as concepts of human action aiming to understand and improve practice and agency, we will refrain from building any generalization from random selected cases. Instead we will select our samples based on the information we seek in order to develop a metaphor (Flyvbjerg, 2007) - in this instance within the domain of western contemporary art and education. Using some of the concepts that make up the theoretical framework of this study, the main research question is:

How can artists contribute to the formation and maintenance of CCCs fostering a CAP that enables its members to develop their own creative potential as unique human beings?  

Case 1: FREEHOUSE - RADICALIZING THE LOCAL
In 2008 artist Jeanne van Heeswijk initiated Freehouse, an art project located in the Afrikaanderwijk in Rotterdam where she investigated local identity and human capital in order to look for opportunities to express and develop the cultural production of the neighborhood. In this project, creative experts from all over the world were invited to collaborate with locals to advance experiments and knowledge about neighborhood development that were implemented directly in the community, and which were also presented in numerous publications, presentations and exhibitions in the neighborhood and the art world. As a first case, Freehouse did not only deliver robust empirical information about the CCC and its CAP but it also supported some of the theoretical concepts that were developed by the research community at Leuven University. Pivotal to the theoretical analysis by Van Heeswijk appeared to be Arendt's view on the “Human Condition” and more specifically the process of public subjectification, a theoretical focus that complemented with the theoretical considerations of Biesta on public pedagogy as explained by Caris & Cowell (2016).

Case 2: FLUXFACTORY: A COLLABORATIVE FREE FALL
On its website Flux Factory (FF) introduces itself as a not-for-profit arts organization. However, FF started twenty years ago as a commune of youngsters who settled in an old factory on Kent Avenue in Williamsburg seeking an affordable way to be part of the myth of New York City. FF was home to a rather intimate community that produced quite radical projects of situated art with unpredictable outcomes. Inhabiting and artistically redecorating the factory they organized all sorts of experimental art events on a regular basis. Eventually FF became a famous hangout for creative talent, and contributed to the revitalization and gentrification of Williamsburg that is now hip and happening.

While Van Heeswijk was ‘portraying’ her neighbors and creating platforms for their subjective expression, the inhabitants and visitors of FF, called “Fluxers”, were first and foremost presenting themselves. Still, both were concerned with the quality of public togetherness that consisted of collaborative artistic experiment, cultural inquiry and cultural innovation. Van Heeswijk was constantly reflecting on her practice, and building a theoretical and conceptual framework that she shared with the art world and policy makers through numerous publications. In contrast it took the Fluxers 20 years before they published just one book about their art. While Van Heeswijk was building a career in the professional art world, the Fluxers were first of all citizens approaching art as an exciting way of life.

Case 3: BHQFU - AN ALTERNATIVE TO EVERYTHING
The arts collective “Bruce High Quality Foundation” (BHQB) claims to preserve and promote the heritage of the late social sculptor Bruce High Quality who died on September 11th 2001. The identity of the “Bruces”, as insiders call the founders and producers of the BHQB, is kept secret although their agent, Vito Schnabel, son of the world famous New York artist Julian Schnabel, sells their work very well. This way the Foundation has substantial capital to support experimental and innovative art related projects.

Constantly seeking and producing alternatives, the BHQB creates situations that playfully disturb the established order. They have a studio in Brooklyn where the nine Bruces work and they also use a loft in Alphabet City where a similar amount of “fellows” organize a daily program of classes for their self-organized Art School, the “BHQF University”. This BHQB started with an art performance but it soon became a professional network and actual home base for art education, personal development and activism. As with the Fluxers, the Bruces operated as a team and like in the other cases an articulated distinction was made between the art of everyday life and the art of institutions and commerce. But the Fluxers stayed at the periphery of the New York art world, whilst the Bruces were breaking right into the very heart of it. As did Van Heeswijk, although with a less rebellious but more constructive attitude.

ANALYSIS
With this study we found some unique and inspiring strategies and approaches of CCCs and CAPs and determined a contour of their appearance and a certain consistency in their development. In all cases communities were established on the middle ground between a distant formal system world and their directly experienced informal life world. Seeking a foothold between these two worlds the members of these communities were not seeking consensus nor synthesis but a platform to perform and test their uncompromised subjectivity in public.
enables us to open new perspectives that escape the deadlocks and impasses of habitual functional existence. Artists should consider themselves stewards of public cultural experiment fostering human development and social change. Considering art to be more than a tool for training human capital, educators should recognize art as a realm of public interaction and democratic debate. The art academy could develop their position as a hub between the CCCs of their students, teachers and alumni. They can also play a role as an institutional counterparts of informal innovative CAPs. And governance should consider art to be more than an industry, an entertainment business or an instrument to maintain public order but as a form of civic agency. Artists should take responsibility for the quality of human togetherness they establish in their work and could enable the audience as well to reveal themselves as unique human beings with the potential to begin something new.

CONCLUSIONS
The cultural and social change these communities managed to initiate was not led by a functional or rational logic but was incubated within the interruption of this logic. The CCCs in these cases can be seen as "the creation of plural and diverse intersubjective spaces" in which the CCC members "can come into the world as unique singular beings" (Biesta, 2006: 27-31). The study also managed to explain the CCC as an enclave or "the differentiation of a new field within an existing field with its own configuration of positions and different rules of the game" (Friedman, 2011: 253). That is, as Friedman et al. would say, "expanding the realm of the possible" (Friedman et al., 2014).

The formation of these CCCs is explained as the establishment of middle ground between the extremes of immanent alienation and conformist submission that would ultimately lead to either world-destruction or self-destruction. Operating on this middle ground the CCC members experienced that it mattered they were acting as unique human subjects relating to the world and their fellow human beings. This existential self-realization explains why these citizens appeared to be willing to take risks and work hard outside a professional context.

What does this mean for art, education and governance?
Art reminds us, probably more than any other practice, of the fact that being human is not just about being a technically functional element in an economic system world. Being human is foremost about being a surprising free spirit in an amazing plural and diverse world. Art is able to transcend the reflective reconstruction and re-enactment of that which is already there. It offers us unique opportunities to disclose unpredictable possibilities of our unprecedented potent selves and
Nederlandstalige samenvatting:

DE KUNST VAN DE INTERRUPTIE
Beschouwingen over kunst als een gemeenschappelijke praktijk van creatieve burgers die culturele vernieuwing en sociale verandering nastreven.

INLEIDING
Dit proefschrift presenteert en exploreert casussen van kunstbeoefenaars - leden van de creatieve klasse en toegewijde creatieve amateurs - die een informeel lerende en onderzoekende gemeenschap hebben gevormd rondom een gezamenlijke, experimentele en zichzelf ontvloeiende kunstpraktijk. In deze veelal verborgen gemeenschappen wordt door creatieve samenwerking de lokale culturele productie verder ontwikkeld en vernieuwd. In tweede instantie dragen deze gemeenschappen bij aan een bredere ontwikkeling van maatschappelijke trends en innovaties. In deze studie worden dergelijke gemeenschappen als ‘Creatieve Burger Gemeenschappen’ aangeduid met de afkorting CCCs (Communities of Creative Citizens). De term ‘burger’ wordt gebruikt omdat de deelnemers in deze CCCs handelen vanuit motieven die vrij zijn van een materiële of sociale noodzaak. In plaats daarvan treden zij uit eigen beweging publiekelijk naar voren als zelfstandige en betrokken leden van hun samenleving. Het leren dat plaatsvindt in deze CCCs is het resultaat van een intersubjectieve samenwerking in plaats van een leraar-leerling verhouding. Ook de betreffende kunstpraktijk kan beschouwd worden als een ‘Coöperatieve Kunst Praktijk’, in deze studie verder aangeduid als CAP (Cooperative Art Practice).

In dit proefschrift worden bevindingen en concepten gepresenteerd die zijn voortgekomen uit drie verschillende bronnen. De eerste bron betreft de professionele ervaring van de onderzoeker als kunstenaar en als ontwikkelaar van kunstvakonderwijs. De tweede bron betreft het onderzoeksnetwerk Plurality and Diversity in Urban Contexts aan de Katholieke Universiteit van Leuven, België, waaraan de onderzoeker heeft deelgenomen in de periode 2009 tot 2011. De derde bron betreft een meervoudige Casestudy van drie CCCs/CAPs in Rotterdam en New York City, USA.

De context van de studie is de sinds het begin van deze eeuw toegenomen interesse van het openbaar bestuur en het zakenleven in kunst en creativiteit. Deze interesse ontstond naar aanleiding van kwantitatieve economische studies die theoretische concepten opleverden als de belevenis economie (Pine en Gilmore, 1999) en de creatieve klasse (Florida, 2002). Deze ontwikkeling is van grote invloed op de maatschappelijke positie, de praktijk en de opleiding van kunstenaars en andere creatieve professionals.
Om het op gang komende debat over het maatschappelijk belang van de kunsten in een overzichtelijke context te plaatsen presenteerden McCarthy et al. (2004) een inventarisatie van de effecten die in de literatuur met de kunsten in verband werden gebracht. Meer dan de helft van de inzichten en instrumentele opbrengsten van kunst in dit overzicht betreft menselijke groei en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling. Echter, volgens de onderzoekers ontkent het aan kritische nuancering betreffende vraagstukken zoals de manier waarop deze effecten tot stand komen of aan welke bevolkingsgroepen deze opbrengsten van groei en ontwikkeling ten deel vallen (McCarthy et al., 2004: 68). Deze studie wil aan die nuancering bijdragen.

De opgedane kennis is bedoeld als ondersteuning van studenten, beleidsmakers en professionals die menselijke groei en maatschappelijke ontwikkeling als opbrengst van kunst nastreven. Wellicht helpt deze kennis aankomende kunstenaars bij het ontwikkelen van hun eigen zelfgestuurde leeromgeving. Daarnaast kan deze kennis ook bijdragen aan de ontwikkeling van kunst als een sociale interventiestrategie. In derde instantie geeft deze studie inzicht in de manier waarop de creatieve klasse zichzelf ontwikkelt en bijdraagt aan de ontwikkeling van de derde instantie. Deze studie inzicht in de manier waarop de creatieve klasse zichzelf ontwikkelt en bijdraagt aan de ontwikkeling van kunst als een sociale interventiestrategie.
van arbeid en werk waarin het subject de gelegenheid krijgt om zichzelf publiekelijk te manifesteren. “De experimenten van publieke kunst en publieke pedagogie zijn bepalend, niet omdat ze een juiste uitweg aan- geven maar omdat ze een ongerijmdheid (‘dissensus’) of een ruimte van onenigheid (‘disjunctive’) creëren” (“Wildemeersch & Von Kotze, 2014: 322). Als interruptie van de gewoontes van ons functionele doen en rationele denken creëert ook de CCC middels haar CAP een dergelijk ongerijmdheid en een ruimte van onenigheid.


Terwijl de meeste sociologische literatuur met betrekking tot verande- ring zich toelegt op de strijd om middelen en controle, proberen Fried- man et al. sociale verandering te begrijpen als een uitbreiding van het domein van de mogelijkheden tijdens het constructieproces van de sociale wereld. Friedman brengt de vorming van “enclaves” naar voren als een effectieve veranderingsstrategie (Friedman, Sykes & Strauch, 2014). Daarbij kunnen sommige enclaves zich toelassen op afzondering terbehoud van de eigen uniciteit en andere enclaves de confrontatie aan- gaan met het grotere veld door het uitproberen en uitdragen van andere manieren van waarnemen, denken en doen. In deze studie wordt de ‘kunst van het interrupteren’ opgevat als het vestigen van gedifferentieerde culturele vrijplaatsen met een dergelijk veranderingspotentieel.

METHODOLOGIE

In zijn studie naar de manier waarop professionals denken en handelen in de praktijk, kwam Schön (1991) tot de bevinding dat hun vermogen tot handelen is gebaseerd op een vergelijking van de actuele situatie met een repertoire aan bekende casussen. Om die reden is uit het brede aan- bod aan kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden voor deze studie de ‘multiple casestudy’ gekozen. Daarmee zoeken we niet naar universele gedrags- betalende wetmatigheden, maar ontwikkelen we in plaats daarvan een theoretisch kader van handelingsconcepten gericht op het begrijpen en verbeteren van de kunstpraktijk en de versterking van de ‘agency’ van de betrokkenen. In plaats van willekeurige steekproeven zullen we voorbeelden presenteren om daarmee een metafoor te ontwikkelen (Flyvbjerg, 2007), in dit geval voor het domein van de westerse hedendaagse kunst en educatie. Gebruikmakend van enige concepten uit het theoretisch kader van deze studie luidt de onderzoeks vraag:
Casus 3: BHQFU - EEN ALTERNATIEF VOOR ALLES
Het kunstcollectief Bruce High Quality Foundation (BHQF) beweert hoeder en promotor te zijn van de nalatenschap van de “social sculptor” Bruce High Quality, die stierf op 11 september 2001. De identiteit van de oprichters en makers, door insiders “the Bruces” genoemd, wordt geheim gehouden maar dit staat hun vertegenwoordiger Vito Schnabel, zoon van de wereldberoemde kunstschilder Julian Schnabel, niet in de weg om hun werk goed te verkopen. Op deze wijze beschikt de stichting over voldoende middelen om experimentele en innovatieve kunstgerelateerde projecten te ondersteunen. De Bruces zijn voortdurend op zoek naar alternatieven voor de door geld en status gedomineerde kunstwereld en creëren daartoe situaties die op speelse wijze de gevorderde orde verstoren. De BHQF beschikt over een studio in Brooklyn waar de negen Bruces werken en een loft in de wijk Alphabet City waar een vergelijkbare hoeveelheid “fellows” een zelfbe­stuurde kunstacademie draaien. Deze BHQF University (BHQFU) begon ooit als een performancevoorstelling maar ontwikkelde zich al snel tot een professioneel netwerk en een thuisbasis voor zelfgestuurd kunstonderwijs en activisme. Net zoals de Fluxers vormden de Bruces een collectief en maakten zij onderscheid tussen de informele kunst in het leven van alledag en de formele kunst van de instituties en de commercie. Hierbij bewaarden de Fluxers een zekere vorm van splendid isolation in de periferie van de New Yorkse kunstwereld terwijl de Bruces tot het hart van die wereld doordrongen. Dat laatste deed Van Heeswijk ook, maar dan wel vanuit een constructievure houding ten opzichte van deze kunstwereld.

ANALYSE
Middels deze studie hebben we een paar unieke inspirerende strategieën en benaderingen van CCCs en CAPs gevonden waaruit we een algeme­ne verschijningsovergang en een zekere consistentie in hun ontwikkeling kunnen onderscheiden. De casussen hebben gemeen dat hun gemeenschappen gevestigd zijn in een grensgebied tussen de afstandelijk forme­le systeemwereld en de direct ervaren informele leefwereld. Zoekend naar een positie tussen deze werelden wordt in deze gemeenschappen niet zozeer gewerkt aan een consensus of synthese maar aan een sociaal platform dat de betrokkenen in staat stelt hun authentieke subjectiviteit in een publieke context uit te dragen en ter discussie te stellen. Een dergelijke vrijplaats moet opgevat worden als een subjectieve enclave die zich onderscheidt van het omringende veld van de functionele systeem­wereld.

De vestiging van zo’n gedifferentieerde vrijplaats kan gezien worden als een daad van artistiek burgerschap. Freehouse vormde een vrijplaats van buurproductiviteit te midden van de grotere economie ter versterking van authentieke lokale producten en het onderwijs van een anonieme wereldmarkt. Flux Factory vormde een Boheemse vrijplaats binnen de orde van het New Yorkse kosmopolitische leven door de vestiging van een zelfontworpen woon- en werkomgeving. De BHQF vormde een vrijplaats van zelfgestuurd, vrijzinnig kunstonderwijs binnen het grotere veld van het institutionele hoger kunstonderwijs.

Ter afsluiting van deze analyse kunnen we concluderen dat we de art of interruption niet moeten begrijpen als de kunst van het veranderen maar als de kunst van het onthullen van ongekende mogelijkheden voor zowel de wereld als voor het existentiële zelf. De art of interruption die we in deze studie hebben leren kennen is de kunst van het telkens weer nieuw aangaan van coöperatieve artistiek gedreven experimenten en alledaagse revolutionen. De art of interruption is een mind-set die vooraf gaat aan de veranderingen in onze samenleving.

CONCLUSIES
De culturele en sociale veranderingsprocessen die de kunstenaars in deze studie op gang brachten volgden niet een functionele en rationele logica maar ontstonden juist uit de interruptie van deze logica. De betreffende CCCs kunnen worden gezien als “de creatie van meervoudige en diverse intersubjectieve ruimten”, waarbinnen de leden van deze gemeenschappen “zich openbaren als unieke op zichzelf staande wezens” (Biesta, 2006: 27-31). De studie wist ook de CCC te verklaren als enclave dan wel “de differentiatie van een nieuw veld binnen een bestaand veld met zijn eigen configuratie van posities en andere spelregels” (Friedman, 2011: 253), waarmee “het domein van de mogelijkheden wordt uitgebreid” (Friedman et al., 2014).

De formatie van deze CCCs hebben we verklaard als de verwerving van een middengebied tussen de uitersten van immanente vervreemding en conformistische overgave die in haar extremen leidt tot respectie­velijk wereldverniezing dan wel zelfvernietiging. Opererend in deze tussenwereld ervaren de leden van de bestudeerde CCCs het als zinvol en bevredigend om actief te worden in een unieke relatie tot de hun omringende wereld en hun medemensen. Deze existentiële zelfrealisatie verklaart waarom deze burgers bereid zijn om risico te nemen en hard te werken zonder een betaalde arbeidsovereenkomst. Wat betekent dit voor kunst, educatie en openbaar bestuur?

Kunst herinnert ons, misschien wel meer dan andere praktijken, aan het feit dat ons mens­zijn meer inhoudt dan een technisch functioneel mind-set is een die vooraf
om de onvoorspelbare mogelijkheden en ongekende potenties in onszelf te ontdekken en ons in staat te stellen nieuwe perspectieven in ons leven kunnen doorbreken of omzeilen. Kunstenaren kunnen zichzelf beschouwen als begeleiders van het publieke culturele experiment dat voor menselijke groei en sociale verandering zorgt. In het onderwijs zouden we kunst niet alleen moeten beschouwen als gereedschap voor de training van menselijk kapitaal, maar ook als een domein van publieke interactie en democratisch debat. De kunstacademie kan zichzelf ontwikkelen als een knooppunt van CCCs van haar studenten, docenten en alumni. Daarnaast kan zij een rol spelen als institutioneel klankbord voor informele innovatieve CAPs. Het openbaar bestuur zou kunst niet alleen moeten beschouwen als een sector van de creatieve industrie, als volksvermaak of als een instrument om de openbare orde te bewaren, maar ook als een arena van actief burgerschap dat de samenleving helpt ontwikkelen en bestendigen. Kunstenaren zouden de verantwoordelijkheid moeten nemen voor de kwaliteit van het menselijk samenzijn dat zij met hun werk teweeg brengen en ook hun publiek in staat kunnen stellen zichzelf te openbaren als unieke menselijke wezens met het vermogen iets nieuws te beginnen.

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CV of the candidate

Arthur (Thuur) Caris is a visual artist producing situation-based art in public spaces since 1992. As a social scientist he studies art as a conversational space in which learning opportunities occur. Both as an artist and a pedagogue he has a special interest in art as a source and as a force for social transformation. Besides a Masters in Pedagogy (2010) he holds a Bachelor in Fine Arts (1993).

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Colophon


English language corrections: Gillian Cowell, Barbara Lampe
Graphic design: Peter de Kan

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