

On one level there is the philosophical problem of the GATS' reduction of art and culture to services/commodities to be traded, indistinguishable from other regulated service/commodities on the global market... **this phenomenon/approach is co-extensive with cultural policy which rationalizes art and culture solely in economic and social development terms.**

But even if art and cultural producers were to agree to the terms of “service provision”, following for example the model of “artistic service” proposed by Andrea Fraser and Helmut Draxler, **GATS is problematic because it espouses a neo-liberal assertion of a (highly regulated) “free market” that designates public funding as a “barrier to trade”, thus jeopardizing the ability of countries, regional governments, and cultural institutions to maintain their own cultural policies.**

The GATS designates art and culture as “services”, encapsulating them within the category “Recreational, cultural and sporting services”. Within the GATS framework, art production and art's professional practices are reduced to purely economic terms—conceived of as services/commodities, indistinguishable from any other services/commodities within the global market. By extension, artists and other art professionals, become “service providers”.

Writing in the 1990s, Andrea Fraser outlines the analysis initiated in the 1960s of artistic practice as heteronomous—that is subject to external laws or rules, particularly economic forces. Many artists developed strategies aimed at undermining the object/commodity status of the artwork, such as “site specificity and institutional critique, conceptual art, and cultural activism”. The Art Workers Coalition Open Hearing (1969) demands for artists' proprietary rights over their work, recognized art's tangible and intangible value, in turn redefining artwork from a commercial product or good to a service product—in this case intellectual property (Fraser 1996 <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/frasercritique.html>).

*One of the earliest distinctions between goods production and service provision, made by Adam Smith, relates less to the tangible or intangible character of the product of labor than the social character of labor itself: whether or not that labor produces profit. **For Smith, a service is a product that contains only use value and no exchange value: it adds "to the value of nothing."**[1] It may have been precisely this condition—which rendered services suspect for Smith—that the artists of the AWC aspired to in considering their work intellectual property...It may be from this perspective one can understand how **artists of the late 1960s saw in the condition of service products, relations, positions, and functions a means of protection from, and even resistance to, forms of exploitation (of themselves and others) consequent to the production and exchange of cultural commodities** (Fraser 1996 <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/frasercritique.html>).*

The conceptualization of art practice as a service was central to Fraser's own practice in the 1990s in her development of "project work," often comprising the "appropriation of professional models in rejection of traditional studio practice." In her essay "How to Provide an Artistic Service: An Introduction," Fraser outlines how the term "service" encapsulates the diversity of project work practices (in terms content and approaches) and aims to identify the "economic condition of project work as well as the nature of the social relations under which it is carried out." The increasing practice of cultural institutions paying fees to artists underscores the emergence of art as "service provision": congruously "a fee is by definition payment for services" (Fraser 1994 <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/fraserservice.html>).

I would say that these questions are not exclusive to project based practice—defined as a service or not. Project based practice simply makes it necessary to pose them. I would say that we are all always already serving. Studio practice conceals this condition by separating production from the interests it meets and the demands it responds to at its point of material or symbolic consumption. As a service can be defined, in economic terms, as a value which is consumed at the same time it is produced, the service element of project based practice eliminates such separation. An invitation to produce a specific work in response to a specific situation is a very direct demand, the motivating interests of which are often barely concealed and difficult to ignore. I know that if I accept that invitation I will be serving those interests—unless I work very hard to do otherwise. (Fraser 1994 <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/fraserservice.html>).

But as Fraser points out, while "artistic appropriation of forms of representation, production, or organization from corporate culture may have begun as a critical strategy" ... "entering into competition with that culture, for artists no less than museums, implies not only an acceptance of but also an investment in the stakes offered up as legitimate and desirable by that culture" (Fraser 2003: 119-120). This current state of affairs is crucial to examine in light of the present GATS negotiations and applications: has the concept of service provision—what is/was a critical and pragmatic strategy by artists and public institutions—now emerged to reduce art and cultural production to solely economic terms and to regulate art as a service—like other publicly funded services from education to health to water—to be forced into competition like any other offered on the global capitalist market?

A professionalizing shift within the art world generally, in hand with the increasing corporatization of public cultural institutions—both in management structure, and, for example, the increasing emphasis on marketing strategies and the demand to justify programs through revenue, or "social inclusion" criteria such as new audience development—reflects, as Jim McGuigan argues, how public cultural policy is increasingly made to serve a neo-liberal agenda. Within "free market" logic, policy and spending decisions are rationalized on the basis of economic rationale rather than cultural value. Fraser suggests that due to increasing capitalist pressures, artists and art

professionals are beginning to recognize their activities as in competition with commercial entertainment and commodity culture (2003: 119).

[Maybe this text in juxtaposition to Fraser's quote about all practices as a kind of serving...] In Fraser's terms—and similarly with those of the GATS—any artist's practice can be considered to be a service in so far as s/he is creating a work that it will meet certain demands "at its point of material or symbolic consumption" (Fraser 1994). As curators approaching artists to participate in this project, we were conscious of how the notion of "service" could be applied both to the artists' response in producing a work, and to our own role as curators. We first undertook to inform the artists about the significance of the GATS for contemporary art production. In our own production, we treated information as an object for both aesthetic and political engagement. Realizing our commitment to "building the commons through serving art, artists, and audiences", we literally wore the project in order to disseminate the artists' works and information to audiences in Venice.

In inviting artists to participate in the *Art is a GATS Free Zone* project, we were specifically interested in art practices that directly address a public through opening up the possibility of exchanges—art practices more concerned with creating a situation of interaction than with creating a commodity object. For it is art's value within the public sphere—and the very of concept of a Commons, comprising *public* services—that is undermined by the "free-market" agenda of the GATS.

In her practice Lara Almarcegui often undertakes projects to reclaim abandoned urban sites for public use. In *Opening up empty lots to the public Amsterdam, Brussels and Alcorcón* (2000–2002), Almarcegui sought permission from city authorities to reclaim disused private property as a territory for local citizens. In *Repair and Occupy an Abandoned Boat* (2003), Almarcegui occupied public space as an artist, rendering a public service through acts of restoration. Antje Schiffrers was interested in how her practice as an artist could be relevant within the context of her home village in Northern Germany. In the project *I like being a farmer and would like to stay one* (2000), Schiffrers traded oil paintings she made of farms with their owners in exchange for videos in which they filmed and explained their way of living and their work. For the project *The main thing is you've got work* (2003), Antje Schiffrers continued her practice of exchanging the production of art for subsistence in creating a position for herself as company artist at tire manufacturer ContiTech, proposing to carry out all services that the staff thought appropriate for a company artist. Schiffrers' offer to exchange the production of art for subsistence was also carried out in her travels through Italy (2001) and through Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (2002) as an itinerant painter, offering paintings in exchange for room and board.

The Commons Service Group is interested in how artists use the web as an accessible space of public address and as a means of *la mise en commun*. Almost all of the artists participating in this project employ the Internet both as a medium in itself and/or as a way to communicate projects that exist in other forms. Chris Lloyd has been writing (almost) daily letters to Canada's Prime Minister since January 2001, publishing his correspondence on his *Dear PM* blog since August 2003. YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES works almost exclusively on the web, publishing multi-lingual versions of their works. For this project, YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES humorously translated their aesthetic to a printed chant against the GATS.

Etienne Cliquet
Antje Schiffrers

Maura Doyle

The artist and architect collaboration of public works realize projects that address that engage how how users of public space are engaging with their environment and how design and programmatic strategies can support and facilitate physical, economical and social infrastructures in the public realm. "intersection between art as a critical venture, design as a problem solving exercise, and architecture as social process"

That these artists' works are circulating on the Internet and in free publications is a dissemination of their work within public spaces of various regions

Maura Doyle offering the free

Claude Lévêque

How can artistic practices—particularly practices that are explicitly based in a service model—provide an alternative to the social and economic shift signaled by the GATS?

Critical alternative

Notes

1. Smith, Adam. *The Wealth of Nations*, quoted in Delaunay and Gadrey, *Services in Economic Thought*, 12, in Andrea Fraser, "The Critique Of Artistic Autonomy" <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/frasercritique.html>

References

Fraser, Andrea (2003). "A Museum Is Not A Business, It Is Run In A Businesslike Fashion," *Beyond the Box: Diverging Curatorial Practices*, (The Banff Centre Press): 109—122.

Fraser, Andrea (1996). "The Critique Of Artistic Autonomy" <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/frasercritique.html>

Fraser, Andrea (1994). "How To Provide An Artistic Service: An Introduction" <http://home.att.net/~artarchives/fraserservice.html>

McGuigan, Jim (2004). *Rethinking Cultural Policy* (Berkshire: Open University Press)

The Commons Service Group, identity as a group that provides a service: our self-prescribed mandate

Activating, performing the project: prendre le parole, prendre en charge de porter l'information, taking responsibility for the information

Cohabiting a space, a platform, a support, with the artists

Addressing ourselves to the artists and publications as collaborators, informing about the GATS, explaining the project: inviting the artists to co-inhabit the space of an insert, the other side of which we occupy to inform on the GATS,--and the publications to house and diffuse this insert, to become a vehicle for the project

Aesthetic manoeuvre: the concept of information as an object for aesthetic treatment: the decision to take on a visual identity as a kind of NGO, appropriation of the GATS FREE ZONE logo, an existing (rather ugly) logo, that we appropriated through hybridizing it with the Venice lion

Aesthetic manoeuvre in the sense of strategic actions across multiple platforms, and temporalities, to disseminate info and the artists' works>>>Concept of action, of curators as carrying out an action, performing the project

Kiosk

Commons, mise en commun,

Free gratuit

Creative Commons

Art in circulation on the web, in free publications, accessible

Notes from Cultural Policy: 51: public sphere as the “political space for rational-critical debate”...consequences for policy and connected to the notion of civil society: “the social space of freedom and solidarity”. The public sphere refers to “the conditions of argumentation and representation; civil society, contrasted with the state but not reducible to the market, being somewhere in between.” John Keane (1998: 31) defines civil society as “a community of actors whose legally inscribed patterns of association are voluntary, which means that its members are equipped with the power to interpret and to transform the social and political structures within which they interact”. Many arts and cultural organizations act within “this civil-society space, the ‘third sector’, which is neither of the state nor of the market and where goals are sought that are ‘not for profit’”.

Habermas: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*

53: Argued in 1980s that the central problem of contemporary societies is the “Colonization of the life world” by instrumental reason...

53: Useful for analysing “why many interested specifically in ‘culture’ prefer not to talk of cultural policy. To talk of cultural policy is to run the risk of potentially

instrumentalizing culture, of reducing it to something other than what it is. The discourses of state and market, in effect, treat culture instrumentally, to make it, for example, a means of simply embellishing the nation-state (Williams 1984), or, as [McGuigan] has suggested, by reducing all value to exchange value by applying market principles to everything in a global cultural economy”.

53: “The notion of civil society is closely associated with the historical development of the bourgeois public sphere. It has been a means of checking the powers of the state while simultaneously creating the conditions for market relations to develop, which is very much how civil society was imagined in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The paradoxical problem is, however, that the civilizing force of rational-critical debate—what the public sphere is about—has contributed historically to a liberalization of the economy that may eventually threaten civil society itself as the space between state power and exclusively market relations. In our present historical conjuncture, it is again ‘the market’ which is the main encroachment upon the life world of civil society”.

53:”Generally, social and cultural critique is dependant upon some preferred notion of a public sphere or civil discourse that is oriented towards mutual understanding as a critical measure of democratic blockage and as a practical check on systemic abuse of democracy”.

62: Raymond Williams (1984) discussion of **cultural policy as display**: national aggrandizement, and economic reductionism

63: cultural policy proper: ideally to aid the democratic practices of art, culture, and media

Could include concisely edited paragraph of what happened in the case of NZ in terms of NZ cultural content...see also re telecommunications article, and text on how culture is not an isolated category...a few quotes and web references