

## ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE ARTIST, DESIGNER AND ARCHITECT AS FACILITATOR OF INCLUSIVE SOCIAL PROCESSES

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The public involvement in a visual art practice has different meaning on an artist practice to being involved as an artist in education, architecture or cultural activities. The artist or individual engagement responds to sharing skills and abilities. This assignation forces the artist to detach himself from his/her practice and its impact and consequences lay the individual status. The artist becomes an educator, a designer, a social worker or a civil servant responding to a demand for the duration of a project. Contrasting, a practice socially involved is composed of partnerships and is defined by a multidisciplinary nature. It challenges the notion of authorship and consequently also challenges the current institutional mode of dissemination (based on the author) that make a work of art. Is a socially based practice produce work of art or the work of an artist?

These are two different approaches of the role of the artist in socially based practices that are often merged, and the artist role resumed to a skill sharer rather than a practice sharer. The potential of the role of the art practice itself is rarely considered. This paper addresses the analysis of the role of the artist practice in socially based practices. Based on two visual art practices I would like to argue that

- Artists manages an inclusive creative method and protocol
- These inclusive protocols have authorship status
- An authored method doesn't respond to a demand therefore doesn't facilitate.

### SECTION 1: AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS

For the last ten years, I have gradually involved communities and public at large in the creative process and the production of artworks. My practice has developed into a hybrid status between technical challenge, administration/negotiation and reflection, inspired by both a studio practice (having been trained as an environmental artist) and an administration practice (having worked as a fundraiser and public art co-ordinator for five years for the Bristol base engineer Charity, Sustrans). I got involved in multidisciplinary practice very much through intuition and the experience of practising as an artist and administrator. It always has been totally impossible for me to make artwork without the involvement of an audience or having a consultative approach. Although my practice is fully based on social exchange to develop and implement projects, I would not define my role as a facilitator of inclusive social process.

The visual practice case studies<sup>1</sup> I will describe are defined by their intrinsic relationship with social process. Their creative process is based on the negotiations and the proceedings that will be necessary in order to inform and get involve with a community. This process is seeking for partnership and its production will be based on a multiplicity of professions, individual, facts, places and mediums. Although a timescale can be given at the beginning of a project, the two practices objective isn't about achieving finality. The projects aim at improving a creative method that has no finality, but the one of communicating within the partnership. The method is amended and refined from a project to another. The public and professional involved are contributing to this objective providing the artist with new approach and their own professional expertise. It's not about using the other as an instrument but rather improving a technique in-vivo, a mutual exchange between art and non-art context. One can say that in return the artist provides an opportunity for the participants to explore their creativity, to empower themselves and to carry other work they would not have considered prior to the project.

It's an inclusive process totally lead by artistic freedom. The practice does respond to a need but rather creates a demand by providing a unique product that has not been thought of previously by the

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<sup>1</sup> **Building Underwood (2000-2002)** is co-ordinated by three artists, in the French Pyrenees, intending to gather an audience/participants in a natural setting aiming to build from scratch buildings, circulatory systems, community tasks, all structures necessary to create in two months, analysing and studying a living environment.

**Vernacular (1999-2002):** Is a vehicle and acts as a source of database in my Ph.D., originally the title of an audience specific touring practice. The word 'vernacular' indicates 'language', 'communication', and the non-object, at a local level. These notions are the core structure of this touring project in that they constitute the groundwork and the base for the development of each project. The dialogue initiates and develops each artwork in response to places. The touring structure is intrinsic to the content (vernacular dialogues) of the project. The concept **-a series of vernacular dialogues in a nomadic structure-** challenges the notion that site specificity does not only relate to the physicality of the location and therefore can be applicable to a nomadic concept. The interventions as dialogue, and myself, are facilitating opportunities, so that the audience can see the potential of dialogue on a specific issue that relates to their locality and way of life.

participants. The uniqueness of the exchange, and its mutual benefits are the outcome of the inclusive process, therefore the outcome of the artistic method rather than the manufacture of a final product.

## **SECTION 2: A CREATIVE SOCIAL PROCESS AS A PROTOCOL: CAN A PROTOCOL BE AUTHORED?**

The tools used by the artist are not different to any diplomatic or negotiating tools. The method follows a number of chronological phases that allow the artist and future participants to get to know each other, to decide on the subject to raise through the method and to allow both parties to raise respective expectations. The partnership should be installed in order that everyone communicates at ease and learns through the method. This creative process is similar to a protocol, as the artist, in a way manages administrative procedure and the creative process results in administering contingencies. The creation in this particular method gains the 'logic of rules and regulation aesthetic that consists of agreeing on the structure of the discussion, being the form of the 'artwork', negotiating, and deciding in a democratic process'<sup>2</sup>. In the context of performing art, Allan Kaprow has defined the art experience in four stages, which are the situation of the artwork, its operation, its structure, its feedback and finally its learning. This definition and analysis of his art experience allowed me to compare it and identify my type of art experience, a creative protocol, that could be defined and analysed as a creative performance in the professional world. Artists use the participation as a strength that will benefit both the community and the artist himself. The method does not intend to integrate any form of economic production but to use professional language in order to make the artistic process understood to the non-art context. Its only real economy is a 'type of creativity with political nature'<sup>3</sup>, by involving the body politic.

Although a socially inclusive protocol, the creative method doesn't respond to a demand. The artist orchestrates the protocol hoping to take his participant into an area of work they wouldn't have thought of. Result of a shareable negotiation technique, the protocol is still authored by its uniqueness in each project. This authored inclusive process had gradually integrated its own mechanism of recognition in order to inform the multidisciplinary level of the nature of the work and the variety of individual the practice involves (art and non-art included). From a simple management and administrative procedure it became an artistic formed protocol. It is not the attitudes that are becoming (art) forms (E.g. Happening or in the performance) but the attitudes are the art and create the sensitive experience.

## **SECTION 3: AUTHORSHIP VS DEMAND**

In the social process, the artist experiments in-vivo his/her capacity in inserting, in a coherent manner, his/her creative process and production in a contemporary setting. The experimentation of this protocol is an opportunity for the community of a creative engagement and for the artist the affirmation of a social role<sup>4</sup>, as a visual art practitioner.

Socially involved and process based practices are now included as a symbolic system of understanding art and is recognised as an artistic production amongst others. It is a chance for artists undertaking this new form of practice but also a problem in a discipline that use to be valued in its object (Art) production and distinguish itself from knowledge, communication and interpretation<sup>5</sup>. This art is much characterised now by its creative process than by its production. Working in the real world, a world of economics and functions, the artist practice will often hope to be 'used' as an economics or social strength towards defined objectives. In order for the inclusive process described above facilitates something the artist method would need to assist the progress of this something. Although a protocol confined in a clear and transparent method, it is an authored method valued for its creative, risk taking and uncertain nature. As oppose to diplomatic protocol, our method provides no guarantee from one project to the other. The creative process is unique, self-centred and artistically driven following one's beliefs. How can an artistic practice respond to a demand and assist in the progress of something? Did ever an authored work facilitated?

Is placing the artist in a facilitator role is about realising works that no one else can physically, socially or politically realise? Artists fulfil their own needs and believe. Theirs method and practice are driven toward the need of the artistic problematic. The method's impact and consequences might lead the participants to proceed in future development with the ideas ignited by the artist. This socially inclusive process based method implemented by the artist is inclusive by its process but the outcome will never fulfil the expectation of inclusive social process. The role of art is to raise new expectation not providing an answer to existing one. A creative process is not about resolving or finding problem. The only function that can be attributed to art practice is to teach us to see the world differently.

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<sup>2</sup> P. Ardenne, 2002, Un Art Contextuel, Création artistique en milieu urbain en situation d'intervention de participation, Flammarion, p190

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p213

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p280

<sup>5</sup> J.J., Gleizal, 1994, L'Art et le Politique, p17

**AN ARTISTIC INCLUSIVE METHOD WITHOUT AN ARTIST FACILITATOR**

Current visual art practices are intrinsic to inclusive social process by their multidisciplinary nature involving and relying on exchange, contribution and partnership from a non-art as well as an art audience. Can this inclusive process provide the artist with a status of facilitator? The paradox in the artist role as facilitator stands in the working relationship and practice of the notion of authorship and demand. The inclusive protocol in an artistic practice is a mean not an end to the creative process. A facilitator would have to make it an end as well as a mean by responding to a brief and achieving the expected objectives. Taking on board these requirements, the practice loose its creative freedom and the fulfilment of its own believe.

A creative practice can have the benefit of inclusive social process without placing the artist as a cultural designer or worst a civil servant backing up the culture of repairing 'social disease'. The role of artists as facilitators seems another ways of replacing the word 'artist' and providing them with an economically viable function in the body politic, undermining the creative value of the artistic practice itself. Expecting artists to become facilitators rely on a political solution, rather than an artistic one. It wouldn't provide the practice any benefit, except an offer wide open into a world of compromises, but rather supply the new 'artist' with a recognised professional status in the body politic.