Tactical Media and Art Institutions
Some Questions

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TACTICAL MEDIA, POLITICS AND ART WORLD TABOOS

As an artist, writer and activist in Vancouver, Canada, I first encountered tactical media (TM) around 2000. Through word of mouth as well as descriptions of projects and actions on various email lists, I heard about the activities of the Barbie Liberation Organization (a project by RTMark involving the switching of voiceboxes of GI Joe and Barbie dolls, so that GI Joe would say, 'Let's plan our wedding', while Barbie would say, 'Vengeance is mine'). At the time I was becoming politically active and was frustrated with the lack of political consciousness within the artworld, often expressed through post-critical, post-political apathy. In Canada, the word 'politics' had become inextricably linked to the word 'identity'. This association made many people immediately switch off, partly because of still unresolved issues around institutionalised racism, and also because of that combination of generational conflict narratives and fashion that would lead the artworld to dismiss earlier struggles as passé. TM provided a needed and refreshing approach to cultural practice because it was unafraid of being explicitly political. In some cases TM was based on an anti-capitalist analysis, lacking, in my experience, within discussions around identity politics, as earlier challenges to Eurocentrism and institutionalised racism were being co-opted into official and corporate multiculturalism. TM was not afraid of didacticism, another artworld taboo; many projects had an obvious pedagogical dimension. Interestingly, TM in Canada seemed to emerge out of activism rather than art (as defined by museums or even independent spaces at the time). One particularly inspiring example of this was the Deconstructionist Institute for Surreal Topology, whose members catapulted teddy bears across the fence (the infamous 'Wall of Shame') at the 2001 Free Trade of the Americas summit in Quebec City. In a general sense, I associate TM with the notion of culture jamming popularised by Adbusters and the counter- or alter-globalisation movement.

Those two aspects came together in Naomi Klein's influential book *No Logo*,[1] which includes a section on culture jamming. Klein discusses the interventions of Adbusters, Jorge Rodríguez Gerada and the Billboard Liberation Front among others, and historicises these activities in relation to Situationist détournement. I also think of alternative media initiatives such as resist.ca, tao.ca, or the Indymedia network, which were indispensable as information and organising tools.

PRAGMATISM AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF TACTICAL MEDIA

As TM now seems to be becoming institutionalised, there are certain questions that it needs to address, which will be the focus of this text. These questions have to do with the contradictions of a tactical approach within a process of institutionalisation (which Raymond Williams, in *The Sociology of Culture*, defines as becoming 'officially recognised as a part of the central organisation itself').[2] At a time when culture is used to serve many kinds of 'image management' purposes, the 'central organisation' may mean not only the museum or the state but also the corporation, cultural policy initiative or city branding campaign. I am asking whether this places some real limits on TM's pragmatic method – in other words, if TM has taken the approach of 'take the money and run', then have we been noticed? The second question I am asking is how TM engages a wider public, audience or political constituency, if it now has greater visibility. Much of the rhetoric around TM claims that the work can potentially empower the audience. But the context where the activity takes place affects how people might experience or participate in TM. As TM becomes institutionalised does it mean operating in contexts that work against these intentions?

TM has occupied multiple contexts, ranging from exhibition spaces to demonstrations to media interventions to the web, and the agility with which practitioners have shifted between these contexts is exemplified by Critical Art Ensemble and subRosa. TM practices have also encompassed a range of activities including art production, writing and publishing, and political organising. This has meant negotiating different, sometimes contradictory disciplinary, criteria and bringing them into a productive tension, such as the demand for formal or visual experimentation within an art context, or communicability and easy reproducibility within activism. One context could be used to problematise another, as in the use of visual and performance art strategies within anti-globalisation protests mentioned earlier.

Pragmatism was at the heart of this approach, connected to TM's interdisciplinarity and apparent lack of concern with the usual taboos of art (the didacticism and explicit politics mentioned earlier but also utilitarianism, collectivism and the creation of repeatable rather than unique situations). This pragmatism also guided much of TM's relationship to art institutions and exhibition spaces which were seen as useful for their space, resources and public – but not the only site where activities might take place. Much writing framing TM exhibitions reflected this: the catalogue for the exhibition 'The Interventionists' was called a 'user's manual for the creative disruption of everyday life'.[3] Stephen Wright, in

1 Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs, Taking Aim at the Brand Name Bullies*, HarperCollins, New York, 2000

2 Raymond Williams, *The Sociology of Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995, p 36

3 Nato Thompson, Gregory Sholette, *The Interventionists: User's Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life*, MIT and Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, Massachusetts, 2004

the catalogue essay for *The Future of the Reciprocal Readymade*, which took place at Apexart in 2004, stressed functionality, calling for an approach to art as both an 'open toolbox' and a 'walk-in toolbox'.[4] The implication here is that by offering tools for use, TM practitioners can use exhibition spaces to encourage viewers to become active producers. In his catalogue essay for 'The Interventionists', Gregory Sholette discussed the 'artist as tool provider' in relation to early twentieth-century Constructivists and Productivists.[5] He then questioned the relative absence of political strategy in the present (post-1989) moment by quoting exhibition curator Nato Thompson's argument that:

> … interventionists do not preach. They do not advocate. As opposed to providing a literal political message, these artists provide tools for the viewer/participant to develop their own politics. In this sense, the political content is found in a project's use. They supply possibilities as opposed to solutions.[6]

Sholette speculates on whether this shift reflects a 'healthy disillusionment with expert culture as well as an acknowledgement that even when preaching social awareness artists remain a privileged class'.[7] He also stresses different relationships to the state: the Constructivists and Productivists were dedicated to building Communism in the USSR, while he sees the Interventionists as closer to NGOs in structure, stressing 'pragmatic and tactical action over ideology'.[8]

What does it mean to claim the art context can be used pragmatically, as a toolkit? What are the conditions of possibility for this approach? What are the limits? If the point is not to preach to the audience/public but to provide tools to empower them, then how can these tools actually to be put to use? These are the questions I will take up here. To answer them, it will be necessary to consider the larger cultural and social frameworks that affect audience experiences and responses to exhibitions and other public events.

WHO IS THE PUBLIC FOR TACTICAL MEDIA?

Much of the writing on TM has focused on democratising production. Writing on open source and, more recently, social software has claimed that these technologies go beyond the sender–receiver model of communication, erasing the distinction between producer and consumer and even becoming a 'micro-politics of resistance against the broadcast hegemony'.[9] Other statements, such as *The ABC of Tactical Media*, have tried to erase this distinction through de-emphasising expertise, drawing inspiration from the 'rebellious user'[10] in Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*[11] who creatively misuses consumer products. However, there seems to be little discussion of the audience/public for TM, although one could assume that culture jamming is intended to reach – and politicise – the 'general public', and that within the context of protests TM interventions would be speaking to activists, the police and the media. In a wider sense I would also like to ask (as TM is gaining visibility): who is TM trying to engage? Other TM practitioners? Rebellious users who may not necessarily see their small everyday

4 Stephen Wright, *The Reciprocal Readymade*, catalogue essay, Apexart, New York, USA, 2004

5 Gregory Sholette, 'Interventionism and the Historical Uncanny, or: Can there be revolutionary art without the revolution?', in *The Interventionists*, op cit, p 133

6 Nato Thompson, 'Trespassing Relevance', in *The Interventionists*, op cit, pp 138–9

7 Ibid, p 139

8 Ibid

9 Eric Kluitenberg, *Media without an Audience*, http://rhizome.org/thread.rhiz?thread=1606&page=1#1911

10 David Garcia and Geert Lovink, *The ABC of Tactical Media*, http://project.waag.org/tmn/frabc.html

11 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans Stephen Rendall, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1984

subversions as art or as activism?[12] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's or Paolo Virno's multitude[13] or Maurizio Lazzarato's immaterial labourers?[14]

While most of my experiences with TM have been within activism, when I have encountered TM in exhibition spaces, it has involved documentation or props from actions or interventions, often displayed in a conventional museological manner. The implication is that the interventions take place elsewhere and the gallery space is for contemplating the evidence or results – or, more rarely, for contemplating the possibility of making similar interventions in one's own everyday life. So then, what is the difference between using the exhibition space as a toolkit or in a more conventional manner? I am not claiming that all presentations of TM should be 'interactive' in a literal sense, nor do I deny that audiences can respond in ways that are difficult to predict, including 'active' responses to more contemplative settings.[15] But I feel it is important to go beyond the claim of the exhibition functioning as a toolkit and ask how this might operate in practice and, furthermore, how museum or art conventions encourage or discourage the active use of the 'tools' on offer. Acknowledging here that there are many possible approaches to 'pedagogy', it is still important to consider how information should be presented to audiences, especially since the codes of the art discipline tend to limit this by privileging the metaphorical over the explicitly 'instructional'.

It is also important to ask about how contexts themselves can produce audiences. For the most part, street protests, social centres, electronic sit-ins and other media interventions construct an audience/public in different ways than do art exhibitions. In some forms of intervention, everyone becomes an active participant and there is no outside 'audience'. In other situations the immediate 'audience' is made the object of a prank for the benefit of a larger 'public', as in the Yes Men's performative interventions before WTO officials or live on the BBC. But how do publics constituted in ways such as these relate to conventional art audiences? Do they remain separate or do they ever meet? If the project takes the form of a prank, then is the art audience 'in on the joke'?

EXPERTS, AMATEURS AND THE POLITICS OF KNOWLEDGE

A related question is how TM projects negotiate the politics of knowledge. Power relations and socioeconomic privilege are embedded in media and technological competences, no less than in art competences. By valuing a DIY aesthetic, TM has tried to dissolve the opposition between the amateur and expert. But these differences persist to some degree in all artistic genres in which media and technology play a central role. It is a cliché to say that media and technological expertise has been the domain of privileged white men in industrialised countries. And so claims that technologies are emancipatory or effective where previous strategies have failed will continually run into this problem. However, a more productive strategy is that taken by the workshop/performances of both CAE[16] and feminist collective subRosa; they are significant in how they deliberately make publicly accessible knowledge usually kept under

12 For a discussion linking everyday acts of rebellion and TM, see, Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-Public Sphere*, http://post.thing.net/node/889

13 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000; *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, Penguin Books, New York, 2004; Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Semiotext(e), New York, 2002

14 See Maurizio Lazzarato, *Immaterial Labour*, http://www.generation-online.org/c/fcimmateriallabour3.htm

15 Claire Bishop argues that traditional, contemplative gallery spectatorship is not passive: 'Introduction/Viewers as Producers', in *Participation*, ed Claire Bishop, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2006, pp 11–17

16 Critical Art Ensemble, *Electronic Civil Disobedience*, Autonomedia, New York 1997, p 6

high secrecy (in this case biotechnology research) but with public conse-quences. subRosa in particular draws attention to how biotechnology research affects the 'lives, livelihoods, bodies, roles and subjectivities of women'.[17] This includes women's bodies as 'parts-supply and produc-tion laboratories'[18] but also the use of farming technologies to deprive women of a livelihood in traditional agricultural communities, and the gender division of labour in scientific research. Their performances, often playing on the form of educational demonstrations, take place in a variety of contexts, including art venues but also technology fairs, student workshops and academic conferences.[19] Both CAE and subRosa are trying to *take back* expert knowledge – and as the indictment of a CAE member in the USA makes clear, there are consequences for doing this. It is different with the Yes Men who deliberately make use of these competences (in other words to perform the expert role) in order to successfully stage their infiltrations. The point is not for us all to become Yes Men.

DOES CONTEXT STILL MATTER, EVEN IF IT'S BEING USED TACTICALLY?

These issues of audience and public are unavoidable in any consideration of how projects actually function. I will turn now to the exhibition frame-work and how it might facilitate or prevent the use of offered tools. Are there differences, for example, between presenting a project within an independent space, a media festival, a museum, a biennial, etc? As John Miller,[20] Pamela Lee[21] and others have described, biennials and other larger, prestigious exhibitions tend to involve dynamics of spectacle and reification; they can easily become 'naturalized'[22] into total artworks by curator-auteurs. This tendency, Miller argues, works 'against artists' critical intentions, but also – more importantly – against the ability of audiences to evaluate the show in an analytical fashion'.[23] I would also argue that an awed and overwhelmed audience may not be in the best frame of mind to make active use of tools. To return to the question of audience, these contexts may also shape the demographics of the public attending or participating in projects.

I am moving towards a larger issue: the assumption that the art context is neutral. Assuming that tactical or pragmatic occupations of art institutions do not assume such neutrality, do they adequately take into account the realities of institutional power relations? In a climate where contemporary art, especially in its more prestigious presentation venues, is increasingly implicated in processes of globalisation and city branding, such questions must be confronted. In this regard, it is useful to think about the traditions of institutional critique and the history of that genre's institutionalisation.

PRAGMATISM AS A RESPONSE TO THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF CRITIQUE

In the 1970s and '80s, practices of institutional critique were motivated by the awareness that art institutions were implicated in hierarchies of

17 subRosa, interviewed by Ryan Griffis, in *The Interventionists*, op cit, p 124

18 Ibid

19 subRosa, http://www.cyberfeminism.net/index.html

20 John Miller, 'The Show You Love to Hate: a psychology of the mega-exhibition', in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds Reesa Greenberg et al, Routledge, London, 1997, pp 269–74

21 Pamela Lee, 'Boundary Issues: The Art World Under the Sign of Globalism', *Artforum*, New York, November 2003, pp 164–7

22 John Miller, op cit, p 272

23 Ibid

power and capital and therefore were incapable of the neutrality they often claimed. Artists working in this direction often put direct pressure on institutions. One only has to think of Hans Haacke's research project *Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System as of May 1, 1971*, which exposed a member of a prominent Manhattan family as a slum landlord and triggered the exhibition's censorship. Another example would be the Guerrilla Girls, who forced the artworld to consider the exclusion of women and minorities from art institutions and exhibitions. In a recent article, Hito Steyerl draws parallels between institutional critique and activism. She argues that 'institutional critique functioned like the related paradigms of multiculturalism, reformist feminism, ecological movements and so on. It was a new social movement within the arts scene.'[24]

But by the early to mid-1990s, works of institutional critique were actually being commissioned by museums, as Miwon Kwon pointed out in *One Place After Another*. Fred Wilson's site-specific excavation of institutional racism at the Baltimore Museum, *Mining the Museum*, was later commissioned by the Seattle Art Museum. Kwon saw the commissioning of these kinds of projects in terms of institutions initiating and managing their own self-critiques.[25] Artists then take on a role similar to travelling consultants by providing 'critical-artistic services'.[26] This trend could be interpreted most generously as reflecting institution's desire to be more open and democratic – a desire artists have fostered by *identifying with the institution*. Andrea Fraser, in her 2005 *Artforum* article 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', articulates this sentiment:

> It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalise, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to.[27]

From a more sceptical viewpoint, this 'institution of critique' could be read as a defensive and neoliberal move, similar to the way in which businesses or government agencies perform internal audits to pre-empt outside criticism. In this reading, art is used by the institutions to give symbolic cover to actual failures. Returning to Kwon's critique of Wilson, an artwork *about* institutionalised racism can give the impression that the institution is dealing with the problem while leaving the situation unchanged. Steyerl draws attention to this dynamic, arguing that such practices reflect the 'unmooring of the seemingly stable relation between the cultural institution and the nation state'.[28] Unfortunately for institutional critics, she continues:

> … a model of purely symbolic representation gained legitimacy in this field as well. Institutions no longer claimed to materially represent the nation state and its constituency, but only claimed to represent it symbolically.[29]

The result is a situation where symbolic displays of self-critique can stand in for actual change – and, in the worst sense, can even prevent or at least pre-empt change by creating the illusion of 'progressiveness'.

If institutional critique has become institutionalised as a set of mainly symbolic gestures of institutional self-questioning and image

24 Hito Steyerl, *The Institution of Critique*, European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies, January 2006, http://eipcp.net/transversal/0106/steyerl/en

25 Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specific Art and Locational Identity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA and London, 2002, p 47

26 Ibid. 'Critical-artistic services' may also refer to Andrea Fraser's work, *How to provide an Artistic Service*, Depot, Vienna, 1994, http://home.att.net/~artarchives/fraserservice.html

27 Andrea Fraser, 'From a Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', *Artforum*, September 2005, p 283

28 Hito Steyerl, op cit

29 Ibid

management, where does this leave critical practitioners? TM's pragmatic occupation of art institutions may partly be a response to this shift. If institutions aren't going to go away and are becoming increasingly sophisticated at incorporating critiques, then maybe the best approach is, as Brian Holmes argues, to 'exploit the museum's resources for other ends'.[30] This could mean redirecting money from museums into activist projects, or using the convention of artistic autonomy to sanction otherwise criminalised activities, such as Yomango's shoplifting. TM's pragmatism may also reflect the diverse disciplinary background of its practitioners, some of who may not specifically be invested in the politics of the art and exhibitions.

TACTICAL MEDIA, CRITICAL PRACTICES AND CORPORATE FUNDING

It is certain, however, that one of the points raised by earlier forms of institutional critique will not go away. Institutions are not neutral, even when they allow themselves to be used tactically by artists. Another unavoidable question (which is why Haacke's project is still relevant) is how institutions are structured and financed, no matter how progressive they claim to be. This question is becoming increasingly urgent because of how culture is currently used to promote neoliberalism. Two recent phenomena indicate the danger: the support of critical and progressive art (including TM) by corporate institutions, and the role of museums and art festivals in city branding campaigns, especially those (pertinent to aspects of TM) that use rhetoric around 'creative industries'.[31] In both situations, qualities associated with critical contemporary art are used to legitimise institutions, cities and corporations, and this may point to a real limit of tactical practices.

While there is a long history of corporations collecting art, the past twenty years have seen the rise of corporate sponsorship of critical and progressive art practices.[32] Some examples are: Deutsche Bank and the Siemens Art Fund in Germany; Erste Bank and corporate-funded exhibition spaces such as the Generali Foundation in Austria; the Cartier Foundation in France; and the Bonniers Konsthall in Sweden. Brian Holmes addresses this issue in an essay on the politics of the exhibition 'Geography and the Politics of Mobility' at the Generali Foundation in 2003. The exhibition included the work of Bureau d'Etudes, Frontera Sur RRVT, Makrolab, Multiplicity and Raqs Media Collective. Discussing TM's pragmatic approach to exhibition spaces, Holmes writes:

> For the tactical media underground in Europe, art shows offer useful research deadlines, a chance to share ideas and critiques, at best some production money – and at worst, a damaging distraction. The revenge of the concept has been to finally create parallel and alternative circuits of experimentation, production, distribution, use and interpretation. To be sure, these circuits are hardly consolidated – but the best way to do so is to maintain other urgencies, which cannot be treated within any of the specialised subsystems.[33]

He then registers his discomfort with the exhibition site:

30 Brian Holmes, 'Liar's Poker', *Springerin*, January 2003, pp 18–23

31 Most recently popularised by Richard Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Basic Books, New York, 2002, and now being adopted as policy in some European nations and in Canada

32 See also Chin-Tao Wu's *Privatizing Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s*, Verso, London, 2002.

33 Brian Holmes, op cit, pp 18–23

> The position [taken in the catalogue essay] was fairly clear. But the actual site of the show in question – the Generali Foundation in Vienna – was still part of the game. And we all know that uncomfortable feeling. At whatever distance you place the operations of a foundation from the financial holding behind it, the connection through the proper name is complete.[34]

What are the implications for TM practices if they are now being supported by corporate institutions, and does this point to another real limit to the tactical use of institutionalised exhibition spaces? In *Sponsoring and Neoliberal Culture*, Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann characterise corporate sponsorship of contemporary critical practices as a form of branding, using the example of the sponsorship of Rirkrit Tiravanija's six-month stay in Cologne by Central Krankenrersicherung (an insurance company). According to Creischer and Siekmann, 'the sponsors emphasised that they were no longer interested in acquiring art products, but in the transferability of art itself to the company philosophy'.[35] In other words, corporations seek to transfer to their own public image qualities associated with contemporary art: 'cutting edge' innovation and creativity but, more importantly, the credibility and legitimacy associated with what is perceived as mainly a non-commercial and critical activity. It might be useful to ask how qualities associated with TM might serve a similar 'image transfer' procedure: its ingenuity, its agility in adapting to various contexts and circumstances, its technological savvy or its often libertarian and even anti-authoritarian stance? How might this be useful to companies branding themselves as 'innovative', 'creative', 'entrepreneurial' or 'irreverent' (all common neoliberal buzzwords)? Gregory Sholette has argued that since 9/11 corporate culture in the US has turned away from the 'radical business management' styles popular during the dot-com boom,[36] while in other contexts, especially in Europe, 'creative industries' remains a popular concept.

INNOVATION AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Another symptom of neoliberalism is the city branding phenomenon, in which festivals and cultural institutions increasingly play a role. In *The Expediency of Culture*, George Yúdice describes how culture has come to be seen as a potential 'resource' for boosting trade and tourism, lowering crime rates, etc.[37] As cities engage in ambitious city branding and urban regeneration campaigns, the concept of 'creative industries' is guiding urban policy-making. A high level of cultural activity is seen as having great potential economic benefit, although the nature and degree of benefits is in many cases unclear. Policy based on creative industries has also come under question for its contribution to the expansion of precarious labour in the form of temporary, low-wage service jobs[38] and to the displacement of low-income residents due to gentrification.[39]

One particularly controversial case of the use of contemporary art for city branding is an event called 'Art Goes to Heiligendamm', in connection with the 2007 G8 summit in Heiligendamm, Germany. The website used the rhetoric of creative activism and interventionism (rhetoric, I

34 Ibid

35 Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, *Sponsoring and Neo-liberal Culture*, in *Society of Control*, ed Stephan Dillemuth, http://www. societyofcontrol.com/ research/creissiekm_engl1. htm#sdendnote30anc

36 Gregory Sholette, 'Disciplining the Avant-Garde: The United States versus the Critical Art Ensemble', *CIRCA: Contemporary Visual Culture in Ireland*, Summer 2005, pp 50–9

37 George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC and London, 2003, p 1

38 Andy Beckett, 'Can Culture Save Us?', *Guardian*, 2 June 2003, http://society.guardian. co.uk/regeneration/story/ 0,,968680,00.html

39 Merjin Oudenampsen, *Extreme Makeover*, MUTE, October 2006 http://www.metamute.org/ en/Extreme-Makeover

should note, which is close to that associated with some of the writing around TM):

> ART GOES HEILIGENDAMM responds to the challenge of going to the places where the social movements are, in order to interact with the different participants. The art interventions are intended to allow a 'permeability' of action and perception between forms of presentation and representation in art and social movements.[40]

Some projects used strategies associated with TM: a temporary isolation cell set up in the city centre, the occupation of a storefront to develop 'wearable architecture', networked conversations using surveillance cameras, and an open-source video distribution platform.[41] While emphasising interventionism, the website simultaneously presents contemporary art as a mediating and 'civilising' force:

> The supporting institutions in Rostock hope that the art interventions will have a de-escalating effect. All over the world we notice the urgency of dialogue between different cultures, which cannot take place without artists since their opinions are not based upon tactical and strategic interests like diplomacy or economy but rather refer to the universality and the freedom of art. Unlike the state, art is not tied to any hierarchical interest.[42]

The contradictory intentions here are revealing: culture can simultaneously activate the public and promote 'de-escalation'. Will art make people less inclined to protest? Can one distinguish art interventions from protest actions, especially in terms of the nature of public interaction?

If qualities such as 'criticality', creativity and ingenuity are seen as good for corporate sponsors and city branding campaigns, even to the point of promoting 'de-escalation' at the G8 summit – not, I would argue, the most productive or useful for empowering publics – then what does participation in such processes help to legitimise? What, then, are the implications for TM? Do we need something more than pragmatism here? Do we actually need a strategy to counter the strategic use of culture as resource or image management?

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

If these cultural institutions ultimately are not conducive to providing tools and empowering audiences, then one approach would be to follow the Constructivists and Productivists and contribute our skills directly to social movements. Or we could concentrate on creating counter-institutions better suited to the task at hand – perhaps interdisciplinary organisations that do not entirely frame themselves or their publics according to art conventions. TM practitioners may already have created spaces of this kind. However, if we conclude that museums and other cultural institutions are still useful (and of course they are not all implicated in the processes I have described to the same degree), then I would argue that we need to consider carefully how we work with them, and especially how audiences interact with projects and offered tools. This includes carefully considering the weight of collaborations with

40 From the website Art Goes Heiligendamm, http://www.art-goes-heiligendamm.net/en/idea

41 Ibid

42 Ibid

43 Bishop's work usefully challenges relational aesthetics, yet also reasserts traditional artistic autonomy. 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 110, autumn 2004, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp 51–79, and 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', *Artforum*, XLVI: 6, February 2006, pp 178–83

established institutions in relation to other activities within TM practices, so they do not dominate TM practice as a whole, and maintaining the productive tensions between these various contexts. In doing so, we can learn from how earlier traditions of institutional critique made power relations clear and apparent. This seems especially important to revisit, given that one of the effects of neoliberalism is to erase or smooth over all such conflicts. TM can productively exploit these situations, bringing the same degree of wit, humour and inventiveness with which it has intervened in other contexts. I feel that this rethinking of TM is necessary for me (as a practitioner) now at this point of TM's institutionalisation. TM's interdisciplinarity, disregard for artworld taboos, and inventive, resourceful DIY approach continue to inspire me and also, significantly, pose an important challenge to the present shifts within the artworld (beyond the scope of this text to discuss) which call for traditional definitions of both authorship and spectatorship and a return to disciplinary boundaries.[43] Reconsidering audience/public/ political constituency, in the contexts where TM is experienced, is a necessary step to take both the practice and discourse further.