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The Space that Art Makes: The Antagonist Art Movement and Artist Agency

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Ruth Marie Bowling entitled "The Space that Art Makes: The Antagonist Art Movement and Artist Agency." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Geography.

Micheline F. van Riemsdijk, Major Professor

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The Spaces that Art Makes:
The Antagonist Art Movement and Artist Agency

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Ruth Marie Bowling

August 2014

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Abstract

This thesis uses literatures on art geography, community building, and the art market to explore the process of space-making for art production. In the year 2000, the Antagonist Art Movement (AAM) was established in New York City to create virtual and physical spaces that support art and artists. I contribute to an ongoing discussion about the relationship between art and geography by exploring how artists create spaces for art, and the role of artist communities in maintaining such spaces. The paper uses three documentary films created by the AAM, interviews with key Antagonist members, and observations conducted in NYC to explore the spaces that facilitate art production. My findings reveal a reciprocal relationship between spaces for art and community building. In addition, the act of art-space creation by the AAM resists the demands of the art market on artists. The demands of the art market are a direct product of neoliberalism. This paper extends the literature on art geographies by studying what Hannah Neate refers to as the “alternative geographies of the galleries,” and explores the ways in which artists create spaces for art beyond the venues offered by contemporary art galleries. Thus, I contend that the processes of art production are as valuable to scholars as a finished art product, and that the AAM uses art-space creation as a means of resisting the art market and the demands of neoliberalism. The politics of art-space creation offers geographers a rich and nuanced understanding of the relationship between community building, globalization, and space.

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Chapter 1: Thesis Background

The Antagonist Art Movement (AAM) was established in NYC in the year 2000 to make spaces for artists to create and show artwork beyond the venues offered by the contemporary art market. Since the year 2007, I have attended several Antagonist art shows, unaware of the geographical extent of the group's work. A member of the AAM gave me a documentary film, *The Dolls of Lisbon*, in October 2012 and asked me to watch it. In the film, an Antagonist artist created dolls out of wire and blank canvas and sent them to various artists in the U.S. and abroad. After the artists created art on and with the dolls, they sent the dolls to be shown in an Antagonist art show in Lisbon, Portugal.

The film's cross-cultural collaboration between artists was fascinating. One artist in Berlin deconstructed the doll, reshaping the wire and canvas into a house. Another artist created a banker who was about to receive his "just desserts" for deceiving the public. A group of artists in Ecuador created an animation about a ball game between the painted dolls. The film highlighted the individual, yet similar needs of the participating artists. Throughout the film, regardless of where an artist was located, he or she would express financial challenges and the frustration of finding a space to show his or her art. In addition, the artists marked public spaces with individual art and versions of the AAM logo. The coordination of the dolls project was facilitated by the internet, and the dolls were displayed in small art venues. I was intrigued by the relationship between virtual communication and physical art spaces.

I initially planned to study the role of social media in the artist community. I received approval from the Internal Review Board at the University of Tennessee in April 2013 to conduct research that included participant observation and interviews. I spent two weeks in New York City in summer 2013 to conduct interviews and participant observation at art shows, artists' studios, and a bar owned by AAM members. Eight artists affiliated with the AAM declined a

formal interview but were open to a more informal discussion at an AAM art show that occurred, over meals, and at a bar owned by AAM members. I conducted three semi-formal interviews with members of the AAM who organized current projects. I reviewed the IRB consent form with the informants prior to conducting the interview. After they signed the form, I gave them a copy for their records. Each interview lasted between one and two hours. After I analyzed data collected during fieldwork, my research shifted from investigating the influence of social media on community building to the relationship between art space creation and urban environments. To explore the relationship between urban environments, art spaces, and artists, my research addresses the following questions:

What is the relationship between art-space creation and activism? How do artists create a community that supports non-commercial art and why? In what ways do the group's varied means of space-making speak to larger political concerns, such as neoliberalism?

I analyzed multiple journals to decide to which journal I will submit this manuscript. I researched the focus, scope, and the members of the editorial board of each journal. I plan to submit this manuscript to the peer reviewed journal *Social and Cultural Geography*. I chose this journal because of its interest in art, for example, the collection of papers on art and the environment that were published in 2006, edited by Malcolm Miles. In addition, the journal aims to publish papers that “are especially focused on space, place and nature in relation to social and/or cultural issues, including inequalities, poverty, housing, crime, work, and leisure; as well as everyday life, consumption, identity, community and neighbourhood (and their historic legacies).”¹ My research topic fits well within the scope of the journal as it highlights the social issue of the relationship of community to the creation of spaces.

¹ <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=rscg20>

In this manuscript, I also cite several authors who have published papers in the journal, including Hannah Neate and Harriet Hawkins. This manuscript is formatted with the requirements of *Social and Cultural Geography* in mind. Citations are presented in the Harvard Reference format. The abstract word count is at 199, just under the 200 word limit for *Social and Cultural Geography*.

In the remaining part of the introduction, I discuss what the study of the AAM contributes to scholarly research, the influence of the art market and economics on the work of the AAM, the influence of the urban environment in which most AAM artists reside, and the ways in which the AAM defines art.

Does Art Matter?

People engage with art daily. Art influences the everyday interactions of individuals and institutions. Art is a means to communicate what words cannot grasp or enhance. However, the communication skills of art are often fetishized by consumers (and researchers). Fetishizing what art communicates (i.e. how the final art product shapes space and create place) occurs at the expense of other ways in which art functions in daily life, such as the production of art. The spaces created to produce art are studios but also spaces that support artists. Spaces of support include venues to show art that are beyond the scope of the commercial art gallery, websites and social media, and spaces of emotion that form as a result of community building. The findings of this research reveal that the spaces in which art is produced and the spaces produced by art are intricately woven into place-making practices and community building. In the case of the AAM, place-making practices and community building resist the effects of neoliberalism on art and its creators. This contributes to existing art geographies literatures that, in addition to exploring the

ways in which art impacts spaces, investigate aspects of art production such as gallery spaces (see Neate 2012).

The “hows” and “whys” of art production reveal a nuanced perspective of the flows of finance, power, and ideals which allows a deeper understanding of the flows that affect life at the intimate, personal scale. The AAM does not consider itself a political group, however, the goal of the group is to reject the commodification of both art and the artist (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007). I will demonstrate that in rejecting the demands of the art market, which (through market demand) regulates what art is produced, the group is political. The AAM challenges the idea that art functions as an investment, a means for large profits, and that the art market sets the standard for the creation of art. The AAM create spaces for art production through community gatherings at a local bar, marking public spaces, and initiating places for art showings outside of the commercial art market.

Centering the Antagonist Art Movement

If Antagonists sell their work for profit, they must never make art with material reward in mind even if they seize upon their power to use the system against itself when necessary. – Excerpt from *the Antagonist Manifesto*

To better understand the significance of the AAM, the group must first be situated within the discussion of the ways in which neoliberalism influences urban space and art. The movement is a reaction to the global art market, which is a product of neoliberalism (Harvey 2002; Harris 2013).

David Harvey describes the neoliberalisation of NYC (where the AAM is located):

The ruling elites moved, often fractiously, to support the opening up of the cultural field to all manner of diverse cosmopolitan currents. The narcissistic exploration of self, sexuality, and identity became the leitmotif of bourgeois urban culture. Artistic freedom and artistic license, promoted by the city’s powerful cultural institutions, led, in effect, to the neoliberalization of culture (2005, 45)

Art and its creators are commodified within the art market and the wider cultural economy. The cultural economy refers to the profit to be made from artistic talents of creators (Gibson and Kong 2005; Lange et al. 2008; Markusen and Gadwa 2010; Stallabrass 2004; Tretter 2009).

A specific example of the ways in which art (and its artist) can become commodified is Andy Warhol. Some of his art pieces were uniquely art and some were copies that bore his signature (Graw 2010; Interview July 19, 2013). Copies of Warhol's art sold because of his signature. Thus, the value of the product was placed not on the artwork but on his signature. Warhol is one example of the myriad ways in which art becomes a conduit through which money can flow, trumping the value of the aesthetics or message of a piece of art. In urban environments, artists often receive funding to create works that the city organizers reason will attract revenue. However, there is a tension between how much funding helps art (Markusen and Gadwa 2010) and the ways in which funding hinders and/or exploits the processes of creating art (Dickens 2010; Dickens 2008a; Dickens 2008b; Tretter 2009; Rothenberg 2012; Stallabrass 2004). Thus, artists who seek to create art outside of the demands of an economic market, face a challenge in art funding and the spaces in which to show art. AAM concedes that, as art and its artists become conduits through which capital flows, the contemporary art market controls the creative options of an artist, regardless of how artistic the piece may or may not be. The AAM resists the overarching influence of neoliberalism on art creations as it creates spaces for non-commercial art (Hollands and Vail 2012).

There are two figures on the next page. The first shows the flow and trajectories of the art market. The second shows the relationship between the AAM community and artists. The first visual is based on the "Art-Ecosystem Model" that was created by the strategic research consultancy firm Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre. Note the "Start Here" occurs in art school. There

is no other option. The prestige of an art school, tells a dealer if an artist is a safe investment. For example, an artist from Yale is a safer investment than an artist from a state school. What is important to note in the visual is that all roads lead back to the dealer. Thus, the dealer maintains the most control of art pieces (and the artist).

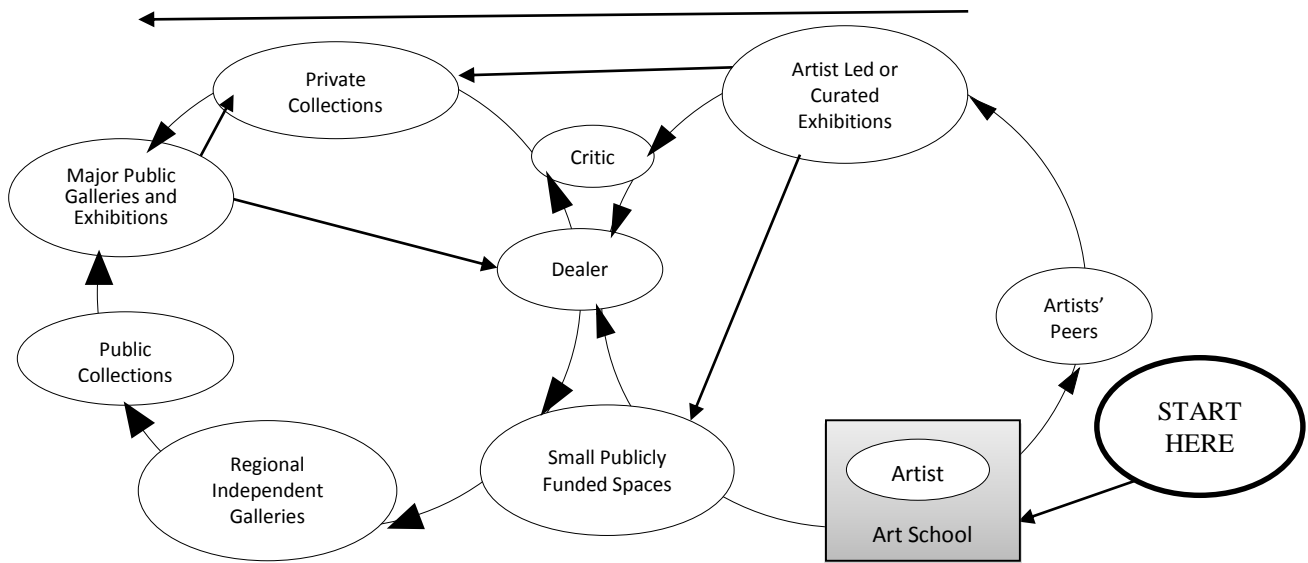


Figure 1. The Contemporary Art Market.

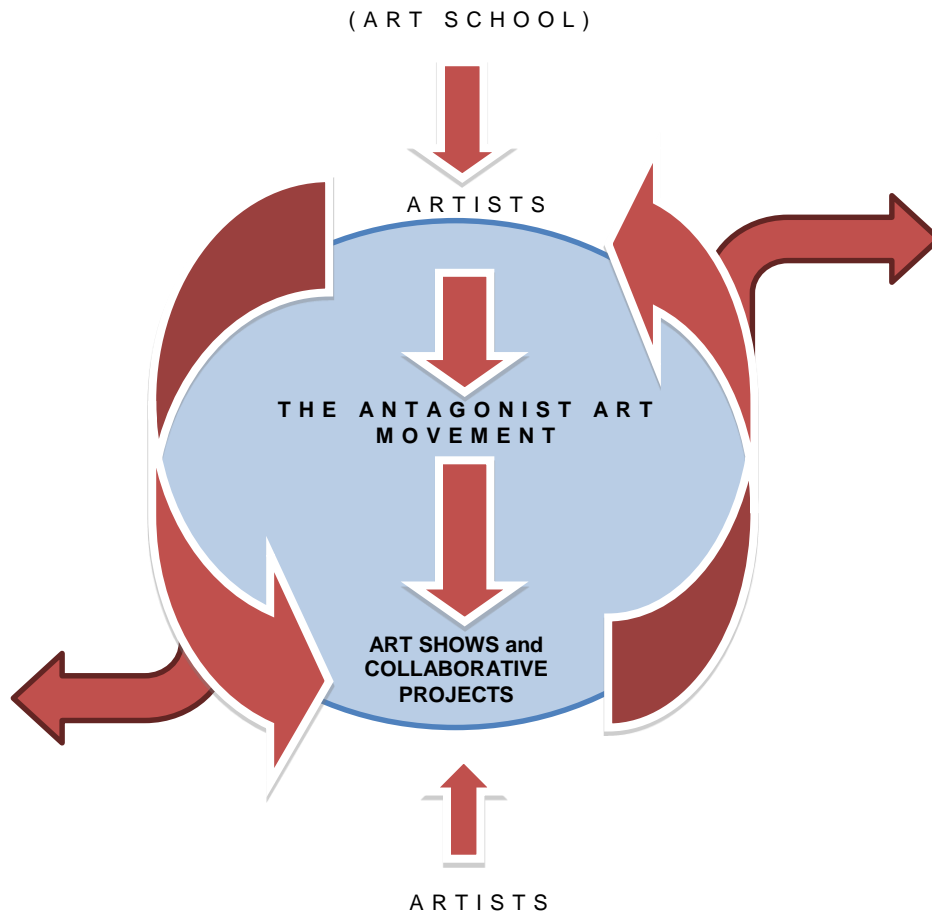


Figure 2. The AAM Community

The Contemporary Art Market visual is a stark contrast to the ways in which art and artists connect within the AAM. In the AAM, the artist continues to have agency in his or her relationship with the group. Thus the artist maintains control of his or her work.

The Antagonist perspective in the chart above differs from the art eco-system model in that an artist may or may not begin with art school. The artists then meet the AAM and participate in art shows. Or sometimes artists join shows unaware of the AAM's work and decide later to collaborate

on more projects with the AAM. This creates a community that, since the year 2000, continues to expand. The arrows leaving the community acknowledge that some artists leave. The AAM is not opposed to artists working within the commercial art market at any time. However, the foremost concern of the group is to create spaces and networks of support for artists to produce the work of their choosing despite market demands. Despite a strong and expanding community, AAM artists face challenges in addition to that of the art market. Finances and funding are an everyday factor for artists and artistic communities. For artists, such as the core group of AAM members, the everyday factors are exacerbated by living in large cities with high costs of living.

Urban Spaces for Art

In like manner, the Antagonist will bring into the service of art any resource, material, or tool which would perpetuate the creative cycle as described above, whether authorized by social convention or not, no matter how great the resistance to doing so. – Excerpt from *the Antagonist Manifesto*

New York City is a hub of cultural and financial capital (Harvey 2002; Eizenberg 2012; Stallabrass 2004; Rothenberg 2012; Graw 2010), and it has a profound influence on the artists and the ways in which they build artistic communities (Zukin 1982). Cities have a long history of being hubs of and inspiration for creativity (Neate 2012; Markusen and Gadwa 2010; Tretter 2009). They are a place where both governments and private firms hope to profit (Gibson and Kong 2005; Tretter 2009). NYC is the a prime example of a city formed as a conduit for and a product of neoliberalism (Harvey 2007; Miller 2004). The city is a contested site (Bridge and Watson 2011; Massey 2005) as people engage with a setting constructed by diverse people, institutions, and built environments. The cross-cultural interactions in NYC influence the ways in which an artist perceives the world, and that perception shapes the art that he or she creates.

The AAM engages with politics through the creation of spaces for art as a resistance to the “economics of art” (Nathan 2013). Thus, the social movement literature is helpful to contextualize the functions of the group. Urban environments influence the ways in which social movements form and work (Nicholls 2007; Uitermark, Nicholls, and Loopmans 2012; Nicholls 2008; Miller and Nicholls 2013; Uitermark and Nicholls 2012), acting as a conduit for people to form strong ties and provide access to resources that individuals or a group may need (i.e. for artists it can be a well-paying job with a flexible schedule or for a group it may be sources of funding). The city works as a platform for like-minded creators to come together as cities have large and diverse populations (Nicholls 2008).

However, a city does not bind a movement to a particular location (Miller and Nicholls 2013). To merely examine the urban environment as a catalyst for what the AAM does, would fail to acknowledge the many other processes, such as travel and social media, that influence the ways in which the AAM builds and expands its network of artists and projects. However, urban areas remain a core influence on how the AAM coordinates its work.

Urban environments often serve as incubators for social movements, and work in tandem with social media, the local institutional support structures, and the agency of participants in a movement (ibid). The majority of AAM members are located in urban spaces (mostly in NYC), and the group is sustained through local support structures (i.e. artists and community groups), and the flexibility that some of its members have to travel and make art. The AAM collaborates with artists in cities around the world. Social media creates a virtual space for showing art and communicating with artists abroad.

The connections between virtual communication and physical engagement supports the assertion of Walter Nicholls that “activists have important connections to distant allies and these

connections permit the flow of information, financing and political backing between them” (Nicholls 2009). He then argues that people are encouraged to join movements when they are placed-based (ibid), however, virtual spaces are still important to the maintenance of networks. This is seen in how the AAM utilizes virtual and physical sites to create venues for art. These art spaces then create spaces for the Antagonist community, which strengthen and expand its connections.

Paul Adams asserts that virtual places “offer at least as much agency and involvement as the corresponding physical places” (1998: 103). There is a digital divide between those who have access to the internet and those who lack access, though that divide continues to shrink (Nakamura 2006; Nakamura 2011; Warf 2011; Warf 2013; Adams and Jansson 2012). The internet offers a means to interact with others previously considered out of reach or touch. Many of the AAM members create and maintain relationships with the group through the internet, even some of those who live in NYC. Thus, virtual and physical places intertwine, facilitate connection and collaboration among artists, which creates the spaces and conditions in which the AAM creates art.

Art Defined

Not only is the Antagonist one who opposes, but also one who provokes. He or she is bound by a most sacred vow to bring forth creative potential wherever it resides, whether in the human heart or in the soul of non-human material. The Antagonist pledges to do what he or she can to assist any artist, in any field of art, to engage in the creative process, and to destroy obstacles to genuine free expression everywhere.

- Excerpt from *the Antagonist Manifesto*

The Antagonist Art Movement does not adopt a concrete definition of art. Defining art is a goal that is secondary to providing artists the agency with which to create art. The group strives to include artists of all skills in its shows. Art is defined by each artist as he or she chooses – not the AAM. The importance of the AAM’s work to geographers is in the spaces that the group consistently creates by art and for art.

Geographic research on the arts has predominately focused on the impact of completed artworks and the meaning of art in particular communities (Doss 1995; Till 2008; Till 2009; Hoelscher 2008; Zebracki 2012). Research on the cultural economy, the creative class, and community art workers has studied the spaces in which art is produced (see Grodach 2011 or Gregson and Rose 2000). However, the focus of research remains on the function of the finished art piece(s). The impact of art on spaces and places is important to explore, however, the spaces that work to create art reveal the connections of art to capitalism, urbanization, and globalization. This paper contributes to the understanding of art-space production through an exploration of the ways in which the AAM creates spaces for art and artists through community building.

How the AAM produces art-spaces is of interest to geographers because it is an act of space creation that resists the pressures of the contemporary global art market, which is intimately intertwined with global flows of finance. Art-space creation is a more subtle approach to activism than an embodied occupation of a political location. However, both tactics aim to resist the infringement of market demands on individual agency. The AAM is less concerned with the message (and to a certain extent, the quality) of an artwork than building a community that gives an artist the opportunity to show work that he or she desires (Minsker 2007; Nathan 2013; Reid 2013). Some of the artwork of AAM members visually represents resistance to commercialization. For example, one artist removed the heads of shooting targets. Removal of the heads allowed others to add to the target whatever or whomever frustrated them. Andy Warhol and George Washington (as he appears on the dollar bill, thus representing a struggle with money, not with the historical figure) were two heads that were pasted on targets.



Figure 3. Film Still: *The Dolls of Lisbon*. Andy Warhol



Figure 4. Film Still: *The Dolls of Lisbon*. Artists Paste on the Target the Face of the U.S. Dollar Bill.

However, the main goal of the AAM is to provide artists with an exhibition place to show art and provide peer support to freely create whatever they desire (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007c; The Antagonist Art Movement 2013; The Antagonist Art Movement 2007a). The art that the AAM shows is not required to conform to a particular kind of political leaning.

Rosalyn Deutsche notes, “Urban space is a product of conflict” (quoted in Massey 2005: 137). The spaces created by the AAM are also a product of conflict. The AAM art spaces are produced through the tensions between 1) what are deemed “proper” spaces for art and those allowed to show art in those spaces 2) the challenges of living in an urban environment and 3) the power relations between dealers and artists. This paper explores the spaces for art which are the result of these tensions.

Chapter 2:

The Spaces that Art Makes: The Antagonist Art Movement and Artist Agency

Our whole statement of purpose is not really to say screw you to the galleries.
(Interview July 19, 2013).

This paper responds to an ongoing discussion about art, geography, and the relationship between the two. Geographers continue to investigate the relationship between art and geography, of which a 2006 collection of papers about art and the environment in *Social and Cultural Geography* is an example (Dickens 2008a; Dickens 2010; Dickens 2008b; Hawkins 2012; Hawkins 2010a; Hawkins 2010c; Neate 2012; Cresswell 1996a; Tolia-Kelly 2011; Foster and Lorimer 2007; Till 2009; Till 2008). I investigate the association between art-space creation and neoliberalism, emphasizing the spaces that are created for art production, through a focus on the Antagonist Art Movement, a group in NYC that creates spaces for art beyond commercial art gallery venues.

The aim of this paper is to expand the discussion of what art does by examining the spaces that are produced for art and by art in the process of art creation. The paper examines 1) the relationship of the global art market to the AAM 2) the spaces that the AAM creates for art and 3) art-space creation as activism. The group creates spaces for art, in both virtual and physical places, as a reaction to the global art market. A community is built through the creation of art spaces, which provides individual artists with the agency to produce art of their choosing and create non-commercial spaces for art.

The Antagonist Art Movement (AAM) does not just create art with a message, but the creation of art-spaces is the message in and of itself. Harriet Hawkins argues that the art-creation process is intimately connected with the urban environment of an artist (2010a). Through the types of art spaces available, the cost of living, and the opportunities for artists, cities shape how AAM members create art (Dickens 2008a). The group's art-space creation

tactics constitute social action (Hawkins 2013) because it creates spaces that facilitate the production of art separate from the trajectory of the global art market.

The art world is global in scope and challenges artists to create works that will sell in the art market (Rothenberg 2012; Erić 2007). “Art world” or “art market” can have different connotations (Neate 2012), but for the purposes of this paper, the term refers to the global art world as defined by the art historian Jonathan Harris:

The globalized art world is, then, this ‘systemic power network’ of interlinked economic, institutional and ideological-cultural relationships and inter-dependencies, founded on the economic and discursive power of Western art, its host societies, their legal systems, art discourses and infrastructures for the buying, selling, authentication and critical validation of artworks (Harris 2013: 540).

The artists of the AAM resist the pressures of neoliberalism, of which the art market is a product (Harvey 2009; Rothenberg 2012; Stallabrass 2004), through the creation of non-commercial art spaces.

This paper explores the urban and social geographies that go into the production and showing of art. The paper incorporates recent literature in art history, exploring how geographers use art history literature to strengthen their understandings of space (Hawkins 2013). I discuss how artists create spaces for art, which is a subtle but consistent resistance to the demands of the art market (a product of neoliberalism) on the agency of artists. I note the role of community in the creation and expansion of art spaces, and examine the relationships between scales at which the artist community interacts.

This case study addresses what Hannah Neate terms the “expanded geography of the gallery,” which studies the connections between spaces, artists, art works, and other factors to understand how art comes into being (2012:291). It provides an example of “the potential of

creative cultural practices for developing critiques of space and place” (Hawkins 2010b: 805). Geographers have studied community art workers (Rose 1997; Gregson and Rose 2000) and the influence of art in varied environments (for example: Butler 2007; Hawkins 2010; Zebracki 2012; Mackenzie 2006). However, the production of art, which results from an intricate relationship between communities and art spaces, offers insights into the politics of art creation in contemporary cities.

Introduction

The AAM was established in the year 2000 as a reaction to the commercialization of art (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007a; Graw 2010; Stallabrass 2004). The group has organized over 3,000 art shows and its members are located in places as diverse as Baltimore, Maryland, Paris, France, and Hong Kong (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007b). The movement aims to counter the commercialization of art and the hierarchy of the traditional art world by providing spaces and opportunities for artists to show their work. The AAM declines to show art in commercial galleries, which, through powerful art dealers, are feeders of art to large corporations and wealthy buyers (Graw 2010; Minsker 2011; Minsker 2007; Stallabrass 2004; Rothenberg 2012).

Since the year 2000, the AAM has provided art venues in which young, old, amateur and professional artists participate. In addition to art shows, the AAM organizes weekly writers’ nights,¹ collaborative public murals (Greenberg 2013), and fanzines.² The AAM also films the events that it participates in, and updates its websites frequently (Adams 1998; Nicholls 2009). These events and spaces allow artists to show independent work that does not necessarily conform to the demands of the art market.

An example of AAM collaboration in NYC is the murals that some AAM artists paint on city blocks. The most recent mural completed was a collaboration between the AAM and the Fourth Arts Block (FAB NYC). FAB NYC is a collaboration between cultural and community groups that aims to promote the fourth arts block between 2nd street and the Bowery in lower Manhattan (FAB 2001). The AAM collaborated with FAB to create a street mural on Essex Place, behind the previous location of CBGB (Country, BlueGrass, and Blues). CBGB was a music venue that was famous for its role in the punk rock scene of the 1970s, and Patti Smith and the Ramones performed there. The mural was inspired by a poem that Dee Dee Ramone wrote about his brother Joey Ramone (Greenberg 2013; Nathan 2013). The lead AAM artist for this project was an artist from Ecuador who visited NYC for an extended trip. While he was in NYC, the AAM helped him find a job assisting an established artist, a place to live, and encouraged him to participate in the mural project. The collaboration on the Essex Place mural created a space that was local and international, as two NYC groups organized the project and it was completed by an Ecuadorean artist.



Figure 5. A Street Mural Behind CBGB Commemorating Joey Ramone. Photograph By Author.

Art collaborations occur outside of NYC as well. The AAM has created art shows in Victoria, Texas; Ambato and Quito, Ecuador; Lisbon, Portugal; and Berlin, Germany. These shows were organized largely via internet communication (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007b; Nathan 2013). Travel, when possible, prior to the beginning of a collaborative art project is a significant aid in the organization of any project (Nathan 2013). For example, artists from Ecuador visited NYC in summer 2013 to meet the AAM and to discuss the collaborative project planned for fall 2013 (personal observation). Meeting in-person before projects commence, builds trust and improves communication between collaborating groups (Nicholls 2008).

The AAM has documented its completed international projects and several local projects in films that explore the relationship between the physical and virtual artist communities (Dickens 2008a). The group promotes its films, events, art, and writings on social media sites. The most frequently used social media sites are Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, and the Antagonist's website (www.antagovision.com). Additional sites include Vine, Instagram, and Myspace (Nathan 2013). The virtual communication networks strengthen and maintain the AAM community (Adams 1996; Nagel and Staeheli 2010; Dickens 2010), by connecting those with similar interests (artists or not). These connections often result in the creation of new relationships and contacts between artists and the AAM (Martinez-Torres 2001).

The global art market creates a preference for art work that sells, which is determined by current market demands (Rothenberg 2012; Stallabrass 2004; Erić 2007; Neate 2012). If an artist wants to succeed in the art market, he or she must produce a work that will sell (Graw 2010; Erić 2007; Stallabrass 2004; Reid 2013; Nathan 2013; The Antagonist Art Movement 2007a). The AAM resists the commercial art market, which is a product of financial markets (Graw 2010; Rothenberg 2012; Stallabrass 2004; Harvey 2009).

The relationship between the AAM and its collaborators is influenced by corporations, “power dealers,” and buyers who exert control over the art market and constrain the artists through economics. According to sociologist Julie Rothenberg, “Dealers act as gatekeepers, vetting potential buyers for their art-world credibility, capital and reputation before securing them a spot” in the art market (2012: 286).

The study of geographies of art requires an understanding of the connections between artists, their work, and the varied spaces that show art (Butler 2007; Hawkins 2010b; Hawkins 2010c; Dickens 2008b; Dickens 2010; Neate 2012). In the case of the AAM, artists create and maintain connections in community spaces. Building strong community networks helps the group to construct additional spaces for art. The action of space creation is political as it resists the pressure to create a product for the demands of the market.

Methods

The concept – each film is a progression of the episode . . . They’re all self-contained films but if you watch all of the films, you’ll see the progression of it (Interview July 19, 2013).

This paper uses three AAM documentary films, interviews conducted with three AAM members, and observations taken during fieldwork in NYC to explore the ways in which the AAM creates spaces for art. Geographers have used films to study geopolitics (Lukinbeal 2006), landscapes (Aitken and Zonn 1994), and cultural perspectives (Benton 1995). The three AAM documentary films document the group’s projects through an innovative utilization of interviews, animation, and voice overs (Dickens 2008a). Investigation of these films is supported by interviews with active members of the AAM (Dickens 2008a) and participant observation.

Through this exploration, the nuances of the geographies of the gallery and the relationship between art, its spaces, and community are revealed (Neate 2012).

The three films that are examined in this paper are *Mark of the Ninja* (2004), *This is Berlin, Not New York* (2007), and *The Dolls of Lisbon* (2011). *Mark of the Ninja* was the first AAM film. *This is Berlin, Not New York* (2007) documents the first international collaboration of the AAM with Berlin-based artists. *The Dolls of Lisbon* (2011) shows collaboration between German and Portuguese artists in Lisbon. The narratives of each film are driven by the projects in which the AAM engages. The dialogue is a mixture of conversations between artists and interviews with artists. The dialogue provides insight into the artists' thoughts about art and the AAM "in the moment" of these projects, which reveal a confidence that interviews conducted years later cannot reproduce.

I analyzed the dialogue in the three films to understand how the AAM frames its goals and builds spaces for art and artistic community. The documentary films discussed the establishment of the AAM, the ways in which it coordinated art collaborations, and challenges that the group and individual artists face. I also analyzed the ways in which the artists in the films engaged with urban space. "Landscape is constantly turned into a space of action" in films (Lukinbeal 2005), and in each AAM film, the viewer follows Antagonist artists as they engage in spaces of action. The directing style of the films is intimate. The close-up camera shots of reveal artists in a variety of places that include their apartments, studios, making art, piled into cars in Berlin, and stealthily entering an abandoned building.

The intimacy of the film direction highlights the corporeal ways in which the artists engage with space and the inclusive nature of the group. In addition, while the film has one director, many of the artists are involved in holding the camera. No one artist has an omniscient view of the

AAM projects. Instead, artists work as a team to create films that show many participants' experiences and opinions of the art projects. The relationships of the artists to urban environments revealed an awareness of the politics of reshaping spaces through art and shaping spaces in which art is formed.

After watching the films, I created interview questions to explore the themes in the films. The interview questions addressed individual artists' connection to the AAM, and how AAM artists build and maintain their communities. In each film, artists examined their motives for producing art-spaces and their relationship to the AAM. However, the films predominately focused on the documentation of the ways in which specific art projects were produced.

I conducted fieldwork in NYC in summer 2013 for two weeks. I conducted interviews and observed AAM artists. Eight AAM artists declined a formal interview but participated in informal conversations at a bar owned by AAM members. The bar offers employment to several AAM artists, and is a gathering place for AAM supporters. AAM artists can be found at the bar any day or night of the week, and when the bar is closed, its backyard is used for large art projects that require space and ventilation. Thus, the bar works to produce art as a physical space for artists to gather to discuss, plan or produce art, and a place of employment that gives artists the means to support themselves so that they can create art.



Figure 6. Works in Progress Behind the AAM bar. Photograph By Author.

Engaging with participants at the bar allowed me to see first-hand and experience the inclusive community that the AAM works to encourage. In addition, I witnessed the results of AAM efforts when I visited an art show by AAM artists and two AAM murals in the East Village.

I conducted three in-depth interviews with a co-founder of the AAM (“Nathan”), and two artists who organized AAM projects (“Reid” and “Marie”). Pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of the informants. All three informants are participants in current AAM projects.

Nathan was interviewed in a coffee shop near the AAM bar, and Reid and Marie were interviewed in their art studios. Interview questions addressed how an artist became involved with the AAM, where and how he or she artist presents artwork, and how he or she understands community.

Fieldwork interviews and film sections were transcribed. I analyzed the ways in which artists described their relationship to urban environments, art studios, and art galleries. From these descriptions I created the themes community, art, finances and New York City. I coded the relationship between artists and urban environments, along with the financial challenges of art creation. The coded themes underlined the importance of community to provide artists with the agency to overcome the constraints of culture and finances.

This paper first contextualizes the goals of the Antagonist Art Movement within the contemporary global art market and then discusses space creation for artists. The discussion explores how creating spaces for art is political through the examination of projects by the AAM. Then I describe the ways in which AAM artists define community, and explore the mutually enforcing relationship between community building and space-creation. I conclude by observing how the spaces that produce art can be political, while highlighting the importance of community to the ways in which the AAM construct said spaces.

Art Market

Working in the galleries it is very clear that [galleries] have to [encourage] a high value that must be placed on the art because [the galleries] can't exist and function without that. So we're not anti-gallery. We understand that that's how galleries work. They have to cover all of the gallery, all of the staff. And make a profit or there's no reason to do it, but that makes sense as a system (Interview July 19, 2013).

The AAM was established in NYC in the year 2000, rejecting the “Warholization of Art” (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007b). Andy Warhol is (in)famous for his role in the commercialization of art, of making art a commodity (Gregos 2012; Graw 2010; Stallabrass 2004; Rothenberg 2012). Despite the recent economic downturn, the art market is currently doing well (Ciotti 2012).

Art is a commodity and a safe investment (Harvey 2009; Harris 2013), which encourages the wealthy to invest in art (Harris 2013; López Cuenca 2012; Stallabrass 2004). Some scholars argue that the art world aims to market art solely to gain maximum profits (Gregos 2012). Commercial galleries and collectors control access to what Harris calls a “kind of skewed power network” (2013: 536). Even scholars who do not use such bold language note that the relationship of art to the market has changed. For example, sociologist Julie Rothenberg notes,

“Indeed, art’s increasing deployment as a source of financial speculation has altered its function as a vehicle of communication and meaning” (2012:291). The nodes at which the art market and power networks converge (i.e. New York City or a Gagosian Art Gallery) are controlled by a handful of people from institutions and financial organizations (Harris 2013). Artists who do not conform to the demands of museums, curators and dealers to create works that will “sell,” run the risk of exclusion, of being forgotten (ibid).

For the violence exercised by the market on art is a much more insidious kind of violence, in comparison to the other types of violence that capitalism inflicts on people’s lives in very real, tangible ways . . . it has altered the very nature of art and the way we perceive it (Gregos 2012: 132).

In other words, art is used as a means to transfer wealth with the understanding that it is an investment (Harvey 2009). The function of art is valued above the creativity with which it was made. The art market has a damaging effect on the artist as it limits an artist’s creativity and control of a completed work (Gregos 2012).

Economics into art, it has the way of corroding, corrupting the quality of what you’re doing creatively and what that means is that the moment you’re aware that there’s an economic value to your art, it changes the value, it changes your art. So you are then catering towards what you think is commercial, what the galleries will want, and the gallery system (Interview July 19, 2013).

Some artists strive to find outlets that support the creativity of their art over the function that the art may serve in the market (Dickens 2008a). The AAM is one example of an innovative and consistent alternative to the global art market.

All three AAM films address the financial challenges of creating art in urban spaces. In addition, all three informants discussed these challenges without my prompting. Nathan, one of the founders of the AAM, stated that “our group is sort of a reaction to the art market . . . economics in art, it has a way of corroding, corrupting the quality of what you’re doing creatively” (Interview July 19, 2013). This sentiment is expanded in the Antagonist Manifesto which states

that “commercialism and opportunism” become the “virulent enemies” of an Antagonist artist who strives for open, creative expression (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007a). When an artist focuses on commercial gain, art becomes the means of financial stability and the purpose for the art shifts from creative expression to selling the piece quickly for a profit (Gregos 2012; Minsker 2007; Minsker 2011; Reid 2013; Stallabrass 2004).

In *The Dolls of Lisbon*, the Lisbon-based curator who invited the AAM to participate in Pop-Up Lisboa (a “Festival of Urban Culture”), discusses the challenges of creating art shows in Lisbon. One of the challenges is a lack of funding. He notes that it is “not easy being an artist. These artists [the artists who are outside of the commercial art world] are not the type of guys who control the market” (Minsker 2011). This thought was echoed in an interview with Reid who mentioned that “funding is always an issue,” and cited the expense of living in NYC as a challenge to his goal to make art. He stated that “the second you [charge people for a product] it changes the dynamic of everything” (Reid 2013). He explained that money changes the relationship of the artist to the art and the artist to the consumer, which mirrors the sentiments of the Antagonist Manifesto, along with other artists and scholars (Gregos 2012; Stallabrass 2004).

Some of the artists of the AAM sell their work to pay for more art projects. Nathan stated, “Our group is sort of a reaction to the art market. And in the art market, we’ve all worked in galleries and have shown in galleries and we all want to be successful artists” (Interview July 19, 2013). The willingness of AAM members to work in art galleries confirms members’ assertion that the AAM is not anti-gallery. The group does not oppose galleries, artists who show in commercial galleries, or the curators. The AAM is not against the selling of art for profit, but rather the idea that an artist must sideline his or her creativity for market demands. Therefore, the group utilizes any type of space to create spaces for art and artists.

Spaces by and for artists

But from our perspective there's a system that creates something that allows artists the freedom to experiment and within that lax setting allows artists to really pursue something that may be unique so whether it's visual arts – whatever the creative output is, it doesn't matter. What we would like to do is generate individuals' artwork that we find [to be] truly engaging and unique (Interview July 19, 2013).

The demands of the commercial art market and the financial pressures pose a challenge to artists who seek studio space, employment, and exhibition spaces (Minsker 2007; Minsker 2011; Marie 2013; Nathan 2013; Reid 2013; Stallabrass 2004). The artists, in turn, assert their agency as they create exhibition spaces, despite the constraints of time, funding, and – at times – rules, building a supportive community (Dickens 2008a).

Table 1. AAM Use of Space for Art

Spaces for Art	Internet	Indoor	Public Outdoor Spaces	Not-So Public Spaces
	Documentary Films	Bars	Buses	Abandoned Buildings
	Websites	Small, Independent Galleries	City Blocks	
	Social Media	Museums	Street Signs	

The AAM marks space through its logo of a masked person (The Antagonist Art Movement 2004). This masked person could be any person at any stage of life (ibid). The masked person could be anyone – a robber, a rescuer, a skier – the meaning is in the eye of the beholder (ibid). A logo that represents anyone encourages a message of inclusivity in the AAM. The logo is printed on T-shirts, coats, bags, and stickers.



Figure 7. The AAM Logo. Source: www.antagovision.com

These stickers are stuck on public spaces by Antagonist-affiliated artists wherever they travel. Stickers are easy to place on a wall when compared to spray paint (Dickens 2008a), which helps the artist avoid the policing of public spaces and provides more flexibility with where an image can be placed. Stickers have a set picture, are lighter to carry than paint, and the exact same design can be placed at multiple locations. In addition, stickers maintain a consistent brand that viewers can recognize, assert group identity, and agency (The Antagonist Art Movement 2004; Reid 2013). Spray paint is sometimes used to place the AAM logo, however the paint is bulky to carry and takes some time to use when creating a sign or picture (Dickens 2008a). Regardless if stickers or spray paints are used, an unplanned image interrupts the space in which it is placed (Cresswell 1996), while promoting a brand of an artist. In this way, the AAM challenges the demands that communication in and around public spaces be controlled by a few.



Figure 8 Film Still: *The Dolls of Lisbon*. A Logo On a Street Sign in Lisbon.

Current members of the AAM place stickers at home and abroad (personal observation). Promoting the AAM brand by placing stickers in public places (walls, benches, posts, etc.) disrupts normative notions of public space (i.e. clean and visually uncluttered) (Cresswell 1996). Claiming spaces for public expression and using images or rooms to show art is simultaneously *art-making* and *place-making* (Gregson and Rose 2000). In this activity, the AAM explores the myriad ways in which art shapes and challenges banal spaces. As the AAM community continues to expand, members around the world place its stickers on spaces in their hometown and as they travel. This marks the space with unprecedented art, which challenges ideas of the function of public space, the ways in which artists find a voice, and how art in public space is experienced.



Figure 9. Film Still: *The Dolls of Lisbon*. A Sticker Placed On a Street Pole.

The film *This is Berlin, Not New York* (2007) explores how artists and spaces influence each other, and the community that forms as a result of this relationship. The Antagonists work with Berlin-based World Vacation (WV) artists to create art (Minsker 2007). The two groups collaborate at the Mastul Art Gallery in Wedding, Berlin, which is a lower-class neighborhood

where it is less expensive to show art in an independent gallery. Throughout the film (and art collaboration) Antagonist artists note that their movement is about the process of art, not the final art product. The technique of an artist is secondary. To focus on the desire to create art instead of an artist's level of technique allows the group to be more inclusive. In an interview, Reid expanded on the implications of the inclusive intentions of the AAM:

We always struggle with ... being inclusive. We want to keep it open to everybody but there's a problem with that where I feel like often times the work is pretty generic. Like street art. I think there's a place for it but I'm not interested in it. It's fun to look at ... So that sort of issue of [sic] the group being [inclusive]. The concept is great but then the art that we produce is necessarily not as important and I feel like we've had to do that because you want to involve everyone (Interview July 21, 2013).

The Dolls of Lisbon (2011) features artists from Germany, Portugal, and Ecuador. This film focuses on the global connections of the AAM and its local impact in Lisbon. The project started when the curator of a Lisbon art project, Pop-Up Lisboa, read an AAM ad on Craigslist that asked for artist participants in a project. He responded because he appreciated the AAM's collaborative focus and goal to build an international community of known and unknown artists (Minsker 2011). The dolls project was motivated by the Zapatista movement and the dolls that the movement inspired (ibid). The theme of the project was working people standing up to the wealthy, which the AAM asserts paid homage to the Zapatista fight against wealthy landowners (Froehling 1997; Minsker 2011).



This film also shows how artists in large cities try to balance art, life, and subsistence. An NYC-based Antagonist presents the group as “it is us as individuals banding together to be creative at all costs against all the financial restraints, time restraints, that our culture and city place upon us” (Minsker 2011). He describes their lives as “our individual struggle [to live as artists] is sort of a layer of a much larger struggle in our world where the arts and sort of individual creativity is being suffocated by corporate culture,” and their goal to make art no matter the limitations (ibid). This speaks to the importance of collaboration to the creation of exhibition spaces which, in turn, strengthen the community (Grodach 2011).

[In *The Dolls of Lisbon*], I think [they] did a really good job ... of showing the mechanism you know behind ... that it’s not so much about the art, the dolls ... they’re dolls ... [The dolls] are an avatar proxy for what we do, which is to try to get people together to connect and to try to get people from different cultures (Interview July 21, 2013).

Organizers coordinated the project via email and Skype (Minsker 2011; Marie 2013; Nathan 2013). The Ecuadorean artists³ created dolls for the art show, but were unable to attend the Lisbon show. These artists and their art are included in the *Dolls of Lisbon* documentary. The AAM strives to include anyone who wants to create art regardless of location. The film also shows footage of artists in Ecuador who place AAM stickers in public spaces, including the front of buses and street signs. In Lisbon, Antagonists artists marked public spaces with stickers with the AAM logo and individual pieces of art. The placement of the AAM logo on public spaces in various international locales speaks to the growing transnational community of the AAM.

When discussing past projects, such as the “Lisbon project,” each interview informant described his or her use of the internet to promote their art. Marie, whose first project with the AAM was in Lisbon, noted, “Social media is a major part of my work. It’s the vehicle that makes everything functional” (Interview July 21, 2013). She uses social media as inspiration for her art and to promote her work. Thus, the internet is a space that Marie creates for her art and also is shaped by her art, which she displays online.

Most informants use the internet because of easy access to other artists and supporters of art (Interview July 19, 2013). The internet, while connected to real life, is yet another space for to resist cultural and economic pressures (Kinsley 2013; Kitchen 1998; Adams 1996; Adams 2010). The two most recent international projects of the Antagonists started on the internet. AAM members post their work and events on websites. The AAM also post ads on Craigslist (under Community/Artists) that ask for artists to participate in projects. Posting ads on Craigslist is a very efficient method of contacting international artists (Nathan 2013). An informant noted that the only downside of the internet is the criticism of random people on the internet (“never respond to those”), and that some people – artists or not – feel a need to always be virtually connected at the expense of engaging with others in physical places (Marie 2013). The virtual and physical spaces in which the AAM works facilitate the creation and maintenance of community (Nagel and Staeheli 2010; Staeheli 2003; Staeheli 2009).



Figure 11. Film Still: The Dolls of Lisbon. An Artist Places a Sticker on a Street Sign in Lisbon.

The majority of NYC-based members work full time to support themselves (and in some instances, their families) and their art projects. Reid discussed the stresses of working in the city while trying to cultivate his art, “In New York I work this crazy day job that I don’t like so I can afford [studio] space, and I’m often too tired to come in here at night because I’m working to pay for this place” (Interview July 21, 2013). Both Reid and Nathan used the word “struggle” to describe their daily attempts to create art. The everyday struggles of artists are situated within broader conflicts that are simultaneously urban and economic (Dickens 2010; Harvey 2009; Hawkins 2010c).

Agency through community

Noise is the background noise you try to reduce. So you choose what your community is. You choose . . . you look for that pure signal. You choose what that community will be (Interview July 19, 2013).

An “antagonist” is someone who provokes and antagonizes others into creating art (The Antagonist Art Movement 2004). The protagonist of any story only becomes who he or she is supposed to be through his or her interactions with the antagonist(s) (ibid). Thus, the antagonist is a vital aspect of the growth and maturity of any individual. It is the AAM community that works to antagonize artists into creating art, despite the challenges that occur. The *Mark of the Ninja* (2004) shows weekly “art slams” that later evolved into weekly art shows and, presently, art projects of various sizes and goals.

“Community” is a contested term (Staeheli 2008; Staeheli 2003; Nagel and Staeheli 2010) and each artist interviewed provided a different understanding of the word. When asked how she defines community, Marie stated

Community’s a rough one. Because there’s an artist community and there’s a bankers community. Community is people of the same interests. In my mind. In my book. [They have the] same interests, [the] same motivations. They want to help for the benefit of everyone. They don’t want to keep anyone out unless it’s something that is harmful. There’s obviously a deviant side of people in society that you want to stay safe from. You need that community to help you and that community – you don’t need them to ostracize anyone else (Interview July 21, 2013).

Communities have the ability to give individuals agency (Nicholls 2009; Uitermark and Nicholls 2013; Martin 2008; Martin and Pierce 2013). Through the creation of supportive spaces for artists, the AAM counters commodification of art and provides an alternative for artists to create and show their art. Through the movement of creating art in whatever way the artist chooses, the artist circumvents the demands for profitability of the art market (Dickens 2008a).

In *This is Berlin, Not New York* (2007), a friend of a NYC-based Antagonist connected the group to the Mastul Art Gallery in Berlin and art group World Vacation (WV). As Berlin's commercial art market grows, local artists have limited options to show their work, unless they create the type of art that larger galleries want (Minsker 2007). A Berlin owner of a small art gallery says:

I feel like there are these really free artists here. They are getting pushed down more and more ... this commercial art market is really coming up. So everyone's only trying to do - only trying to show in places where they're going to make money.

One of the Antagonists notes that: "that's the problem with art, when it gets so big . . . is that it's professionalized. The market ruins the community" (ibid). Artists in NYC noted that the demands of the commercial art market threaten an artistic community (The Antagonist Art Movement 2007a). Collaborations with artists in Berlin and Lisbon, strengthen community ties. Nathan described how the AAM's collaborative projects evolve:

All the projects we do . . . we're not interested in forcing our agenda on any of the places we are going to. We want to work collaboratively with them. So typically the rule is that everyone pitches an idea. So I throw in an idea and then they throw in an idea . . . We're always up to what the local community wants because they determine the final say in what [the project] is (Interview July 21, 2013).

WV continues to collaborate with the AAM as projects arise, but the groups mostly work on separate projects. In the Berlin film, the two groups place small pieces of art on street walls and other public infrastructure. In addition to the gallery, the AAM and WV artists planned a public project. They entered an abandoned building to create art on the inner walls of the building and to build sculptures with neglected parts of the building. An example of this is a sculpture created by an AAM artist of all of the unbroken window panes in the six-story building (see figure 12). The international trespassing collaboration to create art-space, culminated when the artists poured different paint colors out of the uppermost windows in the building, which left

a rainbow of colors on the sidewalk. Only when pedestrians stopped to notice the splatter and *then* look up, would they see that the abandoned building was used as a space for art as well as an artwork itself.



Figure 12. Film Still: *This is Berlin, Not New York*. A NYC Artist Creates a Sculpture of Windows in an Abandoned Building.



Figure 13. Film Still: *This is Berlin, Not New York*. Paint is Poured From the Top Floor of an Abandoned Building..



Figure 14. Film Still: *This is Berlin, Not New York*. Paint Splatter on the Sidewalk from the Building Above.

Artists appreciated that the materials for *The Dolls of Lisbon* project were provided by the AAM. Art materials are often costly and for that reason, some artists choose to draw because it is less expensive (Minsker 2011). A participant in Lisbon notes that artists, not just in NYC, are “fighting to create with spare minutes and dimes” (ibid). The provision of materials in addition to creating spaces for art is another way in which community is strengthened. Individuals who actively invest in their community, increase the community's potential to be a powerful actor for improvement of each participant’s life (Martin et al. 2007).

The international AAM community forms around a common grievance, that market demands determine creative output. This common grievance builds a “collective sense of agency” out of which AAM collaborative projects form (Martin 2003: 732). Non-commercial art spaces provide nodes for interaction, and encourage “geographically extensive networks” that are also “territorially intensive” (Nicholls 2007: 619). Antagonist members interact with each other at local, national, and international scales. The AAM has a “territorially intensive” focus on art projects that are local to the city that the group is in. The combination of intensive focus on the local and international network expansion shapes successful social movements (Nicholls 2007).

Agency in contemporary cities

Reid noted that NYC is an expensive and at times stressful city to live in. However, he was impressed by the access to art and artists that NYC provides. Interactions include:

Talking about art [in NYC], looking at art, meeting artists is incredible. I don’t care what people say, it’s still the art capital of the world, and I’ve been to Berlin and México City, and France and other places that claim to be [the art capital of the world], but there’s no place like New York. (Interview July 21, 2013)

He noted that NYC can be artistically stifling “because there is a certain homogenization . . . which you have to fight against constantly: Commercialism.” Nathan also noted the challenges and inspirations of NYC,

I can't see another city where I would have the ability to make the art, do the films, have access to writers, filmmakers, and all of the people who are willing to help . . . all of these people moved here with the same sort of creative drive . . . where they all want to make something creative. You come to the city and then you are enslaved to your rent. Because of that, a large wealth of talent and drive is unused. So being able to tap into that . . . In a lot of ways we're grateful to that high rent because it's made everything we do possible. (Interview July 19, 2013)

Reid became involved with the Antagonists during graduate school because a childhood friend was a founding member of the group. He mentioned that "defining community in the context of New York is very challenging and difficult." He then repeated that NYC is a challenge because of its high cost and "there's a lot of superficiality [in how people interact and the promises people make to each other]." Reid also felt conflicted about his contributions to his community:

I find that when I travel people are like, 'Ok, when does your flight come in?' Even though it might be an hour outside of the city, but in New York, it's like, 'Yeah, you know like public transportation [or] it's only going to cost you \$70 from the airport, but you know, have fun! I'm busy the entire day but I might have time for a drink later, maybe.' And you're like, 'What the [-]?' . . . And I get resentful sometimes because my studio time is so precious. (Interview July 21, 2013)

There is a tension between the urban "capitalist system" as a "stimulus to creativity" (Gregos 2012, p.140) and the social and financial challenges to creativity inherent in the same system. However, both Marie and Reid mentioned that the AAM opened artistic doors in and beyond NYC. Art shows provided artistic support and a place of engagement for a variety of artists (Gregos 2012; Harris 2013; Hawkins 2012; Neate 2012). Some artists from the first Berlin project participate in art shows with the AAM in NYC, Lisbon, and Ecuador. The AAM artists have returned to Berlin to participate in art shows with WV artists. The Ecuadorean artists have traveled to NYC to connect with the AAM and the AAM completed its first art collaboration in Ecuador in November 2013. The international collaborations create an artist network that is

connected to various local communities and supports the creativity of individual artists. The travel between countries and continued participation in other group’s events maintains the community as well as the art spaces that are created for the community (Uitermark and Nicholls 2012; Uitermark and Nicholls 2013; Meek 2012).

Conclusion

The Antagonist Art Movement create spaces for art as a resistance to market demands in multiple ways. The table below highlights differences between the art market and the AAM. The commercial art market supports art works since its existence relies on the sale and purchase of art. Therefore, the market creates spaces (such as art galleries) to stimulate the exchange of art for profit. The AAM aims to support the artist through material (i.e. art shows) and emotional (i.e. community) support.

Table 2. Key Differences Between the Commercial Art Market and the AAM.

	Supports	Focus of Art Shows	Control
Commercial Art Market	Art Work	Networking	Dealer
Antagonist Art Movement	Artist	Community Building	Artist

Community building may occur in the commercial art market, but networking serves its goals and needs as networking between actors increases the efficiency of the exchange of art for maximum profit. The market provides nodes for art dealers, buyers, and artists to connect as the exchange of art occurs. The relationships that form help the buyers to know what art is the best investment (or what artist is “hot”). Networking is the focus of commercial art shows while

community building is the focus of the Antagonist art shows. Like art shows of the commercial art market, AAM art shows are places where artists show art, discuss future plans, and make new connections. This does not mean that networking does not happen at an AAM art show and that community building does not occur at a commercial art gallery. Rather, the difference in the *focus* of the two venues should be noted. Art dealers (and sometimes curators) control art works in the commercial art market, while control of art pieces in the Antagonist Art Movement remains with the artist(s) who create the works. This support for artists enhances the AAM community, which builds a foundation for future collaborative art projects. Control of art creation (and thus art) is at the root of this paper. It is in challenging the control of art that the AAM works towards activism.

On the website it says we try to stay outside of politics in the form of the North American version of that like liberal conservative . . . Our political views are only with the economics of art, and that's it. We try to keep it encapsulated so we're actually political but only in the sort of allowing artists to work without the constraints of economics (Interview July 19, 2013).

The AAM challenges the economic pressures of neoliberalism, from which the art market extends, through art-space creation. This space-creation enables participation by artists who might be on the fringes of or outside the commercial art market. The AAM and its individual members continue to make new connections between artists and art groups that facilitate the production of additional spaces for art. The actions of the AAM align with the assertion that “activism entails an individual making particular kinds of new connections between people that alter power relations within existing social networks” (Martin et al 2007:80). The creation of non-commercial art-spaces allows artists to rely less on the “gatekeepers” (Harris 2013) of the art world, which alters the power relations of current art networks.

The members of the Antagonist Art Movement build community through the creation of spaces for artists, which in turn strengthen the community. The spaces beyond the commercial art

market allow for the participation of artists of all backgrounds and skill sets. AAM art-spaces provide artists with additional opportunities – beyond the art market – to create and show art and build a community of support. This strengthened community creates more spaces in which artists show and present artwork, and these opportunities increase artists’ agency in art creation. While the AAM considers itself a movement, the group does not rally in the streets as a collective act of resistance. Rather, the relationship between community building and art spaces is an example of a more-subtle activism. Space making by and for art works resists market demands and supports local artists.

It is to say that we want to be engaged. We want to be a part of, we want to be responsible for, trying to create individual pieces of art and work, and large bodies of work that . . . I don’t mean financial work, but that are valuable in a larger sense. And we’re not saying that we’ve ever accomplished that yet but that’s the continuous goal for us as a group and each individual artist in the group (Interview July 19, 2013).

The artwork that is shown in AAM exhibitions and the cross-cultural relationships between international artists are beyond the scope of this article, though each is a rich field for future investigation. I recommend that future work in art geographies expand on the variations of the geographies of art galleries and the processes that produce art. In the following examples, I describe areas of art studies that will benefit from a geographic perspective of scale, and extend the urban, cultural, and economic geographic literatures.

Additional exploration into the different types of galleries, the scales at which the galleries operate, and the role of galleries in communities, will shed light on the nuances of urban and cultural geographies. The power relations between art dealers, curators, and artists provide a lens through which to further explore the economic connections and politics of the art world. Several art historians are studying the contemporary art market, and geographers, especially urban and

economic geographers, are well equipped to contribute to this subject. Furthermore, the investigation of power relations between economic classes could be researched through the lens of art in myriad ways. Who is able to experience art, who has the means to buy art, and who has the agency to produce art (this includes the opportunity to attend art school, have a studio, and live in a community that supports art) are all questions that must be answered in the context of economic agency.

The geographic locations where art is exchanged can shed light on global power relations as western/wealthy influence the location of art galleries, art festivals, and art auctions take place. An example of this is Art Basel, the exclusive art show that occurs in Basel, Switzerland, Hong Kong, and Miami Beach. Another example is Christie's Auction House, which has locations in cities such as Amsterdam, Dubai, Zurich, and Milan. In addition, the global art market functions in places that are historically nodes of global finance and places that are increasingly important to global finance (i.e. Dubai). The intricacies of the relationship between the local and global art market (and the scales in-between) have yet to be explored by geographers.

Art and its market offer a variety of ways in which to explore the relationships between spaces. Through the creation of spaces for art and artists beyond the art market, the Antagonist Art Movement resists the pressures of neoliberalism. The AAM relies on its community to facilitate the creation of alternative art spaces. Thus, space-creation and collaboration work hand in hand to help artists develop agency to create and show the art that they choose. Therefore, the process of *how* art is produced influences spaces as much as completed works of art. The Antagonist Art Movement extends the discussion of what art does through a focus on the creation of spaces for art and artists. In turn, the creation of art-spaces speaks to a broader discussion of individual and community agency in contemporary neoliberal environments.

Notes

¹ The Antagonist Art Movement aims to support artists of all mediums. Writers' nights, for writers known and unknown, occur weekly. However, this article will focus on the work of visual artists.

² 'Fanzine' or 'zine' is a self-published manuscript dedicated to a particular subject. *Psycho.moto* is the Antagonist Art Movement zine that is "a collection of writing and artwork from talent associated with the movement." It matches AAM artists with writers "in an attempt to push both mediums" (The Antagonist Art Movement 2013).

³ The Ecuadorean artists contacted the AAM after an artist in Ecuador viewed *This is Berlin, Not New York* online.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. How did you hear about the Antagonists?
 - a. When was that?
2. Why did you decide to work with them?
3. Where are you from?
 - a. Why did you move to NYC?
 - b. How long have you lived in NYC?
3. When I say "community" what do you think of?
4. Do you see yourself as part of any community?
 - a. If so, what kind?
 - b. How do you see yourself as a part of community?
 - c. How do you choose to connect (or not connect) to your community?
 - i. Why do you choose these methods?
5. How do you promote your art?
 - a. Do you promote your art via the internet?
 - b. What compelled you to choose this method?
6. Do you have a web/Facebook page?
 - a. How often do you update it?
 - d. How many art groups/artists do you follow on the internet?
 - i. By what means [Facebook, Twitter, websites, etc]?
 - e. What is your preferred method of communicating with artists?
 - i. Do you communicate in person with other artists? Why?
 - ii. How often do you communicate in person?

7. Has communicating through the internet changed how you communicate with others?
8. What are the pros of using the internet to communicate?
 - a. Are there cons?
9. When I say “artist” what do you think of?
 - a. What do you think is the role of an artist in society?
 - b. What are the most effective ways of fulfilling that role?
10. What does being a part of a "local" group mean to you? Why?

Vita

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