Assembling Networked Art

A Study of the US, UK and Australia

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**ABSTRACT**

Networked art is not just a niche cultural form. This dynamic sphere of creative practice has significant implications for the histories and futures of cultural production. Networked art has been the subject of evolving aesthetic debate and contemplation for over two decades. Yet the institutional, economic and political dynamics that are intimately involved in shaping these debates have been largely overlooked in discursive analyses of this particular stream of techno-culture. The importance of networked art is not limited to the aesthetic or formal peculiarities of its form/s. Networked art has induced a range of ‘deterritorializing’ forces (in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense) that are permeating the deeply entrenched organizational logics of Art worlds and unhinging the traditional tenets of cultural production as never before. This thesis conducts an empirical analysis of the aesthetic, economic, political and institutional milieu through which networked art has been assembled within the contemporary cultural landscapes of the US, UK and Australia. As the socio-cultural impacts of emergent information and communication technologies continue to unfold, the defining qualities of networked art are proving ever more difficult to locate. I do not intend to look for these qualities in the confines of the Internet nor within any specific medium or system of technologies. Networked art is the product of what I call a digital ethos – a fluctuating nexus of ideas and practices that are shaping and shaped by network culture. This thesis finds emergent techno-cultural practice in a pervasive digital ethos; on the margins of increasingly antiquated institutional, political and economic infrastructures; and, perhaps most importantly, at the heart of discursive and institutional transformation.
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INTRODUCTION

Networked art is not just a niche cultural form. This dynamic sphere of creative practice has significant implications for the histories and futures of cultural production. Networked art has been the subject of evolving aesthetic debate and contemplation for over two decades. Yet the institutional, economic and political dynamics that are intimately involved in shaping these debates have been largely overlooked in discursive analyses of this particular stream of techno-culture. The importance of networked art is not limited to the aesthetic or formal peculiarities of its form/s. Networked art has induced a range of ‘detrimentalizing’ forces (in the Deleuzo-Guattarian sense) that are permeating the deeply entrenched organizational logics of Art worlds and unhinging the traditional tenets of cultural production as never before. This thesis conducts an empirical analysis of the aesthetic, economic, political and institutional milieu through which networked art has been assembled within the contemporary cultural landscapes of the US, UK and Australia.

As the socio-cultural impacts of emergent information and communication technologies continue to unfold, the defining qualities of networked art are proving ever more difficult to locate. I do not intend to look for these qualities in the confines of the Internet nor within any specific medium or system of technologies. For me, networked art is the product of what I call a digital ethos – a fluctuating nexus of ideas and practices that are shaping and shaped by network culture. This ethos is expressed not only through an engagement with new technologies but through the exploration of concepts and techniques like interactivity, modification (or modding), transdisciplinarity, screenscapping, sample culture¹ (mash-ups, remixology), gaming and so on and so forth. The term ‘networked art’ both includes and extends beyond cultural forms that are living, wearable, virtual, interactive, embedded/augmented and mobile. As emergent technologies continue to infiltrate formal cultural categories and pioneer an increasing slate of new cultural forms, the urgency of the aesthetic, institutional, economic and political questions posed by networked art advances. It is for these reasons that I would like to open this thesis with a description of two networked artworks in an attempt to sketch out a working
definition of this complex practice and to introduce some of the key questions it poses: Nick Knouf’s *Fluid Nexus* (Knouf, 2007) and Soda_Jerk’s *Pixel Pirate II* (Soda_Jerk, 2006). It is important to note, however, that while this thesis is concerned with how aesthetic values come to function within the spheres of networked art, it is not interested in making aesthetic judgements about networked art.

**Networked Art: A Working Definition**

Nick Knouf produced *Fluid Nexus* in 2007 with collaborators Bruno Vianna, Luis Ayuso and Monica Sanchez. *Fluid Nexus* is a mobile phone application that allows a community of people to ‘send messages and data amongst themselves independent of a centralized network’ (Knouf, 2008-2009). The *Fluid Nexus* application cultivates ‘sneaker nets’ through the open wireless protocol of ‘Bluetooth’ that allows for data to be exchanged over short distances between mobile devices. Knouf describes *Fluid Nexus* as an ‘ad-hoc network’ that can function ‘when the centralized network has been shut down, either by the government during a time of unrest, or by nature due to a massive disaster’ enabling ‘surreptitious communication’ (Knouf, 2008-2009).

*Fluid Nexus* has been selected precisely because of the way it brings the concept of the ‘network’ into question, a concept that needs clear elucidation here. The ‘network’ has been reborn in the information age. Contemporary ideas about networks have been consistently subjected to the rhetoric of fluidity, decentralization and openness. These kinds of descriptors encourage the fallacy that networks transcend boundaries, flow openly across socio-cultural and socio-political spheres creating ‘frictionless’ forums of sociality. However, in *Organized Networks: Media Theory, Creative Labour and New Institutions*, Ned Rossiter argues ‘that there is a predominant tendency to overlook the ways in which networks are produced by regimes of power, economies of desire and restless rhythms of global capital’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 47). By cultivating a mobile network that can operate outside the infrastructures of commercial and government telecommunications agencies, *Fluid Nexus* demonstrates that even the most basic conditions of global digital networks are defined by the politics of access that correspond to geo-political distributions of
wealth and power. *Fluid Nexus* juxtaposes a ‘fluid view … of networks’ (Knouf, 2008) with the reality of network culture. As Knouf states in a paper written for the 2008 Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA) symposium:

[Fluid Nexus] requires no representation of the network to function; it gets its strength from temporary links between people that disappear as soon as they are created. These ad-hoc connections do not necessarily have to correspond to real-life links between individuals; messages and data can transfer based on physical proximity instead of social relationship … By displacing the stability of the network, *Fluid Nexus* works to redistribute power over network individuation and protocol to those often seen as the capital-O Other, providing a counter to centralized control of often-State-run infrastructure. (Knouf, 2008)

I owe my understanding of the concept of the ‘network’ to Manuel Castells and particularly to his work in *The Rise of the Network Society* where he writes, ‘A network is a set of interconnected nodes. A node is the point at which a curve intersects itself. What a node is, concretely speaking, depends on the kind of concrete networks of which we speak’ (Castells, 2000, p. 501). For Castells a network is both a ‘concrete’ thing – a sewerage system, the labyrinths of public transport and so on – and a concept of social organization. 3 The two disparate conceptualizations of the network become integrated in Castells’ work because concrete networks of information and communication technologies have become interspersed with the logics of social organization. Castells’ argument is that the near global pervasion of ‘concrete’ digital networks has induced a correlative shift in the organizational logics of societies. Indeed, he speaks of a ‘network based social structure’ (Castells, 2000, p. 501), which must be distinguished from the conception of social structures as networks. But rather than assuming an homologous relation between the rhetoric of decentralization that characterizes utopic analyses of digital networks and the emerging logics of organization that characterize the network society, Castells argues that

… the network morphology is also a source of dramatic reorganization of power relationships. Switches connecting the networks (for example, financial flows taking control of media empires that influence political processes) are the privileged instruments of power. Thus, the switchers are the power-holders. Since networks are multiple, the inter-operating codes and switches between networks become fundamental sources in shaping, guiding, and misguiding societies. (ibid., p. 502)
This complex conceptualization of the ‘network’ is embedded in Knouf’s *Fluid Nexus*. The work erodes inaccurate assumptions about decentralization as an innate quality of digital networks by revealing the limitations of these networks when ‘power-holders’ are incapacitated. In doing so, Knouf reveals how the technics of information and communication technologies have become intrinsic to emergent or ‘network’ logics of social organization. As Castells so aptly points out, ‘The convergence of social evolution and information technologies has created a new material basis for the performance of activities throughout the social structure itself’ (ibid., p. 502). Networked art is conceived here in precisely this way: as a new material basis for the performance of cultural production. There is also something significant about my choice to refer to ‘networked art’ as opposed to ‘network art’. Here I follow Anna Munster’s discussion in the ‘empyre’ email list forum (empyre, 2009) on the topic of a networked book titled *a (networked_book) about (networked_art)* (Green & Thorington, 2009). In a post published on October 5, 2009, Munster notes:

> What do I mean by ‘networked’? Keeping the work done previously by Castells in mind, ‘networked’ might mean: what has come to pass and how do we take this into account socially, economically, culturally in this ‘post-network’ understanding of an information society? … we are now networked through and through, and so what are we going to do about it? How might we work in, with, against the broader vectors of information flows? What can a networked (elsewhere I have called this a distributed) aesthetics do and say about the unevenness and affective dimensions of these flows? Are other flows possible and what might they feel like? (Munster, 2009)

‘Networked’ art, then, is post-network. It is a product of the fact that ‘we are networked through and through’. As this thesis will attest, networked art is one of the ways ‘we work in, with, against the broader vectors of information flows’ and, like *Fluid Nexus*, it often speaks ‘about the unevenness’ of these flows. And Art worlds – founded on the stability of materiality (the sacred Art ‘object’ and its corresponding exhibition complexes) – have become out-of-step with this shift in the logics of cultural production. Where is the object of *Fluid Nexus*? There is no object per se. There is a multitude of material components but the work functions as a whole in process, in movement. *Fluid Nexus* is a network. *Fluid Nexus* is an event. But more
than that it is not an event that can be staged and managed by Art institutions. *Fluid Nexus* is contingent on the occurrence of a range of ‘external’ activities: external to the work itself and external to carefully disciplined Art worlds. Its exhibition in the white-walled sanctuary of traditional Art galleries (or even in the more contemporary black-box) would be limited to farcical performances, description, interpretation and screen grabs or video demonstrations. While the disappearance of the art ‘object’ and the shift towards the art ‘event’ may be old issues for aesthetic theory (see, for example, Ascott & Shanken, 2003; Bahktin, 1984; Barthes, 1977; Zurbrugg, 2004; Kac, 1999) the inability for an artwork to be successfully managed within the confines of the Art institution has a renewed relevance where networked art is concerned. As this thesis will attest, the escalating networked art/Art institution problematic is a critical aspect of the growing disparity between emergent and established spheres of cultural production.

*Fluid Nexus* is a networked artwork about networks using network technologies. However, networked art is not always so easily aligned with a definitive sphere of emergent media. Soda_Jerk’s *Pixel Pirate II* does not use digital network technologies, it is a video project, and yet we can, without reservation, call *Pixel Pirate II* networked art. The full title of the work is *Pixel Pirate II: Attack of the Astro Elvis Video Clone* and it is an ‘hour long narrative remix video constructed from samples pirated from over 300 film and music sources’ (Soda_Jerk, 2006).

Soda_Jerk are Sydney-based duo Dan and Dominique Angeloro. In an interview with Marcus Westbury⁵ for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) series *Not Quite Art* the duo noted that there is no Pixel Pirate ‘I’ because ‘we’re not so fond of the idea of the original, almost everything is at least a pretend follow-up’ (*Not Quite Art*, 2008a). *Pixel Pirate* is a part of the remix or mash-up culture of the digital ethos. Soda_Jerk speaks directly to the ‘post-network’ qualities of networked art. Through their work the duo acknowledge that we are ‘networked through and through’ and ask precisely ‘what are we going to do about it?’ (Munster, 2009), as Soda_Jerk continues:

> We made pixel pirate as a response to the way culture is changing and this idea of creative reuse and remix as a creative act. The way we feel about copyright is
that the law hasn’t caught up with that yet. In terms of the narrative, Pixel Pirate pits the Pixel Pirates led by Elvis Presley – as the ultimate impersonator – against the copyright cops led by Charlton Heston as Moses. (Not Quite Art, 2008a)

While a negligible threat of litigation means that young artists like Soda_Jerk can flaunt their mash-ups in the face of deeply entrenched copyright laws with little consequence, Art institutions and organizations are not quite so liberated. Art institutions (particularly the big wealthy ones) are eminently indictable, which means engaging mash-up culture comes at significant risk. We start to see here the politico-legal issues that emphasize the disparities between emergent and established cultural forums. But mash-ups are not about pilfering culture; they are about remediation.6 As Soda_Jerk note:

We definitely think of ourselves kind of like archaeologists, cultural archaeologists, that’s why I like that DJs refer to looking for records as ‘digging’, I think of that as an archaeological term. So we’re always looking for some artefact that may have been forgotten and then by taking that artefact and putting it in a new work people might discover that history for themselves and then go back to the original work and it is a way of keeping history alive in that sense. (Not Quite Art, 2008a)

The digital ethos evident in this example denotes an inclination towards collaboration and participation. Decentring the artist is yet another potent characteristic of the digital ethos. Soda_Jerk openly acknowledge the expansive collaborative framework that enables the culture of mash-ups and remixing, ‘we’ve actually got a complete sample list that comes with the DVD. It’s a really important part of our practice that we always have a complete sample list so that we’re acknowledging that wider network of collaborators’ (Not Quite Art, 2008a). This sense of entitlement concerning ‘creative reuse’ is precisely the kind of socio-cultural shift that distinguishes a digital ethos and correlative cultural practice. There is also a perception of the ‘network’ at play here that refers us to the very important (and Castellian) point that identifying ‘a’ network is to reference a set of qualities and dynamics that are unique to a specific assemblage of relations. Accordingly, Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker observe in The Exploit: A Theory of Networks:
To name a network is to acknowledge a process of individuation (‘the Internet’, ‘al-Qaeda’), but it is also to acknowledge the multiplicity that inheres within every network (‘the Internet’ as a meta-network of dissimilar subnets, ‘al-Qaeda’ as a rallying cry for many different splinter groups). (Galloway and Thacker, 2007, p. 12)

Networks, then, do not transcend external forces. Much as Castells notes, ‘Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they are able to communicate within the network, namely as long as they share the same communication codes (for example, values or performance goals)’ (Castells, 2000, p. 501). The communication codes that networked artists, critics, administrators, organizations and audiences share are those of the digital ethos born in the matrices of the network society. Networked art, then, is not a specific ‘genre’ of cultural form but rather a particular orientation towards cultural production. Pixel Pirate is not digitally networked but it is networked art. Networked art can be media art or digital art or computer art or visual art or literature or video art (and so on) but not all the forms of these ‘genres’ are networked art.

Is Fluid Nexus art or is it research and development or political activism? A question that has little relevance in the spheres of networked art where the creative work can exist simultaneously across vastly disparate social spheres without undermining any one variant of its application. Questions about the categorical integrity of Fluid Nexus are questions of an antecedent organizational logic: the organizational logic of deeply historical Art worlds. Moreover, who is the artist in regards to Pixel Pirate? Can we say definitively that it is Soda_Jerk? Or do the artists extend across the range of people implicated in all the sampled works? These kinds of questions may have been aesthetically codified but they have yet to be adequately answered in terms of the institutional, economic and political dimensions of administrating culture. Neither digital aesthetics nor media theory has attended to the pressing issues of how emergent cultural forms function (or fail to function) within the established social structures through which cultural value is reproduced. While it is certainly true that the idea of decentring the artist is now anachronistic to aesthetic contemplations of networked art – in which the works of Bakhtin, Barthes and Derrida comprise well-worn territory – endless lists of ‘artistic collaborators’ are still problematic for Art
institutions that have long coordinated mutually beneficial relationships with the Art star (the creative genius). This thesis begins, then, by looking beyond the discourses of networked art and media theory to engage debates in cultural theory where there is precedent for assessing the complexities of cultural administration.

**Beyond the Field**

The French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, has been one of the world’s leading authorities on theories of cultural production. He conducted extensive empirical research on French habits of cultural consumption over a number of decades in the second half of the 20th Century. Bourdieu’s *Distinction* (Bourdieu, 1984) is a significant theory of cultural production (and a pivotal text for this thesis) primarily because it is expressly concerned with how cultural value judgements can be located in broader contexts of social relation. On its release in 1979, it stood in direct opposition to the (now antiquated) interpretation of Kantian aesthetics that assumed aesthetic value was an inherent quality of the aesthetic object. Bourdieu’s task, then, was the

… perhaps immoderate ambition of giving a scientific answer to the old questions of Kant’s critique of judgment, by seeking in the structure of the social classes the basis of the systems of classification which structure perception of the social world and designate the objects of aesthetic enjoyment. (Bourdieu, 1984, pp xiii-xiv)

In chapter one I argue that one of the more pioneering aspects of Bourdieu’s work resides in his careful assessment of the relations between cultural and economic capital. His meticulous theorization of cultural economies provides this thesis with the tools to assess a range of institutional and political functions that are integral to the administration of culture. Moreover, a strong account of how economic value plays into cultural economies allows me to identify one of the primary sites of incompatibility that arise in attempts to administer networked art within the established organizational logics of Art worlds. However, the ‘field’ is ultimately limited by Bourdieu’s uncharacteristically rigid adherence to the organization of social classes through his conceptualization of ‘habitus’. For Bourdieu, habitus is a
theory of embodiment that locks social classes into the eternal reproduction of class values and places social agents into very specific relations with cultural products. The bourgeoisie, for example, can never escape bourgeois sensibilities and so on and so forth. The ‘habitus’ reifies high/low class distinctions and, therefore, high/low cultural values. Bourdieu’s ‘field’, then, is organized into an oppositional framework: the field of ‘restricted’ production (high art) versus the field of ‘large-scale’ production (popular culture). Put simply, Bourdieu believes that mass media simply cannot support ‘high’ art. Clearly, and despite its insight, the concept of the ‘field’ is a problematic methodological framework for making sense of networked art.

However, Art critic and theorist Julian Stallabrass reminds us that Bourdieu’s ‘field’ theory is, in many ways, of another time (Stallabrass, 1996). In an essay titled ‘Cold Eye’, that critiques Bourdieu’s collection of essays titled Photography: A Middle-Low Brow Art (Bourdieu, 1965), Stallabrass notes, ‘Sometimes we are forcefully reminded that Bourdieu is writing of a different world, in which peasants were still a strong and distinct social force, and in which less than a third of the [French] population owned a television’ (Stallabrass, 1996, p. 3). The irony of the ‘field’, then, is that its limitations are inscribed in the very claims it makes to renewability. In developed nations, education levels have risen and the middle-classes have expanded, thus, social class distinctions have become increasingly fuzzy, which has given contemporary art a presence in the mass media and the mass media a presence in contemporary art. More than this, though, information and communication technologies have progressed along an exponential axis that has utterly changed the conception and distribution of ‘mass’ media. And so, as Stallabrass continues, ‘In Bourdieu’s terms, this change in contemporary art may not, after all, be surprising’ (ibid., p. 5) but rather a progression of cultural production that is unfolding alongside first-world development. Yet this blurring of social class distinctions and the increasing prevalence of mass media as tools for ‘high’ cultural production (and reception) causes insurmountable problems for the logic of the field. As we shall see, despite these limitations field logic is a lingering force within the discursive, institutional, political and economic forums of contemporary cultural production.
What we need is a methodological framework that allows us to keep the great value of field logic and relinquish its failings. This thesis finds such a methodological alternative in the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the ‘territorial assemblage’. The logic of the territorial assemblage precludes false dependencies on automatisms like that of habitus and looks for enduring stabilities in processes of repetition and territorialization. But the territorial assemblage is also ‘inseparable from lines or coefficients of deterritorialization, passages, and relays towards other assemblages’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 333). This means that the territorial assemblage is always-already open to external forces and cannot be locked in to any one determined state. In this way, cultural assemblages can be understood in constant relation with the dynamics of external forces but in possession of deeply entrenched territorial processes that function to discipline these dynamics.

Over the last decade we have seen pivotal shifts towards the logic of ‘assemblage’ across a range of sites of cultural production. Chapter two explores Anna Munster’s *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (Munster, 2006) and charts its composition of new techno-specific regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that reorient the artwork itself as a territorial assemblage. Munster’s thesis is a crucial step towards the aesthetic emancipation of cultural production from a lingering field logic that has – even within the relatively young discourse of digital aesthetics – often unwittingly submitted techno-cultural forms to rigid high/low oppositions.

In chapter five I explore Ned Rossiter’s theorization of the ‘new institutional form’ proposed in *Organized Networks* (Rossiter, 2006). Rossiter seeks to unhinge illusions of an apolitical, open and decentralized network culture. He argues that networked socialities need to overcome the short-term (and easily exploited) tendencies of network politics and implement strategies for flexible but more durable logics of organization. Accordingly, Rossiter conceives the new institutional form as necessarily open to the transforming forces of the ‘constituent outside’ (ibid.) while implementing a renewable range of territorializing processes. As Rossiter notes: ‘The political concept of organized networks … understands conflict as a generative force in need of both collaborative methodologies and transdisciplinary frameworks’ (ibid.,
The new institutional form, then, can be closely aligned with the logic of the territorial assemblage.

Munster’s *materializing new media* and Rossiter’s *Organized Networks* are pivotal texts for this thesis as both demonstrate the emergence of new logics of organization that have particular relevance for the shifting landscapes of cultural production. Following on from these insights, this thesis takes a look at what is happening on the ground, at the sites where emergent organizational logics are clashing with the deeply historical social structures of Art worlds. I have mapped the status of networked art across three cultural assemblages – the US, UK and Australia – by tracing historical developments and conducting extensive interviews with a range of key players. This thesis finds networked art caught in a political, institutional and economic lag across all three cultural assemblages. Networked art lingers in a cultural no man’s land as it waits for the consolidation of new regimes of value and the emergence of new institutional forms. Networked art is caught in the lag between field and ‘assemblage’.

**Case Studies**

This thesis has mapped three vastly different contemporary cultural assemblages in the US, UK and Australia. And these differences correspond to variances in politico-economic frameworks and strategies. In chapter three we see how the differential tangents of national development between the US and the UK have produced two very different economic and political infrastructures for their respective cultural sectors. The UK has a strong climate of public cultural support that is bolstered by an equally strong climate of private Arts funding. The US, on the other hand, has nurtured a potent culture of philanthropy that compensates a relatively poor public cultural commitment. The cultural institutions of the UK, therefore, draw from a more diverse funding palette and are consequently afforded a broader range of opportunities for innovation. US contemporary Art worlds, however, tend to be dominated by big wealthy Art institutions that are locked into the rigid agendas of centuries old philanthropic ties and have become somewhat immune to the public scrutiny of taxpayer obligation and public objectives. Chapter six traces
the rampant conservativism of the Australian contemporary Art world and finds a moderate public commitment to the Arts overburdened by an extremely weak private Arts funding sector that has contributed to the paralysis of cultural innovation.

There is, however, one unifying clause across all three cultural assemblages: networked art is perceived as a niche cultural form and has been marginalized accordingly. The striking parallels of this marginalization are precisely what tell us that networked art’s tenuous cultural status is a systemic problem and not an indication of its innate ‘high’ cultural illegitimacy. If three contemporary Art worlds with such disparate economic and political conditions are all experiencing the same problems accommodating emergent techno-culture then there must be something going on at a point of commonality. And what the US, UK and Australian contemporary Art worlds share is that they are all centred by traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and the logics of traditional institution. Through an examination of Tate Galleries’ inspiring intra-institutional journey from the dedicated portal ‘Tate Net Art’ to its more nuanced successor ‘Tate Intermedia Art’ and the devolution of the Whitney Museum of American Art’s ‘Artport’, chapter four outlines precisely what Rossiter means when he refers to the ‘moribund technics of modern institutional forms’ (ibid., p. 14).

Yet the dire economic conditions for networked art that characterize the cultural assemblages of the US and Australia have, paradoxically, induced ideal conditions for real cultural innovation. New organizational logics have begun to emerge within two dedicated networked art organizations: the US’s Turbulence and the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT). Chapter five traces these shifts and argues that both organizations are on the cusp of ‘scalar transformation’ into ‘new institutional form’ (ibid., p. 22). However, it also finds that both Turbulence and ANAT struggle against entrenched allegiances to logics of traditional institutions and established regimes of cultural and aesthetic value, making organizational transformation a complex and fragile process where two steps forward are often followed by one step back.
Indeed, the climate of the ‘post-network’ cultural assemblage is characterized by disequilibrium, asymmetry and frequent lapses into apathy but there is also innovation, reorganization and the beginnings of foundational change. This thesis documents multiple sites of strident territorialization that bind themselves tirelessly to an increasingly redundant field logic and a range of sites of radical intervention where assemblage logic has begun to unhinge the rigid systems of categorical fixity and organizational obsolescence. This thesis takes a step away from the aesthetic fetishization that has tended to dominate discursive analyses of networked art. Instead, it unveils the dynamics of aesthetic, institutional, political and economic forces that are critical to the administration of all cultural forms but play a particularly pivotal role in the development of new cultural practice. And it does so through close empirical analysis. This thesis takes up the challenge set by Ned Rossiter when he encourages ‘detailed case studies whose analytical empirics are immanent to the time and space of network collaborations’ (ibid., p. 16). It also attempts to answer the question posed by Darren Tofts in the conclusion of his book Interzone – ‘where is media art?’ (Tofts, 2006, p. 133). This thesis finds emergent techno-cultural practice in a pervasive digital ethos; on the margins of increasingly antiquated institutional, political and economic infrastructures; and, perhaps most importantly, at the heart of discursive and institutional transformation.
Sample culture, mash-ups or remixology is a process of pulling information from a multitude of sources into one text. The concept has a long history in Music and Art (think Duchamp’s ‘ready-mades’ and Dada’s ‘cut-ups’) and has been revitalized through digital media where networked artists can pull and remix an array of aural, visual and textual samples from the databases of digital networks to produce a single ‘mashed-up’ work.

The concept of decentralization critiqued in this thesis is most closely aligned with the polemic assertions that digital networks stand to undermine the power of central government. For the cyberlibertarian, decentralization stands to open-out the potential of free market. But for the techno-leftist, decentralization can unhang the knowledge/power nexus. These ideas will be more thoroughly unpacked as they relate to the spheres of networked art in chapter five.

For a discussion regarding the sociological concept of the network see Latour, 2005, p. 129.

In the ‘The World as Clock: The Network Society and Experimental Ecologies’, Andrew Murphie defines the term ‘technics’ as ‘combinations of technologies, systematic processes and techniques, whether these are found in the organization of living or non-living matter’ (Murphie, 2004, p. 136). And, in a posting on his blog ‘Adventures in Jutland’, Murphie writes that ‘technologies themselves are a gathering of techniques’ (Murphie, 2009). Murphie’s coalescent and adaptive definition of ‘technics’ is reminiscent of Bruno Latour’s mobilization of the term in We Have Never Been Modern where he argues that ‘technics’ is a hybridization of technology and culture that produces manifold transactions between ‘culture’, ‘matter’ and/or ‘technique’ (Latour, 1993, p. 106). It is in these interpretations that my understanding and utilization of the term ‘technics’ rests.

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I use the term ‘remediation’ here in the context of Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin’s now iconic work Remediation: Understanding New Media (Bolter and Grusin, 2000), in which they argue that a remediation is, following Foucault and McLuhan, a nod to ‘historical affiliation and resonances and not ... origins’ (ibid., p. 21). For Bolter and Grusin, then, mash-up culture does not degrade or ridicule ‘old media’ but rather revitalizes its currency in new mediated landscapes.
Rossiter’s use of the term ‘constituent outside’ speaks to a key philosophical debate and it is one with which this thesis is primarily concerned. Rossiter’s ‘constituent outside’ pursues the philosophical stratagem of ‘immanent critique’ that is often opposed to Kantian “Transcendental” philosophy. Immanent critique, as Rossiter notes:

... retains Adorno's insistence that contradictions and tensions operate as a constituent force within any idiom of expression and it recognizes that sociality within network cultures and creative economies is configured not according to dualisms, but rather to patterns of distribution, rhythms of tension, transversal social relations, modulations of affect and transdisciplinary institutional practices. (Rossiter, 2006a)

In his book *A New Philosophy of Society* Manuel DeLanda draws a comparison between this philosophical schism and the methodological rupture of modes of inquiry that pursue ‘relations of interiority’ and those that pursue ‘relations of exteriority’ (DeLanda, 2006). For me, Rossiter’s use of the term ‘constituent outside’ and DeLanda’s term ‘relations of exteriority’ share much in common as they both draw heavily on a Deleuzo-Guattarian logic and the two terms are used somewhat interchangeably throughout this thesis. The idea of a ‘constituent outside’, then, is understood here as a tool to elucidate the inadequacy of approaching any subject of study as an enclosed or totalized whole while carefully sidestepping the aimless descent into radical relativism. I explore these issues in detail in Chapter One where I introduce the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the territorial assemblage as a methodological alternative to the logic of the field.

While networked art communities extend across the globe (with a multitude of rich sites of production in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America), this thesis is concerned with how clashes between emergent and established socio-cultural systems are unfolding. And given that some of our most deeply rooted Art worlds reside in the wealthy first-world nations of the US and England they are ideal sites for the documentation of such clashes.
CHAPTER ONE

LIMITS OF A CULTURAL FIELD

As discussed, this thesis is an analysis of the shifting cultural status of networked art. The first two chapters of this thesis argue that networked art undermines modern regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and, therefore, the organizational logics of Art worlds. This chapter will outline the undulations of contemporary cultural theory and enter into conversations about how the value of art is organized. The importance of establishing this theoretical prehistory is that cultural theory has been instrumental in formulating broad socio-cultural understandings of and engagements with art. There is no way to enter into an analysis of the cultural status of networked art without a solid understanding of precisely how it challenges conventional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value.

Networked art is, in many ways, the praxis of a specific branch of late 20th century critical thought that refuses to accept the shaky theoretical ground on which fixed socio-cultural categories are founded (a branch that is, ironically, often categorized under the banner of post-structuralism). The traditional binary oppositions of cultural production – those that oppose the fixed categories of high and low culture – are not just conceptually but functionally outmoded in network culture. Yet specific boundaries do encompass this mutable practice when its forms are submitted to the public domain as ‘art’ with, as we shall see, all the compromises and subversions that such a submission denotes.

Chapter one begins by moving back in time to explore the impact of Kantian aesthetics on the development of aesthetic theory and cultural sociology. This chapter then establishes the conditions of emergence that saw the conception of the ‘Art world’. From there I explore perhaps the most significant break with early cultural sociology via the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his field theory. I argue that Bourdieu’s insights are limited by a paradoxical theoretical rigidity that excludes the
possibility of emergent cultural practice like networked art. Finally, I investigate how Bourdieuean insights can be revised and remobilized within the more flexible Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the territorial assemblage. I argue that the territorial assemblage is crucial to making sense of networked art and introduce it here as a central concept of this thesis.

The Rise of Art: Kant and Early Aesthetic Theory

In Immanuel Kant’s now iconic *The Critique of Judgement* the philosopher argues for the unique pairing of ‘aesthetic perception’ and ‘cognitive judgment’ (Kant, 2009) in the experience of ‘beauty’. For Kant, the appreciation of beauty requires the unique reconciliation or ‘free harmony’ of ‘imagination and understanding’ (Kant, 2009, p. 45). For example, when we experience a beautiful object Kant argues that we do not cognitively judge the object by locating its characteristics in a conceptual framework (shape, colour, etcetera) but rather our cognitive senses work in ‘free harmony’ with our aesthetic perception to induce a state of mind that is non-conceptual, which he calls a ‘disinterested pleasure’. This ‘free harmony’ abstracts cognition in a way that frees our aesthetic experience from the constraints of understanding.²

Kant was integral to the development of early aesthetic theory precisely because the philosopher characterizes aesthetic perception as a ‘disinterested pleasure’ under the assumption that aesthetic perception is neither informed by nor in the service of accumulated knowledge. Kant’s ‘aesthetic perception’, then, is a kind of knowledge outside of knowledge. Accordingly, British theorist David O’Hear observes, ‘In contrast to theoretical contemplation, aesthetic contemplation is not concerned with certain insights that are to be gained by turning towards the object’ (O’Hear, 1999, p. 401). Moreover, in the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’ (Kant, 2009, p. 31) Kant proposes a corollary between aesthetic perception and the production of aesthetic objects. While Kant reserves particular significance for the beauty of nature he extends this idea of beauty to ‘fine’ or ‘beautiful’ art. The consequence of this distinction is that the aesthetic object becomes something like an authentic gesture of disinterested pleasure. Accordingly, the creator of the aesthetic object is distanced from the
‘cognitive’ function of producing an object for any knowledge driven or practical purpose and aligned with the idea of aesthetic creativity as an extension of an unmitigated aesthetic perception. With this Kant lays the ground for the concept of the creative genius who is in possession of a unique capacity for expressing aesthetic ideas (aesthetic ideas, like aesthetic perception, are forged in a kind of inimitable union of understanding and imagination) that – as Australian cultural theorist John Frow writes in his work, Cultural Studies & Cultural Value – ‘severs the work of art from worldly ends and practical functions’ (Frow, 1993, p. 31).

Kantian aesthetics were key in the seismic socio-cultural shift away from ‘art’ understood as skilled labour and towards ‘art’ as a rarefied practice of cultural production. As W. J. T. Mitchell writes in New Keywords:

The history of ‘art’ as a term is generally divided between an early usage, when the word applies quite broadly to all skilled craftsmanship, work, expert techniques, technologies, and professions (‘art’ with a lower case ‘a’), and a more modern usage, when the term is endowed with rather more elevated and inflated connotations (‘Art’ with a capital ‘A’). This modern conception is associated with the emergence of the artist as a distinct social or professional role, the cult of artistic genius and inspiration, the elevation of the work of art to quasi-sacred status as a fetish object, and the rise of aesthetic judgment as distinct faculties designed for the perception of works of art. (Bennett et al, 2005, p. 6)

Kantian aesthetics set up a distinction between, as Pierre Bourdieu notes in Distinction:

The ‘taste of sense’ and the ‘taste of reflection’, and between facile pleasure, pleasure reduced to a pleasure of the senses, and pure pleasure, pleasure purified of pleasure, which is predisposed to become a symbol of moral excellence and a measure of the capacity for sublimation which defines the truly human man. (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6)

Kant’s philosophy became the basis for the perceived autonomy of aesthetic production, reception and distribution. The social distinction of aesthetic objects meant that Art could be perceived as existing, as Julian Stallabrass notes, ‘in a zone of freedom, set apart from the mundane and functional character of everyday life, and from its rules and conventions’ (Stallabrass, 2004, p. 1). This distinction of the
aesthetic object was a key factor in the development of high/low cultural opposition. While the Kantian separation between aesthetic objects and objects of ‘practical function’ does not account for the complex emergence of what would come to be the high-cultural ‘other’ – popular culture (a categorization I will attend to shortly) – it certainly laid the ground for a system of cultural distinction that has dominated western interpretations of cultural production for over two centuries. Accordingly, until well into the 20th century, Art was understood as existing in an autonomous sphere of aesthetic practice governed (and privileged) by Kantian laws of aesthetic perception and animated/administered by the ‘creative genius’ (Artist) and the gifted aesthete (Arts administrators: curators, critics, etcetera).4

The Art World: Socio-political Conditions of Emergence

Twentieth century social theory has done much to critique the Kantian foundations of aesthetics. In her book, *The Social Production of Art*, sociologist Janet Wolff argues that ‘the arts’ can only be comprehensively analyzed from a ‘sociological perspective’ (Wolff, 1993, p. 1). As a social science dedicated to the theoretical and empirical engagement of the ‘systems’, ‘structures’, ‘fields’, ‘assemblages’ and so on of human social interaction, sociology ‘argues against the romantic and mystical notion of art as the creation of “genius”, transcending existence, society and time, and argues that it is rather the complex construction of a number of real, historical factors’ (ibid., p. 1). The concept of an ‘Art world’, then, is a sociological convention, as American sociologist Howard Becker notes:

The existence of art worlds, as well as the way their existence affects both the production and consumption of art works, suggests a sociological approach to the arts. It is not an approach that produces aesthetic judgments, although that is a task many sociologists of art have set for themselves. It produces, instead an understanding of the complexity of the cooperative networks through which art happens, of the way the activities of both Trollope and his groom meshed with those of printers, publishers, critics, librarians and readers in the world of Victorian literature, and of the similar networks and results involved in all the arts. (Becker, 1982, pp. 1-2)

Despite, as we shall see in the following section, intra-disciplinary rifts within the discourse of cultural sociology, there are a number of ‘real, historical’ conditions that
are generally agreed to have preceded the emergence of high-cultural distinction and
the birth of the Art world. It is widely agreed, for example, that the ‘Art world’
emerged in the unique conditions of early capitalism in the late 18th and early 19th
centuries. It is argued that the industrial climate of this era induced a
‘dehumanization of labour’ (Wolff, 1993, p. 30) that eliminated the specificity of
individual work and induced an assembly-line mentality that would emphasize the
contrast between the individual control of Art making and the mechanized labour of
factory production. The Art world’s interpretation of Kantian aesthetics was used to
philosophically reinforce the distinction between different modes of production,
which led to a broad socio-cultural distinction between the Art object and objects of
social utility.

What is more, this broad social distinction would be grounds for a much narrower
cultural distinction between creative practices of functional utility (design, carpentry,
fashion, pulp-fiction and so on) and the ‘disinterested’ practice of Art making: in
short, between popular culture and high-culture. It is important to note that high/low
cultural oppositions have never been unqualified distinctions: from the Arts and
Crafts Movement and Bauhaus to Pop Art and right through to Avant-Pop. Yet
what is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of high/low cultural opposition
from a cultural theory perspective is that it tends to denote a divergence between
cultural producers and their relation to the market. Popular culture is understood to
stand in direct relation to the market (in that popular culture is produced expressly
for the market) whereas Art tends to have a complex and often indirect relation with
the market (a point I will explore in some depth later in this chapter).

During the 19th century the emergent western nation state assumed a pedagogic
responsibility that has been broadly interpreted, following Foucault, as a strategy for
disciplining publics. According to sociologist Tony Bennett, the modern public
museum was conceived as a tool through which the state could impart specific
national values by assembling a national history and cultivating a national identity
(Bennett, 1995). Consequently, there are strong links between the emergence of the
public Art museum and the discourse of formal Art history. The disproportionately
western perspective of formal Art history is corollary to the fact that the modern Art
museum was founded within the heavily biased politico-cultural agendas of emergent western nation states. Bennett also argues that the museum was seen as a tool through which the state could civilize the working classes by exposing them to the refined dispositions of the dominant classes (Bennett, 1995). The emergence of modern cultural institutions and public cultural policy, then, was central to the rise of Art (these critical dimensions of the history of modern Art worlds will be discussed in detail in chapter three).

The pedagogic responsibility assumed by the young nation state also saw the emergence of state run educational institutions and the birth of the Art School. The training of the Artist had now shifted from the collaborative guild environment to a forum that concentrated on the development of individual skills in specific forms of Art. Not only did the advent of the Art School further entrench the individualization of the Artist and the distinction of Artistic practice from other modes of cultural production, it restricted Art making to those with the requisite social and economic status to access the education system – the males of the bourgeoisie. As Michael Carter and Adam Greczy write in, Reframing Art, ‘Since the setting up of the state Art Schools in the late 19th century, the level of education required of potential Art students has risen steadily. It is undoubtedly the case that Artists of the 20th century were better educated than at any time in the past’ (Carter & Greczy, 2006, pp. 46-47).

The increasingly well-educated Artist demanded the concomitant sophistication of ‘his’ audiences. As Carter notes in his prequel to, Reframing Art, Framing Art, ‘What is termed High Art has steadily become the province of the highly educated elites within modern societies – both in terms of its makers and its audiences’ (Carter, 1990, p. 53). Accordingly, Art ‘audiences’ are understood in two primary categories: Arts administrators and Art lovers. The Arts administrator is a term that includes all professional positions outside the Artist that exist within Art worlds (dealers, critics, curators, teachers and so on). The Arts administrator is integral to the processes of high-cultural legitimization as she administrates Art institutions, contributes to the generation of public cultural policy and is a central figure in critical debate: Art worlds would not exist without them.
While conceiving the Art world in terms of these complex socio-cultural histories is more or less a unanimous position amongst sociologists, the discipline has long been fraught with internal schisms regarding which ‘sociological perspective’ bears most analytic authority. In other words, while there is general consensus regarding the historical conditions outlined here, it is the ways in which these conditions are interpreted within theoretical frameworks that differ.

**Structuring the Art World**

One of the more persistent sociological interpretations of high-cultural distinction is founded on relations of differentiation, which, in Hegelian terms, are also relations of ‘mutual entailment’. In other words, Art is only sustainable as a specific cultural category of value according to its differential relationship with low or ‘popular’ culture. Any field of activity that defines itself via its oppositions from the specific environment within which it exists is inextricably bound to its relation with that environment as the reference base of that which it distinguishes itself against. I am, of course, referring to the key structuralist principle of binary opposition. ‘High’ is only a definitive cultural category in relation to ‘low’ and this particular binary pair forms a framework of cultural production within which the Art world is situated as the ‘other’ of popular culture. From this perspective, Art is both separate from and bound to popular culture.

It is difficult to speak of a ‘structuralist school of sociology’ today as any semblance of such a unity has been largely dismantled. So, instead of arguing that certain analyses of the Art world are structuralist in their approach perhaps it is wiser to follow Manuel DeLanda in his book *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* and refer to sociological modes of inquiry that assume a ‘relations of interiority’ (DeLanda, 2006) premise. While it may appear that I am being slightly monolithic regarding structuralist analyses of cultural production, the goal here is to characterize a common discursive thread that still impacts upon broad social understandings of cultural production and is particularly debilitating to the socio-cultural contextualization of emergent forms like networked art. As DeLanda explains:
This version [of sociological inquiry] involves not an analogy but a general theory about the relations between parts and wholes, wholes that constitute a seamless totality or that display an organic unity. The basic concept in this theory is what we may call relations of interiority: the component parts are constituted by the very relations they have to other parts in the whole. A part detached from such a whole ceases to be what it is, since being this particular part is one of its constitutive properties. (DeLanda, 2006, p. 9)

Early ‘relations of interiority’ analyses (often undertaken by ‘functionalist’ or structuralist theorists) saw the first major shift away from Kantian aesthetics and argued for the necessary inclusion of a complex array of social, discursive, institutional, political and historical dimensions. DeLanda argues that early functional analyses were based on an ‘organismic metaphor’ that involves an ‘analogy between society and the human body, and to postulate that just as bodily organs work together for the organism as a whole, so the function of social institutions is to work in harmony for the benefit of society’ (ibid., p. 8). Within this mode of cultural inquiry the production, distribution and reception of Art ceased to be solely understood or theorized as an autonomous sphere of activity governed by innate sense perceptions and became a component part of a multi-dimensional unity of cultural production. This unity was characterized, of course, by the mutual entailment of high/low cultural opposition: Art is only Art in the context of popular culture. Yet even as sociology took broad steps away from ‘functionalism’ during the 20th century, ‘a more sophisticated form of the basic metaphor still exerts considerable influence on most schools of sociology’ (ibid., p. 9). Accordingly, there are contemporary cultural sociologists that still argue for a totalizing and structuring system of binary opposition. One such example can be seen in cultural philosopher Sandor Radnoti’s paper ‘Mass Culture’:

High culture and an industrialized low culture aiming at mass production confront each other as split obverse fragments of a conceptual unity, two independent, self-contained, yet interrelated complexes … The high art of our age is paradoxically indeed culture-creating art in that it creates its opposite, mass culture. It generates a culture of life in order to articulate itself in tension with it. (Radnoti, 1981, pp. 32-37)

Accordingly, this preliminary binary opposition binds all cultural forms to practices of evaluation that are governed by relations of differentiation and all cultural agents
(individuals, organizations, communities and groups) to the outcomes of these evaluations. In other words, the myriad factors that are perceived to influence the production, distribution and reception of cultural objects are always-already determined by the binary opposition of high versus low and, therefore, remain ‘interior’ to the system itself. As DeLanda writes: ‘Thus in this conception wholes possess an inextricable unity in which there is a strict reciprocal determination between parts’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 9).

Theoretical frameworks that are based on a ‘relations of interiority’ premise have had a pervasive influence within cultural theory. What is more, cultural discourse is not socially benign (only relevant to an autonomous discursive sphere). It infiltrates and influences broader spheres of socio-cultural perception. For example, Art critic, Roger Cardinal’s 1970s term ‘Outsider Art’ (Cardinal, 1972) is a practical example of how ‘relations of interiority’ theoretical frameworks correspond to the broad socio-cultural perception of the Art world as bound to a sphere of human activity that is resolutely organized according to high/low binary distinctions. While ‘Outsider Art’ was initially conceived in association with the French term Art brut (a specific reference to Art created by inmates of insane asylums), its anglicized interpretation extends to Art produced by anyone who is not formally trained through Art Schools or universities (Cardinal, 1972). The term is a practical example of how ‘relations of interiority’ approaches have influenced broad social perceptions of cultural landscapes that, in turn, interpret external forces within a limited selection of positions predetermined by the analytic framework. Brian Massumi outlines the limitations of the ‘relations of interiority’ approach beautifully in Parables for the Virtual:

The sites, it is true are multiple. But aren’t they still combinatorial permutations on an overarching definitional framework? Aren’t the possibilities for the entire gamut of cultural emplacements, including the ‘subversive’ ones, precoded into the ideological master structure? Is the body as linked to a particular subject position anything more than a local embodiment of ideology? Where has the potential for change gone? How does a body perform its way out of a definitional framework that is not only responsible for its very ‘construction’, but seems to prescript every possible signifying and countersignifying move as a selection from a repertoire of possible permutations on a limited set of predetermined terms? How can the grid itself change? How can what the system
has pinpointedly determined flip over into a determining role capable of acting on the systemic level? (Massumi, 2002, p. 3)

DeLanda argues that ‘relations of interiority’ analyses have proven difficult to unravel ‘because it is not just a matter of rejecting an old worn out image and because its impact on sociology goes beyond functionalism’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10). Indeed, as we shall see, even when sociologists resolutely dismiss a ‘relations of interiority’ mode of inquiry, their analyses of cultural production can be unintentionally corralled back into inflexible theoretical frameworks by the rigid hangovers of these discursive threads. The problem that has continued to dog analyses of cultural production is how to account for the stability of enduring systems like the Art world. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, who is perhaps the highest authority on sociological models of cultural production, theorizes a complex field analysis that while carefully accounting for the impacts of external infiltration is paradoxically bound to an extraordinarily stable conception of ‘social class’ that reinforces old structuralist principles of binary opposition and, therefore, is unable to accommodate the slippery forms of networked art.

**Pierre Bourdieu: The Field of Cultural Production**

Pierre Bourdieu produced an impressive body of work regarding the machinations of cultural production. His work is primarily a reflexive sociological analysis of the ways in which cultural value is produced and distributed. Bourdieu’s extensive empirical work focused on the production, distribution and reception of cultural products in France in the last decades of the 20th century. He transformed empirical data into a complex field theory that is without question the most comprehensive sociological model of cultural production to date and yet, as we shall see, it is paradoxically hindered by a troubling rigidity. However, I do not believe the limitations of field theory nullify the value of such a comprehensive opus. Despite its limitations, there is a great deal of insight in Bourdieu’s field analysis that can only enhance the theoretical toolbox of this thesis. My aim is to carefully separate what is useful from what is not within Bourdieuean theory. To begin I will spend some time unpacking the function of a field. I will then explore the limitations of this function.
One of Bourdieu’s primary agendas was to oppose a ‘relations of interiority’ premise by theorizing a complex system of relations between what could be considered an ‘assemblage’ of social ‘fields’. In *The Field of Cultural Production* (Bourdieu, 1993), for example, he conceptualizes the relations between three distinct social fields: locating the ‘field of cultural production’ in a dominated position within the ‘field of power’ (understood as the dominant classes: the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy or the middle-upper classes), which is, therefore, situated in a dominant position within the broader ‘field of class relations’ (understood as the hierarchy of social relations). He argues for a complex relational reciprocity between external and internal forces.

Bourdieu conceives the ‘field of cultural production’ as an abstract map or ‘space’ of ‘social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions’ (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 29). The field is also understood as a ‘field of struggles’ in which social agents perpetually vie for cultural status and authority. As Bourdieu writes:

> The network of objective relations between positions subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. their position-takings), strategies that depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations. (ibid., p. 30)

Each ‘player’s’ position is offset by the moves – the ‘position-takings’ – of all other field members. ‘Position-takings’ enable the accumulation of ‘external or specific profits (such as literary prestige)’ (ibid., p. 30) and they correspond to a ‘positioning’ of the social agent within the field. Bourdieu defines the act of ‘position-taking’ as the ‘manifestations of the social agents involved in the field – literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics’ (ibid., p. 30). In other words, the position of the social agent is altered through his/her/its position-takings. It is important to note that the space of ‘position-takings’
is conceptualized as an additional dimension to the ‘space of positions’. The field, therefore, is a multi-dimensional space that accounts for both the outcomes of actions (that are represented in the space of positions) and the relations between positions (represented in the space of position-takings). In this way, Bourdieu rejects the structural premise of static ‘positionality’ and attempts to account for movement in the field – the ‘in-between’ of positionality.

Both dimensions (the space of positions and the space of position-takings) are organized according to the differential control of cultural resources that inherently opposes a sub-field of restricted production (the Art world) and a sub-field of large-scale production (popular culture). The field of cultural production, then, follows a hierarchical organizational logic that is both directly and indirectly correspondent to social class hierarchies. One of the primary differences between field theory and a ‘relations of interiority’ theory, then, is that rather than perceiving the high/low binary opposition of cultural objects as internal or innate to the sphere of cultural production, Bourdieu understands it as an outcome of a complex system of socio-cultural relations. Or, as DeLanda notes: ‘In Bourdieu’s view, the asymmetrical degree of access and command over resources acts as a force that differentiates a population of persons sorting them into ranked groups’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 63).

However, as he continues:

Unlike older theories of social classes, Bourdieu does not limit his analysis to economic resources, and hence does not view classes solely in terms of income distributions or in terms of control over the means of production. To financial and industrial resources he adds cultural ones, such as possessing a general education or specialized technical knowledge, as well as owning the diplomas, licenses and credentials needed to profit legitimately from such knowledge? (ibid., p. 63)

Bourdieu’s conception of cultural resources is integral to his field theory. It allows him to observe incompatibilities between the machinations of social class hierarchies and the field of cultural production, while still accounting for the relations between them. Field theory allows us to understand the ways in which the internal logic of a field mediates the consequences of its location within a system of external relations. Bourdieu uses an economic metaphor to conceptualize two distinct but
interconnected cultural resources: symbolic and cultural capitals. Symbolic capital is understood as an accumulation of prestige: credibility, celebrity, acclaim and so on. Cultural capital, on the other hand, is the accumulation of knowledge that is articulated through competency in high cultural codes and results in the awards, degrees, professional placements and so on that are available within the field. And, as Randal Johnson explains in the ‘Editor’s Introduction’ to *The Field of Cultural Production*:

The possession of these codes, or cultural capital, is accumulated through a long process of acquisition or inculcation which includes pedagogical action of the family or group members (family education), educated members of the social formation (diffuse education) and social institutions (institutionalized education). (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 7)

The rationale of Bourdieu’s economic metaphor resides in his observation that cultural capital, like economic capital, is unequally distributed throughout social classes. Accumulating cultural capital is, in Bourdieu’s perception, an exclusive function of the dominant classes. However, economic and cultural capitals are hardly reducible to one another, as Johnson observes:

Possession of economic capital does not necessarily imply possession of cultural or symbolic capital, and vice versa. Bourdieu, in fact, analyses the field of cultural production as an ‘economic world reversed’ based on a ‘winner loses’ logic, since economic success may well be a barrier to specific consecration and symbolic power. (ibid., p. 8)

What Johnson is referring to here is the internal dualities at play within the field of restricted production that orients its location within the external ‘field of power’, what Bourdieu calls a ‘duality of hierarchies’. You see here the complexity of how Bourdieu theorizes internal and external field relations through his conceptualization of the ‘autonomy’ of the field of restricted production. Bourdieu writes:

The literary and artistic field is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy to it, especially as regards its economic and political principles of hierarchization. It occupies a dominated position (at the negative pole) in this field, which is itself situated at the dominant pole of the field of class relations. It is thus the site of a double hierarchy: the heteronomous principle of hierarchization, which would reign unchallenged if,
losing all autonomy, the literary and artistic field were to disappear as such (so that writers and artists became subject to the ordinary laws prevailing in the field of power, and more generally the economic field). (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 38)

Therefore, one hierarchy within the field distinguishes between the differential control of resource distributions: between high and low. The other field hierarchy distinguishes between the ‘avant-garde’ and the ‘consecrated avant-garde’. The two extremes of this secondary or additional hierarchy are fleshed out through the principles of ‘heteronomy’ and ‘autonomy’. As Bourdieu writes in *The Rules of Art*:

… the heteronomous principle … favours those who dominate the field economically and politically (for example, ‘bourgeois art’) and the autonomous principle (for example, ‘art for art’s sake’) … which leads its most radical defenders to make of temporal failure a sign of election and of success a sign of compromise with the times. (Bourdieu, 1996, pp. 216–7)

Understood in this way, the ‘art for art’s sake’ or the avant-garde occupies the autonomous axis of Bourdieu’s field. All social agents of the avant-garde must appear to be solely motivated by accumulations of symbolic capital that (for the sanctity of its purity and esteem) requires a resolute ‘disavowal of economy’. A ‘disavowal of economy’ is understood as a denial of the laws of the market reinforcing high-cultural distance from ‘economic necessity’ (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 217). This ‘disavowal of economy’ has effect along both axes of field hierarchies. Firstly, by position-taking at the autonomous pole of the field of restricted production the social agent is at the furthest distance from the ‘laws of the market’ that underpin the field of large-scale production and therefore at the furthest distance from ‘low’ culture. Secondly, a ‘disavowal of economy’ separates emerging social agents from legitimate social agents. As Bourdieu writes:

The structure of the field of cultural production is based on two fundamental and quite different oppositions: first, the opposition between the sub-field of restricted production and the sub-field of large scale production… and secondly, the opposition, within the sub-field of restricted production, between the consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e. between artistic generations, often only a few years apart, between the ‘young’ and the ‘old’, the ‘neo’ and the ‘paleo’, the ‘new’ and the ‘outmoded’, etc.; in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 53)
Within Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, the opposition between the avant-garde and the consecrated avant-garde is the sole means of field transformation: the new displaces the incumbent and the field is ever evolving and ever able to incorporate heresy. As Johnson notes, ‘The polemic, in other words, is not simply between two individuals, but rather is inscribed in the broader conflict between orthodoxy and heresy which constitutes the central dialectic of change in the cultural field’ (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 17). The ‘disavowal of economy’ espoused at the autonomous pole of the field imposes ‘autonomy’ on the field of restricted production because it stands in direct contrast to the driving economic principles of ‘the field of power’ in which the field is located. Just as Bourdieu writes in *The Rules of Art* Bourdieu:

> The degree of autonomy of a field of cultural production is revealed to the extent that the principle of external hierarchization there is subordinated to the principle of internal hierarchization: the greater the autonomy, the more the symbolic relationship of forces is favourable to producers who are the most independent of demand, and the more the break tends to be noticeable between the two poles where producers have only other producers for clients (who are also their direct competitors), and the subfield of large-scale production, which finds itself symbolically excluded and discredited. In the external demands, the economy of practices is founded, as in the game of loser takes all, on an inversion of the fundamental principles of the field of power and of the economic field. It excludes the quest for profit and it guarantees no correspondence of any kind between monetary investments and revenues; it condemns the pursuit of honours and temporal standing. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 217)

In other words, the location of the field of restricted production within the field of power is dependent on the degree of autonomy the field possesses: the stronger the autonomous logic (the disavowal of economy) within the field of restricted production the more it is in conflict with the logic of economic accumulation that defines the dominance of the field of power. Therefore, the more ‘autonomy’ the field of restricted production accrues the more subordinated its position within the field of power precisely because it functions to reject economic accumulation, to ‘disavow economy’. The same logic that distances the field of restricted production from the field of large-scale production and the working classes (along the high/low axis) also subordinates it within the field of power (along the avant-garde/consecrated avant-garde axis).
Bourdieu understands the ‘disavowal of economy’ of the autonomous principle as a kind of economic strategy that protects creative freedom from the exploitative forces of immediate commercialization, allowing for greater accumulations of cultural capital and greater economic reward in the long-term. If proponents of the avant-garde secure the move to ‘consecrated avant-garde’, they (or their beneficiaries) stand to gain the highest economic rewards available within the field (think Picasso, Dali or any of the consecrated avant-gardists that now dominate the Art market). In his paper ‘The historical universal: the role of cultural value in the historical sociology of Pierre Bourdieu’, Tony Bennett writes:

In his account of the field of restricted cultural production, Bourdieu insists that ‘the disavowal of the economy’ associated with the commitment to art as an end in itself that characterizes the behaviour of various agents in this field (the author, artist, critic, art dealer, publisher or theatre manager) is itself a form of ‘economic rationality’ which, once the symbolic capital it represents has been cashed in, will yield both symbolic and economic profit to its champions (Bourdieu 1993: 76). Here, the ethos of disinterestedness is brought down to earth in being depicted as tangled up with specific kinds of interested economic calculation. (Bennett, 2005, p. 144)

The ‘disavowal of economy’ in play at the autonomous pole of the field of restricted production is a kind of high-stakes gamble – if you win, you win big and if you lose you are left with nothing. Until this point, field theory would seem an ideal framework within which to account for emergent cultural forms like networked art. The majority of the social agents involved with networked art come from middle-high social classes, are almost all highly educated and, as we shall see in following chapters, the autonomous principle of ‘disavowing economy’ is strong within networked art communities. We could conceptualize networked art communities as a series of avant-garde position-takings displacing the ‘old’ new media avant-garde of, say, video art (that cannot be aligned with a digital ethos) and participating in the natural evolution of the field. However, and this is where a troubling rigidity starts to snake its way into field logic, Bourdieu imposes a very specific discipline on the field of restricted production that binds the potential of external influence to a very specific range of possibility. As Johnson explains:
External determinants can have an effect only through transformations in the structure of the field itself. In other words, the field’s structure refracts, much like a prism, external determinants in terms of its own logic, and it is only through such refraction that external factors can have an effect on the field. The degree of autonomy of a particular field is measured precisely by its ability to refract external demands into its own logic. (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993, p. 14)

This, as we shall see, is the troubling logic that establishes the limits of the cultural field.

**The Limits of a Cultural Field: Habitus**

Bourdieu believes that the field of restricted production has been evolving towards a kind of autonomous state: an idyllic version of itself as the result of a centuries old journey towards a specific end. Every move made within the field of restricted production is absorbed by the structure of the field itself, which is, therefore, inscribed with the remnants of all position-takings. And the field becomes a kind of self-correcting cycle with a bias towards the autonomous, symbolically dominant pole of the field: the avant-garde. It is as though there is a cumulative force at play that is herding the field towards its better self. Moreover, Bourdieu believes that the late 20th century represented the summit of this evolution, the end result of a gathering momentum towards cultural autonomy. As he writes in *The Rules of Art*:

> The evolution of the field of cultural production towards a greater autonomy is thus accompanied by a greater reflexivity, which leads each of the ‘genres’ to a sort of critical turning in on itself, on its own principle, on its own premises: and it becomes more and more frequent that the work of art, a vanitas which betrays itself as such, includes a sort of autoderision. In effect, to the extent that the field closes in on itself, a practical mastery of the specific attainments of the whole history of the genre which are objectified in the past works and recorded, codified and canonized by the whole corpus of professionals of conservation and celebration – historians of art and literature, exegetes, analysts – become part of the conditions of entry into the field of restricted production. The history of the field is truly irreversible; and the products of this relatively autonomous history present a kind of cumulativity. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 242)

Bennett fleshes out the temporal conditions of the field’s increasing ‘autonomy’ by arguing that it is a kind of Marxist-Darwinism. He writes:
It is true, of course, that the narrative trope of accumulation that is so strong in Bourdieu’s work owes as much to Marx as to Darwin, especially in view of the influence that Darwin’s account of the struggle for existence exerted on Marx’s account of the relationships between competition and capital accumulation. There is, however, an important difference, long noted in the literature. For whereas Marx’s account of capital accumulation is one of interrupted development in which value is lost or written off as a result of successive crises of profitability, Darwin always stressed the long, continuous, step-by-step progression of natural evolution in which nothing is lost without at the same time being preserved and carried forward into the next step. (Bennett, 2005a, p. 150)

Bennett argues that Bourdieu’s ‘narrative trope of accumulation’ reveals a basic value judgment: the sociologist believes that the commercialization of Art is a corrupting force that robs it of its capacity to achieve a real and enduring symbolic value. As Bennett notes:

> Bourdieu champions the right of artists and intellectuals to defend the autonomy of the artistic and intellectual fields against the increasing ‘marketization’ of cultural production associated with neo-liberal cultural and economic policies, and to do so even at the price of appearing elitist. For it is, Bourdieu argues, only the autonomy of these fields that can secure the conditions needed if works of universal value are still to be produced. (ibid., p. 142)

The troubling aspect of Bourdieu’s ‘narrative trope of accumulation’ is how he accounts for such a stable temporal momentum. This stability arises through Bourdieu’s theorization of the relations between the field and habitus. Bourdieu’s conception of habitus is a theory of embodiment, a ‘structured and structuring structure’ (Bourdieu, 1994, p. 170) that produces and is produced by ‘the practical sense embedded in the body which allows for the repeated generation of relatively constant choices and actions across time and in the face of changed conditions’, as Bennett et al. write in Accounting for Taste (Bennett et al., 1999, p. 12). Or as Bourdieu writes in his work In Other Words:

> The source of historical action, that of the artist, the scientist or the member of government just as much as that of the worker or the petty civil servant, is not an active subject confronting society as if that society were an object constituted externally. This source resides neither in consciousness nor in things but in the relation between two states of the social, that is, between the history objectified in things, in the form of institutions, and the history incarnated in bodies, in the
form of that system of enduring dispositions which I call habitus. (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 190)

Bourdieu uses habitus to unpack the relatively stable correspondence he finds between locations in the field of social relations and locations in the field of cultural production. As DeLanda observes, ‘The main empirical finding that must be explained, according to Bourdieu, is the statistical correlation between, on the one hand, positions in resource distributions and, on the other, a more or less coherent lifestyle’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 63). Thus he theorizes that ‘different sets of objective opportunities and risks condition day-to-day practices of groups leading to the development of a durable set of dispositions, tendencies to behave in certain ways and display certain aspirations’ (ibid., p. 64). Accordingly, disposition and habitus become locked in a relation of mutual causality that acts as a stabilizing force. However, as Bennett et al. continue, ‘the concept [of habitus] comes dangerously close to being a tautology (one makes petit-bourgeois choices because one has a petit-bourgeois habitus) and … in its emphasis on the integration of social agents into predetermined positions … it may be little more than a sophisticated form of structural functionalism’ (Bennett et al., 1999, p. 12). Or as DeLanda writes, ‘Bourdieu endows this habitus with a high degree of automatism, to the extent that all differences between the motivations behind social behaviour (such as the difference between causes, reason and motives) disappear’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 64).

More specifically, in his book, Cultural Studies and Cultural Value, John Frow argues that habitus imposes a homogeneity on class experience that reveals an implicit essentialism underpinning field theory. For example, Bourdieu argues that the field of power is composed of both the wealthy and the ‘intelligentsia’ and assumes that both groups share the same basic experience of class and that they express the same aesthetic preferences. As Frow writes:

Two forms of essentialism operate in this argument. The first involves positing a single class ‘experience’ common to the sociologically quite distinct groups Bourdieu includes in the dominant class. The second posits a single aesthetic logic which corresponds to this experience. Together they suggest that there is an intrinsic logic of a unitary ruling-class structure. And one of the effects of this is a binary construction of the concepts of a ‘high’ and a ‘popular’ aesthetic
understood as something like class languages, fixed and ahistorical class dispositions with a necessary categorical structure. (Frow, 1995, p. 31)

Frow argues that the field, as governed by habitus, is not really a theory of social class but rather a theory of how the dominant class defines and maintains the parameters of cultural value; or, how the dominant dominate. He writes:

The point of this is not to establish the truism that different classes adopt different lifestyles, but to explore the process by which differences in cultural preference become socially functional. It is a question not of differences in themselves but of the ability of the dominant class to impose the value given to those differences: to impose a recognition of the distinction between ‘good’ taste and ‘vulgar’ taste, between legitimate and illegitimate styles. Aesthetic judgments, then, do not obey an autonomous aesthetic logic; they transpose distinctions of class into distinctions of taste, and thereby strengthen the boundaries between classes. But they also assert the right of a ruling class to legitimate domination over other classes. (Frow, 1995, p. 29)

Not only does the relation between habitus and field impose a rigid high/low binary opposition on cultural production (and assume that the cultural object is, above all, a communication of this opposition), it establishes an integral relationship between the past, the present and the future. Habitus informs the structure of the field which, in turn, reinforces habitus and fuels a snowballing process of cumulativity. As Bennett notes:

They [the relations between field and habitus] also provide, in the case of the literary and artistic fields, for a mechanism of temporalization that is unidirectional, progressive and cumulative owing to the extent to which the innovations of form, style, content or genre resulting from past struggles are ‘recorded, codified and canonized by the whole corpus of professionals of conservation and celebration – historians of art and literature, exegesis, analysts’ to become ‘part of the conditions of entry into the field of restricted production’. (Bennett, 2005, p. 149)

In this way, field transformation is only possible through whatever refractions habitus permits. As Bennett continues:

Such innovations and their conservation, that is to say, become a part of the history of the field that has to be mastered by those cultural producers whose capital accumulation strategies bank on the symbolic profits that accrue to those
who make a new move within the field, opening it up to new possibilities. Each innovation, however, displaces not only its immediate predecessor but, at the same time, the whole series of displaced predecessors that comprises the history of art. (ibid., p. 149)

In other words, the field of cultural production is organized according to a high/low binary that effectively differentiates between, as Frow observes, ‘something like class languages’ and gathers ever more categorical force through the cumulativity of habitus. By the end of the 20th century Bourdieu believed the organizational logic of the field to be incorruptible, as Bennett notes, ‘for Bourdieu, the fin-de-siècle laid down the rules of a game which persist, with no room for maneuver except to repeat moves that have already been made’ (ibid., p. 156). So, the ‘position-takings’ of social agents within the field become predictable, operating within perpetually reinforced socio-cultural categories pre-coding all possibility for change or transition into the ‘automatism’ of habitus and the inevitability of its relation with the field. As Frow writes:

But this dominance of the dominant values – which is never really given a historical and national specificity – then seems to become something absolute, and the working class tends to be inevitably and inexorably entrapped within the cultural limits imposed on it … The totalizing grip of the ‘dominant norms’, understood as a unitary set of values, allows for no possibility of critique and social transformation. (Frow, 1995, p. 46)

Or as DeLanda notes:

Bourdieu does not deny that, on occasion, people do make deliberate choices, or that sometimes they may engage in consciously matching means to ends. But far from constituting exceptions to the automatism of the habitus, it is the latter that determines when and where such exceptions are allowed. (DeLanda, 2006, p. 65)

What is more, Bourdieu corresponds clear aesthetic dimensions to the socio-cultural high/low binary of habitus by arguing that a high cultural preference is a preference for the cool distance (distance from economic necessity) of ‘form’ and a low cultural preference is a preference for the warmth and immediacy of ‘content’. This distinction assumes that high-cultural producers, curators/critics and audiences are
universally fluent in high cultural codes and only have a desire to decode the nuances of Art forms. Whereas, the working classes are assumed to be universally illiterate in high cultural codes and demanding of the instant immersion and accessibility of popular ‘content’ – driven by formulaic plot lines and fleshy characterizations – and are, therefore, utterly disinterested in the cool distance of Art.

The most troubling aspect of Bourdieu’s theory is that he assumes that the momentum of the field reached its zenith at the end of the 20th century, which means that the field of cultural production is caught in a kind of freeze-frame in which legitimate methods, modes, techniques and technologies of producing, distributing and receiving Art are fait accompli.

Cultural Fields and Networked Art

The question, then, is how (within a field logic) do we assign cultural value to networked art? Let us take, for example, a work like Mark Amerika’s *Immobilité* (Amerika, 2009). In 2009 networked artist, remixologist and theorist, Mark Amerika, released the first feature length film to be shot entirely on a mobile phone video camera. *Immobilité* is a work that clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of cultural categories in the face of emergent practice. Amerika openly questions why he should feel obliged to choose one mode of distribution or exhibition over another (or one institution over another or one ‘genre’ of evaluative regimes over another), particularly given the range of platforms available to *Immobilité*. As the artist notes in an interview with Tate Intermedia Art:

I am sort of consciously trying to blur the distinctions between these different forms and the venues in which they appear, so that is something that I am aware of as I make the work. How can I not deal with those issues? I mean what is the difference between what we think of as cinema, digital video, digital narrative, net art, web 2.0 etc? So, for me, I am happy to see the work materialize in a number of different ways and locate various audiences across the media spectrum. For a work like *Immobilité* there are all these ways of going about it so for me it’s not really an either/or situation. The notion of mixing up the muselogical and cinematic is very interesting. I wonder why do I have to succumb to the logic of independent cinema? Why do I have to send it out to film festivals like Sundance? But at the same time why do I have to succumb to the logic of video art in the Art gallery and also why do I have to succumb to
the logic of breaking it up and putting multiple parts on YouTube and just letting anybody see it when they want to in that particular format? I’m constantly asking myself those questions because all those are possibilities and more. (Amerika, 2009)

Immobilité intentionally blurs the boundaries between form and content by employing the high cultural competences of cinema verité through what is arguably the most immediate, participatory, mass medium of our time, the mobile phone. As a networked artist Amerika expresses his high cultural competence through the mass media of emergent information and communication technologies not to emphasize the distinction between high and low or form and content but to explore the legitimate dissolution of any ideology that sustains these kinds of socio-cultural boundaries. If a high cultural disposition (of which Amerika is unquestionably in possession of as an academic) is intuitively and essentially preconditioned to function within the predetermined provinces of ‘formal’ expression, how do we account for Amerika’s desire to explore emergent (read: illegitimate) modes of production, distribution and reception? Indeed, how do we account for networked art at all within a field framework?

Immobilité is one of a multitude of examples that attest to the limits of field logic (as I have noted, networked art is certainly not the only cultural practice that blurs cultural binaries). What is more, it works the other way as well as high-cultural distinction is frequently irrelevant to the producers, distributers and audiences of popular culture. As Frow notes:

The category of cultural disadvantage is, of course, applicable only on the ground of high culture. Bourdieu assumes that the legitimacy of this ground is still imposed on the dominated classes; but it may well be the case, particularly since the massive growth of television culture in which working-class people tend to be fully competent, that high culture, or rather the prestige of high culture, has become largely irrelevant to them. (Bourdieu never seeks to establish the case for the continuing legitimacy of high culture; he simply assumes it). (Frow, 1995, p. 38)

In his book, Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field, Ken Gelder argues that authors, critics and readers of popular fiction are often totally
unaware of its innate or essential differential relation with Literature (with a capital L) and asserts that categorizations of popular fiction as ‘low’ culture are often only relevant to high cultural evaluations. He writes:

> We need to understand that the reduction of popular fiction down to the bare necessities of the marketplace (‘the dollar’) is a response that is common to those who speak from a literary position, from the perspective of the field of Literature. Whether one is conscious of it or not, it is essentially a literary ‘feeling’, carrying with it a familiar set of accompanying complaints about declining literary standards, ‘dumbing down’, the absence of ‘national taste’, the stupidity of the ‘masses’, the dominance of economic value over cultural value and so on. (Gelder, 2004, p. 26)

What both Frow and Gelder are referring us to here is the increasing occurrence of ‘High-Pop’ (Collins, 2002). High-Pop (or Avant-Pop) refers to cultural forms that are both popular and bear the sophisticated hallmarks of legitimate culture, for example, ‘high’ television (Real Time with Bill Maher, for example) or ‘high’ pulp fiction (Philip K. Dick, Isaac Asimov, Kurt Vonnegut and so on) or high popular music (Nick Cave, Tom Waits, etcetera) – each of which demonstrates a ‘high’ cultural sensibility within the realm of popular culture. These ‘high’ sensibilities, however, have not necessarily been adapted or borrowed from Art worlds but rather are genre-specific cultural hierarchizations in which legitimate high-culture has very little bearing. As Jim Collins observes:

> One of the most troubling blind spots that has developed within cultural studies has been the implicit assumption that legitimate culture was being tended to by the rest of the academy, and it was the sort of thing best left to the old guard because it didn’t really address itself to anyone but them anyway. But ‘high culture’ didn’t stay put, living out its days as some sort of hot-house plant in the greenhouse of the academy. It has become popular culture – Shakespeare’s in love, with a vengeance. (Collins, 2002, p. 3)

There is also increasing evidence that legitimate high-culture not only acknowledges but embraces the competences of ‘high pop’. For example, the techno-wizardry of British collective, ‘United Visual Artists’ (UVA: a collective I would include under the networked art banner), could easily qualify as ‘high-pop’. However, it is hard to tell whether the collective is more famous for its commercial digital design or the
installation art it has been commissioned to produce for a variety of Art institutions. For example, UVA has created pop-music film-clips for Kylie Minogue, the British Indie darlings Arctic Monkeys and US experimental rock band Battles; stage design for numerous Massive Attack Tours and the Meltdown Festival; a high-profile BMW launch campaign; and designed a catwalk show for avant-garde fashionista Vivienne Westwood (United Visual Artists, 2009). However, UVA has also exhibited ‘permanent architectural installation, live performance and responsive installation’ (ibid.) at the Tate Modern, Britain’s Institute of Contemporary Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the British Library, London’s most prestigious contemporary Opera Company, ‘Opera North’ and the list of high-cultural institutions literally goes on and on (ibid.).

There are no discernable conceptual or aesthetic differences between, for example, UVA’s film clip for the band Battles or the ‘responsive installation’ on display in Opera North’s Howard Assembly Room throughout 2009 (ibid.). My point is that UVA is neither clearly high-pop nor ‘low-Art’ its works are a complex composition of the qualities that might be aligned with the coolness of ‘form’ and with the warmth and immediacy of ‘content’. Moreover, to assume that UVA’s audiences vary wildly from the Tate Modern to the Vivienne Westwood fashion show to MTV is a fundamentally outmoded and erroneous assumption in the contemporary cultural climate.

The idea that the pursuit of an overt commercial agenda is utterly incompatible with cutting-edge or avant-garde cultural production is also brought into question here. The costs of producing a ‘permanent architectural installation’ or a ‘responsive installation’ in keeping with UVA’s technologically driven methodologies are extremely high. There is no way to secure the resources to produce these kinds of works without economic capital. In fact, UVA openly state ‘We aim to work on a diverse and expanding range of projects, drawn from the commercial and non-commercial arenas, and to collaborate with a wide range of artists and companies’ (ibid.). It seems that, in keeping with Gelder’s observations above, ‘disavowing economy’ is only a relevant stance from the perspective of the Art world. UVA is simply disinterested in such dynamics as they do not vie for exclusive membership in
the Art world but rather work across categories, boundaries, institutions and forms with little regard for what are fast becoming the outmoded ‘Rules of Art’.

Within the Art world of today the idea of artistic autonomy (of the avant-garde as resolute disavowers of economy) is certainly not a hard and fast rule. In a paper titled ‘The Medium is the Market’, Art critic Hal Foster argues that the previously very separate worlds of business and Art (if only ever an illusory separation) have started to merge in unprecedented ways as ‘some artists have embraced business models with a rigour that puts Warhol to shame’ (Foster, 2008, p. 4). He is, of course, referring to contemporary Art stars like Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami, all of whom at certain times have been perceived, lauded or criticized as the avant-garde of the contemporary Art world. As Foster writes:

Hirst multi-tasks like mad: he has his own publishing house, clothing line, restaurants past and present, and a ‘Murderme’ collection of art and curiosities that will eventually be put on view in his Gothic revival manor in the Cotswolds. He also has an army of assistants, as do his peers in Business Art, Jeff Koons and Takashi Murakami. Koons oversees a studio factory with some ninety employees in Manhattan, while Murakami runs a corporation with seventy employees based in Tokyo and Queens. Work signed ‘Koons’ or ‘Murakami’ is largely designed on computers by assistants and then executed by fabricators. At times underscoring the collapse of the differences between museum art and mass culture, at other times reinscribing them to their own advantage, all three artists work in such a way as to make the market the medium of the art … The avant-garde once defined itself in opposition to kitsch, so its embrace of it might be expected to carry a modicum of surprise, but Koons didn’t intend to be part of a vanguard. On the contrary: ‘I have always tried to create work which does not alienate any part of my audience’, Koons states. ‘Through my work, I tell people to embrace their past, to embrace who they are’. This past, this identity, is constituted by the symbols of ‘mass cultural history’, according to Koons, and we are encouraged to deem it ‘perfect just the way it was’. (Foster, 2008, p. 4)

Koons’ point is an important one: how, in a world so saturated by mass culture, can we abide any absolute distinctions between cultural categories like high and low? It is absurd to think that Artists live in a vacuum of high culture that is completely disconnected from the otherwise global pervasion of mass culture. There is plenty of evidence to support the notion that cultural innovators – the bastions of change, the vanguard, the avant-garde – choose from a range of cultural strategies regarding their
relation with cultural and economic capital. Accordingly, the relation between cultural and economic capital is far more flexible than a Bourdieuean analysis allows. In other words, the idea of a ‘duality of hierarchies’ that understands the choices (position-takings) of cultural producers, dealer/critics and audiences along only two axes (the high/low axis and the avant-garde/consecrated avant-garde axis) that correspond to one of only four locales of positional outcomes seems obscenely limited given the dynamic reality of contemporary cultural practice. The ‘disavowal of economy’ seems a rather quaint cultural strategy amongst contemporary cultural agents.

However, ‘disavowals of economy’ frequently emerge in networked art communities (as we will see in following chapters) and when they do they tend to take the very Bourdieuean position that commercial agendas corrupt creative integrity and diminish symbolic and cultural values (often advocating for the ‘democratization of knowledge’ – which is a popular left and right wing political position within the emergent digital ethos and will be discussed in chapter five). ‘Disavowals of economy’ persist in communities of cultural production as a discursive and cultural strategy to establish the credibility of Art by distancing it from cultural products with explicit commercial agendas. These contemporary strategies still seek to distinguish high from low: the commercial cultural product from the pure aesthetic form. The critical point here is that – despite the complex and mutable spheres of contemporary cultural production – cultural hierarchies persist.

It is obvious that there is a diverse range of cultural strategies for the accumulation of cultural and economic capital within the spheres of cultural production. The ‘democratization of knowledge’ strategy demonstrates one such example, the Business Art model another and, as we shall see in following chapters, others still. Despite the limitations of the field there is no question that aspects of Bourdieu’s theory are crucial for making sense of cultural production and evaluation. Bourdieu’s conceptualization of cultural capitals as resources that are won or lost in the processes of cultural production, distribution and reception and their often peculiar and opaque relation with economic capital are enduring insights. There is, however, a
critical amendment that must be used to revitalize the Bourdieuean conceptualization of resource distribution within the spheres of cultural production.

Cultural resource distributions and their relations with economic capital are far more varied and dynamic than the relation between field and habitus allows. According to DeLanda, Bourdieu conceives the field as an abstract space defined by the semiotic categories of ‘high’ and ‘low’ that correspond to an equally abstract social distinction that only makes its way into embodied experience through, as Bennett describes it, the ‘socio-somatic’ concept of habitus (Bennett, 2005, p. 149). However, the distribution of cultural and economic resources is always firmly tied to the real, material conditions of their generation and circulation. As DeLanda observes:

Resource distributions never exist in an abstract space but are always intimately related to concrete social entities such as interpersonal networks and organizations. Not only are many resources (such as solidarity or legitimacy) emergent properties of these entities, but resources that have a different origin (natural resources like oil or coal; technological resources like machines and processed materials; cultural resources like diplomas or licenses) are either controlled by organizations or produced by them. Indeed, some of the making or sorting processes that maintain the differential access to ranking or sorting processes that maintain the differential access to economic and cultural capital are resource dependence relations that exist not between people but between institutional organizations. (DeLanda, 2006, p. 65)

Rather than conceiving an abstract field organized by the rigid conception of fixed high/low cultural categories we must understand the multiple spheres of cultural production as a series of intersecting communities that are composed of myriad heterogeneous elements that include a complex mix of material and expressive dimensions. Clearly, I am not arguing that high/low oppositions do not apply to contemporary cultural production. However, it should also be clear that high/low organizational logics cannot be perceived as an all encompassing strategy that divides cultural production into two neat and opposing categories of high and low culture. The slippery, enigmatic forms of networked art provide irrefutable evidence that field logic is unsustainable.

How, then, if the field has been dismantled, do we make sense of cultural production? How do we account for its peculiarities, its unique protocols and logics?
And, perhaps more importantly, how do we make sense of ruptures and alien conjugations that afflict these protocols and logics, particularly in the metamorphosing climate of network culture? What analytic methodology can provide access to such a slippery sphere of human activity? Over the second half of the 20th century, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari worked together (and separately) on a theoretical framework that produced the concept of the territorial assemblage. This thesis proposes that it is through this Deleuzo-Guattarian concept that we can not only make sense of shifting landscapes of cultural production but take with us the more enduring insights of theoretical models that have proven, as wholes, too rigid to prevail; insights like that of Pierre Bourdieu’s.

**The Territorial Assemblage: A Methodological Alternative to the Field**

The territorial assemblage is an amorphous entity; it is never a fully contained whole but nor is it a euphemism for the radically relative soup of post-modern zealotry. The territorial assemblage is an aggregation of protocols, logics and materialities that aggregate to form systems or ecologies. Territorial assemblages are, however, always-already immersed in the dynamics of heterogeneity; they are always in relation with, as Ned Rossiter puts it, ‘the constituent outside’ (Rossiter, 2006). How, then, do territorial assemblages aggregate in a way that makes one distinguishable from another? According to Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) the aggregation of assemblages is defined via the logic of the refrain. The refrain is exemplified for Deleuze and Guattari through the bird song. The bird sings a song to call and respond to a mate and another to mark the territory of its nest and yet another to defend this territory. The bird sings love songs, anthems and battle-cries and, in doing so, orients its participation in its own social assemblage and in the range of ‘infra-assemblages’ in which its sociality is implicated. The refrain, as Deleuze and Guattari write, ‘is rhythm and melody that have been territorialized because they have become expressive – and have become expressive because they are territorializing’ (ibid., p. 317). They continue:
The territory itself is a place of passage. The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally territorial. But how could it not already be in the process of passing into something else, into other assemblages? That is why we could not talk about the constitution of the territory without also talking about its internal organization. We could not describe the infra-assemblage without also discussing the intra-assemblage. Nor can we say anything about the intra-assemblage without already being on the path to other assemblages, or elsewhere. The passage of the Refrain. The refrain moves in the direction of the territorial assemblage and lodges itself there or leaves. In a general sense, we call a refrain any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 323)

For a concept that can never be enclosed or totalized, this idea of ‘interiority’ needs a little more elucidation. Guattari sheds light on the concept of the ‘intra-assemblage’ in *The Three Ecologies* when he writes, ‘Interiority would appear as a quality produced at the meeting-point of multiple components which are relatively mutually autonomous – in certain cases, openly discordant’ (Guattari, 2008, p. 16). In this way, the concept of interiority here is always-already exposed to its outside, always-already permeated and permeable. The openness of the concept of the territorial assemblage is what makes it such an important tool in terms of unpacking contemporary cultural production. DeLanda frames this openness by arguing that, in stark opposition to the ‘relations of interiority’ rule that defines structuralist analyses, territorial assemblages pursue a ‘relations of exteriority’ rule. ‘Relations of exteriority’ ensure, as DeLanda notes, ‘that a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 11). This is a critical point in the analysis of networked art as, unlike the more Darwinian territorial assemblages of bird groups, not only does networked art breed with other families of its genus it breeds with other species. Or, perhaps more accurately, networked art is the chimerical progeny of alien infiltrations. These capricious activities, however, can disrupt the territorializing effect of incumbent refrains and de-reterritorialize assemblages.

The concept of territorialization is crucial to understanding both the integrity of territorial assemblages like Art worlds and the deterritorializations to which they are currently subject due to the increasing prevalence of forms like networked art. In fact, it is an assemblage’s resolute openness to deterritorialization that makes it an
ideal alternative to field theory. Bourdieu’s theory is predicated on an assumption that an embodied socio-cultural stability (habitus) perpetually territorializes the field of the Art world and predetermines the limits of its transformation. An assemblage, on the other hand, is highly suspicious of ‘master-processes’ (like that of Bourdieu’s habitus) that impose fixed stabilities on inherently dynamic ecologies and systems. As DeLanda notes:

Bourdieu’s … empirical observation that members of a particular class tend to display the same habitus may be accommodated without introducing a master process. We may agree, for example, that the class into which we are born possesses its own habits, which are regularly transmitted to new generations, and that it has access to special training to develop unique skills, a privilege that can also be handed down and preserved in a straightforward way. This would account for the relative homogeneity of a defining set of habits and skills without assuming an ‘immediate submission to order’. Indeed, in the assemblage approach submission or obedience cannot be taken for granted and must always be accounted for in terms of specific enforcement mechanisms. The density of the networks structuring certain communities can be such a mechanism, as can be the more analytical enforcement practices of modern organizations. (DeLanda, 2006 p. 65)

Stabilities or processes of territorialization may be articulated through the literal establishment of ‘material’ boundaries; like those that define the borders of a painting or a sculpture, a domestic space, an organization or the geographical boundaries assigned to a suburb, a city, a state or a country and so on. However, territorializations can also be non-material ‘expressive’ processes or gestures that function, for example and as DeLanda notes, to ‘exclude a certain category of people from membership to an organization, or the segregation processes which increase the ethnic or racial homogeneity of a neighbourhood’ (ibid., p. 13).

The territorializing processes of Art worlds (as with most other territorial assemblages) tend to involve the complex mixing of material and expressive dimensions. Cultural and aesthetic discourses, for example, depend on the material infrastructures of universities, publishing houses and the specific technics of production as well as on an array of (inter)transdisciplinary codes and conventions. Art institutions are organized according to a highly complex and deeply historical mix of expressive and material dimensions (to be discussed in chapters three and
four). The material and expressive dimensions of discourses and institutions are wholly implicated in the continued circulation of traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. And, as the following chapters demonstrate, traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value act as powerful stabilizing forces for the territorial assemblages of Art worlds.

But processes of territorialization can be breached and destabilized and when this happens assemblages are deterritorialized. There is no deterritorialization without a reterritorialization. Even if an aggregation of component parts completely dissipates, the component parts are subsumed anew in other assemblages. As Deleuze and Guattari write, ‘whenever a territorial assemblage is taken up by a movement that deterritorializes it (whether under so-called natural or artificial conditions), we say that a machine is released’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 333). They continue:

> A machine is like a set of cutting edges that insert themselves into the assemblage undergoing deterritorialization, and draw variations and mutations of it. For there are no mechanical effects; effects are always machinic, in other words, they depend on a machine that is plugged into an assemblage and has been freed through deterritorialization. (ibid., p. 333)

The concept of the machine is important here because it is a tool that allows us to follow the lines of transformation through which assemblages are deterritorialized. The quotation above tells us that new ‘machines’ are composed in the rumblings of deterritorialization. A new machine always emerges at the site/s of deterritorialization within territorial assemblages despite the fact that it may be (and often is) the result of external forces. In *Materializing New Media* Anna Munster understands machinic processes as ‘movement capture formations’, that ‘arise out of heterogeneous flows yet sever the flow’s movement in myriad directions’ (Munster, 2006, p. 14). When the rumblings of transformation reach a critical threshold they ‘release’ an incumbent machine and a new machine emerges reorganizing ‘aggregations of matters of expression’ and new territories are born. The machinic restores order after the chaos of deterritorialization. As Guattari writes, ‘when expressive rupture takes place, repetition becomes a process of creative assemblage,
forging new incorporeal objects, abstract machines, and universes of value’ (Guattari, 2008, 122). Munster continues:

Machinism is therefore both an abstract and a concrete movement that operates between two limit poles: diagram and concretization. The diagram is not the same thing as a computer program waiting to be executed or some genetic commands waiting to instruct. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest, it plays a ‘piloting’ role in steering the multiplicity of potential relations between elements. Located at the other pole is the assemblage, in which the process of machinism is concretized; its elements are given substance; and its functions are expressed with a particular form … concretization of the diagram into an assemblage suggests a kind of reification of the social, technical or political relations. But it is also the outcome of the differential impact that these elements, brought into relation with each other through attraction, circumstance and accident, produce. (Munster, 2006, p. 36)

Over the last twenty years mainstream Art worlds have witnessed sites of transformation but these sites have largely been relegated to the borders where their potential could be easily dismissed or disciplined. In the last few years, however, we have witnessed the diagrammatic limit pole of new ‘abstract machines’ as new discursive strategies infiltrate the contemporary dialectic of Art. For example, this thesis documents the emergence of well-honed and highly sophisticated techno-specific regimes of aesthetic and cultural value10 alongside the profoundly transformative emergence of ‘new institutional forms’.11 What is more, over the last two years we have witnessed the beginnings of the concretization of these abstract machines as the ground of critical and aesthetic evaluation begins to shift and new organizational logics emerge within networked art organizations.12 New machines are emerging and new territories are starting to take shape. As we shall see in following chapters, however, it is never a matter of a clean transition from one system of territorializing processes to another – from one machine to another – change is always uneven and messy with sites of radical transformation existing alongside sites of resolute territoriality, much as Deleuze and Guattari note:

These three ‘ages’, the classical, romantic and modern (for lack of a better term), should not be interpreted as an evolution, or as structures separated by signifying breaks. They are assemblages enveloping different Machines, or different relations to the Machine. In a sense, everything we attribute to an age was already present in the preceding age … Fuzzy aggregates have been constituting themselves and inventing their processes of consolidation all along
… Thus it is more a question of thresholds of perception, or thresholds of discernability belonging to given assemblages … It had been present ‘for all time’, but under very different perceptual conditions. New conditions were necessary for what was buried or covered, inferred or concluded, presently to rise to the surface. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 346-347)

What this thesis documents is precisely a shift in ‘thresholds of discernability’ as the abstract machines of new cultural practice begin to take form and give rise to a specific range of new ‘social, technical and political’ relations. Networked art has been a ‘fuzzy aggregate’ for at least twenty years although it may well be the child of the early 20th century avant-garde or, indeed, stretch as far back as the Baroque – much as Munster suggests (Munster, 2006) – or perhaps even earlier. Whatever its sites of origin, the rise of digital networks has induced deterritorializing forces that Art worlds can simply no longer appropriate through the standing refrains of traditional or ‘modern’ Art machines. Bourdieu’s field, while innovative for its time, rests on an assumption that the technics of Art making had reached their zenith at the end of the 20th century determining a fixed set of regimes for cultural and aesthetic evaluation. Bourdieu could not foresee a set of conditions in which ‘high’ cultural distinctions might be dispersed across the entire spectrum of cultural production let alone a set of conditions in which cultural production itself would be laid open to the effects of alien infiltrations that would give birth to the wild chimeras of contemporary cultural forms. By understanding the spheres of cultural production as assemblages, however, we open out the ground of analysis and are able to follow the traces of transformation where they lead.

As the following chapters will demonstrate, there are still highly stable sites within Art world assemblages that actively resist the encroachment of networked art’s seditious forms. These sites of territoriality reveal the continuing relevance of Bourdieu’s observations regarding the peculiar and opaque relations between cultural and economic capital. Moreover, as new machines overlap and infiltrate old machines we see some of the old ‘field-like’ refrains still alive and well in new logics of production, distribution and reception of cultural forms and Bourdieu’s insights have enduring relevance there as well. As Deleuze and Guattari have pointed out, it
is never a matter of the neat evolution from one territorial assemblage to another; change is uneven, messy and complex.

This chapter has explained the impact of early aesthetic theory on the development of cultural sociology and the concept of the Art world. I have explored perhaps the most important contemporary thinker within this discipline, Pierre Bourdieu and his field theory. I have argued that Bourdieu’s insights are limited by an uncharacteristic theoretical rigidity that is expressed through the concept of habitus. I have also argued, however, that Bourdieuean insight can be remobilized within the more flexible concept of the Deleuzo-Guattarian ‘territorial assemblage’. I have presented the ‘territorial assemblage’ as an alternative to field theory and established it as the theoretical ground of this thesis. In fact, the primary tools I will introduce over the following chapters to trace the deterritorializing forces at play within contemporary Art worlds are all iterations of this Deleuzo-Guattarian ground. Chapter two follows on from this discursive prehistory by exploring the discourse of networked art and observing an often awkward discursive struggle to escape the hindrance of traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. I argue, however, that the ‘digital aesthetics’ of Anna Munster’s *Materializing New Media* is a site of groundbreaking discursive deterritorialization.
Chapter One Endnotes

1 British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, defines ‘modernity’ in the following way:

The emergence of modernity is first of all the creation of a modern economic order, that is, a capitalistic economic order. But modern society also involves the formation of a distinctive kind of state and, more generally, distinctive kinds of organization. These depend essentially upon the structuring of information. That is why I use the idea of ‘surveillance’ – borrowed from Foucault – as the way in which information systems are constructed to form new systems of administrative power. The modern state is the prime example of this process. (Giddens, 1998, p. 96)

What Giddens argues here is that modernity refers to a shift in the ethos of governance towards new mechanisms of disciplining publics that ushered in new logics of social organization. These modern logics of organization would see the rise of the modern institutional form (the nation state, the military machine, modern cultural institutions and so on). The concept of ‘modernity’ is frequently used to refer to a specific epoch beginning around the Enlightenment and ending, arguably, in the mid-late 20th century. But I do not pursue such rigid definitions of the concept and rather, following Foucault, understand the term as a reference to the development of specific – ‘modern’ – logics of social organization and a seismic shift in the distribution of power and knowledge (ideas that will unpacked more thoroughly in chapter three).

2 Kant’s conception of ‘free harmony’ is somewhat contingent on his idea of ‘universal validity’. Of course, Kant’s insistence on ‘universal validity’ has been widely critiqued on the grounds that it does not allow for conflict between individual aesthetic perceptions. While it may seem imprudent to refer to Kant’s theory of aesthetic perception without a thorough account of both the subtlety and problematic nature of ‘universal validity’, for the sake of brevity I acknowledge these conversations but leave this demanding discussion to one side. For readings on the problematic of ‘universal validity’ see Allison’s Kant’s Theory of Taste (Allison, 2001, pp 184-192) and Guyer’s Kant and the Claims of Taste (Guyer, 1979, p. 297).

3 Defining the social value of human ‘skill’ has been a complex undertaking throughout history. The Greek word for art/craftsmanship was ‘techne’ and this pre-platonic meaning of the word was used broadly to identify both the processes and implementation of technical skills. David Roochnik argues, in Of Art and Wisdom: Plato's understanding of Techne that in the Homeric poems Techne has a range of meanings:

It names the ‘skill’ of the ship-builder who works with wood; the ‘craft’ of the Hephaestus, who forges metal bonds to hold even the mighty Ares; the ‘craftiness’ of the Proteus, who is able to change his form at will; and the ‘plan’,...
or ‘stratagem’, Aegisthus devises to murder Agamemnon. (Roochnik, 1998, p. 18)

However, Roochnik goes on to argue that Plato complicates the concept significantly by asking ‘is moral knowledge, knowledge of the arête of the human psyche, a techne?’ (ibid., p. 17). Here we see superior intellectual knowledge or achievement incorporated into understandings of art, of ‘techne’. Plato’s use of the term ‘techne’ might be considered as one of the first moves toward a distinction between ‘everyday’ material labour and the ‘higher’ skills of contemplation and interpretation. Kant’s aesthetic philosophy, however, was interpreted by early aesthetic theory as a further distinction between the pursuit of knowledge and the ‘universal’ faculties of aesthetic perception. Kantian aesthetics, then, might be understood at odds with the Platonic concept of ‘techne’ and as a far narrower interpretation of the broad Homeric conception of the word. We start to see here how Kantian aesthetics was utilized to fundamentally shift the western concept of art.

4 It is for these reasons that when I capitalize the word Art I am referring to Art, Artists, Arts administrators and/or Art institutions that function explicitly within legitimate Art worlds. However, when I use a lower-case ‘a’ for the word art I am referring to artists, arts administrators and arts organizations that function in more complex spheres of cultural production where cultural legitimacy is neither definitively tied to high or low culture.

5 As early as the late 19th and early 20th centuries there were reactions against rigid high/low cultural distinctions that took shape through forums like the ‘Arts and Crafts Movement’ of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The key principle of the Arts and Crafts Movement was to undermine the ‘soulless’ production of machine-made design objects (for more see Cumming & Kaplan, 1991). The most notorious proponent the movement is undoubtedly the famed craftsman William Morris. William Morris was an architect, furniture maker, textile designer, poet and socialist who lived in England during the 19th century. Aside from the diversity of his work, he was famous for being a cultural agitator – refusing to accept the hegemonic foundation on which 19th century cultural distinction was based (I attend to the relation between the emergent western nation state and cultural production in chapter three but for more on Morris see Weinroth, 1996). Moreover, the Arts and Crafts Movement was closely followed by the emergence of Bauhaus – the German design school that amalgamated the functionality of craft with the principles of Art – in the early 20th century. While these movements functioned to undermine rigid high/low cultural distinctions they have, ironically, been co-opted by formal Art history as subversive ‘Art’ movements.

6 Avant-Pop was at term coined by networked artist Mark Amerika in the early 1990s. The writer, academic and artist defines the term in the following way:

Now that Postmodernism is dead and we're in the process of finally burying it, something else is starting to take hold in the cultural imagination and I propose
that we call this new phenomenon Avant-Pop. Whereas it’s true that certain strains of Postmodernism, Modernism, Structuralism and Post-Structuralism, Surrealism, Dadaism, Futurism, Capitalism and even Marxism pervade the new sensibility, the major difference is that the artists who create Avant-Pop art are the Children of Mass Media (even more than being the children of their parents who have much less influence over them). (Amerika, 1993)

7 While the term ‘avant-garde’ has a specific utility in Art History (particularly French Art History) as a reference to particular cultural instances and Art movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I, like Bourdieu, understand the term ‘Art for Art’s sake’ to be a correlative term to the ‘avant-garde’. Much like Renato Poggioli’s 1962 book, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, I employ the term in its broadest sense as a reference to the non-conformist attitudes of cultural vanguardism; attitudes that are perennial within the Art world and that can certainly be aligned with a range of networked artists and organizations.

8 While the concept of *habitus* can be traced back to Aristotle, Bourdieu’s use of the term tends more towards Marcel Mauss’ ‘structuralist’ utilization of the term. For Mauss, *habitus* works to emphasize the tendency of social structures to reproduce themselves through ‘techniques of the body’ (Mauss, 1935, p. 77). However, *Habitus* has more recently been taken up by philosopher Gilles Deleuze who severs the concept from the structuralist interpretation of Mauss and Bourdieu but still understands it as a self-organizing system and, on some level, as an embodied process. For Deleuze, *habitus* is an abstract machine that exists on the ‘plane of immanence’ and functions as a kind of zero point of difference always working to distinguish the ‘I’ of the individual agent but it has an almost opposing functionality to that of memory:

Habitus, on the other against Mnemosyne; refusing the content of a repetition which is more or less able to ‘draw off’ difference (Habitus); refusing the overly simple cycles, the one followed by a habitual present (customary cycle) as much as the one described by a pure past (memorial or immemorial cycle); changing the ground of memory into a simple condition by default, but also the foundation of habit into a failure of ‘habitus’, a metamorphosis of the agent; expelling the agent and the condition in the name of the work or product; making repetition, not that from which one ‘draws off’ a difference, nor that which includes difference as a variant, but making it the thought and the production of the ‘absolutely different’; making it so that repetition is, for itself, difference in itself. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 94)

9 Bourdieu’s understanding of ‘form’ here correlates to the specific ideas of ‘formalism’ within aesthetic theory that speak to the compositional elements of Art works (shape, colour, line and so on). The ideas of ‘formalism’ and the corresponding definition of ‘form’ are opposed to the more fluid and reflexive notions of Anna Munster’s approach to the Art work discussed in chapter two and Ned Rossiter’s mobilization of ‘form’ discussed in chapter five.
Chapter two discusses the groundbreaking work of Anna Munster’s *materializing new media* (Munster, 2006).

Chapter five discusses the equally pioneering work of Ned Rossiter’s *Organized Networks* (Rossiter, 2006).

Chapters five and six explore the seeds of radical transformation that are beginning to sprout through the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT).
CHAPTER TWO

THE DISCOURSE OF NETWORKED ART: FROM FIELD TO ASSEMBLAGE

One of the main problems for articulating a digital aesthetic is that mutability seems immanent to computation. It is impossible to gain any classical aesthetic or contemplative distance from an object that is so constantly updating itself.

Anna Munster

In January 2004 the online magazine *Mute: Culture and Politics After the Net* (Mute, 2009) published an article written by media theorist Matthew Fuller and Art critic Ewan Morrison titled ‘In the Name of Art’ (Fuller and Morrison, 2004). Mute asked Fuller and Morrison to explain ‘why the art world still sends out mixed signals about its – digital – other half’ (ibid.). Morrison asserts a ‘list of reasons why “digital art” will never be accepted as fine Art’ (ibid.), while Fuller makes the case for digital art’s airtight high-cultural legitimacy. In the preamble to ‘In the Name of Art’, Mute observes a ‘welcome return of the “high” and “low” arts argument, which seems to have undergone only very slight modification’ (Fuller and Morrison, 2004). Mute is right, despite numerous insightful attempts to recalibrate the considerations of cultural value within cultural studies over the last few decades1 (often within critiques of Bourdieu’s field theory), the tendency towards definitive high/low cultural distinctions within aesthetic analyses persists. The significance of the Mute article is that it demonstrates that networked art is neither definitively Art nor popular-culture. What is implied in the sardonic tone of ‘In the Name of Art’ is a recognition that traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value (that seek rigid high/low categorizations) are proving inadequate in the face of a transforming techno-cultural landscape.

This chapter begins by briefly documenting the origins of the term ‘networked art’. It then argues that early discursive claims for networked art’s specificity through
concepts such as telepresence, virtuality and interactivity are often wrapped up in debates about how well networked art reflects or performs the ideas of post-structuralist thought and/or the 20th century avant-garde. These now largely outmoded debates frequently employ traditional aesthetico-cultural historicizations that mobilize high/low value judgements and, therefore, constrain discursive engagements with emerging cultural practice. The tendency to locate networked art within a binary high/low system of value reveals a lag between the emergence of new cultural forms and the development and refinement of corresponding theoretical tools through which to makes sense of them. This chapter goes on to identify the new aesthetic theory of Anna Munster’s materializing new media (Munster, 2006) as a much-needed alternative to the lingering field logic that has hindered the development of the discourse of networked art. I also establish the ground of another theoretical tool utilized in this thesis – John Frow’s ‘regimes of value’ – by arguing that it is a precursor to Munster’s revised ‘digital aesthetics’. And, finally, this chapter argues that the discursive shift exemplified by Munster’s new aesthetic theory indicates a much larger shift in the organizational logics of the contemporary Art world.

Before I begin, however, it is important to note that when I refer to the ‘discourse of networked art’ I am referring to a deeply interdisciplinary and diverse assemblage of texts, forums and symposia. While it is unarguably the case that the roots of the discourse are planted firmly in the echelons of critical Art theory and formal Aesthetics, they are also deeply indebted to cultural theory and media studies (each with their own complex and deeply rooted histories). The potential force of this interdisciplinarity has meant that the discourse of networked art is subject to the influences of an increasing range of external forces, which sees it – much like the protean forms to which it attends – in a constant state of flux. In this way, we can think of the discourse of networked art itself as a territorial assemblage subject to a range of discursive stabilities but always open to the deterritorializing power of external forces.
Networked Art: The Origins of a Term

The term ‘networked art’ emerged in the nascent days of the Internet between the early-mid 1990s and 2001. The very first incarnations of networked art are often referred to as ‘net.art.’ In his book *Protocol: How Control Exists After Decentralization*, Alexander Galloway notes that ‘net.art’ differs from later forms of networked art because it was bound to the specific aesthetic conditions of the graphical-user-interfaces (GUIs) that characterized a juvenile Internet. He writes:

> The first phase, net.art, is a dirty aesthetic deeply limited, but also facilitated, by the network. The network’s primary limitation is the limitation on bandwidth (the speed at which data can travel), but other limitations also such as the primitive nature of simple network protocols like HTML. (Galloway, 2004, p. 219)

According to Anna Munster in her paper, ‘Data Undermining: The Work of Networked Art in an Age of Imperceptibility’, this era of ‘simple’ network protocols actually endowed the net.artist with a unique aesthetic advantage of which the more contemporary networked artist has been denied. She writes:

> The fascinating paradox of all these trends toward the visualisation of data – the screen interface of the desktop computer, the dominance of GUIs in web browser design and the construction of entire information spaces as both two- and three-dimensional image-scapes – is that the structures, operations and circuits through which data move become increasingly invisible. It is often the case that during initial periods of a digital medium’s or set of technologies’ development, a period of greater accessibility to these underlying structures and processes occurs. This period of experimentation, in which technical and design protocols are less established, is often also characterised by artistic and cultural exploration of the medium/technology. (Munster in Green et al., 2009, para. 50)

The point being that net.artists had greater access to the ‘structures, operations and circuits’ of early GUIs and digital network technologies than more contemporary networked artists. These ‘structures, operations and circuits’ have become largely ‘invisible’ and, therefore, far more difficult to exploit, expose or engage aesthetically. It might be argued that the lack of a clear-cut or sustainable distinction between more contemporary terms like net art, Internet art and networked art is a consequence of the fact that the potential for aesthetic specificity has become hidden
behind the increasingly ubiquitous GUI. Net.art, on the other hand, bears the distinctive (and now retro) aesthetic trademark of its exposed, low-tech origins.

The increasing lack of aesthetic specificity for networked art forms is also a product of the fact that the Internet is no longer (if it ever was) discursively perceived as a single *medium* but rather is understood as a forum of dynamic technological, technical and protocological variability. As Julian Stallabrass writes in *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*, ‘the internet is not a medium, like painting, or video, but rather a transmission system for data that potentially simulates all reproductive media’ (Stallabrass, 2003, p. 12). Galloway, moreover, defines the new spheres of digital networks not as sites of emergent media but rather as the more penetrating emergence of a new logic of socio-cultural organization. He writes:

> The diagram is the distributed network, a structural form without center that resembles a web or a meshwork. The technology is the digital computer, an abstract machine able to perform the work of any other machine (provided it can be described logically). The management style is protocol, the principle of organization native to computers in distributed networks. All three come together to define a new apparatus of control that has achieved importance at the start of the new millennium. (Galloway, 2004, p. 188)

It is on this protean perception of the Internet that many of the discursive arguments for networked art’s capacity to transform broad perceptions of cultural production are founded.

**Is ‘networked art’ Art?**

In 1993, techno-cultural icon, Roy Ascott, wrote a paper titled ‘From Appearance to Apparition: Communication and Culture in the Cybersphere’ in which he argues that digitally networked media are inducing a fundamental shift in the way we understand cultural production and, indeed, the way we ‘read’ the world. It is worth including the entire passage here as it so clearly outlines the specific concerns of this chapter and, indeed, captures the broader issues of this thesis:
A culture concerned with appearances bases itself on certainties, definitive description of reality. Uniformity of dogma, uniformity of outlook and goals, cultural continuity and consensus, semiotic stability: these are its distinguishing features. Within this larger frame, aesthetic changes, when they occur, are merely cosmetic; the basic conformity to an approved model of reality remains. There have been paradigm shifts in art, just as in science, but it could be argued that the canon of Western art has maintained a much longer consistency and continuity than science, since numerous scientific revolutions have come and gone, while art’s preoccupation with appearance, with the surface image, with ready-made reality, has held for a millennia.

In contrast, a culture concerned with apparition bases itself on the construction of reality, through shared perceptions, dreams and desires, through communication, and on the hybridization of media and the celebration of semiotic instability. The shift towards apparition and construction as its primary concern is a paradigmatic shift. We now realize that an art dedicated to appearance simply gives the lie to whatever is the case, since the retinal gaze can penetrate very little of the material state and almost nothing of the spiritual state of things. The surface of the world hides more than it discloses … But until the effects of cyberculture were felt, until the radical implications for art of the new technologies had begun to be recognized and adopted, those artists whose practice, complicitly or unthinkingly, upheld the old orders of perception and knowledge, aided and abetted by the defacto controllers of representation and consciousness – curators, critics, historians, and dealers – resisted the radicalism of these pioneers. (Ascott & Shanken, 2003, pp. 280-281)

What Ascott does here is outline the before and after shots of the cultural deterritorialization we are currently witnessing. In other words, Ascott recognizes two distinct territorial assemblages of cultural production. The first might be understood as a hierarchical field with the conventional Art world at its summit that is governed by the principles of semiotic stability. The second might be perceived as a ‘territorial assemblage’ of cultural production utterly changed under the flexibility of semiotic instability. This passage tells us that we are in the midst of a transition away from a culture defined by the Art object that captures cultural meaning and secures cultural value and towards a culture in which meaning and value are subjectively defined across multiple spheres of social exchange.

Ascott’s observation, however, was made at the first signs of the Internet’s deterritorializing force when the ‘culture of apparition’ was still only a phantasm on the fringes of traditional Art worlds (if even that). A time when the outcomes of such a deterritorialization were still far enough from the reality of mainstream cultural assemblages that the plethora of correlative infrastructural issues implicated by a
transition of this magnitude were still largely indeterminable. In other words, while it
was clear that cultural transition was imminent in the early 1990s, the intricacies of
how the ‘culture of appearance’ would transition into a ‘culture of apparition’ were
still largely obscured. Consequently and ironically, as we shall see, the kind of
insight expressed in Ascott’s quote – and during the early days of the discourse of
networked art – was often snagged by the incumbent systems of value it was
attempting to out-maneuver. What these early discursive strategies did was construct
a foundation on which the scholars and artists of more recent years (with the great
advantage of hindsight) have been able to compose, for example, new regimes of
aesthetic and cultural value (Munster, 2006) or new logics of institution (Rossiter,
2006) and begin to explore new strategies for managing the politics of space within
the spheres of cultural production (Manning, 2007; 2009).

One of the most dominant themes in the early discourse of networked art was to
group the technologies of digital networks together by assigning them defining
qualities through concepts like telematics, interactivity and/or virtuality. This was a
move aimed at providing critics and scholars of networked art with a specialized
‘digital aesthetics’:\textsuperscript{5} The nomination of technological or medium specific qualities
for digital networks is a conflicting move as it attempts to locate a ‘semiotic stability’
within an emergent system of ‘semiotic instability’. These specificities have
frequently been utilized to argue that networked art literally activates the
deterritorializing forces of post-structuralist thought.\textsuperscript{6} Moreover, this post-
structuralist potential is often aligned with many of the ideas pursued within the 20\textsuperscript{th}
century avant-garde. In fact, Ascott argues that post-structuralist principles were a
part of the intellectual climate that inspired the themes and contestations of the 20\textsuperscript{th}
century avant-garde, like two chords of the same dissenting voice (Ascott &
Shanken, 2003, p. 285). In other words, specificity is imposed here to ensure
aesthetic dynamism. The paradox, of course, is that by locking networked art into
relations of technological or medium specificity the infinitely mutable technics of its
forms are bound to a limited slate of critical considerations. It doesn’t matter how
dynamic these specificities are, they impose qualitative boundaries on an expansive
sphere of practice and, in doing so, delimit our capacity to critically engage the full scope of emergent techno-cultural form/s.

Ascott, for example, refers us to the new informational logic of digital media by emphasizing its telematic nature. Ascott argues that the telematics of digital media allow networked art to actualize (both materially and conceptually) Roland Barthes’ theories of non-linear narrative and intertextuality. Ascott’s argument can be elucidated through Lev Manovich’s observation that digital technologies have fundamentally reorganized the narrative/database relationship (Manovich, 2001). In *The Language of New Media*, Manovich argues that digital networks foster a shift from the modern dominance of linear narrative to an informational logic in which the concept of the database is on rather more equal footing. To explain the importance of the difference between the two informational logics Manovich writes:

> As a cultural form, database represents the world as a list of items and it refuses to order this list. In contrast, a narrative creates a cause-and-effect trajectory of seemingly unordered items (events). Therefore, database and narrative are natural enemies, competing for the same territory of human culture, each claims an exclusive right to make meaning of the world. (ibid., p. 225)

Within the protocols of digital media, Manovich continues, ‘the database can support a narrative but there is nothing in the logic of the medium itself which would foster its generation’ (ibid., p. 228). Manovich is not arguing that the database should or will replace the narrative as the privileged informational logic but rather that digital media ensure that ‘database and narrative work together’ (ibid., p. 240). Ascott pursues this line of thought through Barthes’ ‘text as tissue’ metaphor, which he employs in multiple texts. The now canonical metaphor is, for me, best surmised in the ‘Death of the Author’, where Barthes writes:

> We know that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (Barthes, 1977, p. 146)
In his essay, ‘Distance makes the Art Grow Further’, moreover, Ascott argues that the new informational logic of digital media allows networked art to ‘lift the veil’ of Barthes’ textual ‘tissue’ by ‘drawing out meaning’ (narrative) from what is ‘random and inconsequential’ (database) (Ascott, in Chandler and Neumark, 2005, p. 284).

Equally important for Ascott (in actualizing Barthes’ ‘text as tissue’ metaphor) is the specific capacity of digital networks to conclusively kill the ‘Author-God’ through the mutability that digital interactivity affords. The networked artwork is potentially capable of perpetual recontextualization, not just in the abstract Barthes-esque notion of the fluidity of textual ‘meaning’ or ‘truth’ but also in the very real/digital sense that the components of a networked artwork can be modified and reworked in potentially infinite author/audience engagements; a capacity that also brings the author/audience distinction into question. Accordingly, Ascott argues that the networked artwork is ‘self-defining’ (ibid., 284), a statement that corresponds nicely to Barthes’ words in *The Pleasure of the Text*, ‘in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue – this texture – the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web’ (Barthes, 1975, p. 64).

Likewise, in an essay titled ‘Negotiating Meaning: The Dialogic Imagination in Electronic Art’, artist and theorist Eduardo Kac argues that the interactive potential of networked art actualizes Mikhail Bakhtin’s thematically (or, perhaps, precursive) post-structuralist ‘dialogic sphere’ (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 270) in which both the meaning and the components of the work can be perpetually recontextualized in accordance with the Bakhtinian concept of ‘unfinalizability’. And in an essay titled ‘From Film to Interactive Art: Transformations in Media art’ media theorist, Ryszard Kluszczyński, argues that Derrida’s deconstructivism appears to be a ‘methodological matrix for the type of reflection’ required by networked art (Kluszczyński, R., in Grau, 2003, p. 220). He continues:

Interactive media art appears to be the perfect example of the new, deconstructive, postmodernist, cybercultural understanding of an artwork and of artistic communication. Rejecting traditional dogmatism, it does not substitute it with a new scheme, which petrifies the world of art. Derrida did not replace logocentric ideology with graphocentrism, but reduced the role of author to one of the interpretive contexts; similarly, interactive art has demythologized the
role of artist-as-demiurge, ascribing him to the function of context designer who prepares the ground for creative reception. (ibid., p. 220)

Interestingly, by arguing that ‘interactive media art’ rejects ‘traditional dogmatism’ but does not ‘substitute it with a new scheme, which petrifies the world of art’, Kluszczynski seems to be proposing a strategy for how we might make the transition from a ‘culture of appearance’ (semiotic stability) to a ‘culture of apparition’ (semiotic instability). The implication here is that a move from the entrenched conventions of the Art world to new assemblages of cultural production will require the slow and determined penetration of traditional systems by unyielding forms; effecting change from the inside. In this way, networked art’s capacity to win high-cultural distinction (despite the fact that it inherently undermines the wholesale rigidity of such a category) is seen here as a critical accomplishment under the assumption that it is only through legitimate inclusion in the Art world that networked art can unleash the true force of its deterritorializing potential. The point being that the incumbent ‘culture of appearance’ – that is perhaps most forcibly bolstered by the conventions of the Art world – cannot be deterritorialized if it fails to engage emergent forms or, perhaps more accurately, if emergent forms fail to infiltrate the Art world’s exclusive boundaries.

For Kluszczynski, rather than the traditional Art world becoming an irrelevant system of value that sits with an awkward rigidity in an increasingly dynamic and transdisciplinary assemblage of cultural production, the Art world is seen as the critical site of transition. This is an ambitious hypothesis but it is not one with which this thesis agrees, primarily because it implies that networked art’s cultural legitimacy is somehow dependent on its capacity to gain access to the exclusive echelons of Art worlds. However, as this thesis attests, traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that cling to rigid cultural categories are increasingly irrelevant to emergent spheres of cultural production. This thesis takes a counter-position to that of Klusczczynski’s and contends that contemporary Art worlds must learn how to accommodate networked art if they are to ensure their continued legitimacy as bastions of contemporary culture.
Moreover, Ascott, Kac and Kluszczyński all contend that the aforementioned thematically post-structuralist ideas share a conceptual ground with much of the 20th century avant-garde. Comparisons between 20th century avant-garde and post-structuralist thought rely on the tendencies of each to exploit and/or subvert the sacred boundaries of the art ‘object’ and the authority of the Artist, which, of course, pulls the traditional criteria of high-cultural value firmly into question. As Kac writes in *Telepresence and Bio Art: Networking Humans, Rabbits and Robots*:

> The postal network developed by artists explored nontraditional media; promoted an aesthetics of surprise and collaboration; challenged the boundaries of (postal) communications regulations; and bypassed the official system of art with its curatorial practices, commodification of the artwork and judgment value... The actual use of the postal system as a medium has a few historical antecedents, including Dada telegraphy; Futurist correspondence; and Duchamp’s Rendezvous du dimanche 6 fevrier 1916, a set of four postcards with a text in French in which the artist deliberately and playfully avoids referential meaning. (Kac, 2005, p. 63)

Ascott similarly conjures the critical discourse of Conceptualism, Fluxus, Happenings, Performance Art and so on when he states, ‘working with networks is a matter of attitude before it is anything to do with machines. Telematic art is conceptually driven not technologically led’ (Ascott, 2003, p. 282). Here Ascott aligns networked art with the shift away from the Art object and towards the processes of Art making that first occurred in the 1950s (but continued to unfold until well into the 70s). The traditional insistence on the Art ‘object’ as a permanent vessel of high-cultural value underwent a somewhat radical transformation during this time as the possibility of high-cultural value as a transitory concept came to hold significant critical sway in contemporary Art worlds. There are countless examples of highly lauded performance or conceptual Artworks that only endure through the documentation of the Art ‘event’ (think of any number of Sol Le Witt’s works or Alvin Lucier’s 1978 ‘Clocker’, for example).

Aligning the ephemeral nature of networked art (either in terms of its tendency towards ‘Art as event’ or via the increasing speed of redundancy that confronts its technologies) with the ‘Art as process’ model has been a common strategy within the discourse of networked art. Accordingly, when I interviewed Tate Galleries’ Curator
of Intermedia Art, Kelli Dipple, at the Tate Modern in 2007 she observed, ‘what you often find are growing archives of digital art works that are actually growing archives of information documentation, iterations of digital artworks’ (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April, 2007). It must be noted, however, that the tendency to subordinate materiality in early celebrations of process based Art – and, indeed, in similar celebrations of ‘cyberspace’ – has experienced significant criticism within the discourse of networked art in recent years.10

Moreover, this discursive strategy of aligning networked art with the post-structural themes of Bakhtin, Barthes and/or Derrida and the 20th century avant-garde can be interpreted as a very traditional field move. By arguing that networked art completes the post-structuralist campaign by actualizing its abstractions, these threads of the discourse of networked art stake a claim for the practice as a new form of Art. Networked art is presented as a product of a new informational logic under the combinatorially new conditions of telematics, virtuality and interactivity that produce new possibilities for the production, reception and distribution of Art. Additionally, by combining this claim to the new with a claim for networked art as the most recent step in a clear trajectory of legitimate or ‘consecrated’ avant-garde Art movements, networked art is historicized as legitimately new. The consequence of which is a very traditional Bourdieuan field move that works along the ‘autonomous axis’ of the ‘sub-field of restricted production’ (the Art world). The most valorized status in the field is, of course, to be both legitimately ‘new’ and legitimately ‘high-culture’. I feel it is useful here to repeat the following quote from Bourdieu:

> The opposition, within the sub-field of restricted production, [is] between the consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e. between artistic generations, often only a few years apart, between the ‘young’ and the ‘old’, the ‘neo’ and the ‘paleo’, the ‘new’ and the ‘outmoded’, etc.; in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 53)

The difference here, though, is that these discursive arguments do not argue for an opposition between ‘cultural orthodoxy and heresy’ but between unfulfilled cultural heresy and its actualization: an actualization that would, in fact, undermine the rigid
high/low premise of the field and the basis for such a qualification. You can only be
qualified as a heretic within a religious state. In other words, these discursive
strategies still trap networked art in field logic as the rhetoric of cultural heresy is
only relevant within the discourse of Art. By focusing on networked art’s high-
cultural legacy within arguments for its unique capacity to transform the Art world,
these discursive strategies mobilize networked art’s transformative force only within
the boundaries of high-cultural legitimacy. Networked art’s post-structural and/or
avant-garde lineage is only valid within the context of legitimate high-culture.
Despite their deterritorializing intentions, these historicizing arguments function to
legitimize networked art as Art and in so doing reinforce the differential relation
between high and low culture. These arguments reinforce the very value system they
are attempting to debunk; they are trapped by the endless repetition of field logic. By
way of demonstrating this point in practice, when I asked Dipple why historicizing
networked art in terms of more conventional Art histories was important, she replied:

I don’t think it’s important to the form but it’s a priority for the museum, in
order for it [networked art] to be integrated into the museum’s priorities it has to
be understood as relative: linking it back through conceptual art, process art,
Dadaism and minimalism. And also for the wider audience it would probably
help them to understand it better to understand it in that context. (Dipple, K
2007, pers. comm., 10 April, 2007)

Similarly, when I interviewed the Whitney’s adjunct new media art curator
Christiane Paul at the Whitney in 2007 and asked her the same question, she
answered:

I’ve learned that it’s easier if the work makes a connection to art historically as
a precedent. For example, when I commissioned Casey Rea’s Software
Structures which explicitly refers to Le Witt and we even worked with Sol
LeWitt and asked him for permission so Casey could implement some of his
wall drawings into code. And then when I showed this project at curatorial
meetings you could really see people making the connection ‘ah, this is a
continuation, it’s the same instruction based work and here are the same
principles’ and suddenly it becomes easier for them to understand rather than
this kind of disconnected weird thing out there that they don’t understand what
it does and how it works. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April 2007)

The problem is, however, as Theodor Adorno so aptly observes:
Nothing is more damaging to theoretical knowledge of modern art than its reduction to what it has in common with older periods. What is specific to it slips through the methodological net of ‘nothing new under the sun’; it is reduced to the undialectical, gapless continuum of tranquil development that it in fact explodes. (Adorno, 1998, p. 19)

I do not view this lingering field logic, however, as a failing of the discourse on networked art. These arguments have been a necessary step towards the cultural deterritorialization of archaic oppositional value systems. As I argued in chapter one, deterritorialization is rarely the result of swift displacement but rather the hard-won outcomes of numerous and diverse deterritorializing acts that unfold unevenly over time. These early discursive moves have paved the way for the groundbreaking critical work that has emerged in recent years. Thinkers like Ascott and Kac (and many others) have shown us how networked art fits in a trajectory of cultural dissidence, they wrestled with networked art’s inherently subversive, mutable and expansive character and revealed the need for new regimes of value and new logics of organization. Indeed, these early threads of the discourse of networked art have revealed the need for the languages of cultural value to be deterritorialized. They may not have freed us from the field but they have certainly shone light on its fault lines.

While these arguments exemplify an enthusiastic perspective within the discourse of networked art, there are alternative perspectives at play that also tend to get bogged down by the high/low binary of field logic. In 1998, for example, prominent media theorist Lev Manovich sent a provocative email to the Eyebeam atelier forum claiming that ‘the category of “Net art” is a logical mistake’ (Manovich, 1998). The email, titled ‘Internet, modernization and net.art’, argued that the ‘Internet functions as an agent of modernization’ that is defined by a ‘certain Euro-English vocabulary and the names of stars, by a computer competency, by pop music’ (Manovich, 1998). The Internet is, for Manovich, ‘the space of homogeneity, of currency exchange shops, of Coca-Cola signs’ (Manovich, 1998). His concern is that the Internet – increasingly governed by the capitalist machine and largely utilized by white, wealthy westerners – imposes the homogenous culture of the dominant western standard on all who traverse its webs. Manovich’s email reveals a bleak perspective.
regarding the capacity of networked art to act outside the pervasive commercial designation of digital networks. As he writes:

Net is an agent of modernization as well as a perfect metaphor for it. It is a post, a telephone, a motor car, plane travel, taken to the extreme. Thus, we should not be surprised that a typical Net art project, whether it is done in Seattle or Bucharest, in Berlin or in Odessa, is about communication itself, it is about the Internet. So-called Net art projects are simply visible manifestations of social, linguistic and psychological networks being created or at least made visible by these very projects, of people entering the space of modernity, the space where old cities pay the price for entering the global economy by Disney-fying themselves, where everybody is paying some price: exchanging person-to-person communication for virtual communication (telephone, fax, Internet); exchanging close groups for distributed virtual communities, which more often than not are like train stations, with everybody constantly coming and leaving, rather than the cozy cafes of the old avant-garde; exchanging decayed but warm interiors for shiny, bright but cold surfaces. In short, exchanging the light of a candle for a light of an electric bulb, with all the consequences this exchange involves. (Manovich, 1998)

For Manovich, the conditions of the Internet mean that networked art is always-already bound to the minutiae of the most banal of landscapes, conditions he clearly believes stand in direct contrast to those required for Art making. There is an explicit high/low distinction at play here that blankets an entire system of media as ‘low’, indeed, too low for Art making. Manovich countermands previous claims not only for networked art’s avant-garde status but also for its claim to Art and, in doing so, he pursues an almost textbook field logic. Manovich’s position here is not unlike Bourdieu’s dismissal of television as an irretrievably ‘low’ medium entirely mediated by commercial and political interests (Bourdieu, 1998a). As John Frow observes in Cultural Studies and Cultural Value:

Bourdieu sets up a very conventional opposition – as though of the authentic to the inauthentic – between popular culture and a ‘mass-market’ culture in which ‘dispossession of the very intention of determining one’s own ends is combined with a more insidious form of recognition of dispossession’. (Frow, 1995, p. 32)

Manovich almost mirrors Bourdieu’s position on ‘mass culture’ when he criticizes the Internet as a forum that caters to ever-diminishing attention spans ‘with everybody constantly coming or leaving’ unlike ‘the cozy cafes of the old avant-
garde’. While Manovich’s position is extreme his concerns, however, are not entirely unwarranted. In his essay ‘From Internationalism to Transnations: Networked Art and Activism’, media theorist Sean Cubitt expresses similar concerns:

Although Sub-Saharan Africa, the Andes, The Caribbean and Central Asia are to all intents and purposes excluded from the infrastructure of communication, they are also by the same token excluded from the circulation of wealth, which, in the form of electronic cash flows, is indistinguishable from information, art and education. As if whole populations were surplus to the requirements of global commerce, as if the commitment to profit no longer need pay even lip service to the well-being, even the survival of the poor, but only to the dutiful payment of dividends. (Cubitt in Chandler and Neumark, 2005, p. 424)

Cubitt also agrees with Manovich that, thus far, the Internet has been inclined to subsume cultural diversity under the weight of a heavy western bias. He continues:

The smorgasbord of cuisines and art forms, musics and cinemas, far from challenging the West’s hegemony, expands it as the universal tastemaker that, since Kant, it has assumed itself to be. No longer metropolitan, the culture of the nomadic corporate elite is cosmopolitan, not so much because it replicates its home culture wherever it goes – like the old imperial civil service – but because it swallows and digests such difference. (ibid., p. 431)

However, Cubitt sees a middle ground that looks beyond the pessimism of Manovich’s critique. Cubitt argues that the commercial monopolization and western domination of the Internet actually makes the role of the networked artist more important. The networked artist, as an essentially independent party, can, at the very least, demonstrate the inequity that currently envelops the Internet and threatens the potential of emergent digital media. Cubitt takes an important step here towards the discursive deterritorialization of traditional regimes of cultural value by demonstrating that high-culture can, does and should exist within the contexts of mass media. Indeed, there is a range of contemporary networked artists dedicated to challenging the commercialization of online landscapes. See, for example, ShiftSpace.org (2007) at <http://www.shiftspace.org>; Rachel Baker’s TM Clubcard (1997) and her work with Heath Bunting irational.org at <www.irational.org>; Stuart Rosenberg’s West Bank Industrial (1994); and the work of net artist/activist collective etoy at <http://www.etoy.com>.
Cubitt also makes the very interesting point that what qualifies, by mainstream Art world standards, as the ‘avant-garde’ of today is profoundly disappointing given the specificities of the socio-cultural transformation that currently besets us. More importantly, he argues that the inadequate status of today’s avant-garde reveals the failure not only of mainstream contemporary Art worlds to engage emergent technocultural practice but their failure to engage the day-to-day reality of the world in which they live. The implication being that mainstream contemporary Art worlds are not just out of step with Art, they are out of step with the contemporary condition of network culture. He writes:

Stuck in the moment of the readymade, Koons, Hirst, and Rist are ninety years out of date. Other artists, almost all far less well known, make work that smacks of the new country: Some have been making art for years. Each reader will have their own names in mind: These are the ones for whom the task is not the making of objects that will hold in themselves some intrinsic and long-lasting worth, but the process of working itself, the imaginative leap out of the present into the realm of possibility, the otherness of a future that by definition does not yet exist. The contemporary artist no longer makes things, not least because the object relation, which is also that which subjects subjects to objects, is no longer the central relation between people. (ibid., p. 432)

From Cubitt’s words here we start to see what is really ‘new’ about networked art. While I agree that understanding the aesthetic legacy of the 20th century avant-garde plays an important role in understanding contemporary networked art, by locating networked art solely within this history we abide by a system of meaning and value that cannot accommodate the protean spheres of techno-cultural practice. Much as Oliver Grau writes in *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*:

> Although art history and the history of the media have always stood in an interdependent relationship and art has commented on, taken up, or even promoted each new media development, the view of art history as media history, as the history of this interdependent relationship that includes the role of artistic visions in the rise of new media of illusion, is still underdeveloped. (Grau, 2003, p. 4)

What is really new about networked art is also what is new about living in a socio-cultural epoch that is at least partially defined by digital networks. Digital networks distribute information across space and time in unprecedented ways, the consequence
of which is that the traditional boundaries between disciplines, industry and spheres of socio-cultural activity become increasingly porous. It is the distributed nature of networked art that fundamentally challenges the traditional boundaries of cultural value as it courses through an increasingly wide array of socio-cultural assemblages. As Munster writes in *materializing new media*:

In general, the aesthetic debate concerning new media artwork has concentrated on arguments that seek to locate medium specificity for information aesthetics. ‘Interactivity, virtuality and telepresence’ have all been offered as defining qualities of new media art. Although there is something specific to new media art, I am not inclined to look for this in the formal qualities of the media or in the technologies themselves. Instead, we need to examine the social and perceptual conditions produced by living ‘digital’ lives. (Munster, 2006, p. 22)

Is networked art Art? If so, does it qualify for the hallowed ranks of the avant-garde? The answer is yes and no to both questions and this is the real cultural and aesthetic challenge of the practice, this is what is new about its forms. The discursive perspectives outlined thus far are right regarding the practice’s variable claim to high-cultural value, where they are lacking is in the assumption that networked art is either Art or it is not and that its potential as a legitimate cultural practice is caught up in or dependent on that distinction. Julian Stallabrass opens his book *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* with an anecdote that illustrates my point beautifully:

To some surprise, online anti-corporate activists and pranksters RTMark – notorious for sponsoring, among many subversive acts, the swapping of voice boxes between GI Joe and Barbie dolls in toy shops – were selected for the prestigious Whitney Biennial in 2000. Like other participating artists, they were sent a package containing invitations to the event, including a letter implying that they were now a part of the US art-world elite and would have the opportunity at the opening to schmooze with the top curators, collectors, dealers and art administrators. Rather than go along, RTMark sold the invitations through the auction site eBay. They received $4,000, which went into their project fund. The incident is symptomatic of the contentious relationship between the art world and the activist culture that has emerged online. It illustrates the attempts of the art institutions to co-opt parts of that culture by issuing an edict that elevates and brands it as art, and in the process limits its scope and character. (Stallabrass, 2003, p. 8)
The importance of the question of whether networked art is Art or not is that it demonstrates that the either/or modulation of traditional regimes of high-cultural value are proving inadequate in the face of contemporary culture. Just as we saw in chapter one, the British United Visual Artists collective (UVA) does not mobilize different sets of skills or pursue different aesthetic sensibilities in the Art world from when it works in the spheres of commercial design. UVA’s work functions across both cultural planes at once; it is unashamedly both Art and design. Indeed, as Anna Munster observes:

New media are not simply changing older media forms; they are altering the conceptual taxonomies and paradigms for thinking about them. What’s more, there is not just a rearrangement in forms of production, transmission and reception but a reorganization of our epistemologies of media. This shakedown will itself take time and is likely to undergo further changes. (Munster, 2006, p. 24)

The tendency within the discourse of networked art to pursue rather definitive analyses either for or against networked art’s high-cultural value is a clear illustration of the lag between the emergence of new creative practice and the development of critical tools with which to understand it. But as networked art becomes increasingly visible within the cultural landscape and more widely dispersed across cultural planes we are witnessing the emergence of new theoretical tools that reflect the more dynamic relationships with cultural value that characterize emergent spheres of creative practice. Through these new theoretical tools more flexible analyses of cultural value can be implemented that overcome the limitations of previous attempts to neatly categorize networked art according to rigid high/low oppositions. The final sections of this chapter trace a discursive evolution that is fundamental to the shift from a ‘culture of appearance’ to a ‘culture of apparition’ – or from field to assemblage – and cultivates a discursive trajectory of what is really new about networked art. Likewise, it is important to note that many of the theorists discussed so far are active participants in the shifting discursive trajectory I will now unpack.
New Discursive Ground: A Revised Digital Aesthetics

In *materializing new media* Anna Munster argues that ‘digital aesthetics’ has remained largely unchanged since its emergence in the mid-late 1990s, despite enormous shifts in the perceptual conditions of the techno-cultural landscape. Munster proposes to revise ‘digital aesthetics’ by folding into it an aesthetic consideration of our increasingly ‘informatic’ culture. Munster’s digital aesthetics, then, is composed at the intersection of an ‘information aesthetics’ and a ‘distributed aesthetics’. Her groundbreaking work does not merely recognize the limitations of traditional regimes of value with regard to the emergent spheres of networked art; it proposes a new and uniquely adaptive evaluative strategy for those seeking to understand the practice or, more specifically, those concerned with critiquing and administrating networked art.

What is more, Munster’s new evaluative schema openly pursues the transdisciplinarity of a Deleuzo-Guattarian methodology. Munster’s admirable task is to create an evaluative schema that allows aesthetic value to have an ephemeral quality. In other words, her new value system proposes territorializing forces that remain open to deterritorializations, not just on a conceptual (or symbolic) plane but on a material one as well. As Manuel DeLanda notes in *A New Philosophy of Society*, ‘any process which either destabilizes spatial boundaries or increases internal heterogeneity is considered deterritorializing’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 13). Munster’s digital aesthetics stands to destabilize the boundaries imposed by traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value by increasing the heterogeneity of what is eligible for aesthetic critique, which is a crucial step in the deterritorialization of all spheres of cultural production including those of mainstream Art worlds.

As I have argued, the increasing pervasion of a digital ethos, that tends to characterize networked art, makes the practice impossible to locate in a broader cultural context through traditional high/low value judgments. If we were to conceive of the artwork itself as a territorial assemblage, however, it could be understood as having multiple values that are contingent upon the specific functionalities of a range of broader assemblages in which the artwork may be engaged. In other words, the
concept of the territorial assemblage allows us to recognize that high/low value judgments do not divide the entire cultural field into two sub-fields that distinguish the Art world from an opposing sphere of popular culture but rather that high/low value judgments occur across a range of cultural assemblages according to a range of evaluative protocols. What is radical about Munster’s digital aesthetics is that it conceives of the art object in precisely this way.

Approaching the artwork as a territorial assemblage allows Munster to consider its every aesthetic element, as Matthew Fuller observes in *Media Ecologies: Materialist Energies in Art and Technoculture*, in terms of ‘a passion or capacity settled temporarily into what passes for a stable state’ (Fuller, 2007, p. 1). As Munster writes:

> Information aesthetics cannot afford to map out formal or technical standards for evaluating new media art; information flows are characterized by nonstandardization. I will propose instead three vectors that flee from technical and cultural standardization and invent alternative accounts of globalized digital culture. (Munster, 2006, p. 22)

Munster’s three evaluative vectors are proximity, distribution and lag each of which reflects the changed perceptual conditions of ‘living “digital” lives’ (ibid., p. 22). It must be noted that the digital aesthetics proposed in *materializing new media* is extensive and is only briefly explored here. The few aspects of her thesis I include have been chosen for their explicit capacity to demonstrate how Munster’s proposed aesthetic tools mobilize the concept of the territorial assemblage and provide a far more exacting and dynamic set of tools through which to assess networked art.

While Munster states that she is not inclined to define networked art through the ‘formal qualities of the media or in the technologies themselves’ (ibid., p. 22), the formal qualities of emergent digital media are, in fact, fundamental to the changed perceptual conditions of contemporary techno-culture. Munster’s evaluative vectors are shrewdly engineered, however, to reflect or accommodate the specificities of these qualities without being tied to any one incarnation of the technologies themselves. Accordingly, Munster annexes a rule of ‘approximation’ to her
proximity vector that serves as a kind of principle measure of aesthetic value and orients her digital aesthetics within the broader context of aesthetic theory. She writes:

Rather than producing an exact science of feelings or resulting in a judgement of taste, digital aesthetics would at best be approximate … Approximation as a differential qualifier of the proximate gives us new ways to configure digital aesthetics. First, it captures the sense in which the theorizing of contemporary artworks like new media art often lags behind the work itself because the technologies are always updating themselves. (ibid., p. 159)

Munster’s rule of approximation formalizes the lag between emergent cultural practice and its aesthetic (and, by extension, cultural) theorization. In doing so, she ensures that the proposed evaluative schema itself stays flexible by making the first measure of aesthetic value for networked art an assumption that the critic, curator and audience will always-already be on the trailing edge of techno-cultural practice. This ‘approximate’ measure of aesthetic experience means that networked art is only ever perceived to possess a temporary conceptual and material stability. And so the work can evaporate with technological redundancy or it can continue to unfold across a range of technologies. This means that all the potential transformations of any given networked artwork, its deterritorializations, do not necessarily beleaguer or impinge on the value assigned to it at any one time or space of its existence. In this way, a networked artwork can possess any number of aesthetic values that are contextually distinct over the scope of its existence.

Let us say, for example, that a networked artwork is protected under the more flexible intellectual property laws of Creative Commons¹³ (a likely scenario as the open-source movement is fiercely protected by a broad range of networked artists, as discussed in chapter five) and the first incarnation of the work is assigned high-cultural value (submitted to or co-opted by the Art world: praised by Art critics and exhibited and/or collected by Art institutions). However, the work itself is then legally rearticulated within countless other cultural forums. Keeping in mind that we are well beyond the Benjaminian realm of ‘mechanical reproduction’ here as there is nothing definitive separating an ‘original’ from its ‘copies’ in the binary logic of
digital code, Munster’s rule of approximation allows critics, curators, audiences and Art institutions to retain an approximate relationship with a particular ‘assemblage’ of the work. In this way, a networked artwork may be considered Art in one instance and yet, once submitted to further modulation, fail to qualify for high-cultural legitimacy. The rule of approximation formally permits the Art world to retain a relationship with its high-cultural form without delimiting its inherent potential for re-distribution and transformation: for deterritorialization/s. The networked artwork may become a commercial design project or scientific R & D or a cartoon or all of these forms and the list could go on and on. By formally telling us that we are only ever meant to have an approximate aesthetic experience of a networked artwork, Munster undoes the either/or nature of rigid high/low cultural distinction and allows networked art to exist across cultural spheres according to differential modes and rules of engagement with ranging evaluative outcomes.

Moreover, as Munster notes, ‘an open platform of aesthetic approximation undermines the exacting tyranny of remaining up to date with the latest technical standards’ (ibid., p. 159). As we shall see in chapter four, this sense of being perpetually out-of-touch has seen a range of contemporary Arts organizations shy away from investing in the development of strategies for the collection and archiving of networked art because there is a sense of perpetual defeat.14 The issues of archiving and collecting networked art impose significant material and economic burdens on traditional Art institutions. How does an Art museum, for example, physically store a potentially endless array of redundant software and hardware? Just how many staff must be retained to stay in command of outmoded technical standards?

An important consequence of approximation as a formal measure of value is that it allows Art institutions to assimilate networked art in keeping with their strategies for archiving performance Art. Performance Art, as I have outlined, tends to be historicized in Art institutions through rigorous critical and descriptive documentation. Alternatively, approximation as a formal measure of value informs Art institutions that the archival and collection of networked art must be perceived as an ongoing strategic process as opposed to the far less effective case-by-case tactical
response that seems to characterize attempts to include networked art in the collections of Art institutions – few and far between as these attempts have been – points I will return to in chapters three and four. Munster’s rule of approximation effectively formalizes the fact that we will always be in an approximate relation not just with the networked artwork itself but with the range of technologies and techniques it employs.

The rule of approximation directs us towards the vector of proximity. Munster perceives the issues of proximity not just as those that pertain to the relation of the body to the complex dimensions of networked artworks but the emergent ways in which networked art orients bodies in relation to each other. The proximity vector is precisely what allows a ‘digital aesthetics’ to engage an ‘information aesthetics’ and locates the networked artist in ‘spheres of the ethical and the political’ (ibid., p. 159). As she explains:

This is not to say that all digital artists voice these concerns or are willing to engage with these issues. But for those who do, digitality becomes partial and approximate to the conditions of living in digital times. It is possible to argue, then, for a digital aesthetics that is not reduced to the material specifications of the medium but develops its own particular concerns in relation to the differentially embodied experiences of contemporary life. (ibid., p. 159)

Here Munster is proposing a conceptual measure of value by suggesting that networked artists, with their commitment to digital media, are ideally positioned to critically reflect on contemporary life. As discussed earlier, this is a very traditional measure of high-cultural value, however – and this is the crucial aspect of her thesis – the nature of Munster’s evaluative vectors means that high-cultural distinction is never bound to the Art world exclusively (a point I will return to shortly). The vector of proximity is later tied to the vector of distribution through the new perceptual and social experiences induced by information flows (ibid., p. 172). One of the more salient qualities of a distributed aesthetics is the way in which digital media imposes sociality on the processes of cultural production (in stark opposition to traditional notions of the highly individualized process of creative genius). In other words, the
way in which distribution produces a unique set of relations (proximities) between artist, artwork and audience/s. As Munster writes:

The new aesthetic experiences are not simply being produced or consumed in isolation but result directly from collective, social exchange. There is no guarantee that this exchange will be equitable, but the potential is there for acknowledging the outcomes of these aesthetic directions as the collective result of socially networked exchanges. (ibid., p. 172)

Here we see a measure of value that is tailored to the post-structuralist notion of audience as co-creator, of Art as textual tissue by formalizing network sociality as a measure of aesthetic value. The distribution vector, or distributed aesthetics, recognizes that Art is ‘no longer sent from one location and received in another but diffusely distributed and qualitatively changed by the differentials that guide that distribution’ (ibid., p. 171). Moreover, digital information flows are the result of specific flows of economic capital that ‘carve up and reallocate relations and access’ to digital networks (ibid., p. 172). These flows of capital establish the variable conditions of access to and relations with information and communication technologies, which in turn produce specific network topographies (that are, of course, globally inequitable, as outlined previously). Munster, much like Cubitt, believes that the networked artist/artwork can and should function ‘to disturb the false expectation of a smoothly flowing world of global information’ (ibid., p. 23). The implication here is that the degree to which a networked artwork is politically and ethically charged can be measured in terms of its capacity to reflect this inequity. Just as Cubitt notes, ‘The work that the network artist undertakes is to help us see through to the next moment, ahead of capital’ (Cubitt in Neumark and Chandler, 2005, p. 434). The implication, of course, is that the more politically charged the artwork the more value it can/should accrue.

Here, at this intersection of information aesthetics and distributed aesthetics in the context of a digital aesthetics, it cannot be denied that Munster provides tools that could be used to overcome the specific challenges that networked art poses to the Art world. Not only does she endorse networked art’s claim to high-culture, she explicitly rallies behind its claim to the avant-garde. Yet – and this is the most
important feature of her thesis – not at any point does Munster suggest that networked art, or her evaluative vectors, belong exclusively to the Art world. In fact, she consistently configures the aesthetics of emergent techno-cultural practice as ranging through all the veins of digital media and, therefore, across a multitude of socio-cultural planes: high-culture, pop-culture, design, computer science and so on and so forth.

Rather than proposing a new evaluative schema specifically engineered to ensure the inclusion of networked art within the Art world, Munster’s evaluative vectors propose rules of engagement that transcend the boundaries of genre and form, they do not seek to demolish these boundaries but rather flow across them weaving in and out of categorical specificity. In order to elaborate this point more adequately, I will here introduce John Frow’s ‘regimes of value’ and argue that Munster’s proposed evaluative vectors not only function as ‘regimes of value’ but demonstrate a natural progression of the inherently adaptive concept.

Regimes of Value

In his book *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* John Frow employs the concept of ‘regimes of value’ to explore the ways in which cultural value is configured through the relations between texts (and their audiences) in specific spheres of cultural production. These relations result in the organization of distinct ‘types’ of audiences and distinct rules or ‘regimes’ for engaging texts within that context. He writes:

> The concept of regime expresses one of the fundamental theses of work in cultural studies: that no object, no text, no cultural practice has an intrinsic or necessary meaning or value or function; and that meaning, value and function are always the effect of specific (and changing, changeable) social relations and mechanisms of signification. (Frow, 1995, p. 145)

The regime of value, for Frow, is ‘a semiotic institution generating evaluative regularities under certain conditions of use, and in which particular empirical audiences may be more or less fully imbricated’ (ibid., p. 144). Moreover, he continues, ‘Regimes of value are mechanisms that permit the construction and
regulation of value-equivalence, and indeed permit cross-cultural mediation … this regulation is always political in its mediation of discrepant interests’ (ibid., p. 144). While Frow’s concept of ‘regimes of value’ is not explicitly based on a Deleuzo-Guattarian methodology it can be perceived as an assemblage theory. Each regime of value is composed as a complex assemblage of semiotic, political, economic, institutional and aesthetic dimensions. The concept perceives the cultural text according to a ‘relations of exteriority’ rule as it may be ‘plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10). Frow uses the example of graffiti to demonstrate the way in which the meaning and value of a text changes as it is appropriated by different socio-cultural spheres:

Graffiti … is a threat to the system of property values, and a mark of the failure of the state policing the common domain. It thus ties into a wider semiotic network in which it is read as an ethico-political, not as an aesthetic, practice. Explicitly placed outside the realm of the cultural … (Frow, 1995, p. 148)

Here, we see how different regimes of value organize their semiotic, political, economic, institutional and aesthetic component parts in different ways, imbuing the cultural text with a variety of socio-cultural meanings and values as it ranges across socio-cultural forums. Frow goes on to argue, countering Bourdieu and in accord with DeLanda, that cultural value is not inherently bound to social class structures but rather is the product of transferring meaning and value from generation to generation through tradition, institutional infrastructures and the broad distributive capacities of contemporary media. He writes:

Regimes of value are thus relatively autonomous of and have no directly expressive relation to social groups. In the case of ‘high’-cultural regimes, this relative autonomy is an effect of historical survivals and of the relative autonomy of the modern educational apparatus, both of which then give rise to interpretive and evaluative traditions that do not directly reflect class interests; in the case of ‘popular’ regimes, their relative autonomy has less to do with the historical persistence of codes of value (although this is still a factor) than with the way the mass media work to form audiences that cross the borders of classes, ethnic groups, genders, and indeed nations. (ibid., p. 145)

Furthermore, in a lecture he delivered at the University of Western Sydney in May, 2008, titled ‘The Practice of Value’, Frow asserted that high/low cultural oppositions
can be understood, ‘at the most general level … in terms of a tension between commercial and non-commercial structures of judgement’ (Frow, 2008). He continued, ‘That is, between structures of judgement which define themselves as autonomous and self-validating and those that are subordinated to commercial ends’ (ibid.). And he goes on to observe that the cultural privilege of ‘non-commercial structures of judgement’ is based on an illusory distance from commerce that is tied to a false assumption that commodification inherently undermines creative integrity. By tabling high/low cultural oppositions in this way, there is nothing to say that a high-cultural regime of value (the perception of cultural production as ‘an end in itself’) cannot be mobilized within highly commercialized realms of cultural production. In fact, this kind of distinction happens in the spheres of popular culture all the time. Think of Nick Cave or Brian Eno, for example, who have all extolled the virtues of producing music-for-music’s-sake and refused to submit to the overt commercial agendas of multinational record companies. While at other times each of these artists has submitted themselves and their work wholeheartedly to the popular market: Nick Cave’s duet with Kylie Minogue ‘Where the Wild Roses Grow’ (1996) or Brian Eno’s recent role producing the Coldplay album *Viva La Vida* (2008). Eno and Cave are both ‘high-pop’ artists (Collins, 2003) or, perhaps more correctly, ‘Avant-pop’ (Amerika, 1993). As Frow writes in *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*:

Judgements of value are always choices made within a particular regime of value. This is not to say that the regime determines which judgement will be made, but that it specifies a particular range of possible judgements, and a particular set of appropriate criteria; setting an agenda, it also excludes certain criteria and certain judgements as unthinkable. Regimes therefore allow for disagreement, specifying the terms within which it can be enacted. Disagreement may also take place in the space of overlap between regimes, or between discrepant and non-intersecting regimes; but in a sense disagreement is only ever really possible where some agreement on the rules of engagement can be held in common. (Frow, 1995, p. 151)

There is an inherent flexibility and capacity for adaptation in Frow’s ‘regimes of value’, as they are permitted to intersect, overlap and evolve: to deterritorialize. In his work *Genre*, Frow argues that regimes of value ‘allow us to respond appropriately to different generic contexts’ (Frow, 2006, p. 140). For Frow, the
concept of genre, ‘far from being merely “stylistic” devices’, produce ‘effects of reality and truth, authority and plausibility, which are central to the different ways the world is understood in the writing of history or of philosophy or of science, or in painting, or in everyday talk’ (ibid., p. 2). He continues:

These effects are not, however, fixed and stable, since texts – even the simplest and most formulaic – do not ‘belong’ to genres but are, rather, uses of them; they refer not to ‘a’ genre but to a field or economy of genres, and their complexity derives from the complexity of that relation. Uses of texts (‘readings’) similarly refer, and similarly construct a position in relation to that economy. (ibid., p. 2)

And so, for Frow, regimes of value are organized by the economy of relations that distinguishes one genre from another. This is the limitation of Frow’s concept and where Munster steps in to adapt ‘regimes of value’ for a shifting system of cultural production. Digital media literally ‘mash-up’ generic boundaries. As cultural (and non-cultural) forms clash and merge in networked environments, the specificities of genre start to blur. Networked art, for example, is claimed, legitimately, by a multitude of generic forums. The film genre understands networked art as a natural progression of the moving image. The literature genre thinks networked art is an evolution of narrative. The performing Arts understand networked art as an extension of the principles of performance. Computer scientists see networked art as an evolution of research and development and so on and so forth. And they are all correct. Networked art is all of these things and more.

Once we are liberated from the rigid high/low logic of Bourdieu’s field, digital media faces us with a profusion of intersecting and overlapping regimes of value through which to codify, contextualize and evaluate emergent techno-cultural forms. Munster offers up a new slate of tools through which we might start to define the specificities of networked art, without attempting to retrofit the practice into regimes of value that can only accommodate certain aspects of its forms or into pre-existing genres. According to Munster, information culture ‘attempts to sustain connections across its variations and lags’ (Munster, 2006, p. 186) and her digital ‘regimes of value’ reflect this specificity not by carving networked art out as a new genre but by creating new
regimes of value that transcend the boundaries of genre. I am not suggesting that Munster is forecasting the end of genre but, rather, that she has composed new evaluative dimensions that range across the entire economy of genres. Her regimes of value provide tools to access and assess the protean veins of digital media as they course through the large majority of generic forums. Networked art, she writes,

… offers us insight into the very status of our aesthetics and ethics in global information cultures, a crossroads where we can choose to hang around and soak up the rhythmic atmosphere or move the playing field itself so that it expands and contracts to accommodate heterogeneous directions. These kinds of flattened and compressed spaces that distribute information and its users through flows, accumulations and dispersals offers us encounters with disparate, nonstandardized and as yet unassimilated elements across informatic and embodied universes. It will be up to artists, designers, technicians and new media activists of all shapes and sizes to create these with an eye for not simply new perceptual experiences but the production of new forms of social, political and ethical relationships. (ibid., p. 177)

Accordingly, her regimes of aesthetic value are dynamic and malleable and can be added and/or subtracted to more traditional generic regimes of value or mobilized in isolation as ‘unassimilated elements’ to service hybridized or new genres of cultural production. She deposits a slippery layer of techno-cultural specificity over Frow’s receptive concept. Munster’s new aesthetic tools (along with those that are undoubtedly being conceived, written and published as you read) revitalize our systems of value, not only by offering us tools through which to engage the new but by allowing us to reinterpret the old in the face of the new. Much as Grau observes:

In a historical context, this new art form can be revitalized, adequately described and critiqued in terms of its phenomenology, aesthetics, and origination. In many ways this method changes our perception of the old and helps to understand history afresh. Thus older media, such as frescoes, paintings, panoramas, film, and the art they convey, do not appear passé; rather they are newly defined, categorized and interpreted. Understood in this way, new media do not render old ones obsolete, but rather assign them new places within the system. (Grau, 2003, p. 8)

This chapter has critiqued the discursive lag between the emergence of new cultural practice and the development of tools through which to make sense of it. It has also documented an important discursive shift towards the more accommodating
theoretical framework of the territorial assemblage through Munster’s new aesthetic (indeed epistemological) vectors. Munster’s new aesthetic tools provide a much needed alternative to the traditional regimes of aesthetic value that have tended to reflect a lingering field logic within discursive analyses of networked art. Aside from demonstrating a new, more exacting trajectory for the discourse of networked art, Munster’s regimes of aesthetic value take part in a larger deterritorialization of the contemporary Art world. This deterritorialization is seeing massive shifts in the organizational logic of administrating Art in which regimes of aesthetic and cultural value play an integral role.

The Art institution is a critical component in the broad socio-cultural administration of Art. The Art institution organizes relations between Art and Art audiences; it frames, values and distributes cultural artefacts. But how does the Art institution accommodate the slippery, open-ended and rapidly mutating products of networked art? The next two chapters take a close look at how Art institutions are coping with new spheres of contemporary cultural practice by examining the conditions of two major institutional attempts to engage networked art: the Whitney Museum of American Art and Tate Galleries. It becomes clear throughout these chapters that, as Ned Rossiter writes in *Organized Networks* ‘there is an urgent need for new institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 13) through which networked art can be adequately valued, framed and distributed.
Chapter Two Endnotes

1 See High-Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment (Collins, 2002); Accounting For Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures (Bennett et al., 1999); Cultural Studies & Cultural Value (Frow, 1993) and Genre (Frow, 2006); Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practice of Literary Field (Gelder, 2004); Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory (Smith, 1991).

2 It is important to note that a particularly striking feature of the discourse of networked art is the email lists of media arts organizations. The most enduring English based lists include Rhizome, Eyebeam, empyre and Netttime. The importance of the critical forum of email lists is that it allows for a far more responsive and fluid critical discourse, as the delays of traditional publishing do not apply in these environments. On email lists, critical issues arise and dissipate in a kind of real-time interplay of undulating praxis. List forums allow for an unprecedented immediacy and engage artist/critic/scholar in new relations of intimacy and exchange, transforming the nature of ‘discourse’ itself.

3 In his book with Peter Weibel, Net Condition: Art and Global Media (2001), media critic and curator Timothy Druckery claims that the term net.art was plucked out of a corrupted email by Slovenian networked artist Vuk Cosic in 1995, the email was sent to the Netttime email list by Russian networked artist Alexei Shulgin (Weibel and Drucker, 2001).

4 In fact, in a paper titled ‘Commodify Your Consumption: Tactical Surfing/Wakes of Resistance’ Curt Cloninger argues that contemporary networked art can be divided into two primary categories ‘deep net art’ and ‘surface net art’, which he describes in the following:

Deep net art is net art made by programmers/coders/hackers who attempt to modulate the network by opening up its hood and tweaking it down toward its protocological core. Surface net art is net art made by artistic net surfers who attempt to modulate the network by staying on the surface of the network and tweaking in amongst the images, animations, videos, human languages, and other readymade media that travel across its surface. (Cloninger, 2009)

The implication here is that contemporary net art can be divided into to very different skill sets: one that is more technically based and one that is, perhaps, more aesthetically driven. Cloninger’s observations would work well within Munster’s revised digital aesthetics to be discussed later in this chapter.

5 Digital Aesthetics – a cornerstone of the discourse of networked art – evolved alongside emergent spheres of digital media in the early-mid 1990s. Brenda Laurel’s Computers as Theatre (Laurel, 1993) was one of the first texts to unite the specific aesthetic concerns of Art history with a consideration of computer science and information technologies and is, therefore, understood as a keystone text in
distinction of a specific digital aesthetics. However, Sean Cubitt’s *Digital Aesthetics* (Cubitt, 1999) provided a critical expansion of the discourse beyond questions of design and taste and pondered the perceptual consequences of living digital lives. Cubitt’s book can now be read as a genealogy of the digital ethos. Cubitt’s work in ‘Digital Aesthetics’ provides a crucial move towards the revitalization of the discourse that Anna Munster pursues in ‘materializing new media’ (Munster, 2006). There are a range of additional texts that were also pivotal in the development of a ‘digital aesthetics’ that also deserve mention here: Sean Cubitt’s *Timeshift* (1991), *Videography* (1993), *Simulation and Social Theory* (2001); John Conomos’s *Critical Vices: the Myths of Postmodern Theory* (2000); Gregory Ulmer’s *Internet Intervention: From Literacy to Electracy* (2002); Mckenzie Wark’s *Culture, Celebrities and Cyberspace* (1999), *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004); and the late Nicholas Zurbrugg’s *Art, Performance, Media: 31 Interviews* (2004). Many of these authors are taking part in the current discursive deterritorialization that this thesis documents and their earlier works should be understood as the foundation for the contemporary rewiring of traditional regimes of aesthetic and cultural value.

6 The discursive observation of a synergy between post-structuralist thought and emergent digital media has probably been most famously observed in a paper by N. Katherine Hayles that would eventually become chapter two of her seminal work *How We Became Posthuman*, in which she argues that post-structural theory was ‘the child of an information age, formulating its theories from strata pushed upward by the emerging substrata beneath’ (Hayles, 1993, p. 2).


8 I include Mikhail Bakhtin under a looser interpretation of post-structuralist thought. In *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Word in the World*, Graham Pechey calls Bakhtin a ‘precocious post-structuralist’ and argues that he was, in fact, the father of the school of thought (Pechey, 2007). And in a *London Review of Books* article on the same title, Terry Eagleton writes, ‘there is hardly a hot postmodern topic that Bakhtin did not anticipate’ (Eagleton, 2007).

9 See *Negotiating Meaning: The Dialogic Imagination in Electronic Art* (Kac, 1999) and *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Bakhtin, 1982).

10 See, for example, Erkki Huhtamo’s essay ‘Twin-Touch-Test-Redux: Media, Archeological Approach to Art, Interactivity, and Tactility’, in which he contemplates the ‘cultural, ideological, and institutional ramifications of touching artworks’ (Huhtamo, in Grau, 2007, p. 72). Christiane Paul’s essay, ‘The Myth of Immateriality: Presenting and Preserving New Media’ (Paul, in Grau, 2007, p. 251) where she argues that it is not the immateriality of networked art that challenges
traditional Art institutions but the material conditions of exhibiting and archiving the practice that are in dire need of rigorous theoretical debate and technological development. Sean Cubitt’s essay ‘Projection: Vanishing and Becoming’ argues that the material conditions of the ‘four-squared’ screen have remained underdeveloped due to a striking lack of considered engagement with the material dimensions of projection technologies (Cubitt, in Grau, 2007, p. 407). And Munster’s *materializing new media* (Munster, 2006) disassembles the enduring tendency towards imposing Cartesian dualities on digital media, privileging an erroneous perception of the immateriality of ‘cyberspace’ over the multitude of material and embodied systems on which digital media depend and through which we access the altered perceptual conditions of digitality.

11 The NYC based Eyebeam is a dedicated networked art organization. According to their website they ‘are the leading not-for-profit Art and technology centre in the US’ dedicated to ‘exposing broad and diverse audiences to new technologies and media arts’ (Eyebeam, 2009).

12 For a clear statistical analysis of how Internet usage is dominated by specific socio-economic groups (white educated males) within specific countries (US, UK) see Julian Stallabrass’ *The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce* (Stallabrass, 2005, pp 49-56).

13 Creative Commons (CC) legislation was developed in 2001 and is an attempt to overcome the inadequacies of incumbent copyright laws in relation to the emergence of digital media. Creative Commons allows the producer to organize the way in which their work is accessible and/or protected via the specific selection of a series of basic copyright protocols: ‘Creative Commons defines the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright – all rights reserved – and the public domain – no rights reserved. Our licenses help you keep your copyright while inviting certain uses of your work – a “some rights reserved” copyright’ (Creative Commons, 2009).

14 And given that one of the primary roles of the Art museum is to be a repository for cultural artifacts, this omission is a striking failure of the institution to cope with the shifting perceptual conditions of digital media, as discussed at length in chapter four.

15 To compose his concept of ‘regimes of value’ Frow draws from both Arjun Appadurai’s mobilization of the concept in his paper ‘Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value’ (Appadurai in Appadurai ed., 1986) and Tony Bennett’s concept of the ‘reading formation’ in his paper ‘Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and their Texts’ (Bennett, 1985).
CHAPTER THREE

NETWORKED ART AND THE ART INSTITUTION: CULTURAL POLICY AND FUNDING IN THE US AND THE UK

The net is a tricky space for organizations oriented around neatly provenanced objects locked into standard issue art modes.

Matthew Fuller

Emergent art forms must be engaged by a range of cultural forums if they are to achieve any kind of cultural legitimacy and access the cultural and economic capital that such a qualification yields. The existence of an active discourse of networked art is demonstration of one such engagement. The discourse of networked art has produced specific kinds of knowledge about networked art by locating it within the aesthetic and cultural histories of the 20th century avant-garde and post-structuralist thought. We are also witnessing the induction of new discursive strategies for the engagement of networked art. What is more, these new discursive strategies – like those of Munster’s new regimes of aesthetic value (Munster, 2006), for example – stand to transform the way we understand cultural production. Discourse does not, however, generate and maintain Art audiences. The generation and maintenance of Art audiences is the explicit province of the Art institution. The primary purpose of the Art institution is to organize aesthetic objects for public reception and to inform populations about its value. The Art institution has fulfilled these obligations in accordance with traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value for over two hundred years. It is, therefore, at the site of instituting emergent techno-cultural forms that the Art world has begun to experience its most marked deterritorialization.

For almost a decade networked art has received dedicated curatorial attention from two of the most prestigious Art institutions in the world: the Whitney Museum of
American Art through its dedicated online portal ‘Artport’\textsuperscript{1} and Tate Galleries through its new media, sound and performance program ‘Tate Intermedia Art’.\textsuperscript{2} Yet, despite such a striking commitment to curatorial advocacy, both the Whitney and Tate have failed to fully integrate the practice into their long-term institutional strategies. Networked art continues to exist on the margins of these institutions. Networked art has also inspired the emergence of dedicated networked art organizations like the New York City/Boston based Turbulence.\textsuperscript{3} Yet dedicated platforms for the support and exhibition of networked art have struggled to demonstrate the enduring aesthetic legitimacy of the emergent practice and, therefore, the cultural legitimacy of their organizations. The question, then, is why – in the face of such prestigious and committed support – has networked art failed to secure a mainstream cultural profile?

There is a complex range of internal infrastructural issues that delimit an Art institution’s capacity to exhibit, collect and archive networked art, not least of which is the form’s inability to be properly assimilated under traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. The following chapter undertakes a close examination of the Art institution by examining these issues within the Whitney and Tate. However, there is also a range of external forces that have a direct impact on a contemporary Art institution’s capacity for adaptation in the context of emergent techno-cultural practice. As Ned Rossiter points out, ‘All instituted forms retain a relation with the constituent outside, no matter how much their logic of organization is predicated on the containment of expression and exclusion of “the political”’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 22). And it is precisely ‘political’ forces that locate the Art institution as a component part of Art worlds and it is these forces with which this chapter is expressly concerned.

Following Tony Bennett, this chapter begins by reviewing the history of the Art institution through the co-emergence of public cultural policy and the public Art museum during the late 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The history of the Art institution unpacked here not only establishes the issues of this chapter, it also lays the ground for the institutional analyses that unfold in the following three chapters. This pre-history observes that the deeply historical relationship between government
and the Art institution is organized according to a field logic that, despite the reorientations this relationship has undergone over the years, continues to delimit the Art institution’s capacity to engage networked art. The long relationship between government and the Art institution has also meant that the spatial boundaries of physical territories take on particular significance for the Art institution. These spatial boundaries establish explicit networks of relations between organizations and induce specific relations of resource dependence. Relations of resource dependence give networks of cultural institutions specificity by defining the different levels of control one institution has over cultural and economic capital in relation to another. I argue that relations of resource dependence imbue cultural assemblages with unique qualities that orient their Art institutions in very specific ways.

I then outline the specificities of cultural policy and Arts funding objectives in the contemporary Art assemblages of the UK and the US and locate the Whitney, Turbulence and Tate accordingly. Through an analysis of these specificities we see that the political forces external to the Art institution have an enormous impact on its curatorial agenda and, therefore, its functional potential. I argue that the inherently different agendas of public Art institutions and not-for-profit Arts organizations – imposed on each by their respective relations of resource dependence – take on particular significance in relation to each institution’s capacities to engage networked art. This chapter concludes by arguing that the policy and funding specificities of the US and UK contemporary Art assemblages endow the Whitney (a not-for-profit Art institution) and Tate (a public Art institution) with divergent capacities for institutional adaptation in the face of a shifting techno-cultural landscape. The chapter also finds Turbulence in an increasingly vulnerable relation of dependence on ever-dwindling resources in a hierarchy of behemoth not-for-profit Art institutions.

**Cultural Policy: The Rise of Public and Not-For-Profit Art Institutions**

Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum* (Bennett, 1995) and *Culture: A Reformer’s Guide* (Bennett 1998) provide valuable critical accounts of how the infrastructures of the
public Art institution developed in tandem with public cultural policy and public
cultural funding objectives. Bennett pursues a Foucauldian perspective focused on
the ‘governmentality’ of Art institutions and their role in population management.
He understands the public Art museum as a political institution; for him the relation
between the museum and government is definitive. The cultural policies of
government tend to define the cultural funding objectives of its corresponding
physical territory and can, therefore, be understood as a primary organizational force
for the public Art institution and the not-for-profit Arts organization. The
relationship between government and the Art institution begs the question: Why put
taxpayer’s money into Art? The cultural funding objectives of governments are
devised in accordance with ideas of public good and national benefit. In this way,
culture has come to be understood as a political utility. Governments fund cultural
institutions to achieve specific socio-cultural ends in relation to their communities.

In *The Birth of the Museum* Bennett observes that the 18th century saw a seismic shift
away from the ultimate power of the monarch towards the ideas of democracy that
characterized the emergent western nation-state. Cultural objects that had previously
‘derived their meaning from their place within an authoritarian tradition emanating
from the monarch (or church)’ suddenly found themselves at the mercy of ‘bourgeois
consumers’ who now had to derive cultural meaning and assign cultural value ‘in
 collaboration with one another’ (Bennett, 1995, p. 26). He continues:

> They were assisted in this, however, by the newly flourishing genres of cultural
criticism and commentary through which questions of aesthetic meaning and
judgement came to form part of a proto-political process whereby acts of state
were subjected to reasoned debate and criticism. (ibid., p. 26)

Even today, some two hundred years on, you will rarely find a new cultural policy
initiative (implemented by developed democratic governments) that is not tied to
‘independent evaluations’ conducted by cultural and aesthetic critics, research
companies and/or statisticians. In their paper, ‘Political Power Beyond the State:
Problematics of Government’, Nicholas Rose and Peter Miller argue that ‘theories
and explanations play an essential part in reversing the relations of power between
the aspiring ruler and that over which rule is to be exercised’ because ‘before one can
seek to manage a domain such as an economy it is first necessary to conceptualise a set of processes and relations as an economy which is amenable to management’ (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 12). They also write:

Governling a sphere requires that it can be represented, depicted in a way which both grasps its truths and re-presents it in a form in which it can enter the sphere of conscious political calculation. The theories of the social sciences, of economics, of sociology and of psychology, thus provide a kind of intellectual machinery for government, in the form of procedures for rendering the world thinkable, taming its intractable reality by subjecting it to the disciplined analyses of thought. (ibid., p. 11)

It is clear here how cultural and aesthetic discourses become central to the infrastructures of Art institutions. Rose and Miller also mobilize the Foucauldian conception of ‘govermentality’ as a dispersed system of power relations that extends beyond any one locus of control, as they write, ‘To the extent that the modern state ‘rules’, it does so on the basis of an elaborate network of relations formed amongst the complex of institutions, organizations and apparatuses that make it up, and between state and non-state institutions’ (ibid., p. 4). It might be argued that under Foucault’s concept of governmentality ‘the state’ is more accurately perceived as a diverse territorial assemblage with real physical boundaries but also with a multitude of expressive dimensions that reinforce these boundaries and organize a complex ‘skein’ (Foucault, 1984) of internal relations.

Bennett argues, furthermore, that the shift in the ethos of governance during the 18th and 19th centuries also saw emergent western nation-states assume a pedagogic responsibility that resulted in a perception of culture as a means of disciplining and reforming populations. The modern public museum was understood as a tool through which to mobilize specific political agendas, which, at the time, were angled towards the creation of a civilized public sphere. The logic was that if the working classes were invited into spaces of culture – forums that had previously been the province of bourgeois society – the working classes might civilize themselves. The birth of the public museum, then, was the product of a cultural contradiction; it was intended to be a site of broad social inclusion on the basis that working class ‘behaviours’ (but
not publics) were excluded. The public museum was the manifestation of a newly politicized high/low social class distinction. As Bennett explains:

The construction of the public sphere as one of polite and rational discourse … required the construction of a negatively coded other sphere – that comprised of places of popular assembly – from which it might be differentiated. If the institutions of the public sphere comprised places in which its members could assemble and, indeed, recognize themselves as belonging to the same public, this was only because of the rules which excluded participation by those who – in their bodily appearances and manners – were visibly different. (Bennett, 1995, p. 26)

Moreover, the specific material and expressive dimensions of the museum’s ‘exhibition complex’ (ibid.) were developed in the context of configuring a national identity (a particularly important task for emergent nation-states); a desire that would prompt, as Bennett notes, the development of ‘two new historical times – national and universal’ (ibid., p. 76), he continues:

The recent past was historicized as the newly emerging nation-states sought to preserve and immemorialize their own formation as a part of that process of ‘nationing’ their populations that was essential to their further development … which led to universal histories being annexed to national histories as, within the rhetorics of each national museum complex, collections of national materials were represented as the outcome and culmination of the universal story of civilization’s development. (ibid., pp. 76-77)

But, who, precisely, was assigned to devise and organize such complex historical narratives? The highly-educated cultural elite was put to work by central government and charged with the responsibility of conceiving a national and universal aesthetic history that would not only define what Art was but also the parameters of its engagement.6 Historian Kathleen McCarthy observes that the same commitment to nation building through the ‘sacralization’ of aesthetic objects in public museums also saw the emergence of the not-for-profit Arts organization that permitted the social elite to participate in the professionalization of cultural critique. She goes on to argue that, unlike the UK (and most of Europe) where public Art museums would become the dominant Art institution, in America the not-for-profit Arts organization would become the primary repository for cultural artefacts. During the late 18th and
early 19th centuries, the not-for-profit Arts organization would play a particularly important role in building America’s national identity as it saw the emergence of what is now a potent culture of Arts philanthropy. McCarthy writes:

The process of sacralization was intimately linked to the process of professionalization, occurring in two stages within museums. The first came with the development of the ‘nonprofit corporation’ itself, and the attendant decisions about what would be included in the museum’s exhibitions and what would not. The businessmen, connoisseurs, and amateur art historians who created the nation’s first major repositories worked out these organizational details, forging preliminary definitions of what would, and would not, constitute ‘fine art’. (McCarthy, 1993, p. 115)

In accordance with early public cultural policy, cultural philanthropists understood the Art institution as an instrument for public instruction. The two institutional models – the public Art institution and the not-for-profit Arts organization – were mobilized under the same assumption that culture could civilize the working classes and be mobilized in the service of nation-building. As Rose and Miller observe:

The constitutional and legal codification and delimitation of the powers of political authorities did not so much ‘free’ a private realm from arbitrary interferences by power, as constitute certain realms, such as those of market transactions, the family and the business undertaking, as ‘non-political’, defining their form and limits. Liberal doctrines on the limits of power and the freedom of subjects under the law were thus accompanied by the working out of a range of new technologies of government, not having the form of direct control by authorities, that sought to administer these ‘private’ realms, and to programme and shape them in desired directions. (Rose & Miller, 1992, pp. 8-9)

Moreover, these moves towards the sacralization of the aesthetic object and the professionalization of the cultural critic would secure the distance between the amateur and the professional (ibid., p. 115) and this distance would be integrated into the fabric of public cultural policy and, therefore, into the correlative development of the not-for-profit Arts organization. Rose and Miller continue:

The invention of the disciplinary institutions of prison and asylum was accompanied by the promulgation of a variety of programmes by lawyers, doctors, philanthropists and other experts, who claimed to know how to direct business activity, family life and personal morality onto the path of virtue. ‘The
State’ was not the inspirer of these programmes of government, nor was it the necessary beneficiary. What one sees is not a uniform trend of ‘State intervention’ but rather the emergence at a multitude of sites in the social body, of health and disease, of crime and punishment, of poverty and pauperism, of madness and family life as problems requiring some measure of collective response, and in relation to which political authorities play a variety of different roles. (Rose & Miller, 1992, pp. 9-10)

While I am not suggesting the Art institution (public or not-for-profit) bears the same hallmarks of discipline as the prison or the asylum, the modern Art institution was conceived as a forum for the cultural discipline and reform of populations. In Culture: A Reformer’s Guide Bennett unpacks this early integration of ‘expertise’ into public cultural policy – and the private cultural policies of not-for-profit Arts institutions – through the politico-cultural narrative of what he refers to as a ‘top-down’ policy directive.

In keeping with earlier observations regarding the role of the cultural theorist in policy development, Bennett unpacks the top-down policy directive by exploring its advocacy in the critique of prominent cultural theorist Theodor Adorno and his essay, ‘Culture and Administration’ (Adorno, 2001). Adorno argues that the perceived autonomy of the ‘aesthetic personality’ must be accommodated (or, perhaps, protected) by the stipulations of cultural policy. The primary argument Adorno makes is that there is an inherent tension between the terms culture and administration. He writes:

Culture would like to be higher and more pure, something untouchable which cannot be tailored according to any tactical or technical considerations. In educated language, this line of thought makes reference to the autonomy of culture. Popular opinion even takes pleasure in associating the concept of personality with it. Culture is viewed as the manifestation of pure humanity without regard for its functional relationships within society. (Adorno, 2001, p. 108)

The ‘top-down’ policy perspective was forged in the light of Kantian assumptions about the privileged nature of aesthetic perception and aesthetic objects and informed early ideas regarding the political utility of the Art institution. The tension between culture and administration manifests in the necessary but often vexed relation
between the curator as esteemed cultural expert and the menial tasks of administrating objects to which the curator must attend. Adorno is not suggesting that culture transcends administration, quite the opposite, as he states, ‘whoever speaks of culture speaks of administration as well, whether this is his intention or not … the task of which, looking down from up high, is to assemble, distribute, evaluate and organize’ (ibid., p. 118). What Adorno does argue, however, is that if the cultural expert’s relationship with administration is not socially distinguished from the broader tasks of administrating material production (factory and retail workers, for example) then the distinction between high-cultural production, distribution and reception and the production, distribution and consumption of every-day objects is blurred. As Adorno writes, ‘Culture is looked upon as thoroughly useless, beyond the planning and administrative methods of material production’ (ibid., p. 114). The importance of this uselessness, of course, is to distance Art from the ‘mutilation’ of the market and ensuring this distance requires careful administration. He writes:

The relation between administration and the expert is not only a matter of necessity, but it is a virtue as well. It opens a perspective for the protection of cultural matters from the realm of control by the market, which today unhesitatingly mutilates culture. (ibid., p. 129)

And so, for Adorno, the intervention of government in cultural matters (through public cultural policy) must be largely imperceptible to protect the distinction of cultural expertise lest high-cultural value itself be threatened and, consequently, the political utility of the Art institution. Again, he asserts:

Administration which wishes to do its part must renounce itself; it needs the ignominious figure of the expert. No city administration, for example, can decide from which painter it should buy paintings, unless it can rely on people who have a serious, objective and progressive understanding of painting. (ibid., p. 128)

The implication here is that the role of cultural policy should be to support an environment in which the expertise of the curator defines the organization of the Art institution. Rose and Miller express a very similar sentiment when they write:
This does not mean that liberalism was an ideology, disguising a State annexation of freedom. The inauguration of liberal societies in Europe accords a vital role to a key characteristic of modern government: action at a distance. Liberal mentalities of government do not conceive of the regulation of conduct as dependent only upon political actions: the imposition of law; the activities of state functionaries or publicly controlled bureaucracies; surveillance and discipline by an all seeing police. Liberal government identifies a domain outside ‘politics’, and seeks to manage it without destroying its existence and its autonomy. This is made possible through the activities and calculations of a proliferation of independent agents including philanthropists, doctors, hygienists, managers, planners, parents and social workers. (Rose & Miller, 1992, p. 8)

Governments, then, organize social relations with culture through the expertise of the cultural elite who, informed by their high degree of education, decide what culture is and how it should be engaged: top-down. However, Bennett argues that Adorno’s position is now ‘pretty well uninhabitable, except for a few retro-aesthetes’ (Bennett, 1998, p. 199) given that in the last few decades of the 20th century ‘culture has been relativized – in policy procedures and discourses just as much as in academic debate’ (ibid., p. 199). This shift towards a relativized culture points towards a major shift in politico-cultural narrative towards the more inclusive ‘bottom-up’ policy perspective.

The ‘bottom-up’ policy perspective refers to a shift in the socio-cultural perception of the Art institution in accordance with ‘those democratic principles of access, distribution and cultural entitlement’ (ibid., p. 199) that characterized cultural and political discourse in the last few decades of the 20th century. At one extreme this shift is understood as an about-face from the Art institution as instrument of public instruction (top-down) to an inclusive ‘site, instrument and occasion for dialogic exchanges structured, ideally, as non-hierarchical relations of reciprocity, between different cultures and communities’ (ibid., p. 203). The ‘bottom-up’ policy perspective is intended to ensure that the interests of local communities are reflected in the curatorial programs of Art institutions. Within this policy model the role of the curator takes on rather different dimensions to that of the ‘top-down’ directive. As Bennett writes:

No longer the accredited agent of a privileged knowledge, the curator is now called to orchestrate a polyphonic dialogue between different voices and values
emerging from the multiple constituencies that comprise the culturally complex structure of contemporary civil society. (ibid., p. 204)

Bennett’s position, however, is that the shifting ground of cultural policy and curatorial advocacy towards the end of the 20th century was, in fact, still the result of a top-down policy directive. He agrees that the shifting tides of political agenda have induced far more inclusive, community oriented cultural funding objectives but within this model the museum is still an instrument of public instruction; the nature of the instruction may have changed but the instrument remains intact. As he argues: ‘What does this view of museums amount to if not a new discursive strategy for enlisting objects in the service of government as parts of programs of civic management aimed at promoting respect for, and tolerance of, cultural diversity?’ (ibid., p. 212).

Certainly, over the last half of the 20th century the public museum has demonstrated a capacity to evolve with the needs and wants of its communities. The contemporary Art institution has responded to the shifting techno-cultural landscape, for example, by allowing for the (arguably fractional) inclusion of photography and making material concessions for the projection screens of video Art. Perhaps the most significant institutional adaptation was undertaken in the service of digital installation, where the ‘black-box’ exhibition complex was developed as an alternative to the white-cubes of the Art institution’s deeply historical material infrastructures. However, as Bennett continues,

… although the curator’s role may be different, is this still not one performed in the service of government through the deployment of specific forms of expertise? Are these not also, and inevitably, relations of knowledge and power? Is it not also true that the communities that the museum is to involve in dialogue are often the artefacts of its own activities rather than autochthonous entities which come knocking at the museum’s door seeking the rights of equal expression and representation? (ibid., p. 212)

The point here is that the cultural relativity that has defined public cultural policy and the agendas of Art institutions in recent years is limited to the interests and needs of Art audiences that tend to be generated by the infrastructures of the Art institution
itself. Despite the broad cultural shift towards ‘those democratic principles of access, distribution and cultural entitlement’ the audiences of Art institutions are generally restricted to those with the requisite cultural education to engage high-cultural forms. The publics and communities of the Art institution are a product of it, not the precondition. In other words, high/low socio-cultural distinctions were literally woven into the fabric of the public Art institution and cannot be so easily undone. As Bourdieu writes in *The Field of Cultural Production*:

> The museum gives to all, as a public legacy, the monuments of a splendid past … but this is false generosity, because free entrance is also optional entrance, reserved for those who, endowed with the ability to appropriate the works, have the privilege of using this freedom and who find themselves consequently legitimized in their privilege, that is, in possession of the means of appropriating cultural goods … (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 237)

We never really made it all the way from Art institution as disseminator of a closed cultural monologue to Art institution as facilitator of an open cultural dialogue because this kind of transformation would require a metamorphosis of the power/knowledge nexus on which liberal democracy is founded and through which the Art institution was given life. As Bennett explains in *The Birth of the Museum*:

> If culture was thus caught up in the symbolization of power, the principle role available to the popular classes … was as spectators of a display of power to which they remained external …The people, as far as their relations to high cultural forms were concerned, were merely the witnesses of a power that was paraded before them. High cultural practices formed part of an apparatus of power whose conception and functioning were juridico-discursive: that is, as Foucault defines it, of a form of power which, emanating from a central source … deployed a range of legal and symbolic resources in order to extract obedience from the population. (Bennett, 1995, p. 22)

The ‘modern’ public Art institution, then, is capable of adaptation but only within certain material and expressive parameters. The Art institution is limited in the very same way that Bourdieu’s field is limited precisely because it organizes social relations with Art (with a capital ‘A’). The function of an Art institution, therefore, is to impose cultural distinctions on aesthetic forms that distinguish not only Art from not-Art but, by default, high-culture from low-culture. As Bourdieu continues:
Being a keystone of a system which can function only by concealing its true function, the charismatic representation of art experience never fulfils its function of mystifying so well as when it resorts to a ‘democratic’ language: to claim that works of art have power to awaken the grace of aesthetic enlightenment in anyone, however culturally uninitiated he or she may be, to presume in all cases to ascribe to the unfathomable accidents of grace or to the arbitrary bestowal of ‘gifts’ aptitudes which are always the product of unevenly distributed education, and therefore to treat inherited aptitudes as personal virtues which are both natural and meritorious. Charismatic ideology would not be so strong if it were not the only outwardly irreproachable means of justifying the right of the heirs to the inheritance without being inconsistent with the ideal of formal democracy, and if, in this particular case, it did not aim at establishing in nature the sole right of the bourgeoisie to appropriate art treasures to itself, to appropriate them to itself symbolically, that is to say, in the only legitimate manner, in a society which pretends to yield to all, ‘democratically’, the relics of an aristocratic past. (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 237)

High/low socio-cultural distinctions were inscribed in the material and expressive infrastructures of the Art institution through its co-emergent relation with the emergent Western nation-state through the 18th and 19th centuries. But discourse is not limited by the material infrastructures of institution (I am not suggesting, however, that discourse is not limited by its own material and expressive infrastructures). The political discourse of cultural policy has been more flexible than, as Rossiter observes, ‘the moribund technics of modern institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 14). My point is that the shift from a top-down cultural policy directive to a bottom-up cultural policy perspective was largely a rhetorical shift in political discourse. This means that, in some circumstances (certainly not all, as we shall see), public cultural policy has demonstrated a greater flexibility and capacity for adaptation than the Art institutions it mandates (from a distance). The consequence of which is that while the responsive specificities of external ‘political’ forces can go a long way to sanction an Art institution’s participation in the techno-cultural landscape, the full integration of networked art into Art institutions is ultimately limited by deeply historical internal stabilities. In other words, despite evolutions in the ethos of public cultural policy, the Art institution is, in many ways, a relic of the earliest incarnations of modern politico-cultural representation.

This brief pre-history reveals two critical features of the Art institution of today. Firstly, as an instrument of government the Art institution is unequivocally bound to
serve the communities of the physical territory in which it is located. As Rossiter writes, ‘it is precisely the border that joins demos (people) with kratos (sovereign authority)’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 39). Secondly, the public Art institution and, to varying degrees, the not-for-profit Arts organization are locked in relations of resource dependence with public funds. Governments provide Art institutions with economic capital through which they seek to generate their own cultural capital (through the professional expertise of their curators who secure relationships with esteemed Artists, locate prized works of Art for collection, curate ‘block-buster’ exhibitions and so on). Central governments, in return, accumulate their own cultural capital as a proprietor of valorized Art institutions. The Art institution is, therefore, positioned in specific ‘networks’ or, as is more often the case, ‘hierarchies’ of relations that extend across a range of cultural organizations and constitute broader cultural assemblages or Art worlds. As DeLanda notes in *A New Philosophy of Society:*

Besides an authority structure, organizations also possess an external identity as enduring, goal-directed entities. As such, organizations exist as part of populations of other organizations with which they interact, and in these interactions they exercise capacities that belong to them as social actors. (DeLanda, 2005, p. 75)

DeLanda goes on to observe three qualities of resource dependence that tend to define relations between institutions: importance, control and substitutivity (DeLanda, 2006, p. 77). Securing economic capital and generating cultural capital are of equal import to all Art institutions and Arts organizations. They require both to survive and large quantities of each to thrive. Moreover, the two forms of capital share a relation of mutual constitution: economic capital begets cultural capital begets economic capital and so on. It is, however, the qualities of control and substitutivity that provide an important insight here. Control, for DeLanda, ‘refers to the capacity of one organization to determine the allocation of a resource for another, a capacity derived from ownership rights, easier physical access to the resource or government regulations’ (ibid., p. 77). In this way, and as we shall see, governments often impose a great degree of control over Art institutions and Arts organizations. Substitutivity, on the other hand, ‘refers to the extent to which a dependent
organization is capable of replacing a given supplier of the resource by another’ (ibid., p. 77). He continues:

The less alternative sources there are for a given resource the more concentrated it is. Resource exchanges may, of course, by symmetrical or reciprocal, in which case the organizations may become interdependent. But if the symmetry of the exchanges is broken along both the importance and concentration dimensions then the controlling organizations acquire the capacity to influence the behaviour of the dependent ones. (ibid., p. 77)

What DeLanda is telling us here is that the specific orientation (and potential functionality) of any given public Art institution or not-for-profit Arts organization within its contemporary Art assemblage is directly tied to the level of its dependence on public funds for economic resources and the range of alternative sources for generating economic capital at its disposal. The more alternatives an Art institution has in terms of generating economic capital the less dependent it is on public funds. However, the less support an Art institution can secure from central government the more it is beholden to alternative sponsors and, as we will see, non-governmental support can exert a high degree of control over the Art institution and significantly inhibit the small scope of institutional flexibility available to it.

In the following analysis we see specific relations of resource dependence orient the Whitney, Turbulence and Tate in their physical territories in unique and divergent ways. Moreover, these resource dependencies do more than situate the Whitney, Turbulence and Tate in the networks of relations that compose their respective cultural assemblages, they define their potential to act and imbue their cultural assemblages – their Art worlds – with unique qualities that influence the broader scope of potential for both Art institution and assemblage alike. It is through these complex relations of resource dependence that this chapter uncovers the rudiments of each institution’s capacity to engage networked art and adapt to the shifting technocultural landscape of the new millennium.
This analysis does not include a consideration of commercial Art galleries, auction houses or Art dealers primarily because networked art has had only the briefest of relationships with the commercial Art market and, therefore, it cannot be considered as a potential resource; nor can it be considered an influential force in the context of this chapter (or this thesis, for that matter). Moreover, the strained relationship between Art and economic capital means that the Art market has never been a reliable resource for the public Art institution. For example, prior to 2001, public museums in the UK were not required to include their collections as ‘assets’ in annual financial reports despite their potentially enormous economic value. This regulatory exception was a nod to the fact that, historically, Art has not been submitted to standard commercial terms. However, British Art institutions must now list the economic value of any cultural artefacts acquired after 2001 in annual financial reports. Somewhat conversely, however, and in accordance with the perception that governments own public Art collections, the UK’s ‘Museums and Galleries Act 1992’ stipulates very specific conditions for the deaccession (sale or disposal) of any piece of a museum’s collection. In other words, the law now requires Art institutions in the UK to declare their acquisitions as commercial ‘assets’ much as commercial organizations are required to do but Art institutions do not have the same rights to sell, trade or gift these assets.

These conflicting regulatory stipulations reflect the incompatibility of attempting to incorporate Art institutions (and Art itself) into the audit culture of calculation and economic rationalism. As the Art market attracts increasingly astronomical sums for the most valorized works of Art, governments are beginning to subject their Art institutions to the same financial regimes as commercial organizations. It is, however, an awkward attempt to seek transparency from what are inherently opaque regimes of value. And, so, while the Art market cannot be perceived as a reliable resource for public or not-for-profit Art institutions, there are striking parallels between the most active Art markets in the world, the global distribution of financial power and the wealthiest Art institutions. Accordingly, in Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction, Julian Stallabrass observes that in the global Art market the, ‘US
is dominant, accounting for a little less than a half of all global art sales; Europe accounts for much of the rest with the UK taking as its share around half of that’ (Stallabrass, 2004, p. 4). What Stallabrass indicates is that the US and the UK have two of the strongest Art markets in the world. Not surprisingly, they are also home to some of the wealthiest Art institutions in the world.

This correlation would appear to reflect a bottom-up cultural policy perspective in which the cultural interests of wealthy communities are reflected in its government’s cultural policies, leading to greater investment in cultural institutions and so on. However, the evolution of a specific community’s interests in high-culture is undoubtedly indebted to the long-term consequences of successful top-down policy directives in which government emphasis on participation in high-cultural activities as the height of civility has been integrated into the fabric of community life. We see here how top-down policy directives evolve organically into bottom-up policy perspectives, as government directives become, over time, a critical aspect of community identity. In other words, the perceived transition to more bottom-up cultural policies is, in fact, an outcome of early top-down policy directives.

This is an important point because there is also a direct correlation between the most active Art markets, the global distribution of power and cultural philanthropy. Cultural philanthropy and corporate sponsorship are vital resources for public and not-for profit Art institutions as they provide the only substitute for public funding. In the UK we see a diverse slate of funding opportunities for Art institutions, which reduces their dependence on public funding. However, the US has a particularly powerful private cultural funding sector and one of the weakest federal cultural funding mandates per capita in the developed world. For example, in a study conducted by the Canadian Council for the Arts in 2005 titled ‘Comparisons of Arts Funding in Selected Countries’, the UK was listed as spending 0.14% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on public Arts funding, well above the US at a paltry 0.02% GDP (Canada Council for the Arts, 2005).

The tendency of the US federal government to imbue local governments with significant autonomy has tended to fragment its national cultural policy landscape
into a series of State based cultural assemblages. Accordingly, the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs is the largest public cultural funding agency in the US outstripping the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) funding budget by some fifty million USD in the 2006-2007 financial year. NYC is also home to some of the most ancestrally significant philanthropic families in American history. Not surprisingly, NYC is host to some of the US’s most prestigious and well funded Art institutions, indeed, some of the most well funded Art institutions in the world. The Whitney Museum of American Art, for example, is a ‘non-profit’ contemporary Art institution with the largest collection of contemporary American Art in the world. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney – an heir to two of the most infamous east coast industrial families – founded the contemporary Art institution in 1914. And the Whitney has had a Vanderbilt Whitney (or descendent thereof) on its Board of Trustees ever since its inception. This analysis, therefore, is really a comparison between the NYC contemporary Art world and the more unified cultural assemblage of the UK.

The UK’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport classifies Britain’s Tate Galleries as a non-departmental public body (NDPB). The Tate’s NDPB status is set up in such a way that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport is responsible for its core funding but it still maintains a reasonable autonomy from central government and is free to generate its own income on top of its public allocation. In other words, Tate Galleries is a national gallery (a public Art institution), which means it receives a consolidated public funding allocation from Her Majesty’s Government. In the majority of first world countries, national galleries receive what is known as unrestricted funds from their core public funding allocations. Unrestricted funds allow the Gallery to distribute the funds throughout the organization as it sees fit. Unrestricted funding is an echo of the top-down policy directive that strives to ensure that the government’s contribution to Art institutions remains transparent so as to preserve the expertise and autonomy of the cultural expert, regimes of high-cultural value and the political utility of the Art institution.

The primary contemporary benefit of unrestricted funds is that they may be used for administrative costs rather than for ‘sexy’ high-profile projects that tend to be
favoured by corporate sponsors seeking the affiliated kudos (or cultural capital) of conspicuous high-cultural sponsorship. Accordingly, corporate sponsorship tends to be gifted as restricted funds. This means the money must be spent in accordance with contractually agreed upon terms. Historically, philanthropic funds have tended to be unrestricted (in the service of the curatorial ‘expertise’ and political utility of the institution). However, there is an increasing trend towards restricting philanthropic funds. The income Tate receives outside public funding is referred to as ‘self-generated income’ and covers gallery admission fees, fundraising (which includes individual donations and bequeathments, corporate sponsorship, and philanthropic gifts) and shares trading. The balance of public versus private funding for Tate Galleries is hard to quantify as a percentage because it changes from year to year. Over the last five years the public funding allocation for Tate Galleries has tended to make up approximately forty percent of the institution’s total income.

The situation is somewhat different in NYC precisely because its philanthropic sector outstrips the combined value of local and national Arts funding allocations by a ratio of three to one. In the Whitney’s 2006-2007 Tax Return, government support is listed at just over fifteen million USD and its ‘Direct Public Support’ comes in at almost fifty nine million USD (Internal Revenue Service, 2007). The public versus private funding allocation for the Whitney, in this case, is approximately twenty five percent public funding and seventy-five percent private support. The Whitney’s incorporated status as a ‘non-profit’ organization allows it to seek government and private funding (and affords it significant tax breaks) but does not require the organization to be accountable to any particular government body nor US government/s to be responsible for the Whitney. In other words, the Whitney is not a national gallery. The Whitney raises the majority of its funds through the gifts of wealthy patrons, most of whom are on its Board of Trustees and share either direct or indirect ties with renowned philanthropic families and/or corporate sponsors.

The difference between the distribution of public and private funding in the UK and the US has striking consequences for the relationships between Arts organizations within these physical territories. Public Arts funding is subject to a transparency that private and corporate Arts funding is not. Public Arts funding is largely perceived as
taxpayer’s money and is, therefore, subject to public scrutiny (particularly that which accompanies public election campaigns), which tends to reduce the incidence of funds pooling in the service of one cultural form or in one institution for a disproportionate amount of time. On the other hand, private and corporate funds are far less subject to financial transparency and, therefore, their allocation is not up for public debate. For example, when New York Times culture and politics analyst Hugh Eakin was curious about the massive renovation fund allocated for the new MoMA building and asked MoMA spokeswoman Ruth Kaplan how MoMA secured the funds, she responded, ‘It is a longstanding policy never to talk about fund-raising’ (Eakin, 2004).

My research indicates that the most ideal funding conditions for institutional flexibility – and, therefore, cultural innovation – arise when an Arts institution has access to equal amounts of public and private funds. This kind of public/private hybrid funding arrangement ensures both the public transparency and mutual accountability associated with assured public funds and the opportunities for specific sites of development that private funds provide. Conditions like those under which Tate Galleries currently thrives, as revealed in an interview I conducted with Tate’s ‘Intermedia Art’ curator Kelli Dipple at Tate Modern in 2007:

The Tate has a couple of departments that deals with finance because finance is not just money and it’s not just funding, finance is a larger concept around the idea of actualizing things. So, fifty percent of the funding of the Tate is public money and fifty percent is corporate sponsorship and both sources come with boxes to tick … The public and philanthropic funders are less direct than corporate sponsors, who are more direct. But some corporate sponsors are more philanthropic than others and if they want to be too rigorously involved the Tate will drop them. The Tate does not like external curation and they are in a unique position to say no. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

This quote reveals the source of Tate’s remarkable institutional flexibility (comparatively speaking) and its limitations as a traditional institutional form (both of which will be detailed more thoroughly in chapter four). On the one hand, Tate’s ‘unique position’ is not just a result of being well funded but rather it is the result of having the grounding of a stable public funding allocation, active philanthropic support and the requisite cultural capital to attract wealthy corporate sponsors. Tate’s
capacity to ‘say no’ to over-zealous corporate sponsors demonstrates that a strong relationship with government bodies within a healthy territory of private funding provides it with a rare institutional independence. Tate is not totally dependent on any one source for its economic capital and, therefore, it is not disproportionately influenced by any one of its resource providers. It is a public institution, however, which has explicit disciplinary effects (a point I will return to shortly).

Across the Atlantic, the NYC contemporary Art world profits from perhaps the most potent cultural philanthropy in the world and yet the fact that it cannot offset the static nature of these funding allocations with a reasonable public Arts funding mandate means its contemporary Art institutions are often beholden to century old philanthropic agendas. The stability of the relations between cultural philanthropy and US contemporary Art institutions has created a very stable hierarchy in which the majority of cultural resources are carefully controlled by a dominant few. As we shall see, the very different networks of resource dependence that characterize the US and UK contemporary cultural landscapes have an enormous influence over Tate, the Whitney and Turbulence’s capacities to engage the slippery, enigmatic forms of networked art.

**Funding Networked Art in the UK and NYC**

In chapter four I chart Tate’s enduring curatorial advocacy for networked art by documenting the emergence of ‘Tate Net Art’ in 2000 – a website with its own curatorial agenda and dedicated funding allocation – and its subsequent transformation into the less specialized but arguably more refined ‘Tate Intermedia Art’ in 2008. The fact that ‘Tate Net Art’ was not simply discarded as a failed project when the incompatibility between networked art and traditional institutional protocols became apparent is a direct consequence of Tate’s status as a British public institution. There is clear correlation between the Tate’s dedicated networked art initiatives (from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s highly publicized ‘Digital Britain Report’ that dedicates an entire chapter to the creative industries and places particular emphasis on the role of cultural institutions in Britain’s digital future. It states:
The Digital World will continue to rely upon the development of … core creative skills, and many of the basic building blocks in which people develop and enjoy creative content live – our museums, libraries, arts centres, theatres and music venues – look set to thrive in the Digital Age. (Digital Britain, 2009)

The questionable accuracy of this quote aside, Tate’s autonomy from central government is contingent on its ability to internalize public cultural policy and, therefore, become a primary consultant on public cultural policy. Much as outlined in the first section of this chapter, the co-emergence of public cultural policy and public cultural institutions has consigned a relation of mutual determination. They are a part of the same process of governance. As Rose and Miller point out:

Central to the possibility of modern forms of government … are the associations formed between entities constituted as ‘political’ and the projects, plans and practices of those authorities – economic, legal, spiritual, medical, technical – who endeavour to administer the lives of others in the light of conceptions of what is good, healthy, normal, virtuous, efficient or profitable. Knowledge is thus central to these activities of government and to the very formation of its objects, for government is a domain of cognition, calculation, experimentation and evaluation. And, we argue, government is intrinsically linked to the activities of expertise, whose role is not one of weaving an all-pervasive web of ‘social control’, but of enacting assorted attempts at the calculated administration of diverse aspects of conduct through countless, often competing, local tactics of education, persuasion, inducement, management, incitement, motivation and encouragement. (Rose & Miller, 1992, pp. 2-3)

While the indoctrination of ‘governmentality’ might seem like a rigidifying or coercive force for a public Art institution, the internalization of a responsibility for civic good actually ensures an institutional flexibility in accordance with the micro-undulations of political rhetoric. Public Art institutions are a part of political process and, therefore, must stay attendant to ‘tax payer’ wants and needs. As Dipple points out:

The Tate is a public institution so there’s an audience expectation and the audience expectation around media delivery and access to information has increased ten fold. And the public feel they should have a voice in what the Tate is doing … it [Tate Net Art] is an institutional response to a public voice that wants to know how traditional Art institutions will locate themselves within contemporary culture. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)
What is more, the fact that an institution of Tate’s scale has managed to stay so connected to the shifting community agendas of the new millennium has meant that the entire contemporary Art world of the UK has been endowed with a unique capacity for supporting techno-cultural innovation. I am not suggesting that all contemporary Arts organizations in the UK possess as privileged a status as Tate but rather that the flexibility afforded to a major Art institution like Tate allows for a greater slate of opportunities for networked artists and audiences, stimulating local creative communities and climates of cultural innovation. While Tate is still profoundly limited by its assemblage as a traditional institution and is unlikely to be a site of critical techno-cultural innovation, its continued commitment to the spheres of networked art can only be advantageous for artists and audiences alike. This kind of institutional commitment keeps emergent techno-cultural forms on public funding agendas and provides mainstream audiences with a point of access to the ghettoized forums of networked art. Traditional Art institutions may only ever be peripherally involved with networked art but, at present, this peripheral involvement brings with it a great deal of much needed opportunity. Having identified the UK as the most supportive politico-economic climate for techno-cultural innovation considered in this thesis, I will spend some time here unpacking the inherent rigidities of the politico-economic conditions of NYC’s contemporary cultural landscape and the multitude of ways in which it excludes networked art.

The privately funded not-for-profit Art institution disciplines publics according to private interpretations of civic good and, therefore, cultivates private forums for the management of publics. As discussed, the privately funded not-for-profit Art institution is also an iteration of governmentality but it is a self-regulating one, which, as we shall see, tends to make it resistant to the micro-undulations of political rhetoric that keep public Art institutions more attuned to contemporary culture. When private funding is the primary source of economic capital for contemporary Art institutions, agendas tend to become insulated much in the way that the Whitney’s curatorial mandate is largely defined by a century old philanthropic legacy. The primarily philanthropically funded not-for-profit Art institution reflects an almost textbook top-down model of cultural administration but the ‘top’ of the
Information cascade is now defined by private agendas that wield enormous influence over public perceptions of what is culturally valuable. In fact, it might be argued that the paltry national allocation for cultural funding in the US is a consequence of the fact that US Art worlds are now largely perceived as the responsibility of the philanthropic sector.

This combination of a meagre public funding mandate and an incredibly powerful philanthropic sector has induced rigid hierarchical relations between institutions that perpetually reinforce outmoded hierarchies of cultural forms. The only modicum of flexibility that US Arts organizations have regarding their access to economic resources resides in their capacity and willingness to attract corporate sponsorship. Corporate sponsorship is more flexible than philanthropic money not because the money is unrestricted (as it is generally the most restricted type of funding) but because it is a reliably renewable resource, unlike the US philanthropic sector that has deep roots and narrow boundaries. Obviously the current economic climate is not primed for sponsorship renewal of any kind but, the global financial crisis aside, corporate sponsorship has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for replenishment within the NYC contemporary Art world (as is evidenced, for example, by the dozens of ‘Corporate Partners’ listed and updated annually at <http://www.whitney.org>).

In 2000 the Whitney appointed new media theorist and noted new media art critic, Christiane Paul, as an ‘adjunct’ curator of ‘new media art’. The first thing Paul did in her new role was to initiate the ‘net art’ platform, Artport (launched in 2001). When I interviewed Paul at the Whitney in 2007 and asked her if Artport had ever secured any corporate sponsorship, she told me that the only financial support Artport had ever received had come through a technology company in 2000. But as quickly as corporate sponsorships emerge they can disappear and when the tech-company that sponsored Artport was bought-out by Hewlett Packard the relationship was severed. While the relationship between telcos, tech companies and networked art seemed like it had real synergistic potential, it has actually matured into a series of distant and spotty relations.
There are many postulations regarding why the potential synergies between tech companies, telcos and networked art have not become stronger and more reciprocal. Helen Thorington, co-founder of Turbulence, for example, suggests that the possibility of exploiting networked artists as content providers was what first attracted tech companies and telcos to Arts sponsorships. However, the repercussions of the dot.com bust cultivated not only a specific tech company and telco anxiety regarding investment in the Internet but a broader corporate apprehension regarding new media sponsorship and investment at large. In email correspondence, Thorington commented to me that after the dot.com bust

… entrepreneurs and corporations stayed away from the net, studied it (as I understand) until they realized that people really went online to meet with other people, hang out and talk. When they returned it was with platforms that made social networking possible. Net art works by individual artists – were no longer of interest. There are exceptions … but there really was a major change in corporate interest at that time. I think we may be undergoing another now. The social networking sites are not thriving, many of them are losing money; some have laid off staff... the beginning of rethinking the internet once again. (Thorington, H. 2009, pers. comm., 17 February)

However, in a response to an email I sent Artport’s Paul she argues that the assumption that tech companies/telcos and new media art were ever particularly synergistic is reductive and misleading:

I think it slowly became clear in the late 90s that the tech companies were not interested in sponsoring tech art. The (mis)assumption that they would be interested was based on the lowest common denominator between the two: tech. The art world is a very small niche market and 'new media art' an even smaller niche within it (that is hardly integrated into the art world). Tech companies consider it to be more beneficial to sponsor sports events or … rather than art (unless it's a blockbuster with worldwide appeal). For precisely those reasons I was not surprised that HP would not sponsor Artport. The only tech companies that were interested in sponsoring art were the ones that were considered dinosaurs or not very hip (such as the backend storage company that sponsored Artport) – for them it is an 'image upgrade’ to be affiliated with 'hip' tech art. (Paul, C 2009, pers. comm., 17 February)

The implication here, of course, is that corporate sponsors seek the tangible and intangible rewards of being affiliated with dominant cultural institutions: invites to prestigious events hosted by the institution, memberships for executives, private
tours for clients etcetera and the high-cultural kudos (cultural capital) that comes with being a ‘legitimate’ Art lover. Obviously, the more prestigious the institution and/or cultural form the more corporate sponsors it attracts. It should come as no surprise then that networked art is not a great recipient of corporate sponsorship given its tenuous grasp on high-cultural legitimacy. Corporate sponsors generally have a very ‘mainstream’ agenda and are, therefore, really only a renewable resource for highly valorized cultural institutions and legitimate cultural forms. In fact, there is a fairly consistent view within networked art communities that plans to substitute public and/or private funding resources for the ‘new media art niche’ (as Christiane Paul refers to it) with tech-company and telco funding were unduly optimistic.

Regardless of availability, however, there is also an ideological rejection of potential corporate synergies at play within networked art communities. Turbulence, for example, is not interested in corporate sponsorship because both the organization’s founders Jo-Anne Green and Thorington believe that it requires the organization to crudely orient Turbulence within the parlance of commercial practice. As Thorington notes:

We don’t get corporate support. I think the only time I did get any was from a small branch bank in Staten Island – for an event at Staten Island’s Snug Harbor Cultural Center. But I don't try either. We're too small – we’re not structured the way we are told business should be … I don't even think of us as a business and therefore can’t write about us (won’t write about us) in terms that business people understand. (Thorington, H 2009, pers. comm., 17 February)

This quote refers us to the ‘information freedom fighter’ political position that Turbulence and many networked artists and administrators pursue. It is an political position, or a set of principles, I unpack more carefully in chapter five where I refer to it as a kind of moral capitalism that aims to revise the knowledge/power nexus that underpins the social and cultural hierarchies of liberal democracies. In reality, however, this argument implicitly functions to reaffirm high-cultural distinctions by staunchly separating networked art from the commercially driven forums of design and popular culture. This distinction returns networked art, perhaps unwittingly, to the echelons of Art history precisely because it echoes the idioms of political Art and
the avant-garde. In other words, Thorington’s quote implies that ‘thinking’ or
‘writing’ about Turbulence ‘as a business’ or ‘in terms that business people
understand’ could induce a corruption of Turbulence’s objectivity – or its aesthetic
and political purity – when it comes to commissioning and curatorial decisions. The
most damning consequence of this corruption, of course, would be the possible
contamination of Artistic integrity through imposition of commercial agendas. So not
only was corporate sponsorship an over-determined source of economic capital for
the support of networked art, it also presents ideological dilemmas for a significant
number of networked artists and organizations (where it is viewed as a contamination
of aesthetic value and artistic autonomy).

When Christiane Paul pointed out that potential corporate synergies between telcos,
tech companies and Artport were extremely limited at best, I asked her why she was
not able to substitute this lack by securing philanthropic or public grants. To which
she replied:

The problem was getting the permission to put the grant applications in because they [the Whitney] wanted to approach those foundations for other projects. So I haven’t managed to secure any funding for Artport to keep it going so far which is not due to the fact that I don’t think it is fundable but it is because I can’t put in specific applications because the Whitney approaches the same foundations for, let’s say, the contemporary curators or the performance curators – it’s always a matter of priority. So far there actually hasn’t been any funding for new media arts from the Whitney itself. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

This response prompted me to ask whether there were any specific new media arts
grants in the US, grants that would eliminate the problem of potential conflict with
the Whitney’s more esteemed curatorial departments. To which she replied, ‘Well,
yes, there are. There are certain grants that do that, hardly any but … they are all
private foundations’ (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April). And yet Paul would later
reveal to me, ‘that there has been no philanthropic funding of Artport, only corporate
sponsorship (and I would consider that ‘highly’ unusual, it normally seems to be the
other way around)’ (Paul, C 2009, pers. comm., 16 February). Paul is absolutely
right, it is ‘highly unusual’ for Artport not to have secured any philanthropic funding.
Just like their traditional institutional cousins, networked art organizations in the US
tend to attract the majority of their economic resources through philanthropic foundations. For example, in the 2007-2008 financial year Turbulence received 61.5% of its funding from private foundations, 33.5% through public grants and 5% through ‘other’ sources (Thorington, H 2009, pers. comm., 12 February). It is strange to think that Artport – an adjunct curatorial department of the Whitney Museum of American Art, one of the preeminent contemporary Art institutions in the US – would be disadvantaged at any contemporary Arts funding table.

It appears, however, that Artport is not only disadvantaged by its internal subordination amongst the curatorial ranks of the Whitney but by the apparent privilege of being affiliated with a major contemporary Art institution as well. Turbulence, for example, has been awarded funds from four major east coast philanthropic visual Arts foundations: the Jerome Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation, the LEF Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation. The Jerome Foundation, the LEF Foundation and the Greenwall Foundation all articulate specific interest in media arts. Moreover, there is a tendency amongst these foundations to orient their primary objectives towards the support of creative activities that have not yet achieved mainstream legitimacy, as the ‘Purpose’ Statement on the Jerome Foundation website indicates: ‘The Foundation seeks to support artists who exhibit significant potential yet are not recognized as established creators by fellow artists and other arts professionals’ (The Jerome Foundation, 2009).

Unfortunately, Artport does not qualify for Jerome, LEF or Greenwall Foundation grants precisely because the adjunct curatorial department is so closely affiliated with an ‘established’ Art institution. To add insult to injury, the Andy Warhol Foundation, one of the leading and most progressive visual arts philanthropic foundations in the US (grants for which Artport would most certainly qualify), is also off limits to Artport because it is a primary source of income for the Whitney’s more venerated curatorial departments. As an adjunct curatorial department at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Artport has ended up more distanced from cultural and economic capital than any other networked art organization in the same physical territory.
The fact that there are ‘alternative’ philanthropic Arts foundations with dedicated ‘new media arts’ objectives operating within the old-money stakes of NYC contemporary Art philanthropy is a consequence of the fact that the mainstream NYC contemporary Art assemblage has a vibrant history of techno-cultural engagement. My point is that this kind of philanthropic focus does not emerge autonomously – that is, it does not emerge without consultation with the ‘legitimate’ Art world. Networked art has become a part of the fabric of philanthropic funding in the US precisely because there have been several high profile attempts to legitimize the practice. However, as the limitations of instituting networked art within traditional Art institutions have come to light (and will be clearly outlined in the following chapter), what began as a curious mainstream institutional enquiry regarding the emergent form has, over the last decade, turned into tepid acknowledgement and is now slowly dissolving into abject dismissal. The journey from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art, discussed at length in chapter four, is a sterling example of the complex nature of the devolution of networked arts high-cultural legitimacy over the past decade. However, the remnants of this initial curiosity can be seen in the objectives of a small group of ‘alternative’ US based philanthropic foundations.

This looming mainstream dismissal of networked art in the NYC contemporary Art assemblage is not a consequence of curatorial temperament but is, of course, a complex amalgam of institutional, discursive and economic issues. The capacity to commit to an ‘institutional remix’ (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April) that requires an acknowledgement of the limitations of traditional institutions in the emerging cultural landscape is a tall order for institutions for whom civic responsibility is a national mandate, let alone for institutions that must justify seventy-five percent of their expenditure to philanthropic agendas that are based on century old familial ties. The Whitney, for example, answers to a Board of Trustees, the majority of whom see themselves as guardians of the institution, guardians of traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. Telling these powerful individuals that the institutional model in which they have invested lifetimes of wealth is becoming out of step with contemporary culture is going have to be backed up with
more than a few high-cultural examples of the transformative force of emergent techno-cultural forms. The philanthropic sector of the NYC contemporary Art assemblage may be narrow but its roots are deep and its influence extensive.

For example, in March 2008 the Chairman of the Whitney’s Board of Trustees, Leonard Lauder, donated 131 million USD to the Whitney (one of the largest single donations the Museum has ever received) under the condition that the Whitney must maintain its residence at the Breuer Building on Madison Avenue. The Whitney has been involved in extensive plans to expand, having commissioned renowned Italian architect Renzo Piano to design a new building in Manhattan’s meatpacking district. There had been speculation in the months preceding Lauder’s gift that the Museum would not be able to sustain both premises. As Carol Vogel noted in the New York Times’ Art & Design section in March 2008:

Mr. Lauder said that the money required the museum not to sell its Marcel Breuer building on Madison Avenue at 75th Street for an extended period, although he declined to specify how long. The Whitney announced last year that it planned to open a satellite museum downtown in the meatpacking district of Manhattan, which stirred speculation that it might sell its Breuer building. But Mr. Lauder said he was determined that the Whitney keep its hulking 1966 building. ‘Like so many architecture lovers, I believe the Whitney and the Breuer building are one’, he said. (Vogel, 2008)

Lauder’s gift is a striking example of the NYC philanthropic sector’s commitment to preserving the tradition of Art institution and the scope of influence it has over the institutions it sustains. What is more, Lauder’s statement reinforces the modern assumption that Art institutions should be bound to their white-cubed (or even black-boxed) estates. Establishing an enduring legitimization for networked art within a traditional Art institution requires a desire and capacity to rethink the role and function of Art institution within emerging culture. And rethinking institutions requires the cultivation of a flexible relationship with both space and time. While funding is bound up in a philanthropic sector that has a primary objective of protecting the legacy of its forebears then this kind of transformation is unlikely to prevail, regardless of the engagement, insight and motivation of curators, critics and administrators. Accordingly and as chapter four reveals, Artport has virtually ceased
to operate in recent years. Artport’s attempts to secure funding through its high-
profile affiliation with the Whitney were quashed by its more legitimate curatorial
counterparts and its capacity to substitute traditional resources through alternative or
specific networked art resources is extremely limited.

The problem for networked art within the NYC contemporary Art assemblage is that
the illusory surge of activity within mainstream contemporary Art institutions gave
the practice and its advocates a premature sense of sustainability. There was enough
time between mainstream contemporary Art’s inquisitive open-doors to networked
art and its eventual dismissal for networked art organizations to accrue some
mainstream cultural capital of their own. The three major NYC based networked art
organizations emerged within a year of each other: Rhizome and Turbulence in 1996,
and then Eyebeam in 1997. Mainstream institutional interest in networked art in the
US would precede the existence of these organizations with the Whitney adding the
first (and only) Internet Artwork to its prestigious collection in 1995 – the Douglas
Davis piece *The World’s First Collaborative Sentence* (Davis, 1994) – and the
Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis launched its Media Initiatives department in 1996
(that sponsored the very active site of net art support and exhibition, ‘Gallery 9’,
until it was unceremoniously dumped in 2003). It might be argued that this
mainstream institutional attention made it possible for dedicated networked art
organizations to emerge at all.

Accordingly, NYC based networked art organizations amassed a transitory cultural
capital in the late 1990s and early 2000s thanks to an active sphere of discursive
legitimacy and a moderate amount of mainstream institutional interest in networked
art. Just like any other fledgling Arts organization, this mainstream cultural capital
was then transformed into economic capital through an increased capacity to attract
both public and private Arts funding. The cultural trajectory of the early days of
networked art was an almost textbook example of how the field appropriates new
cultural forms. Yet, as mainstream contemporary Art institutions like the Whitney
have failed to develop any kind of secure or enduring relationship with the practice,
US based networked art organizations have been left with only enough residual
cultural capital to stretch out a few more years of funding. As opportunities dwindle
for organizations like Turbulence the threat of dissolution lurks ominously on the horizon. A field analysis would argue that networked art has simply failed to secure high-cultural legitimacy and a place in the Art world (in the field of restricted-production). But the mainstream institutional discharge of networked art is not a consequence of its inability to qualify as high-culture but rather a consequence of the fact that mainstream Art institutions cannot accommodate the boundary defying, copyright infringing and materially unstable form/s of network culture. As Julian Stallabrass so aptly observes: ‘Without the solace of objects and the sanction of art institutions, the boundaries of art (and even of the individual artwork) can be very hard to draw’ (Stallabrass, 2003, p. 9). Again, we see that the in/out-either/or logic of the field simply breaks down when faced with networked art.

Some networked arts organizations, however, have found ways to substitute their dwindling cultural capital and their diminishing capacity to generate economic resources and others, like Turbulence, gasp desperately for air. For example, Turbulence has recently decided to apply for a broader range of public and philanthropic Arts grants. As Thorington notes, ‘I’m going to try some music foundations this year … see how far I get with new media work’ (Thorington, H 2009, pers. comm., 17 February). Given that networked art runs across the boundaries of cultural forms like running water, it seems reasonable to assume that networked art should be able to qualify for funding outside the visual Arts sector. However, exploiting this potentially extended range of funding opportunities could well create more problems than it solves. The very existence of cultural ‘grant categories’ refers us to the traditional hierarchy of cultural forms and the conventional organizational logic of cultural ‘fields’. An arts organization that attempts to appeal to multiple categories may not be advantaged by its diversity but rather disadvantaged by a perceived dilution of its specialization and expertise (a point I discuss in detail in chapter six). Much as Turbulence’s Jo-Anne Green commented:

Most of the foundations have created a category for us. They call us new media or digital art and we just ignore it. Most of the time if they ask us to tick a box that defines us we tick ‘other’. You can’t really position yourself anywhere, it’s
In NYC networked art tends to be categorized as a visual Art, not because the emergent practice is more definitively visual than aural, performative or textual but because it needed an ‘anchor’ and that is how the traditional organizational logic of the cultural field functions. As outlined in chapter two, generic distinction is a crucial aspect of traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. And during the late 1990s and early 2000s, there were simply no alternative organizational logics available to ‘anchor’ or organize the transdisciplinary expertise of networked art producers, curators or critics. Not to mention, the form was taken up by and legitimized within traditional visual Art institutions. And many networked artists and networked arts organizations embraced this visual Arts categorization because it referred them to a clear set of funding bodies through which to secure economic capital. But in a physical territory in which the traditional cultural ideology is proving extraordinarily stable there is little evidence to suggest that a form’s failure to garner enduring legitimacy in one category will make it eligible for another. Nor is there any compelling evidence to suggest that organizations dedicated to theatre, performing Arts or even literature have demonstrated greater capacity for flexibility in the face of emergent cultural shifts than the visual Art sector. Networked art stands to challenge the institutions of these high-cultural forums for much the same reasons it has the visual Art world. My point here is that Turbulence’s attempt to find alternative sources of funding outside the visual Arts sector but within traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and traditional institutions is unlikely to yield great rewards.

These particularly grim observations are amplified by the fact that the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has withheld its support of Turbulence for the last two years. What is most startling about the NEA’s withdrawal of funds is its grounds for rejection: it argued that Turbulence’s website was too confusing for the grants appropriations panel to navigate. As Thorington explains:

like being lost in space, you need an anchor. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)
For the second year in a row, the NEA did not support Turbulence. No one on their panel knew how to move through a website – in spite of endless explanation on our part. The staff now recommends that we make a video of ourselves going through the site and send it in with our application so they can watch it as video. It's all pretty depressing … (Thorington, H 2009, pers. comm., 12 February)

This bizarre NEA justification indicates a fairly narrow desire to support a broader public engagement with one of the most pervasive communications systems of all time, let alone the more contentious idea of networked art. Not surprisingly, the NEA ‘Media Arts’ grant category extends only to ‘Film/Radio/Television’ (National Endowment for the Arts, 2009) providing clear evidence that the Internet is yet to qualify as a legitimate platform for cultural innovation within the US’s national cultural policy. Moreover, the fact that the NEA has backed away from Turbulence over the last two years is consistent with the diminishing legitimacy of the emergent practice as it continues to find itself disenfranchised within the dominant contemporary Art institutions of the US.

The diminishing availability of funds for networked art in NYC is also evident in the decision of one of the most high-profile networked art organizations in the world, the NYC based Rhizome.org, to establish a permanent affiliation with the bricks and mortar Art gallery New Museum. Rhizome moved its offices into the New Museum building in 2003 and is now formally referred to as ‘Rhizome at the New Museum’. It is an affiliation that prompted Turbulence’s Green to observe, ‘I think Rhizome are moving away from net art and more towards new media art in general’ (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April). The implication here of course is that Rhizome is moving away from the more troubled or illegitimate edges of networked art and towards the more legitimate cover of established or gallery-friendly ‘new media art’ practices (video art, installation, performance, etcetera).

The benefit of this affiliation for Rhizome, of course, is that it has been able to gain much needed ground with funding bodies because it can now authoritatively align itself with a traditional institution. Much as Turbulence’s Thorington notes: ‘A physical space commands attention that an organization like Turbulence [or
Rhizome] does not get on its own from funders and others’ (Thorington, H 2008, pers. comm., 8 October). This is a prime example of an increasingly beleaguered organization attempting to substitute its comparative lack of cultural capital with that of a more conventional contemporary Arts organization and increase access to economic resources. Rhizome’s decision to align itself with New Museum is about aligning itself with traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and the cultural authority they bestow.

But what does New Museum get out of the affiliation? How does Rhizome reciprocate? New Museum has absorbed Rhizome’s particular brand of cultural capital, which is that of the techno-avant-garde. The interesting thing about this reciprocity is that what New Museum gains Rhizome loses. New Museum can now make an authoritative claim to the ‘cutting edge’ of innovation and as a smaller but still traditional contemporary Art gallery it can propose its eligibility for pretty much anything from mainstream public and private contemporary Arts funding to the ‘alternative’ Arts philanthropic grants discussed earlier. However, Rhizome has taken a step away from real cultural innovation and towards the compromising but economically vitalizing forces of convention. New Museum gains ‘cool’ capital but Rhizome loses it, this is the trade. Certainly the push-me-pull-you nature of this particular partnership is not lost on the contemporary Art world, as demonstrated in an article written by contemporary Art critic Matthew Mirapaul for the *New York Times* in September 2003:

> In an unusual instance of an established cultural organization taking an upstart arts group under its wing, the New Museum of Contemporary Art in SoHo is forging a partnership with Rhizome.org, an Internet site where digital artists can exhibit their online projects and crow about their status as art-world outsiders … But a digital-arts group and a museum, no matter how progressively minded, can make strange bedfellows … it is not clear whether the New Museum-Rhizome partnership can be viewed as a step in extracting Internet art from its tiny niche or as a life preserver for a floundering art form. (Mirapaul, 2003)

The condescension in Mirapaul’s tone when he ponders whether the New Museum is ‘extracting [networked art] from its tiny niche’ or throwing ‘a life preserver’ to ‘a floundering art form’ reflects a deep assumption that the traditional Art institution is
the pinnacle of cultural evolution. In other words, the only road to a secure and sustainable high-cultural legitimacy for emergent cultural forms is through the benevolence of traditional contemporary Art institutions. The question of whether high cultural legitimacy can be won or even exist outside the traditional Art institution simply does not enter the equation.

The Future of Networked Art in the UK and NYC

The NYC contemporary Art assemblage prides itself on a history of cultural innovation. Cultural innovation in the new millennium, however, requires a capacity for institutional ‘remixing’ (to the extent that it is possible), which is best achieved through a diverse slate of resource providers that the NYC contemporary Art assemblage simply does not possess. This commitment to innovation is precisely what sparked the initial interest in networked art in institutions like the Whitney and the Guggenheim. But the conservative philanthropic stranglehold that characterizes the NYC contemporary Art assemblage, ironically, delimits its potential to live up to its own legacy. Unless NYC based networked art organizations can find a way to sidestep the treadmill of subordination they encounter at the inequitable funding tables of cultural philanthropy and generate new ways to parlay their residual cultural capital into economic capital they have a grim future. As discussed in detail in chapter five, there is an opportunity here to pursue real change, to cultivate, as Rossiter argues, ‘new institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006), to adopt new organizational logics and participate in the development of new cultural forums. But such a transformation requires organizations like Turbulence to recognize that one of the advantages of working with digital networks is that they are not bound to the provinces of any one physical territory or any one model of fundraising. As Ned Rossiter observes,

… liberal democracy is … not coextensive with the logic of networks, whose transversal relations institute new organizational forms that cut across the struggles of the movements and the policing of central government …While networks in many ways are regulated indirectly by the sovereign interests of central government, they are also not reducible to the institutional apparatuses of central government. And this is what makes possible the creation of new
institutional forms as expressions of non-representational democracy. (Rossiter, 2006, pp. 38-39)

Given the paltry public cultural policy of the US, the tight control of private money by a handful of dominant Art institutions and networked art’s tenuous hold on high-cultural legitimacy, Turbulence has to seek out new ways to generate economic and cultural capital: outside traditional Arts funding fora, outside the Art world and outside its physical territory. Certainly, this transformation will likely require Turbulence to think of itself ‘as a business’ or ‘in terms that business people understand’, which may well feel like a breach of its ethics. What Turbulence stands to gain (not just for its own longevity but for the future of networked art), however, is precisely within its ethical mantra of information freedom fighting. That is, an opening out of cultural forums across politico-cultural boundaries and the wholesale expansion of access and participation in the production, distribution and reception of cultural forms. Again, as Rossiter writes:

There’s no question that the political stakes are high in such an undertaking, and there will be many who are quick to charge such a project as selling out. The reality is that organized networks will never be funded through state subsidies in the way that much of the cultural sector has and continues to be … (ibid., p. 31)

Turbulence has little choice but to use the digital networks in which it is immersed to set up new systems of support and administration for emergent cultural forms and, in doing so, participate in the production of new regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that puncture the evolutionarily-compromised walls of the traditional Art world. The vitality of the contemporary Art assemblage that has sustained Turbulence thus far has, ironically, imposed the ultimate disadvantage: an illusion of legitimacy and sustainability. The future of networked art programs that are adjunct to traditional Art institutions, like Artport and Tate Intermedia Art, depends, paradoxically, on the development of new institutional forms that will organize networks of emergent cultural activity and provide forums in which these adjunct programs can participate. As chapter four clearly observes, the possibility that traditional Art institutions will
be able to adequately engage networked art (at least in the medium-term future) is highly unlikely.

Across the Atlantic, however, the UK seems to offer networked art a more stable future but, consequently (and somewhat conversely), fewer opportunities for the institutional innovation that the emergent techno-cultural landscape so desperately needs. The UK’s more equitable division of public and private Arts funding has produced an environment in which Art institutions are not trussed up by inequitable resource dependencies. In other words, the UK has fostered a contemporary Arts assemblage in which Arts institutions have multiple funding avenues and, therefore, multiple fora through which to generate cultural dialogue and make arguments for a range of objectives. Tate’s capacity and inclination for ‘institutional remixing’ (as discussed in chapter four) is evidence of a cultural landscape that is bolstered by a strong public commitment to culture and a diverse and active sphere of private cultural funding. I am not suggesting that British networked art organizations, like Furtherfield (for more information see <http://www.furtherfield.org>), for example, are not struggling against the same kind of legitimacy backlash that is being experienced in NYC. There is an increasing awareness across all physical territories that traditional contemporary Art institutions simply cannot accommodate the large majority of networked art forms. In fact, in October 2008, the Artistic Director of London’s Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Ekow Eshun, made the startling announcement that the ICA (renowned for its eye to innovation) had decided to close its ‘Live and Media Arts’ department. The closure of the department itself was not nearly as alarming as Eshun’s jarring dismissal of associated forms:

New media arts practice continues to have its place within the Arts sector. However, it’s my consideration that, in the main, the art form lacks the depth and cultural urgency to justify the ICA’s continued significant investment in a Live & Media Arts department. (ICA press release, 2 November 2008)

This ferocious rationalization is a powerful delegitimizing and territorializing move. However, the ICA is not an NDPB, it is not a national gallery and, therefore, it does not have the same access to economic capital and nor is it subject to the same kind of civic responsibility that both compels and affords Tate to stay attuned and committed
to the shifting cultural landscape. For that reason, Eshun’s statement is far less corrosive in the UK than it would be in the US precisely because there is an infrastructure of cultural diversity at play that supports a multitude of agendas and objectives. Tate Intermedia Art’s continued engagement with a small range of gallery-friendly networked artworks and its commitment to cataloging the dialogue that surrounds the practice keeps it in the mainstream of contemporary Art despite the undulations within the broader contemporary Art assemblage. As a part of the massive Tate Galleries, Tate Media was able to spread the economic and cultural costs of misdirection and developmental hurdles over a far greater range of funding bodies than the ICA or any contemporary Art institution in NYC.

As the following chapter will reveal, the path from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art has been an impressively reflexive journey. However, the equitable public/private funding conditions of the UK provide a little too much security for real innovation. Precisely because of the UK’s inspiring capacity to sustain multiple cultural agendas and provide sustainability for a diverse range of cultural organizations, the emergence of new institutional forms has not yet become a necessity. British networked art organizations like Furtherfield are just as burdened by the same perplexing questions of how to evolve a practice that cannot secure consistent support from traditional contemporary Art institutions. But they are not in the same immediate economic danger as their NYC counterparts. This relative security has induced a kind of organizational ambivalence regarding the real issues concerning networked art: the lack of sophisticated strategies for exhibiting/distributing, evaluating, archiving, historicizing and administrating the evolving practice. On the other hand, however, Turbulence is only just beginning to realize that the mainstream support that once made its existence possible and is now pushing it into a cultural no-man’s land.

Networked art requires new forums, strategies and sites for cultural production, distribution and reception; new organizational logics; new cultural networks; new institutional forms. Traditional Art institutions are simply not capable of accommodating the full range of emergent techno-cultural forms or, therefore, engaging some of the most pressing issues of living digital lives. The traditional Art
institution is a relic of the emergent western nation state. Despite significant shifts in the objectives of public cultural policy in developed nations, particularly over the last few decades of the 20th century, the material and expressive infrastructures of the Art institution remain tethered to archaic regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and to the sanctity of definitive Art ‘objects’. By taking a close look at the Whitney and Tate’s attempts to engage networked art, the following chapter clearly demonstrates the limitations of the Art institution in the context of contemporary cultural landscapes.
Chapter Three Endnotes

1 See <http://artport.whitney.org>

2 See <http://www.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/>

3 See <http://www.turbulence.org>

4 See Foucault, 1991.

5 See, for example, the ‘National Endowment for the Arts’ (NEA), which has its own ‘Research Division’ that is headed up by Poetry critic and essayist Sunil Iyengar. In 2004, the NEA Research Division produced the report ‘Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America’, which became the impetus for the national initiative ‘The Big Read;’ likewise, Britain’s ‘Department for Culture, Media and Sport’ frequently commissions research from a mix of research companies, statisticians and academics. See, for example, the 2009 report ‘Digital Britain’ (Digital Britain, 2009) commissioned by the DCMS and produced by a private social research company. The results of ‘Digital Britain’ are currently being woven into a wide range of cultural policy initiatives for 2010. And, again, in 2008 the Australia Council commissioned ‘The Writer’s Guide to making a Digital Living’, authored by ICT specialist Therese Fingleton, media theorist Christy Dena and multi-media strategist Jennifer Wilson (Fingleton et al., 2008), the results of which contributed to the Australia Council initiative ‘Story of the Future’ (for more information see <http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/the_arts/projects/about_story_of_the_future>.

6 These two new ‘historical times’ would also become the foundation of the discipline of Art History informing the syllabi of Art Schools and universities for roughly two hundred years. Given that the large majority of these histories were conceived in the west, formal Art history has long suffered under a western bias. Not surprisingly, by the late 20th century, these overtly western agendas had become the subject of much aesthetic, cultural and historical debate. As Michael Carter and Adam Grezcy write in Reframing Art:

A definition of what the study of Art History consists of is fine so long as there is general agreement on what Art is and what History is. If there are serious difficulties about defining these terms, let alone what they might add up to when placed together, then the assumptions upon which the discipline has rested in the past starts to become shaky. It is precisely this undermining of the foundations that was taking place during the 1980s. If we add to this the arrival of ‘New Media Arts’, which have gained prominence since then, we are faced with an even greater theoretical predicament. (Carter and Grezcy, 2006, p. 1)

7 For a critique of the aesthetic and social bias that characterized the Australia Council’s evaluative criteria well into the social democratic reforms of the Whitlam government see Gay Hawkins’ From Nimbin to Mardi Gras (Hawkins, 1993).
Networked art sales of note include The Whitney Museum of American Art’s 1995 purchase of Douglas Davis’ *The World’s First Collaborative Sentence* (Davis, 1994). In 2002 the Guggenheim purchased Mark Napier’s *net.flag* and John F. Simon Jr.’s *Unfolding Object*. And in 2004 the Denver Art Museum purchased a ‘limited edition’ of Mark Amerika’s Artwork *CODEWORK*. However, as the difficulties of institutionalizing the practice within traditional logics of organization have become increasingly patent over the last decade these kinds of purchases have all but evaporated. When an Art form has as tenuous a hold on high-cultural legitimacy as networked art, claims to commercial value are difficult to sustain not to mention the still unresolved issues of how to claim ownership over something that exists across digital networks.

Public Arts funding in the US has suffered under various administrations. For example, Bill Clinton cut the NEA’s budget in half in 1996 and it has only increased under subsequent administrations according to inflation rises, which means the Clinton Administration effectively sets the public cultural funding clock back to zero and it has not been reset since.


Flora Miller Biddle, the granddaughter of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, currently sits on the Whitney’s Board as Honorary Chairman and has been on the Board since 1975. Biddle replaced her mother who took over from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Biddle’s daughter, Fiona, has recently taken her inherited place on the Whitney’s Board. Not to be outdone in direct ancestral ties, David Rockefeller Sr., the son of MoMA’s founder, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, has been the Emeritus Chairman, Chairman or Honorary Chairman of the MoMA since 1948 and at ninety-three is still considered its most powerful fundraiser. Moreover, Ronald Lauder (son of cosmetics giant Estee Lauder) is the only other Honorary Chairman on the MoMA Board and his older brother, Leonard Lauder, is the Chairman and primary fundraiser for the Whitney. Arts philanthropy in NYC is defined by a small set of very wealthy and prominent New York families all of whom share very strong relations with each other, cultivating an unparalleled solidarity within a highly territorialized and extraordinarily powerful sector.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, traditional institutional forms simply do not possess the infrastructures to support emergent techno-cultural forms.

As discussed in chapter two, there have been discursive dismissals of the Internet as a banal landscape unable to support the nuances of art making.
CHAPTER FOUR

NETWORKED ART IN THE TRADITIONAL ART INSTITUTION: TATE INTERMEDIA ART AND THE WHITNEY’S ARTPORT

*It is not about bringing computers inside the museum or digitising cultural heritage. What is at stake here is the acceptance that we are living in a ‘technological culture’.*

Geert Lovink

The short histories of Tate Intermedia Art and the Whitney’s Artport depict two conspicuous attempts to engage networked art by mainstream Art institutions. This chapter explores how the Tate and Whitney’s support of networked art has been constrained by the inherent conflict between the organizational logics of traditional institution and the technics of digital networks. This analysis argues that networked art is largely outside the jurisdiction of the traditional Art institution and reveals the import and inevitability of the emergence of new institutional forms within the cultural sector (an emergence that is explored in detail in chapter five). This thesis maintains, however, that new institutional forms must develop working relationships with the traditional institutions that continue to dominate contemporary Art worlds. In these early stages of techno-cultural development it is imprudent to dismiss the currency of traditional Art institutions within the emergent spheres of network culture, despite their limited capacities to engage new cultural forms. As chapter three demonstrates, contemporary Art worlds are composed of networks of relations between traditional institutional forms (governmental, commercial, philanthropic and cultural). The new institutional forms of the cultural sector will need to participate in these networks if they are to gain access to their resources. Despite the fact that new institutional forms are unlikely to be sustained by government subsidies (or private sponsorships) alone, these resources will continue to be an important reserve for the medium-term at the very least. Mainstream institutional support (in whatever limited
ways it is expressed) ensures that techno-cultural objectives stay on the public and private agendas of cultural funding bodies.

What follows, then, is an exploration of two very different institutional engagements with networked art that have set up two very different territorial futures for networked art. Tate Galleries – bolstered by consolidated public funds, the agenda of a public institution and a favourite of corporate sponsors and philanthropists – has had a far greater capacity to commit to the trial and error of institutional ‘remixing’ than its trans-Atlantic counterpart. The Whitney – a repository for a century-old philanthropic agenda and the affiliated ambitions of industrial elites – has encountered staunch institutional resistance regarding the import of the techno-cultural landscape from an Art world perspective. The question that plagues all traditional Art institutions in the contemporary cultural climate is how does a system founded on traditional regimes of aesthetic and cultural value, organizational hierarchies, material objects and fixed locations flip upside down to incorporate slippery regimes of value, open-ended works of unrestrained collaboration, transdisciplinary and rapidly mutating modes of production that frequently produce objectless, locationless and copyright infringing products?

**Tate Intermedia Art**

In 2000, Tate Galleries launched Tate Online in unison with the opening of Tate Modern. Tate Online was established with the primary objective of presiding over the individual websites of each of the four Tate Galleries. Tate Online also launched a ‘Digital Programs’ initiative that was charged with the responsibility of exploring the best ways for Tate Galleries to exploit the potential of the Internet. Tate Net Art was conceived as a ‘Digital Programs’ initiative dedicated to commissioning and distributing the emergent practice of ‘Net Art’ and was developed as a distinct website linked directly to the Tate Online homepage (but not specifically connected to any one of the four Tate Galleries).

Over the last eight years Tate Net Art has transformed into Tate Intermedia Art and this transformation – which may, at first glance, appear to be a step back from
networked art to the more legitimate and gallery friendly ground of ‘intermedia’ – is perhaps the most comprehensive attempt by a major public Art institution to accommodate the mutating creative landscape of network culture. Tate Net Art was a bold but hasty attempt at engaging new organizational logics from within a mainstream Art institution. As we shall see, the problems Tate Net Art faced are the result of an innate incompatibility between the logics of the traditional institution that function to discipline external forces and the logics of the digital ethos that openly encourage the regenerating force of external disruption. While the journey from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art reveals a particularly shrewd and adaptive organization, it also reveals that even the most well-funded, well-informed and well-intended Art institution can accommodate only a narrow interpretation of emergent techno-culture.

In 2007 I interviewed Tate Net Art’s curator, Kelli Dipple, at Tate Modern in London. Dipple was initially employed as ‘webcasting curator’ for Tate Online and explained the circumstances that led to the development of Tate Net Art and its subsequent 2001 launch in the following way:

> There was this sense of Tate Online taking Tate beyond the gallery walls. And this is where you start to see the activities of media and communications in the more traditional sense and how the museum engages with that. I think there’s a natural tension between the objectives and the necessity of the museum to communicate its activities – to bring it to a wider public is an objective but also to get audiences in to validate their activities. And the website has, historically, been about that, without wanting to reduce it to a promo flyer, that has to be a core activity. And the Tate is unique in its scale, the scale of business is massive, the brand is international. The Tate modern has been the most successful, most popular museum in the world. It was built to handle 1.8 million people and it now receives 5 million people. And they’ve put in a proposal to expand the building again. And it’s a public institution so there’s an audience expectation and the audience expectation around media delivery and access to information has increased ten fold. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

The implication here is that there is a tension between the utilization of the Internet as a somewhat traditional means of communication (as a promotional tool) and the Internet as a platform for engaging new forms of Art. Tate Online openly encourages audiences to access the digital reproductions of Tate’s collections via its websites, safe in the assumption that access to reproductions can never capture the majesty or
aura of the ‘original’. In fact, Tate Online’s catalogue of digital reproductions is considered equal parts promotional tool (luring audiences to behold the real thing) and educational tool as another fulfilment of its responsibility as a public institution to provide broad access to cultural objects and contextualize cultural meaning. As Frow writes in his essay ‘Signature and Brand’:

The fact of reproducibility now comes to function, not as a threat to the auratic value of the singular work of art, but precisely as its guarantee: the museum or gallery shop, with its posters, postcards, T-Shirts, scarves and facsimiles testifies in repetition to the power of the solitary masterpiece. (Frow in Collins, 2002, p. 70)

The digital catalogue of Tate’s material collection is an extension of its control over cultural objects. The threat of ‘exhibiting’ networked art, on the other hand, is that once you direct audiences ‘beyond gallery walls’ – to forms that are accessible through a range of online portals and that tend to defy the traditional regimes of aesthetic and cultural value that underpin Art institutions – audience engagement becomes very hard to discipline. Moreover, once you direct them into the rhizomatic meanderings of digital networks how can you be sure they will come back? The primary mandate of the traditional Art gallery is to bring audiences in and manage their cultural engagement, not send them away into a disorderly ocean of network culture. Again, as Frow writes: ‘Signature and brand name are shifters, markers of the edge between the aesthetic space of an image or text and the institutional space of a regime of value which frames and organizes aesthetic space’ (Frow in Collins, 2002, p. 71).

This institutional uneasiness of going ‘beyond the gallery walls’ for Tate Net Art was reinforced by the difficulty of how to administrate the initiative within the institution – where to locate it within the ‘networked organization’ (Rossiter, 2006). For Rossiter, the ‘networked organization’ of the traditional institution contrasts with the ‘organized networks’ of new institutional forms. The administrative division of a traditional Art institution is generally composed of a network of specialized departments: the curatorial department, the collections department, the archival department and so on. All professional roles correspond to the specialization of the
department in which they work: curators in the curatorial department, archivists in the archival department, accountants in the accounts department and so on. However, digital networks have a way of blurring the neat categories of traditional institution in ways that can be profoundly disorienting for the networked organization. These two problems combined would see Tate Net Art thrown on the chopping block only a few years after it had emerged:

If you look at the commissions they run from 2000 – 2003 and then there’s nothing from 2003 until 2006. Jemima [Rellie, Head of Digital Programs] won arguments, it was nearly axed and the money was reduced rather than lost. But there are different arguments to have now because contemporary artists’ work is changing, the building is changing, the platforms are changing; these arguments weren’t possible before. Jemima has a different set of priorities because she hasn’t been positioned as a curator but more so as a head of digital programs which has been an anomaly that historically didn’t really have an institutional place but again that’s changed, it’s changing and it’ll change again. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

What we see here is an uncommon institutional commitment to accommodating and exploiting the organizational logics of digital networks, providing the already flailing Tate Net Art initiative with a second chance. What saved Tate Net Art was not Tate’s reengagement with networked art but rather a pioneering reorganization of the way in which Tate Online was administrated. And Tate Net Art, as an adjunct website, was able to append itself to the arguments made for the reallocation of Tate Online. Dipple explains:

Initially, Tate Online sat under national and international programs but that failed to work. Tate Online now sits under the communications department. So you had digital programs within communications. That’s all changed now to be Tate Media which is merging the magazine publishing, broadcasting (of a range of digital channels) and the website. So it’s linking broadcast, publication and communication into a whole new bundle and the more traditional modes of communications are linked to that, which involves press, marketing, etc. So they’ve separated off the producer based communications that lead to interpretation and artist practice from the more promotional activities. So, Tate Media becomes a brand but it’s not part of the exhibitions department. And I’ve been pulled across to Tate Media. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

The outcome of this significant departmental amalgamation for Tate Net Art was that it was now located in a newborn department, Tate Media, that was forged in an
attempt to optimise or streamline the Tate’s exploitation of information and communication technologies. Dipple kept her title as a ‘curator’ allowing Tate Net Art to maintain close links to the exhibitions and commissions departments while reaping the rewards of its refreshed validity under the consolidated power of Tate Media. As Dipple notes:

In order to effectively support the work you need to work across departments because Exhibitions do not have the expertise, freelancers or resources to produce film, video, interactive exhibitions. The resources of Tate Media are integral to the practices of networked art but so are the resources of Exhibitions which include the Art handling departments because actually doing anything physical engages a whole range of other networks within the institution separated from Tate Media. If this post were just in exhibitions you’d be trying to constantly pull resources. Our institutional location is very difficult and possibly problematic but integral to the objective. Until Tate Media we were extraordinarily under-resourced. The whole Tate Media initiative has brought with it resources and investment because there is a clear vision and strategy forward that has been successfully argued at a Director level. Digital programs was never in a strong enough position. So, the context has just changed in the last six months. And there’s a lot of pressure to make it work because a lot of investment has gone into the transition so there’s extreme pressure to make it work and it could fail. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

What this quote reveals is a traditional Art institution’s attempt to adjust to the flows of digital networks that cut across the neatly ordered organizational logic of a networked organization. To some extent, this ‘institutional remix’ is an attempt at adopting a more flexible organizational logic that is demanded by the increasing convergence of our physical and digital worlds. I am not suggesting that Tate is making the transformation into new institutional form but I am pointing out that new organizational logics can be employed to varying degrees by networked organizations just in the same way that traditional organizational logics are, at times, employed within the organized networks of new institutional forms (as we will see in the following chapter). ³ As Dipple points out:

This is where you meet the media and communications attributes of the museum and how they’re changing: the lines between archive, library, broadcaster, publisher and museum are collapsing. The museum is no longer a collection, conservation and exhibition centre, it’s a publisher, a broadcaster, a producer. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)
Implementing new organizational logics that enable the administration of a form like networked art is one thing but incorporating the works themselves is quite another. In fact, the administrative flexibility we see here starts to seize up when faced with the problematic nature of the networked artwork. One of the more significant issues faced by the traditional Art institution is the dominance of the ‘remix’ methodology amongst networked artists. As we have seen in previous chapters, networked art tends to open itself out to ongoing collaborations or includes long lists of collaborators that obscures the gallery star system and, consequently, dilutes the attribution of symbolic and cultural capital for both artist and institution alike. The all-powerful ‘signature’ is diluted in a sea of collaborations and the gallery’s authority over the artist/s and object/s is equally diluted. Perhaps even more challenging is the tendency for networked artists to sample copyright protected images, sounds, text and so on – raising a slew of legal issues for a wealthy (read: eminently indictable) Art gallery. As Dipple points out:

The institution likes to deal with a single channel. There seems to be a problem with having to ask a question of a collective and get a different answer from a different person each time you phone them up and not being able to pin it down or having a single point of contact. In terms of intellectual property also, the artist can really sit on the edge with copyright with their work and it’s very unlikely that they’re going to be sued and if they are sued they are not going to get any money ‘cause they don’t have any money. The institution takes an extremely different position with liability. I’ve been told copyright is all about risk management these days. And there’s different levels of risk, there’s a risk when you’re an individual exhibiting in a small gallery and you’re doing a one off performance using a couple of samples of something that would have copyright issues around it but as soon as you record that the risk is increased but as soon as you put that on the Internet the risk is exponential and if you’ve got money to be sued then the risk is too high … by the time it gets to the museum the risk is so high that they’re unable to engage with it and it might not be that they don’t want to it’s just that they can’t. Again, it has to be case by case. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

This is a big problem for the entire cultural landscape. In fact, it may be the most important cultural issue of our immediate future. I say this because sampling and remixing is one of the defining features of our contemporary techno-cultural landscape and the fact that it is illegal appears to have no bearing on the practice whatsoever. Much as cultural critic, Mark Pesce, recently noted in an interview with
Marcus Westbury on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s (ABC) series ‘Not Quite Art’:

We have copyright laws that are 230-240 years old, what we are dealing with is a culture that is functionally already ignoring copyright. We can’t seem to get copyright holders to accept it because it would essentially assign them to death and no business wants to die, so, of course, they’re fighting but it doesn’t matter what they do, the culture has fundamentally moved on from that. (Not Quite Art, 2008a)

The inclusion of networked art on gallery websites must be metered according to the perceived copyright risk of each individual work, the result of which is a significant narrowing of how an Art institution can engage online content let alone networked art. If these are some of the problems that networked art poses for its online distribution, what chance does it have within a physical gallery space? Accordingly, when I asked Dipple whether the Tate Modern had ever exhibited or expressed interest in exhibiting any of Tate Net Art’s commissions, she answered:

No, you can’t do it. Wouldn’t even be attempted, not relevant, don’t want it. There has not been, to date, any demonstration of the work that has made the exhibitions curators think that it should be in the gallery at all; nor the collection curators that it should be in the collection at all. I’d like to see it change but nothing’s changed yet. I think that the elements of form that are often present in net art can work. An example might be Thompson and Craighead who are using data aggregation technologies to feed into a screen based or installation context, that’s Internet art. I don’t really enjoy a bunch of PCs lined up on a wall in a gallery; I’ve never seen it done well. But it doesn’t mean that a particular set of net art works or a particular exhibition project couldn’t bring those works somehow into the gallery space. In some works it would be too problematic for the museum to exhibit – for all kinds of reasons (not necessarily politically) – because it needs another kind of space. Net art is for sitting in your own environment and as soon as you put a PC in a gallery everything changes; the performativity that the user has to engage with, you become a part of the art work and other people observe you. It totally shifts your relationship with it and how relaxed you are and how you move through an interactive piece of work. You become a performer – which is an interesting thing and some artists play with that and some don’t – but it doesn’t mean that those artists and artistic practices can’t be represented in debate contexts in artist’s interviews. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

Dipple indentifies an inherent tension here between the public spaces of Art galleries and what she understands as the private consumption of networked art. I do not,
however, think the problems of publically exhibiting networked art are the result of its forms being somehow innately angled towards private consumption but rather I understand it as a lack of sophisticated strategy for the reinterpretation of space where new techno-cultural forms are concerned (a point I return to in the conclusion of this thesis). The problem, of course, is that the development of new strategies for the exhibition of technologically based art tends to require significant economic investment and those best positioned to invest in this kind of development are big, wealthy institutions that still view the ‘black-box’ exhibition complex as cutting edge. In other words, traditional Art institutions are deeply bound to the material dimensions of established exhibition models that tend to function within the material dimensions of traditional Art galleries. A significant proportion of networked art (perhaps even the majority of networked art), then, cannot be exhibited on the Tate’s websites as it is too risky from an inappropriate content and copyright perspective or in-house as the works would be subject to the constraining material dimensions of white-cubes or black-boxes and there is still the threat of inappropriate content and copyright risk.

What is more, the dilution of signature power through collaboration means that Tate cannot exploit its accumulation of cultural capital in the same way or to the same extent that it can, say, with a Jean-Michel Basquiat or a Damien Hirst work. As discussed in chapters one and three, an Art institution’s cultural status is largely dependent on the relation of mutual causality between symbolic, cultural and economic capital. Art galleries generate symbolic capital for Art works by exhibiting them (which is an act of cultural legitimisation); symbolic capital can then be parlayed into an economic value for the artwork generating cultural capital for the artist and, by association, the gallery. This is where the distinction between Art gallery and Art museum is important. Art galleries transform the symbolic capital of the Art works they exhibit into economic capital by attracting audiences. Art galleries may or may not generate a small amount of economic capital by charging for admission to exhibitions.

The real economic benefits for an Art gallery, however, are found in the public and private funding opportunities that arise in accordance with the consistent pull of large
audiences. For public (and philanthropic) funders large audiences demonstrate an Art institutions capacity to service a community well and for corporate sponsors it ensures the most conspicuous bang for the private buck. Therefore, the more people that attend a particular Art gallery the higher its public profile, the more cultural capital it accrues, the more funding it attracts, and the more symbolic capital it stands to distribute and so on and so forth. For an Art gallery this cycle must be perpetually renewed, as exhibitions are temporary and the capital accrued is transitory. Therefore, the risks associated with the exhibition of networked art are also temporary. If a networked art exhibition fails to draw audiences, the exhibition ends and the galleries exposure to that vulnerability also comes to a close. Exhibitions are transitory.

An Art museum, on the other hand, makes a more permanent claim to cultural capital through its collection. An Art museum’s collection is generally considered as a measure of its cultural capital – of its cultural status – and the higher the symbolic value of the works in the collection the higher their economic value and the greater the cultural wealth and status of the museum itself. Moreover, when an artwork is deemed collectable by a major Art museum like Tate, the work attains a prestigious symbolic capital and the artist an equally significant cultural capital. The greatest potential for symbolic, cultural and economic capital resides in the collecting function of the Art museum. In other words, the greatest acknowledgement of success for Artists and the most enduring act of cultural legitimisation is being collected by a major Art museum. The idea of collection is founded on the singularity and, above all else, originality of the cultural object. As Jane Gaines writes in her book, *Contested Culture: The Image, the Voice, and the Law*, ‘the romantic idea of originality and singularity is the very foothold for the concept of property’ (Gaines, 1991, p. 222). Therefore, networked art poses even greater problems for Art museums than it does for Art galleries. As Dipple observes:

Tate, more than a gallery is a museum as well, which is a very important distinction. The difference between a museum and a gallery is that the core activities of the museum are to collect and preserve for posterity, for history, and to educate, and interpret those objects and bring them to a wider public. Whereas, the gallery, traditionally speaking, is operating on a more time based concept that links closer to temporality because of the idea that an exhibition is
up and then it’s gone and then you get the next one in. Whereas, the museum is always collecting, it gets heavier and heavier the more it takes in. The gallery can do something and then let go of it to make space for the next new thing or the next wave of artistic practice but the museum is unable to let go of what it’s done. It brings about really different issues that the museum has to face when engaging with new media work and net art because there are very pragmatic issues around the information of artworks that are built out of ephemeral technologies that change so rapidly that once you collect a piece of net art the operating system and the browser that it runs on in five years time no longer exist so you don’t just have to collect the artwork you have to collect the machine it sits on and the server etcetera. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

In fact, it is widely argued that the almost total lack of collection and archival strategies surrounding networked art is one of the primary reasons the practice has remained so overwhelmingly problematic for traditional Art institutions. As Turbulence’s Jo-Anne Green noted when I interviewed her in Boston in 2007:

My sense is that the museums thought it [networked art] was sexy and they wanted to be in on it but I think when they realised they couldn’t find a way to place monetary value on the stuff – which brings up questions on how do you archive it? How do you make it collectable? I think that’s why they’ve dropped it. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

Green hits the nail on the head. This lack of exhibition or archiving strategies for networked art is directly linked to its difficult (or non-existent) relationship with economic capital. This lack of an associated economic capital for networked art is less problematic for networked artists than it is for Art institutions. My research indicates that networked artists tend to fall in one of two categories: the artist/activist or the artist/designer/developer. The artist/activist tends to view economic capital as a coercive burden aimed at corrupting conceptual or aesthetic intent (a popular position amongst information freedom-fighters or cyber-leftists). The artist/designer, on the other hand, functions as both commercial designer and artist and generally refuses to acknowledge archaic distinctions between the two (an example of which would be the British collective ‘United Visual Artists’). The artist/designer demonstrates the fact that traditional regimes of aesthetic and cultural value are increasingly irrelevant to young artists today. There are, of course, exceptions to these rules (and I will explore these categories more thoroughly in chapter five). Yet
if we accept that these are prominent tendencies amongst networked artists, then it is clear that failure to secure Art world mandated economic capital is not a particularly big problem for networked artists. It is a problem, however, for Art institutions. Without a potential economic value, it is difficult for an Art institution like Tate to justify its continued investment in commissions and, more importantly perhaps, the costly development of new strategies for exhibition and archiving networked art. As chapter one and three demonstrate, the complex relation between cultural and economic capital – or between Art and market – are integral to the function of Art institutions (and Art worlds).

So we see that networked art is not just difficult to exhibit, collect and archive within a traditional Art institution because of its wayward (and inconstant) expressive and material dimensions, it is difficult to engage because it does not (yet) possess any clear capacity to generate economic value. And Tate Net Art came face-to-face with all these issues. Dipple, however, makes the very important point that these problems do not mean that large-scale Art institutions like Tate cannot participate in the cultural contextualization and historicization of networked Art. Aside from collecting, archiving and preserving cultural objects, the Art institution is especially skilled at documenting the cultural landscape. If traditional Art institutions cannot exhibit, commission, archive and collect networked art then they can host a forum for the theses, publications, reviews, lectures, symposia and cultural critiques that compose the ever-evolving discourse of networked art. As Dipple points out:

I mean I think there’s still a lot to be learnt here. There are strong links between these issues in new media art and performance and installation art because often a performance piece or an installation or a new media artwork made in 1999 can not be repeated in the same way that a sculpture remains the same. There’s something about the notion of the document and description of these works and these are the kinds of conservation and preservation strategies around both performance and installation and increasingly new media. And what you often find, outside of the museum context, are growing archives of digital art works that are actually growing archives of information documentation, iterations of digital artworks. I mean, if you take someone like Alvin Lucier who did a performance where he was measuring his brainwaves that triggered sounds. There are a million descriptions of that work in a million publications and theses linking it into histories of art in all kinds of contexts. Those documents are all there is of that work. I think instead of trying to map it [networked art] onto to how we’ve been dealing with painting and sculpture it’s actually like,
well, how have we been dealing with performance and how can we better deal with performance. New media is performative and temporal and I feel quite strongly that it has a really strong relationship to performance practices. There are certain pragmatic issues, given how quickly technologies become redundant, that are different that performance doesn’t really hit on but they can learn from each other. (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

It is this willingness (conceptually and financially) to continue to go back to the drawing board in regards to what a traditional Art institution can do for networked art that makes Tate so unique amongst the traditional Art institutions studied for this thesis. This institutional reflexivity is the result of an insightful and honest assessment of the limitations of traditional Art institutions in the contexts of emergent techno-culture and an institutional recognition of how important the techno-cultural landscape is to contemporary culture. By cataloguing and providing a platform for discussions around networked art the traditional Art institution can participate in the undulating and expansive spheres of techno-culture without exposing itself to the risk of sample culture (at least until copyright laws catch-up). The traditional Art institution can expose audiences to the discourse of networked art in a way that other discursive forums, like the university, cannot. Academic discourses tend to stay within the esoteric bounds of their operation amongst students and academics but Art institutions speak to much broader publics. These impressively self-aware realizations were the impetus for the transition from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art. The transition to Tate Intermedia Art became official in 2008. In early 2007, however, Dipple made it very clear that the transition was well under way:

Should net art be in a museum? The museum does certain things well. The small artist led organization does other things well. The medium scale publicly funded organization does other things well. The museum cannot claim to own net art neither can it do everything that net art requires but it can do some things for net art that smaller arts organizations can’t. Such as develop preservation strategies and the notion of a wider public as a different scale. Innately, anything on the Internet has a whole range of networked possibilities and viral iterations and is existent in so many different times and locations and contexts with different people so there are certain things I think the museum should and could be doing but I don’t think they can do a lot of things as well as organizations like Turbulence or Rhizome or platforms like that. At the moment Tate Net Art sits on Tate Online as an isolated bubble, the website is largely about communicating in a gallery context and I would suggest that’s a
vulnerable place for it to sit. And it doesn’t sit in gallery and it has now and
again sat through education but without any clearly defined strategy around how
you fit it all together. My current thinking is that actually a strategy forward is
to look at all of the platforms available, to look at the work, and to engage a
dialogue with artists, writers and thinkers such that you’re representing a field
across a variety of platforms and that you’re acknowledging it in a historical
context and drawing narratives through the collection and through other forms
(Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April)

Tate Intermedia Art\textsuperscript{5} has reconfigured Tate’s earlier approach to networked art by
explicitly acknowledging the mutable and expansive landscape of techno-culture and
by acknowledging the limited capacity of the traditional Art institution to participate
in that landscape. This reconfiguration has resulted in a significant shift in curatorial
and programmatic focus. While Tate Intermedia Art still commissions
technologically based art, the criteria for selection has both narrowed and expanded.
Tate Intermedia Art’s commissions have narrowed because it now self-consciously
selects works that will not create potential copyright or content problems. Whereas,
the curatorial focus of Tate Intermedia Art has expanded because it is no longer
focussed solely on the Internet as a defining system of media but rather stays tuned to
the mutating spheres of techno-cultural experimentation (in keeping with the more
expansive definition of ‘networked art’ proposed in this thesis). But as a traditional
Art institution it will only ever be able to engage cultural experimentation on gallery-
friendly terms.

Devising a strategy for how to engage cultural experimentation on ‘gallery friendly
terms’ reveals what is perhaps the most intriguing outcome of this intra-institutional
reconfiguration. Tate Intermedia Art now acts as a kind of nodal moderator for
discursive considerations of networked art. In this way, Tate Intermedia Art can
engage issues and ideas that cannot be engaged by the institution in practice. For
example, Tate Intermedia Art conducted and posted an interview with Mark Amerika
regarding his work, \textit{Immobilité} (Amerika, 2009)\textsuperscript{6}, that directly addresses the limits of
traditional institutional channels of distribution in regards to emergent modes of
cultural production (as discussed in chapter one). Tate has not, however, exhibited
the ‘cinema verité’ inspired full-length movie (shot entirely on mobile phone
cameras). By engaging the range of aesthetic and cultural issues posed by a work like *Immobilité*, Tate Intermedia Art bravely enters into a conversation regarding the shifting landscape of cultural production and the shifting status of the traditional Art institution within that landscape.

The reconfiguration of Tate Net Art into Tate Intermedia Art is, perhaps, most clearly performed through its refusal to be bound to a term like ‘net art’ (which, for some, constitutes a very specific temporal, technical and technological epoch of networked art, as explained in chapter two). The shift to the less-specific ‘intermedia art’ enlists the established cultural legitimacy of famed Fluxus artist, Dick Higgins. Higgins introduced the term to refer to the convergence of genre and form in the increasingly media-centric cultural landscape of the 1960s. By dropping such a close affiliation with ‘net art’ and establishing a new initiative in accordance with the concept of ‘intermedia art’, Tate is, as Dipple has suggested, drawing networked art into a contextual relationship with the history of techno-cultural forms that has specific currency within formal Art history and, therefore, within the traditional Art institution. So, Tate Intermedia Art has the dual functionality of framing networked art in the context of Art institutions and framing Art institutions in the context of networked art.

Clearly, Tate Intermedia Art is still not an ideal platform for networked art but, as Dipple observes above, traditional Art institutions should not be expected to be the sole forum for networked art. Indeed, traditional Art institutions should not even be expected to be a *central* forum for networked art. As I have argued, however, the peripheral engagement of institutions like Tate is still imperative to the viability of emergent cultural forms. Tate Intermedia Art is no longer a traditional curatorial program; it has become a much broader interface between culture and technology. It is a shift that also suggests that the role of curators like Dipple have undergone significant transformation and become interdisciplin ary roles themselves, taking on archiving and library responsibilities as they catalogue a forum of information that contextualizes, historicizes and documents techno-cultural practice. The institutional reflection and adaptation that has led to the conception of Tate Intermedia Art may not seem all that groundbreaking when compared to the seismic shifts of
contemporary cultural production but they are monumental in terms of the logic of the traditional institution.

Tate Intermedia Art is doing more for the potential of networked art by acknowledging the limitations of a traditional Art institution’s participation in emergent spheres of techno-culture – while keeping the form/s firmly on its agenda – than it ever did with the precarious Tate Net Art. The journey from Tate Net Art to Tate Intermedia Art demonstrates an exceptional institutional insight into the transforming cultural landscape. Accordingly, the increasingly engaged relationships between Tate Modern and Tate Online also reveal an ongoing commitment to institutional ‘remixing’ as boundaries between departments become more permeable and less rigid. Tate Net Art was the product of a journey through an awkward stage of engagement with a form that confronts the traditional logic of instituting Art on every level. Moreover, emergent technologies (whether networked or otherwise) are increasingly relevant to more formal modes of visual Art making. This means that even if traditional Art institutions simply refuse to acknowledge emergent technocultural forms (or dismiss them as ‘low’ culture), the task of acclimatizing to the contemporary cultural landscape is inevitable. Certainly, it stands to reason that those with the resources and desire to implement institutional changes as opportunities arise stand a much better chance at long-term cultural relevance than those who do not.

In the immediate future, however, the traditional contemporary Art institution, regardless of how progressive it may be, can only engage networked art somewhat remotely. Without the emergence of new institutional forms through which networked art can be developed and adequately supported, its forms and all their potential are likely to remain in the insular ghetto in which they currently reside. When networked art gets bumped out of traditional Art institutions (which it has done time and again) it has tended to bounce back and forth between a small range of dedicated forums for networked art (academic conferences, symposia and festivals⁷), getting stuck in a constant state of becoming: never quite legitimate but always in the process of legitimisation. Tate’s mainstream support (limited as it is) might be viewed as a unique circuit breaker in this repetitive cycle, keeping networked art on
mainstream cultural funding agendas just long enough for smaller UK based networked art organizations to develop new logics of organization. However, this can only happen if UK based networked art organizations actually recognize the full value of Tate’s continued support of networked art, particularly in the face of an increasing mainstream dismissal of emergent techno-cultural forms (as the following analysis will attest). Tate is keeping networked art on the public and private agendas of UK Arts funding bodies and networked art organizations should be taking advantage of this boon to reflect on the issues facing techno-cultural practice and to implement the new logics of organization required to ‘organize networks’ (Rossiter, 2006).

It must be noted that, as Dipple observes, the kind of institutional remix to which Tate Intermedia Art is indebted is largely due to the uniquely diverse conditions of Tate’s resource dependencies. Very few other institutions can afford to take the risk that an entire department might ‘fail’. The implication of which is that the potential of institutional adaptation does not hinge solely on a willingness to engage change but also requires access to the resources that make processes of trial-and-error possible. So it is here that we shall take a look at the Whitney’s Artport, a medium-scale, not-for-profit Art institution that has attempted a similar engagement with networked art through rather more erratic modes of engagement.

**The Whitney’s Artport**

In 1996, New York City based academic Christiane Paul founded *Intelligent Agent* – a magazine dedicated to the development of a dialogue surrounding the aesthetic, cultural and technological issues of new media art. Accordingly, Paul acquired significant cultural capital as a techno-cultural expert and was frequently asked to consult on exhibition strategies for new media art at festivals and Art institutions and sit on new media art conference panels. As the Internet gained phenomenal velocity in the final days of the twentieth century, the Whitney Museum of American Art expressed an interest in creating room for a dedicated ‘new media art’ curator and Paul was recommended as an ideal candidate; she was appointed to the role in 2000. Prior to Paul’s appointment, however, the Whitney demonstrated a pioneering
commitment to networked art for a traditional Art institution. In 1995 the Whitney was one of the first contemporary Art institutions to purchase a networked artwork for its collection: a hypertext piece by Douglas Davis titled *The World’s First Collaborative Sentence* (Davis, 1994). In 2000, the Whitney’s ‘Millennial Biennial’ (a program administrated before Paul’s appointment) was proudly broadcast as the first mainstream contemporary Art exhibition to include ‘Internet Art’. The Whitney would go on to include ‘Internet Art’ in its 2002 and 2004 Biennials in consultation with Paul.

Paul’s first recommendation to the Whitney in her role as adjunct new media art curator was to set up a commissioning and distribution platform devoted to ‘net art’. When I interviewed Paul in 2007 at the Whitney’s iconic Madison Avenue gallery in Manhattan she defined ‘net art’ as, ‘art that has been created for, is stored on and distributed via the Internet’ (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April). The initiative would be launched in 2001 and titled Artport. Alongside the commissioning and distribution of net art, Artport was also to showcase an ‘Artist of the Month’ under the sub-initiative ‘Gate Pages’. Artport’s ‘Gate Pages’ were intended to introduce conventional Art audiences to a community of networked artists. The Gate Pages were an attempt to build Artist profiles – or generate star power in a very traditional Art world sense – for networked artists. Artport also established a series of external ‘resource’ links to net art forums, e-lists and organizations like Rhizome, Turbulence and Eyebeam and assembled a ‘what’s on’ list regarding networked art exhibitions, festivals and conferences.

The Whitney and Paul also agreed that Artport would also host interpretative documentation for any new media art to appear in the Whitney’s galleries. Artport would also become the archival platform for the Whitney’s networked art collection (which continues to be limited to the Davis work, *The World’s First Collaborative Sentence*). However, Paul’s role as a ‘new media’ curator also allowed her to pursue projects outside Artport, and outside the Internet. In 2006 Paul commissioned an interactive mobile media project by Jennifer Crow and Scott Patterson titled *Follow Through* (Crow & Patterson, 2005) that was designed specifically for the Whitney’s fifth floor ‘Permanent Collection’ gallery. Paul understands her role at the Whitney
as an interface between networked art communities and the conventional contemporary Art world.

Indeed, the complexity of Paul’s role at the Whitney demonstrates an institutional acknowledgement of the boundary defying nature of digital networks and a willingness to engage network culture from an institutional perspective. However, much like Tate Net Art, the exclusive and hierarchical organizational logic of traditional institution would plague the Artport initiative from intention to execution and both Artport and Paul have found themselves hemmed in by the dominant force of traditional institutional agendas. For example, when I interviewed Paul she reflected that the Whitney’s refusal to exhibit any of Artport’s commissions had had a detrimental impact on Paul’s goal to expose the audiences of the contemporary Art world to networked art (and expand networked art audiences). She noted:

> Gallery exhibition creates a certain bifurcation or just catering to different audiences. I wish that the general museum audience, which is not necessarily devoted to net art, was also exposed to it because it is mainly, I would think, a certain group of people who are regularly visiting Artport. I’m sure there are people who come through whitney.org and they see a link to this and they check it out but I would bet that the majority of visitors are people like you. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

Paul hits on a crucial point here. There is a supposition at play in traditional Art institutions (and within networked art communities) that has been particularly toxic to the emergent spheres of networked art. There is a tacit assumption that because networked art is often connected to the massive distribution system of the Internet that a ready and waiting audience emerges organically. But networked art currently resides in a cultural ghetto, bouncing back and forth between a relatively small group of artists and academics. New cultural forums require new logics of organization that cultivate and direct audiences and the assumption that these new logics will occur outside of strategic intervention is naïve at best and negligent at worst. Networked art websites need a public profile to attract audiences and the works they distribute need socio-cultural contextualization in order to establish protocols of engagement. New users need to be guided to and through their engagement with new cultural landscapes, even more so than new visitors to Art galleries. There is an inherent
discipline in the material and expressive dimensions of the white-cube exhibition complex that both implicitly and explicitly organizes our behaviour within it. But no such universal system of instruction exists for digital networks. The cultural intimidation that the non-Art lover experiences in traditional Art spaces is just as prevalent (if not more so) in the unique users of networked art websites (a point I will return to in chapter five).

What is more, networked art has its own ways of perpetuating hierarchies of privilege and cultural exclusion. We don’t have to look far to find examples of intentionally opaque networked art that tends to evoke antagonistic technocratic sensibilities: accessible only to the initiated. The notoriously cryptic networked artist Jimpunk, for example, administers a website that is a graphical labyrinth of chaotic pop-ups and links, the majority of which send the user away from the site (see <www.jimpunk.com>). There is a mischievous sense of play about Jimpunk’s website (and his work) but if you don’t know the rules of the game – and Jimpunk offers no direction – this sense of play becomes a powerful force of exclusion. So, on a site like Artport you could well have the high-cultural intimidation of an ‘Art’ website working in conjunction with the technocratic antagonism of certain networked artworks to exclude publics along two axes. In this way, providing a link to Artport on the Whitney website without any promotion or contextualization from the institution itself is a bit like randomly letter-dropping Manhattan Island with invitations to a new gallery written in Mandarin and wondering why the only attendees are a handful of Mandarin speakers.

The Whitney’s engagement with Artport is limited for precisely the same reasons that Tate’s engagement with Tate Net Art was limited. Firstly, networked art poses potential copyright risk to the wealthy gallery. Secondly, there are no demonstrated strategies in place for exhibiting, collecting, and archiving networked art. And thirdly, networked art has an uncertain relationship with economic capital and cannot assure any return on investment. Accordingly, when I asked Paul what kind of budget the Whitney allocates Artport, she replied:
There is no budget. Basically, everything that I’ve done so far at the Whitney was not funded by the Whitney. I mean, Artport received support from what was then a small back-end storage company in New Jersey … And the Whitney Biennial net art selection, everything that was shown in the gallery, or the ‘follow through’ mobile media project that I did last year (on the 5th floor) – all of that was financed by outside funding from the Rockefeller Foundation to France Telecom to Antenna Audio. So far there actually hasn’t been any funding for new media Arts from the Whitney itself. The exhibition I’m working on right now which is opening in June, part of it will be cancelled, I think, due to funding. I haven’t had a budget so far. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

As we saw in chapter three, Artport has been relegated to the bottom of the Whitney’s institutional hierarchy, which means networked art initiatives are low on the priority list of the Whitney’s curatorial programs. With no budget allocated by the Whitney and little to no access to private contemporary Arts funding bodies – resources that are reserved by the Whitney for its more ‘legitimate’ curatorial departments – Artport’s survival has been dependent on the funding opportunities of a very small array of specific new media arts grants from the private sector. But Artport is often ineligible for dedicated media arts grants offered by small, alternative Arts foundations because of an erroneous assumption that its affiliation with the Whitney affords it a cultural and, therefore, economic privilege. Unfortunately, Paul’s continuing struggle to secure external support for Artport only has served to reinforce the internal institutional questions regarding networked art’s high-cultural legitimacy. And this perception of questionable legitimacy reinforces Artport and Paul’s diminished institutional status within the Whitney and the Whitney’s reticence to support Artport directly. Artport has been locked in a self-perpetuating cycle of cultural subordination. It serves my argument well here to repeat a quote from Paul referenced in Chapter Two (of this thesis), which was recorded when I asked her if Artport’s institutional subordination was openly expressed amongst the more dominant curators of the institution:

Yes, but a lot of it is lack of understanding. I’m not blaming anyone or trying to sound condescending but you have to understand the language of the medium. I’ve learned that it’s easier if the work makes a connection to art historically as a precedent. For example, when I commissioned Casey Rea’s Software Structures, which explicitly refer to Sol Le Witt and we even worked with Sol Le Witt and asked him for permission so Casey could implement some of his wall drawings into code. And then when I showed this project at curatorial

150
meetings you could really see people making the connection ‘ah, this is a
continuation, it’s the same instruction based work and here are the same
principles’ and suddenly it becomes easier for them to understand rather than
this kind of disconnected weird thing out there that they don’t understand what
it does and how it works. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

Once again we see how the incumbent organizational logics of the traditional Art
institution pivot on a kind of pattern recognition system that inherently expects new
creative expression to be rerouted through Art history. I am not arguing that Art
history has no relevancy in the future of networked art. On the contrary, I think
contextualizing and historicizing networked art within a range of socio-cultural
histories is a vital task. I am merely observing that the traditional regimes of cultural
and aesthetic value that underpin formal Art history do not contain an innate template
for potential modes of creative practice. Traditional Art institutions are deeply bound
to the ‘narrative trope of accumulation’ (Bennett, 2005a) that characterizes
traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value – and Bourdieu’s field – and locks
Art into a rigid cycle of repetition. And networked art often fails to meet these kinds
of formal aesthetic expectations, which is precisely why Artport was so terribly
undernourished for so many years. From 2006 to 2009 Artport did not commission or
exhibit any new works because there were simply no funds to support such activity
and stasis is a dangerous condition for an advocate of networked art. However, in
early 2007 Paul was hopeful:

Right now it’s [Artport] an archive, I mean the monthly gate pages aren’t
happening but I’m sure there will be more commissions or funding for it. I have
some connections, people interested right now, foundations or whatever. It’s
always the best way if those respective foundations are really just devoted to,
let’s say, net art or new media art and they just wouldn’t do anything else. Then
it’s fine because there is no potential conflict, they couldn’t go after them for
anything else anyway. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

In November 2009 Artport unveiled a new commission (the first one in almost three
years) titled Sunrise/Sunset. Sunrise/Sunset was launched to coincide with the
redesign of the Whitney.org website and was the first networked artwork to be
commissioned by the Whitney itself. This means that the funds for Sunrise/Sunset,
far beyond Paul’s expectations, were drawn directly from the Whitney’s purse. The
work itself reflects a very interesting institutional shift. Sunrise/Sunset unfolds ‘over a timeframe of ten to thirty seconds’ and ‘each project accompanies a transition of the [Whitney] website’s background color from white (day) to black (night) and vice versa’ (Artport, 2009). The project is a temporal event that occurs everyday on the Whitney website at New York’s sunrise and sunset. New artists are to be commissioned by the Whitney to create an iteration of the Sunrise/Sunset project every few months. Sunrise/Sunset is an ongoing artwork that cannot be resolutely aligned with any one artist but rather is framed – by the Whitney – as a conceptual template. This strategy offers a fascinating solution to the dilution of the Artist’s ‘star power’ that often occurs in the collaborative and mutable spheres of networked art.

I outlined earlier how the collaborative nature of networked art can be problematic for Art institutions because it undermines the ‘star power’ of the individual artist (and the affiliated accumulation of cultural capital that Art stars afford the Art institutions that exhibit and collect them). The Whitney disciplines the openness of Sunrise/Sunset, however, by diminishing the role of the Artist in the generation of symbolic capital (and affiliated cultural capital). By presenting Sunrise/Sunset as a conceptual template (rather than as the works of individual artists) the symbolic capital of the work is wrapped up in its conceptual framework, which is, to some extent, the intellectual property (IP) of the Whitney as Sunrise/Sunset is composed around the Whitney website. This means that the Whitney can align itself with the symbolic capital of the concept itself and not be subject to the undulating symbolic values of the work as it unfolds over time. It is a deft strategy to maintain control over the slippery forms of networked art and could well be interpreted as a kind of aesthetic counterpoint to Munster’s ‘rule of approximation’ (Munster, 2006, p. 159). In chapter two I outlined how Munster’s ‘rule of approximation’ allows a single networked artwork to possess a number of aesthetic values that are contextually distinct over the scope of its existence. Whereas, the Whitney’s engagement with Sunrise/Sunset as a conceptual framework might be viewed as a way to anchor the evaluative approximation of networked art. Sunrise/Sunset is a cunning move towards making emergent techno-culture work on gallery-friendly terms but if the
only networked art that the Whitney is prepared to engage has to unfold within such tight parameters the scope of works it can support is extremely narrow.

The redesign of Whitney.org and the commission of Sunset/Sunrise might well reflect a broader institutional reengagement with network culture. And while this kind of renewed attention can only be beneficial for US based networked artists, organizations and audiences – networked art simply cannot be adequately supported within the logics of traditional institutions. Sunrise/Sunset is a fascinating and important project but, as we saw with Tate, the traditional Art gallery’s capacity to engage networked art is dependent on the interface between the two being weighted towards the organizational logic of the traditional institution. In other words, the Whitney and Tate need to delimit the potentially disruptive forces of digital networks and facilitate an engagement with network culture in sync with gallery agendas. And attempting to institutionalize networked art in accordance with the logic of the traditional institution is, in fact, attempting to manage assemblages within the profoundly incompatible logics of the field. The traditional Art institution is, therefore, ill equipped to be the sole interface between networked art and society.

For the large part, networked art exists outside the jurisdiction of the traditional Art institution. But, as we have seen, cultural funding is the outcome of complex networks of relation that define the territories of Art worlds. And Art worlds are still centred by the legitimizing force of the traditional Art institution. As outlined in chapter three, cultural funding bodies (both public and private) and dominant Art institutions are functionally symbiotic. The problem for networked art is that it has been repeatedly marginalized within Art worlds not because it is not Art (although not all of it is, of course) but because the logics of organization that mandate traditional Art institutions are simply unable to adequately accommodate its slippery, mutable forms. It is not surprising then that when I asked Paul whether she thought networked art required the legitimisation of traditional Art institutions for its future, she noted:

Yes, of course. I mean all the people working in the field [of networked art] would probably say it doesn’t need that; it is already Art like anything else. But, then again, in the Art world at large I think it does tremendously help. And I
know from many artists who have done a gate page, for example, who would say to me ‘I don’t care about the money, the small fee you pay me. I care about having the name on my resume’ because it means something to say ‘exhibited at the Whitney’. So that, yes, unfortunately, while I would like to think that no art needs legitimisation, it does and that’s still how it works and some artists care about it and others don’t but it’s a fact. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

In the absence of alternative forums for the generation of high-cultural legitimacy (that can provide access to public and private cultural funds), Paul is right. Yet as new regimes of cultural and aesthetic value begin to gain currency within critical discourse (Munster, 2006) and new institutional forms start to take shape (as discussed in chapter five), networked art will eventually come to stand in a very different relation to contemporary Art worlds than it does today (as Art worlds themselves are deterritorialized). But as the following chapter reveals, it is still very early days for new institutional forms and as they work to find more solid footing on more flexible ground it is imperative that networked art is able to sustain relationships with the institutions the dominate contemporary Art worlds. The more attention networked art receives from dominant contemporary Art institutions the more legitimacy networked art is afforded and the more likely it is to stay on public and private funding agendas, which should keep networked art organizations operational and make the processes of their transformation into a new institutional form all the more achievable.

Tate Intermedia Art and, to a lesser extent, the Whitney’s Artport are important examples of how traditional Art institutions can bolster both their local networked art communities and their own contemporary currency just by staying engaged (in whatever limited capacity) with network culture. The problem is that working out how to negotiate the ubiquitous flows of network culture for the rigid traditional Art institution is a learning curve that requires close examination, critical reflection and, perhaps most importantly, the availability of resources to renew. The Whitney’s rekindled commitment to networked art is undoubtedly the consequence of Paul’s staunch commitment to interfacing networked art communities with conventional contemporary Art worlds and the inevitable institutional realization that networked art is an increasingly dominant feature of the contemporary cultural landscape. And
Tate’s persistence with networked art is also due in equal parts to the insight and unwavering advocacy of curators like Dipple (and Tate’s former ‘Head of Digital Programs’, Jemima Rellie) and the specific relations of resource dependence that put Tate galleries in such a strong financial position.

The significance and subtlety of Tate’s institutional ‘remix’, however, is often lost on contemporary Art worlds (and networked art communities) and the transformation of Tate Net Art into Tate Intermedia Art can be misinterpreted as an institutional dismissal of networked art. This is largely because the majority of critical attention aimed at networked art has tended to focus on aesthetic peculiarities and the difficult institutional, political and economic issues that the emergent practice continues to raise have been largely overlooked or their critiques underdeveloped. The importance of looking beyond aesthetics is that networked art is not just a new cultural form it is a new form of culture. And this new form of culture is networked.

This chapter has demonstrated that even the best-case scenario for the support of networked art by traditional Art institutions is profoundly limited. The task at hand, then, is one of ‘organizing’ networks – of implementing new logics of organization for the administration of networked art. Through the sharp focus of Ned Rossiter’s lens, chapter five unpacks the delicate process of organizational deterritorialization through an empirical analysis of Turbulence and the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT). The following chapter explores the nascent conditions of two ideal candidates for transformation into new institutional form. What it finds are journeys of both impressive innovation and lingering rigidity that pave unique and uneven paths towards the organization of networks and the cultural transformation that such undertakings promise.
Chapter Four Endnotes

1 Tate Online’s ‘Digital Initiatives’ program was launched when Tate realised it had no digital information to program into the touch-screen interactives they had plans to install throughout the galleries. Alongside the collation of digital interpretive data for on-site gallery patrons, Tate Online also wanted to make this information available to international audiences via online access to its collections. The webcaster’s role, then, was initially conceived to implement these strategies.


3 However, Tate’s increased commitment to the shifting techno-cultural climate could fail to yield reward that can be measured in traditional institutional terms. Traditional institutions measure success according to performance indicators: bums-on-seats or, in the parlance of the Internet, user-tracking software. Tate Media’s performance indicators will demonstrate the degree to which Tate’s online presence can be measured as a successful expansion of the Tate brand. The problem, of course, is that traditional institutional performance indicators do not actually reveal very much about how and why users are engaging Tate Online, which is a key issue for traditional institutions attempting to mobilize digital networks in the service of brand expansion.

4 There are, of course, innovative strategies emerging for the utilization of public spaces in the exhibition of networked art. See, for example, 010010111010101.org’s 2003 ‘Nike Ground’ installation in Karlsplatz, Vienna: a guerrilla marketing campaign that feigned the renaming of Karlsplatz as Nikeplatz to incite public reaction (for more information see <http://www.010010111010101.org/home/nikeground/intro.html>). While ‘Nike Ground’ was not networked via digital networks it is, without question, a piece of networked art (see introduction). However, the same problems still emerge in alternate public spaces as these kinds of installation art works are generally funded by public or private funding bodies (or sponsored by Art institutions) that are, by association, still subject to the same liabilities in an open-public space as they are inside the walls of the Art institution. Case in point: Nike threatened to sue 010010111010101.org for breach of copyright (see <http://www.0100101110101101.org/home/nikeground/story.html>) and the City of Vienna publically denied any responsibility. It is unclear, however, whether any such litigation went ahead.

5 It is useful to note that Tate Intermedia Art outlines its programme as follows:

The Intermedia Art programme is focussed on art that engages the use of new media, sound and performance. Presenting a selection of artist commissions, events and broadcasts; supported by artist interviews, written articles and discussions that inform or comment on the work and its context. Artworks may be created with newer or older networked and time-based media such as video, radio, computer technologies or the internet. They may involve performance or
discussion, straddle a variety of media, or even fuse media in the creation of new hybrid, intermedia forms. The programme will also address art that comments on the social and political implications of new technology and practices that challenge traditional ideas of the art object; including work that is process-driven, participatory or interactive. The Intermedia Art programme aims to support artists’ use of new tools and new methods as well as to expand modes of distribution and display beyond the walls of the gallery. (Tate Intermedia Art)


7 The most high profile of which would undoubtedly be Ars Electronica based in Linz, Germany in 1979; Inter-Society for the Electronic Arts (ISEA) founded in the Netherlands in 1990; and Electrofringe based in Newcastle, Australia. However, there are literally dozens of new media art festivals every year all over the globe. In fact, the increasing number of new media art festivals and conferences is a clear indication that there is an absence of adequate fora through which emergent technocultural forms can be exhibited, distributed and contextualized and an increasingly active sphere of producers, critics and audiences.

8 The Whitney’s 2002 Biennial was an unwilling participant in a controversial ‘net art’ hoax. The story goes that artist, Miltos Manetas, and writer/academic, Peter Lunefield, unhappy with the paltry representation of Internet based art in the post-millennial Whitney’s Biennial decided to ‘make an Internet show that will challenge the Museum show’. The two discovered that the ‘whitneybiennial.com’ domain name was still up for grabs and snapped it up in order to create a show that was illegitimately affiliated with the Whitney. What, apparently, ensued was a great deal of media hype and not much delivery but the point of the exercise was to pull questions of institutional relevance into the dynamics of network culture. For more information see <http://www.whitneybiennial.com>.

9 Technocracy, of course, has a rich history that extends back to the early 20th century and to political movements in favour of the administration of society by technological and scientific experts. At certain times in history, the technocrat has been perceived as an elitist that elevated technological and scientific expertise to the summit of human activity. However, as Andrew Murphie and John Potts note in *Culture and Technology*, ‘the meaning of the term oscillated between its negative and positive senses. Later in the twentieth century the word lost much of its political edge, as the notion of technocracy lost ground; yet it remains today to describe someone who values highly the potential of technology’ (Murphie & Potts, 2003, p. 4).

10 See <http://www.whitney.org/Sunset>.

11 I am still awaiting a reply regarding how the Intellectual Property (IP) of Sunrise/Sunset is configured.
CHAPTER FIVE

ORGANISING NETWORKS: TURBULENCE AND ANAT

Organization, not disorganization, is the challenge facing network cultures.

Ned Rossiter

The last two chapters have demonstrated, as Ned Rossiter observes, ‘the urgent need for new institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 13). What we have seen are two globally dominant contemporary Art institutions – Tate and the Whitney – constrained by the exclusive and increasingly archaic logics of traditional institutional forms. Traditional Art institutions are founded on organizational hierarchies, predetermined cultural categories of Art objects, the fixed material dimensions of the ‘white cube’ (and, at its most contemporary edges, the ‘black box’) and, typically, the single Author-God or ‘Art Star’. Yet networked art pivots on a fulcrum of rapidly mutating modes of production that range across and beyond generic cultural categories to produce what are often objectless and locationless cultural forms. The disparity between traditional Art institution and emergent techno-cultural forms has revealed a growing crisis in the logics of organization. What we are witnessing now, consequently, is the emergence of new institutional strategies through which the mutability of contemporary techno-culture can be explored and nurtured and, perhaps more importantly, adequately managed. The importance of this development should not be assessed in terms of what we stand to gain through the dynamics of the techno-cultural landscape but what we stand to lose if we fail to harness its potential.

This chapter takes the theoretical insights of Ned Rossiter’s Organized Networks (Rossiter, 2006) and applies them to a study of two cultural organizations: Turbulence and the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT). Both of
these organizations are uniquely positioned to take on the role of institutional vanguard by adopting new organizational logics that stand to have a profound influence on how we value, engage and distribute creative practice. Before the empirical analysis begins, however, I will briefly introduce Rossiter’s concept of the ‘organized network’.

**Network Culture**

In an article written in 2001 observing the character of the Internet, media critic and online journalist Scott Rosenberg asserted, ‘We are reaping the worst of both worlds, networked chaos and monopolistic consolidation’ (Rosenberg, 2001). Rosenberg’s comment refers us to one of the more prevailing conflicts of network culture that pits the ‘information freedom fighter’ against the ‘cyberlibertarian’. It is a tension that assumes, on both sides, that the regulatory concessions afforded to major telcos and media corporations around the globe – due to their investment in early digital network infrastructures – has irrevocably aligned the interests of governments with corporate agendas in the spheres of emergent information and communication technologies (ICTs). It is a tension, therefore, that has been inclined to induce a classic political left versus right wing polemic within the digital landscape. The irony is that both sides of the polemic advocate the *decentralizing* power of ICTs, each believing that network culture has the power to democratize knowledge and liberate societies. However, while the cyberlibertarian sees ICTs as an ideal platform for free market (Gilder, 1993; Dyson et al, 1994), the leftist position sees ICTs as a platform in which publics can, as Julian Stallabrass observes in his paper ‘Free Software, Free Speech, Free Beer’, ‘exchange information freely, and work within egalitarian and informal structures’ (Stallabrass, 2002, p. 2). This leftist perspective is most clearly exemplified through the ‘copyleft’ movement of freeware and open-source initiatives.¹

The problem is, however, that emergent ICTs have failed to realize anything close to either egalitarian or capitalist utopias. In fact, on the 6th November 2009, Rupert Murdoch revealed – in an interview with Sky News² journalist David Speers – that News Corporation™ would be rolling out a subscription business model for all its
online content, which means charging users for content they are currently accessing for free. When Speers questioned the change, the media magnate responded:

Well they shouldn’t have had it free all this time, I think we’ve been asleep … There are no news websites or blog websites anywhere in the world making any serious money … There’s not enough advertising in the world to go around to make all the websites profitable. We’d rather have fewer people coming to our website and paying. (Interview with David Speers, 2009)

While the issues of online journalism – pressing in their own right – are not central to this thesis, Murdoch’s loaded statement points us towards some of the key issues currently facing network culture. It would appear that free market principles do not slip so effortlessly over the Internet. Not only does Murdoch’s statement suggest that the Internet is not proving to be the liberating cash-cow idealized in cyberlibertarian rhetoric, it is also a clear demonstration of how access to digital networks and the flow of information can be limited and constrained in accordance with the tactics of corporate power-holders. Murdoch would go on to say that he was considering pulling News Corp sites from Google’s aggregating search engine because he believes that Google (among others) are ‘content kleptomaniacs’ (ibid.). The perplexing thing about Murdoch’s new digital strategy is that it is attempting to relocate the logics of print media to the inherently fluid and mutable dynamics of digital networks.

The head of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Mark Scott, has called News Corp’s plan a ‘classic play of an empire in decline’ (Lateline, 2009). Indeed, News Corp’s perplexing decision does seem to reflect an industry increasingly frustrated by an information landscape it cannot get a solid commercial hold on. As Turbulence’s Helen Thorington notes:

Emerging out of the major economies of the world there is this kind of ‘we do it for free’ sentiment that has grown and grown and grown and it’s threatening. The whole idea of collaborating and working together to do something without the usual hierarchy being involved, without the usual exchange of money – it’s a threat to the economic structure of the last century. (Thorington, H 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)
But the growing ‘copyleft’ credo Thorington is referring to has also failed to induce the massive political and legal upheaval that its proponents envisioned in the 1980s. While Creative Commons was developed as an indirect consequence of the ‘copyleft’ movement, it is still only a marginal legal infrastructure and certainly not a wholesale solution for the copyright issues that currently face network culture.3

Much as chapter four argued, centuries old copyright law still dominates the legal infrastructures of the creative industries – which goes some of the way to explaining why Murdoch feels justified labelling Google a ‘content kleptomaniac’ – despite the fact that a significant portion of the global population has functionally moved on.

Thorington understands the problem as a systemic one:

I don’t talk about it very much but I foresee the end of Art as well as museums and it’s almost inevitable because Art is defined by those traditional institutions. And we’re going to have to find another thing that’s going to have to include all the thousands of very creative people who do not self-identify as artists and it’s going to be a much more democratic process in what it includes and who it includes. (Thorington, H 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

Despite her polemic tone, Thorington hits the nail firmly on the head when she suggests that we are going to have to find alternative strategies for organizing culture. This is precisely where Ned Rossiter’s concept of ‘organized networks’ comes in. Given that the primary function of institutions ‘is to organize social relations’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 13) it should come as little surprise – in the midst of such paradigmatic socio-cultural transformation – that institutions that were developed in and for the socio-cultural landscapes of another time sit in conflict with the emergent socialities of network culture. As Rossiter writes:

Institutions face a particularly difficult task when it comes to adapting to changing environments. More often than not the temporal rhythm of any particular institution accumulates an asymmetrical relation to the temporality of elements internal and external to its system. It’s at this point that disequilibrium characterizes the system. Arguably, many institutions struggle against this condition today and for this reason new social-technical platforms of organization are required in order to recompose labour and life in ways that furnish a sense of security and stability within informational systems subject to the unsettling force of contingency. Such an undertaking requires transdisciplinary, distributive and collaborative institutional forms. This form is called the organized network. (ibid., pp. 13-14)
There is, however, a strident resistance to the development and deployment of new organizational logics within the spheres of network culture that emanates from both sides of the cyber-political divide. This resistance is evidenced by Murdoch’s current business plan; the insistence that networked art can be adequately accommodated within traditional Art institutions by media art advocates like the Whitney’s Christiane Paul; and, as we shall see, the often inflexible ‘copyleft’ credo of networked art communities. This resistance can be a consequence of an inability or unwillingness to conceive of logics of organization outside the tenets of traditional institution, as Rossiter writes:

It is easy for both leftist activists and techno-libertarians to dismiss the process of emergent institution formation. Many would assert that it simply results in a bureaucratization and rigidity of social-technical communication systems whose default setting is one of flows, decentralization, horizontality, etcetera. I would suggest such knee jerk, technically incorrect responses risk a disengagement from the political and thus from politics. There is a passivity that attends this kind of position. Moreover, it is a position that fails the politics of reappropriating the psychic, social and semiotic territory of institutions. (ibid., p. 23)

Rossiter’s analysis of institution rests on a crucial interpretation of the concept of form (Rossiter, 2006, p. 23). The idea of form here stands in direct contrast to the ideas of ‘formalism’ that function to capture expression and reify movement. For Rossiter, network culture has revealed an inherently porous and flexible conception of form that bears within it the template for new logics of organization. As he writes:

I wish to place the emphasis here on institutional forms rather than institutions per se. Forms are open to the movement of networks and the network of movements. Both are in constant tension with institutionalisation, which I understand as the reification of form. Since it is only revealed through expression, form holds no relation to formalism, which is another iteration of reification, stasis and establishment. (Rossiter, 2006, p. 38)

We can align this concept of form with following passage from A Thousand Plateaus in which Deleuze and Guattari explain the ‘territorial assemblage’:

The territory itself is a place of passage. The territory is the first assemblage, the first thing to constitute an assemblage; the assemblage is fundamentally
For Rossiter, then, form is a point of emergence, a beginning point; a place of passage that passes into specific kinds of assemblage. But form is always-already waiting for variant logics to take it elsewhere. In this way, resistance to instituting networks may well rest on a false assumption that ‘the institutional form’ reached its summit in the logics of the modern institution – but form can never be resolutely captured in this way. Understanding the institutional form within the confines of traditional institution is akin to field logic, but engaging the logic of institution in accordance with Rossiter’s subtle and supple conception of form orients the institution within assemblage logic. The institutional form – which must be distinguished from specific institutions – is always open to deterritorialization. This is precisely why the traditional Art institution, as we have seen, makes such consistent and measured attempts to contain expression and discipline behaviours. The white-cube exhibition complex is a material reification – or institutionalization – of the expressive dimensions of traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. This is precisely why Rossiter observes that ‘the registration of form only becomes apparent through the movement of expression’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 23). For all their static materiality, white cubes are the consequence of the consistent repetition of specific kinds of cultural and aesthetic expression. Rossiter continues:

Form thus initiates a kind of border zone, a space of ‘the political’, and contests all efforts at containment. This is its paradox. Form gives the semblance of order and finitude, but since the individuation of expression institutes the territory of form, an uncertainty always lingers about form. Form can never rest secure that it has captured expression. Its strategy of the future is precipitated by insecurity, uncertainty, hesitation, ambivalence. At best, expression is momentarily organized within the borders of form. (ibid., p. 23)

Understood in this way, Rossiter’s theorization of ‘the institutional form’ implies a fundamental relation between established and emergent modes of institution. While it
is certainly true that there are contrasting organizational logics at play within the two institutional models they also share a primary functional directive: to organize social relations. The new institutional form is characterized by an openness to dynamism—a commitment to adaptation and modification—whereas traditional institution has established a range of material and expressive dimensions precisely to discipline the corrupting forces of the ‘constituent outside’. The new institutional form is responsive and reflexive while the traditional institution is directive and instructive. In other words, the traditional institution works relentlessly to constrain and capture form, where as the new institutional form remains resolutely open to the characteristic uncertainty of form.

The importance of aligning ‘institution’ with this conception of form is that it reminds us that no sphere of human activity excludes ‘the political’. The tendency toward depoliticizing the language of deterritorialization and becoming (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) – that often characterizes theoretical analyses of network culture – is reined in here as Rossiter argues for the necessary inclusion of political dimensions in the analysis of contemporary socio-cultural landscapes. As Rossiter writes, ‘I maintain it is better to engage hegemonic discourses, exploit their political legitimacy, and confront the materialities of informational communication in order to make concrete the horizons of utopian speculation’ (ibid., p. 16). Rossiter’s new institutional form, then, is a ‘post-network’ concept that recognizes, as Munster notes, that ‘we are now networked through and through’ (Munster, 2009). When Munster asks ‘How might we work in, with, against the broader vectors of information flows?’ (Munster, 2009) Rossiter’s ‘organized networks’ provides a particularly potent answer.

**Organized Networks: An Introduction**

The terms ‘new institutional form’ and ‘organized network’ are, of course, correlative. The new institutional form is to organized network what ‘traditional institution’ is to ‘networked organization’. As chapter four demonstrated, the traditional institution tends to be configured as a networked organization. Accordingly, the new institutional form is an emergent platform for the organization
of network socialities. An ‘organized network’ is the manner in which the material and expressive dimensions of the new institutional form are configured in any one iteration of its assemblage. Unlike the traditional institution, new institutional forms lay themselves wide-open to the influences of the constituent outside. In fact, any given component part of a new institutional form is encouraged to be, borrowing DeLanda’s words, ‘detached from it and plugged into different assemblages in which its interactions are different’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10). This dynamism of functional potential inherent in the new institutional form does, however, run the risk of problematizing the implementation of enduring logics of organization, leaving the network in a perpetual state of deterritorialization. And perpetual states of deterritorialization are difficult to manage, protect or exploit in any sustainable way. As Rossiter writes:

Since organized networks consist of loose affiliations where participants have the freedom to come and go, they are particularly susceptible to the disruptive force of the constituent outside. Movement across borders always enhances the chance of alien infiltrations. This is both a strength and a weakness. On the one hand, it is a source of renewal, reinvention and mitigates tendencies to excessive bureaucratisation often associated with institutionalisation. And on the other hand, the constituent outside holds the potential to wreak unexpected demolition. For these reasons, the scalar transformation of organized networks as new institutional forms is always a fragile, uncertain process. (ibid., p.22)

Rossiter argues that it is the tendency towards the short-term ‘tactical dimension of Net politics’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 23) that has waylaid the development and implementation of organizational logics peculiar to the spheres of network culture. The process of instituting networks then, involves a crucial shift towards strategic intervention. But, as Rossiter continues: ‘This is not to dispense with tactics since tactics are the source of renewal. Without the tactical, organized networks collapse into stasis’ (ibid., p. 23). Organizing networks demands the careful integration of logics of organization that do not ossify dynamism and shut down openness but still allow for the management of flows. The benefits of organizing networks from the perspective of networked art is that the new institutional forms of the cultural sector stand to work in a reflexive way with networked artists encouraging unlikely collisions between ever-broader socio-cultural spheres. In this way, the new
institutional forms of the cultural sector will not be entirely of the cultural sector but they will play an integral role in its continued development. Indeed, for networked artists, the emergence of new institutional forms is a long overdue boon.

New institutional forms stand to offer networked artists new opportunities to access economic capital and secure an ever-expanding slate of collaborative partners, techniques and possibilities without compromising their creative control. Organizing the technics of the digital ethos according to the logics of new institutional forms should result in more open flows of information exchange and more productive sites of cultural management. New institutional forms should, eventually, be able to provide audiences with both more and less structured nodes/sites/spaces of access that contextualize networked art according to an adaptive and transdisciplinary range of political, economic, aesthetic and cultural regimes of value.4

What follows, then, is an exploration of emergent logics of organization that could well transform traditional arts organizations into new institutional forms. What we also find, however, are sites of rapid organizational mutation functioning alongside traditional modes of institutional management. We witness processes of compromise, of give and take, between where the two organizations are headed and the stratified system to which they are both still deeply indebted. Both ANAT and Turbulence were formed within the rigid value systems that define Art worlds. In other words, both organizations are products of Art worlds. Organizational transformation of this magnitude cannot be achieved in one fell swoop. Deterritorialization, as I have argued, is a slow and uneven process and the following analysis reveals just that. As ANAT and Turbulence struggle to find more flexible footing in the rigid institutional landscape of contemporary Art worlds, they struggle against their own indebtedness to traditional regimes of value and modern logics of organization as much as they do against the external institutional rhythms to which they are geographically bound (dominant Art institutions, public and private funding bodies).

Arts organizations like ANAT and Turbulence – organizations at the intersection of culture and technology – are in urgent need of expanding their operations beyond Art worlds and finding access to resources and opportunities elsewhere. It is particularly
important, however, that Turbulence and ANAT maintain the integrity of their position within their respective Art worlds while they pursue alternative logics of organization: a delicate undertaking to say the least. Given that deterritorialization is a process of the territorialized assemblage, ANAT and Turbulence must enable the careful negotiation of emergent logics of organization into traditional organizational models. Thus the following analysis uncovers a range of difficulties and successes along the complex journey from networked organization to organized network.

**Brief Histories: ANAT and Turbulence**

The seedlings of both ANAT and Turbulence emerged in the anticipatory ripples of the pre-Internet techno-cultural landscape of the 1980s. ANAT was a research based pilot project launched in 1985 by South Australia’s not-for-profit Experimental Art Foundation (EAF). EAF began as ‘Dark Horsey Bookshop’ the notorious Adelaide speciality store that catered to authors and lovers of new media theory, philosophy, art and literature as well as small press avant-garde literature, magazines and catalogues. While EAF was responsible for the inception of ANAT it was established as an independent not-for-profit Arts organization almost immediately. ANAT was conceived at the edges of Art. ANAT’s primary directive as an R & D body working at the intersection of Art and technology has afforded it a unique organizational structure that has positioned the organization as an ideal candidate for transformation into new institutional form. In mid 2009, ANAT underwent a significant shift in management that saw the incumbent Executive Director – academic and celebrated media artist, Doctor Melinda Rackham – replaced by the sitting General Manager business strategist, Gavin Artz. This shift has significant implications for ANAT’s future that will be touched on in this chapter but explored more fully in chapter six.

Turbulence emerged from an equally marginalized cultural location as the progeny of the not-for-profit organization ‘New Radio and Performing Arts, Inc.’ (NRPA). Cultural enthusiast and award winning media artist, Helen Thorington, founded NRPA in 1981 in New York City ‘to foster the development of new and experimental work for radio and sound arts’ (Turbulence, 2009). In 1994 NRPA extended its operation to include ‘net art’ and Turbulence.org was born. 

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is committed to commissioning, exhibiting and archiving ‘new hybrid networked art forms’ (Turbulence, 2009).

In 2002, NRPA gained a ‘Foreign Corporation Certificate’ that allows Turbulence to seek funding outside the US. However, it currently operates pretty much entirely out of NYC and Boston. In the same year, noted arts administrator and internationally renowned artist Jo-Anne Green, came onboard as co-director of Turbulence alongside Thorton. Like ANAT, Turbulence operates in and advocates an increasingly dynamic site of techno-cultural practice. However, despite the similarities in the circumstances of their emergence there are two important differences between the organizations that have significant impacts on their respective transformations into new institutional form. The first is that their primary objectives differ. ANAT is an R & D organization, which means that it bypasses the most common expectation of a traditional Arts organization: to exhibit, collect and/or archive cultural forms. Conversely, Turbulence states very clearly that it is a platform for exhibition, collection and archiving. The point here is that ANAT’s agenda has always been distinct from that of the traditional Art institution; whereas Turbulence has undertaken the more onerous task of reappropriating the operations of the traditional Art institution to the slippery spheres of digital networks. The second condition that distinguishes the two organizations is their disparate physical locations. This particular condition defines their respective access to funding and the most immediate and influential spheres of their ‘constituent outsides’ (as discussed in chapters three and six).

One of the most striking similarities between Turbulence and ANAT, however, is that neither Arts organization is dependent on the material and expressive dimensions of the physical gallery space. ANAT has entertained the idea of committing to a physical site for exhibitions over the years. But the cultural landscape in which ANAT is immersed has changed so rapidly over the last two decades that any architectural plan suited to one year’s program has proven utterly inappropriate for the next, short-circuiting any plans for a permanent physical gallery affiliation. ANAT has always been about tracking, nurturing and developing the co-evolution of
Art and technology; about finding synergies between organizations and institutions and the dynamic artistic community it has come to advocate.

Likewise, Turbulence has often weighed the benefits against the costs of establishing a physical gallery space and continues to decide against the inherent limitations of a permanent gallery, pursuing only temporary affiliations with external organizations and institutions. In fact, both ANAT and Turbulence agree that the only ‘space’ they would consider establishing would be a creative ‘lab’ space in which, as Turbulence’s Jo-Anne Green notes, ‘art making can be fostered, workshops offered, and collaborations encouraged’ (Green, J 2008, pers. comm., 8 October). Or, as ANAT’s Gavin Artz noted, ‘our thoughts have mainly been about lab spaces, not galleries or studios as such’ (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 8 October). A lab space is appealing precisely because it does not delimit production. Lab spaces can be as flexible as the intentions of its inhabitants, a lab space can be reconfigured in an almost infinite number of ways to service the production needs of an unlimited array of creative pursuits.

An Art organization’s conscious withdrawal from fixed affiliations with material exhibition spaces reflects an explicit step away from the entrenched regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that are reified by gallery walls, while quietly petitioning for the possibility of Art outside the gallery. However, this kind of withdrawal can also present as many problems for Arts organizations as it provides freedoms. As discussed in chapter three, public and not-for-profit Arts organizations depend on public funds and/or philanthropic/corporate support and much of this funding is contingent on the Art organization’s capacity to demonstrate that it enriches local communities (in the service of civic good). The measure of this capacity is generally achieved through ‘bums-on-seats’ assessments (which is a pretty standard ‘key performance indicator’ for public and not-for-profit Arts organizations). Traditionally speaking, the locus of the Art gallery acts as a community centre and the number of patrons through its doors is a marker of how well it fulfils its commitment to its communities (and thus how much and what kind of funding it qualifies for). It is much harder to demonstrate that you are enriching your community if your performance cannot be measured through standard bums-on-seats
assessments. This point that was painfully evident in the US’s National Endowment for the Art’s bizarre rejection of Turbulence’s funding application for 2009 where it claimed that Turbulence’s website was too confounding for NEA staff to navigate (as discussed in chapter three). Much as DeLanda notes, ‘organizations usually operate in particular buildings and the jurisdiction of their legitimate authority usually coincides with the physical boundaries of those buildings’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 13). Clearly, anything outside of this model can be difficult for Arts funding bodies to accommodate, as alternative spatio-temporal dimensions require new strategies for assessing how emergent art forms – that are not contained within the material dimensions of traditional distribution formats – contribute to civic good.

At the most basic level, material exhibition spaces are problematic for emergent networked artists and administrators because the inherent fixity of bricks and mortar limits even the most dynamic architectural plans. The decision for an Arts organization to distance itself from material exhibition complexes speaks to a growing institutional refusal to submit to formalist assumptions regarding what constitutes Art. As ANAT’s Gavin Artz noted, ‘Most work being created doesn’t work in a gallery space, so why do it?’ (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 8 October). At the heart of this shift away from obedient institutional submission to formalist Art categories is a pivotal change in how we understand the socio-cultural role of both Artist and Artwork. As Turbulence’s Jo-Anne Green notes:

The interesting thing is that there seems to be two worlds of net artists – and probably a lot of smaller ones in between – but there are those who want to be part of the art world and those that recognize that the internet is so radically different in every way – economically, politically, artistically – that aspiring to be a part of that world is just impossible; unless the artist gives up control of the artwork to some extent because most of the more interesting work is not necessarily collaborative but it does invite the user to contribute. We’ve commissioned a piece by an artist and when we commissioned it his proposal was that it was going to be an open work and that people were going to be invited to upload sounds and various other elements and when he delivered it was completely closed and I was really upset. And I said ‘this is not what we commissioned’ and his answer was ‘well, I tried it that way but the quality of peoples contributions was mostly really poor and I didn’t want that to influence the quality of the overall piece’. He wasn’t willing to let there be ups and downs, it all had to be completely controlled. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)
If, as DeLanda notes, ‘any process that increases internal heterogeneity is considered deterritorializing’ (DeLanda, p. 13) then Green demonstrates a passionate advocacy for the deterritorialization of the Artwork in this quote. One of Turbulence’s primary objectives is to encourage and support the opening-out of Artistic practice, to the extent that Green is openly disappointed when opportunities to expand definitive boundaries are reigned in by the internalized expectations of Artists (that are set down by the deeply entrenched rules of Art). I am not inclined to think Green is disappointed in the Artist per se but rather by the power of the stabilizing forces at play, the tendency to fall back into line (into established modes of practice) when uncertainty threatens the system. Green’s position here also refers us to the political schism of network culture (as outlined earlier) and aligns Turbulence (by association) with the ‘copyleft’ credo of information freedom fighters. As we shall see, Turbulence’s tendency towards this leftist political position has tended to have a detrimental influence on its capacity for institutional transformation precisely because it locks the organization into a rigid economic model.

**Turbulence: Networked Art, Free Labour and Economic Capital**

Turbulence’s co-director Helen Thorington reaffirms Green’s position regarding the shifting socio-cultural perspective of the Artist and Artwork when she notes:

> Something has changed with the work that we’ve been posting since 2004. A lot of it, not all of it, but a lot of it, really has a participatory nature to it and, as far as I understand it, what the artists are creating is a platform, other people call it a tool, but it doesn’t have the specific task to be accomplished that a tool ordinarily has. What it does, rather, is to toss its weight towards the spectator and the experience that person has, so that it’s more about giving people the opportunity to have an experience. Jason Freeman is very forward about it, he speaks about his work and about the fact that with music, which is his field, it is the experience that meant the most to him, deeply and spiritually, and wants to make this experience a possibility for other people to have who are not trained and who don’t have to be trained. And there’s a lot of this going on and it’s very Cagean, very 50s and 60s, the idea of giving people the opportunity to participate in things because it’s an experience and then you don’t worry so much about the object, the work. (Thorington, H 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)
This notion of encouraging amateur collaboration has particularly striking consequences for the Art world – an economy wholly dependent on the concept of the creative genius and the Art ‘expert’. The assumption here is that ‘free labour’ is a way to disengage the oppressive hierarchies of the Art world.6 The Art world is accurately positioned here as a powerful system of creative control – administered by dominant Art institutions and commercial Art galleries – that fosters the illusion of artistic freedom but is, in fact, driven by the Art market. The advantage of the free labour model of cultural production, of course, is that if you work for free, make your products available for unrestrained collaboration and distribute the results under an open-source directive then your work cannot be easily co-opted by the Art market. The absence or dilution of the Art star works in conjunction with this refusal of economic capital to problematize the artwork’s integration into Art institutions, as discussed in chapters three and four. The free labour model, then, is understood as a powerful way to undermine traditional Art institutions and, therefore, Art worlds. Rossiter outlines the political appeal of the free labour model by quoting from Ulrich Beck’s What is Globalization? (Beck, 2000):

People are prepared to do a great deal for very little money, precisely because economic advantage is individualistically refracted and even assigned an opposite value. If an activity has greater value in terms of identity and self-fulfillment, this makes up for or even exalts a lower level of income. (Rossiter, 2006, p. 147)

This view of free-effort ratifies a very Bourdieuean ‘disavowal of economy’. While the gesture is intended to undo the exclusive value system that underpins the Art world it actually reinforces the privilege of the symbolic over the commercial. And a high versus low cultural opposition begins to snake its way into the network. What we have is a disavowal of economy elevating free labour over traditional forms of Art (that are understood as either overtly or covertly manipulated by the Art market) and popular culture (overtly driven by commerce). What is more, not only does this free labour imperative function along the high/low axis of Bourdieu’s field, it also functions along the autonomous axis of the field as a claim to the new avant-garde. The free labour model tables networked art as an ethico-aesthetic cultural form that can be uniquely distanced from the ‘mutilation of the market’ by its unwavering
commitment to symbolic value, which, of course, corrals networked art back into the annals of formal Art history and the traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that it inherently undermines. What is more, when networked art administrators advocate the free labour model they reiterate the professional privilege of high-cultural administration over other kinds of social and cultural administration (outlined in chapter three) because, as Adorno argues, ‘It opens a perspective for the protection of cultural matters from the realm of control by the market’ (Adorno, 2001, p. 129).

There is an assumption in this rejection of economic capital that the accumulation of symbolic and cultural capital will continue to be fulfilling enough for cultural producers to ensure the sustainability of the practice. This is a dangerous assumption because, much as Rossiter notes, ‘there is only so much free labour that can be done within networks … eventually free labour exhausts itself’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 34). There is also something amiss in the assumption that everyone inclined to produce networked art has sufficient downtime to expend free-effort (leisure time), access to the rather expensive slate of techno-tools (a decent job or spare cash) and the skills to engage them (an education). This paints a very upper-middle class picture of cultural producers that does not expand the scope of inclusiveness for the Arts particularly far.

The more pertinent question for advocates of the free labour model of cultural production is how networked art organizations might raise funds for their own administrative costs in a landscape of ever-dwindling public and private cultural funding? This is where Turbulence’s organizational transformation becomes problematic. Turbulence has all the right component parts for the ‘scalar transformation’ (Rossiter, 2006) into a new institutional form but it is hindered by the rigidity of its position on the relation between Art and commerce. For example, when I asked Green and Thorington whether Turbulence had considered the benefits of exploiting the commercial potential that is latent in many networked artworks,⁷ Green responded:
We have thought along those lines but for the sole purpose of getting money and actually over time I started to feel uncomfortable about that, I started thinking ‘do I really want to move into that world just for money?’... But when I’m surfing the web and come across projects I’m really surprised to find they’ve been done by design groups and they call it interactive art, they don’t call it net art, and it bears so many similarities to so many projects and then you see that these people make tonnes of money doing it and there’s a part of me that kind of draws back from that. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

Here Green reiterates a distinction between Art and design (based on the latter’s explicit submission to the market), which is a distinction that even the most conservative contemporary Art institutions have softened on in the last few decades. It needs to be clear, however, that Turbulence does not advocate the complete dismissal of economic capital but rather pursues what I consider be a kind of moral-capitalism that is characterized by a denial of commercial profit in lieu of the accumulation of an ethico-cultural capital. As Green observes:

There are people trying new things. There’s a gallery that’s selling Art as experience rather than object and one of the projects is by a group called iCartoon and they’re selling their patriotism. And they go to a country in Europe and sit opposite some people from that country in a tent with an American flag and they’ll drink. And the way that money enters into it is that people have to buy them the ticket to the place they want to go. And then they produce the artwork, which is basically a performance, and then it’s over and that’s all they want out of it. They’re not looking for someone to buy the piece, to collect the piece, to archive the piece, they’re just looking for the experience. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

Perhaps the most problematic aspect of the free labour model is that it orients Turbulence in an antagonistic relation to an Art world on which it is wholly dependent for its livelihood. As discussed in chapter three, Turbulence depends on the resources of contemporary Arts funding bodies that are locked in symbiotic relations with dominant contemporary Art institutions like the Whitney. The strident anti-institutionalism that inheres in the free labour model of cultural production makes an organization like Turbulence an easy target for cultural marginalization. For example, more moderate networked art organizations – like Rhizome – sustain more compliant relations within the institutions that dominate Art worlds and are often perceived as being more amenable to the objectives imposed on them by Arts funding bodies. This means organizations like Rhizome tend to attract more funding
and accrue more cultural legitimacy. But Rhizome is, by no means, more expert (or more entitled to cultural capital) than Turbulence in regards to networked art. Yet, as Rossiter notes:

Just as the success of government operating within liberal democracies depends upon getting the right spin, so too does the capacity for the creative industries project to obtain a purchase with a variety of actors that include politicians and government departments, university officials, students, academics, industry managers and creative producers. (Rossiter, 2006, p. 150)

Certainly, Christiane Paul’s commitment to the integration of networked art within traditional Art institutions might be perceived as a strategy to ‘obtain a purchase’ within mainstream contemporary Art worlds. Accordingly, when I asked Paul about how the commodity potential of networked art differs from more traditional Art forms, she responded:

If I have it on my server, I own it. Does it really matter that it’s accessible to the rest of the world? No, I don’t think so. I mean how many collectors own a Picasso but it’s never in their home, it’s never in their living room, it’s always in a museum or travelling around. And it’s all about prestige, you know, it’s the little label next to it that says ‘I am the owner’, ‘it’s mine’. So what would be the difference of having a work that everyone in the world can see but that says on the home page ‘Collection of the Whitney Museum’? It’s on my server I have ownership of the code. A good comparison is a lot of conceptual art: it’s very similar to a Sol Le Witt, he’s selling the instructions to his work and you just have the paper with the instructions and then you can implement it but the work doesn’t exist until it is site specifically implemented on a wall, it’s not a canvas that’s being sold and so is a lot of other conceptual art. (Paul, C 2007, pers. comm., 4 April)

In this quote Paul attempts to legitimize networked art within traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value by taking up the familiar argument that networked art is a natural evolution of the 20th century avant-garde. She also makes the somewhat dubious claim that networked art should be able to secure economic capital in much the same way that conceptual Art was co-opted by the Art market. But Paul has to fight for the formal legitimacy of networked art within the context of the Whitney’s support of Artport. Paul’s fight is a fight for entitlement, for ‘the right spin’, for cultural capital, for inclusion in the traditional Art institution and in mainstream Art worlds. As we have seen, however, conforming to Art world conventions is certainly
no panacea for networked art: Artport is still gravely undernourished. But Paul obtains the right kind of ‘purchase’ for accumulations of cultural capital and, of course, professional advantage and so too does Rhizome. Paul and Rhizome represent the ‘legitimate’ avant-garde of contemporary Art worlds. As Green acknowledges:

Christiane Paul, Steve Dietz and even Rhizome, to some degree, all those people don’t value us at all, they value some of the individual works we’ve commissioned but as an organization they don’t value us at all and they don’t support us at all … I don’t think we’re perceived as being experts. There’s a certain amount of perceived expertise that a Christiane Paul and or a Steve Dietz has, partly because of their affiliation with those big institutions but also because they publish books and they get invited to be on curatorial panels all over the world. We get invited by very different kinds of organizations, it’s not Tate’s or the Whitney’s, it’s furtherfield.org or upgrade which are all just ordinary people. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

Green is absolutely right. High-cultural ‘expertise’ generally requires the sanction of traditional Art institutions. But the spheres of networked art are defined by increasingly diverse backgrounds and skill sets and the restrictive channels for the accumulation of cultural capital dictated by Art worlds are not only archaic they are increasingly irrelevant to broader spheres of cultural production and their audiences. Turbulence is caught in the struggle of finding support for new modes of cultural production, distribution and reception within a field that assumes all modes of high-cultural production, distribution and reception have reached their summit. It is a no win situation. How do you convince funding bodies of your ‘cultural’ value when what you advocate contradicts the very regimes of value on which your assessment is based? How do you negotiate the fragile territory of being in the Art world but not of the Art world while being wholly dependent on Art world funds and on the regimes of value that define access to those funds? The real problem for Turbulence is, as Rossiter argues (and as I have noted before):

Organized networks will never be funded through state subsidies in the way that much of the cultural sector has and continues to be … As a result, organized networks have no choice but to come up with business models. Otherwise they can only amble along in parasitic mode, taking a bit here and a bit there from their unwitting hosts … (ibid., p. 31)
And ‘ambling along in parasitic mode’ is precisely how Turbulence is currently operating: existing on increasingly diminished funding from a small range of public and private Arts funding bodies. Rossiter maintains that without the development of business models organized networks have ‘little chance of sustainability’ (ibid., p. 31) and with Turbulence’s staunch ‘disavowal of economy’ this could well be the sticking point that ultimately prevents its transformation into a new institutional form. Turbulence currently sits at a critical juncture. Its survival depends on its capacity to secure economic resources outside the Art world. There is no alternative. Even if Turbulence was to orient itself in a more amenable position to conventional Art world politics (like Rhizome or Paul) – a prospect that would undoubtedly seem abhorrent to both Thorington and Green – there is little evidence that it would be in any better a financial situation than it is now (just look at Artport). But nor can Turbulence completely separate itself from Art worlds. As Green notes:

Even though we don’t see ourselves as being a part of the Art world, in the scheme of things on the Internet we’re an art site we’re not slashdot, we’re not del.icio.us, we’re not flickr, we’re an art site so we tend to draw an art audience unless something gets blogged on something like Boing Boing or slashdot then suddenly we’ll get forty thousand visitors that have never been to our site before. It is exhilarating and then you read what they have to say about it and it’s disappointing because they don’t know what they’re supposed to do or what’s supposed to happen. All of a sudden all of the things that come naturally to them in other social networking environments when they get to a so-called art work they don’t know what to do. (Green, J 2007, pers. comm., 6 April)

This observation outlines precisely why networked art organizations are in such urgent need of new organizational strategies. The tactical boon of occasionally attracting a huge number of visitors means very little in the long term. You cannot assume that just because digital networks are open and participatory that the deeply engrained socio-cultural understanding of Art as an exclusive realm of production and reception is suddenly bypassed. New modes of organization must be implemented. Subversive tactical action is not enough as the avant-garde of the 20th century has taught us time and again. If networked art is to open out the exclusive cultural hierarchies of Art it will only be through the careful contextualization of its forms within the zeitgeist of cultural production. Producers and administrators of networked art simply cannot assume that organization inheres in digital networks
themselves. Without careful strategies to guide audience/user engagement with emergent techno-cultural forms, access to networked art is likely to remain in the cultural ghetto in which it currently resides. And networked art organizations will remain correspondingly marginalized.

A brief communiqué I witnessed between Thorington and Green reveals how close Turbulence is to real organizational transformation – demonstrated here by their striking insight regarding Turbulence’s need to operate both within and outside of the Art world. Yet we also see Turbulence’s most debilitating obstacle: Thorington and Green’s deep cynicism regarding the relation between Art and commerce. As they note:

Green: Maybe the mistake is thinking that we’re somewhere between the Artists and the Art world where in fact we’re really just a parallel to the Art world and in some ways a part of it but in many ways not.

Thorington: We are obligated to recognize the structure of the old world when we apply for funding, everything we say about it, you know, we put into our proposals to these funders that this has been shown at the Whitney and this has been shown at this museum and it’s kind of disgusting in a way … I think this is what we can do, we may exist within the structure because of our funding and such, but the ability to see that there is a change in what we call Art and that change is a very productive and creative one because it’s open and it’s objective is to create experience for people, a more open area in which they can interact and work and actually do something and see something.

Thorington and Green express an open anxiety about positioning Turbulence in relation to a dominant yet unsatisfactory classificatory system. Yet they remain wary of the opportunities waiting to be exploited outside that system. They seem to be trapped by a traditional organizational logic at a time when only a new organizational strategy can assure them a future, which is a dangerous place to linger. Being at the vanguard of institutional transformation means working without a net, developing new ways to operate on the fly – it means finding operational strategies that are new, dynamic, open and flexible – which means laying the organization open to both the potential risks and gains of external forces.
To ensure even the most modest version of the cultural future it envisions, Turbulence will have to explore new ways of brokering relationships between artists and the constituent outside, as there is no indication that the Art world will suddenly re-embrace networked art and the myriad forms that align themselves with a digital ethos. In fact, there are plenty of signs that Art worlds have had just about enough of trying to accommodate a practice that is so utterly unsuited to the established protocols of the traditional institution. If Turbulence wants to participate in the new landscapes of cultural production then it will have to implement a range of strategies (including commercial ones) that take it outside the Art world (and even outside the cultural sector) in order to aid its development and ensure its sustainability. But it must also, of course, continue to foster relationships within the conventional Art world. It is unlikely that Turbulence will be in a position to withdraw itself from the rounds of traditional Arts funding for some time (if ever, completely). As Rossiter notes, ‘While the organized network has a relative institutional autonomy, it must engage, by necessity, other institutional partners who may often be opposed to their interests’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 36).

Make no mistake, Turbulence is at the vanguard of institutional transformation. In chapter two I argued that the lingering field logic that had, until recently, beleaguered the discourse of networked art was not a failing but rather a necessary step towards the cultural deterritorialization of archaic oppositional value systems. Likewise, Turbulence’s awkward and sometimes contradictory organizational strategies are necessary steps in the deterritorialization of the traditional Art institution as the dominant mode of instituting Art. After all, two-steps forward and one-step back is still transition and the way forward is far from clear.

**New Resources for Networked Art**

ANAT functions ‘at the intersection of art, science and technology’ (ANAT, 2009) – its mandate is, therefore, outwards facing. However, ANAT, like Turbulence, is still largely dependent on the entrenched organizational logics of the Art world. As an Australian not-for-profit arts organization it is dependent on its relationship with Federal and State funding bodies. The Australian private Arts funding sector is small
(which includes both philanthropy and corporate sponsorships) and networked art is a long way from owning a place on its agendas. Therefore, unlike the US and the UK, Australia’s cultural organizations are almost entirely dependent on government funding. The public funding mandate in Australia is reasonable. Certainly, the Australian commitment to culture is closer to the UK’s than the US’s. However, as the following chapter demonstrates, networked art has been on the receiving end of what could only be described as sporadic investment that has dwindled significantly over the last five years. And so ANAT faces the same immediate threat as Turbulence: it must pursue alternative business strategies in order to ensure a viable and progressive future.

ANAT does not adhere to a staunch political agenda other than its quest to open-out the socio-cultural boundaries of art, to liberate it from the exclusive regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that underpin conventional Art worlds. As Melinda Rackham, former Executive Director of ANAT, observes in one of the many email correspondences we have had over the past two years:

Art as a term/concept is very encumbered and to a general population means painting and sculpture. Where as the emerging artforms we are working with actually have no specific term, they are sort of amorphous, still forming and reforming, making and breaking associations, finding stable formats. And while elegant, inspirational and potent they are also sometimes messy, temperamental and evolving. For example, internet art, network art, net art, web art, distributed art etc. can all be the same thing but we can’t quite all agree on what exactly it is or pin it down yet after 12-15 years of practice. Creativity is a term people can understand, identify with, and it doesn’t have the same perception of elitist barriers that art may. For example, researchers acknowledge they are creative, while they wouldn’t necessarily say they were artistic. Culture and cultural practice is also a much more open term than art practice, ’cause emerging forms work much more across cultural spaces … with architecture, with urban planning, with nano-technology, with astronomy, with biodiversity, with textiles, with jewelry, with music, with location, with medicine … it’s not really removing or excluding art – its widening the scope of what it encompasses and what people think it encompasses. (Rackham, M 2008, pers. comm., 29 August)

Gavin Artz made a similar observation when I interviewed him at the ANAT offices in Adelaide in March 2008, when he was still ANAT’s General Manager:
The problem is that I don’t think of art as being outside of every day life and most Arts organizations spend most of their time making sure that art is outside everyday life. In fact, Melinda [Rackham, the then Executive Director] and I just wrote something [for ANAT] and we removed all references to the term ‘art’ because it’s just not relevant anymore. I mean is an artist who produces a product that has implications for the mining industry an artist or an engineer? Are they both? Does it really matter? What’s important is that we [ANAT] foster creative pursuits by identifying key areas of creative potential within the realms of science and technology and we create open environments through which this potential can be realized. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March)

As implied in both these quotes, since Rackham’s posting as Executive Director in 2005 ANAT has made concerted efforts to recalibrate the way ANAT engages the idea of ‘art’. ANAT has always operated outside the traditional institutional preoccupation with Art objects but over the last few years its commitment to an alternative logic of instituting art has been pulled sharply into focus. The organization has been dedicated to the development and implementation of dynamic and flexible ways of functioning. Even ANAT’s current charter has been left somewhat open and pliable:

ANAT is Australia's leading cultural organization working at the intersection of art, science & technology; networked & emergent art practices; experimental music & sound arts; and mobile & portable platforms. Operating nationally and globally for two decades, ANAT has been delivering initiatives which enable connection, collaboration, research and development, fostering enterprise, sustainability, dialogue and exchange across art, culture, science and technology. (ANAT, 2009)

As indicated in its charter, the geography of ANAT’s operations has become a rather fluid concept. The organization has staff located inter-state and internationally, not permanent interstate and international offices but staff working in and out of different states and different countries as a part of the same organizational network. This is not particularly progressive for a large multi-national corporation but for a small not-for-profit Arts organization – long bound to the Australian physical territory by its dependence on public funding – it reflects a changing attitude towards the boundaries of geography (a point I will return to shortly and examine again in the conclusion). Much as Rackham notes:
Employment is flexible, especially when people have to travel a lot and we want the best person for the job and they may not be located in Adelaide! For example, with sound – there is much more activity on the east coast so it makes sense to have a manager there. (Rackham, M 2008, pers. comm., 10 October).

What is more, towards the end of 2008 and throughout 2009 ANAT has been reconciling its increasingly mutable and dynamic understanding of art against new strategies for the administration of art. In short, ANAT has begun organizing networks. As Rackham notes:

We will be more out on the web pushing info in different ways through custom ANAT facebook apps, partnering with other orgs, getting out of outdated alliances and forming new ones with people working in exciting ways aligned to our area and making ‘Filter’ [ANAT’s quarterly magazine] a digital plus print publication … archiving, rebuilding old works for posterity, consulting on creative approaches for corporates … etc. (Rackham, M 2008, pers. comm., 29 August)

An interesting site of this new organizational logic can be identified in the shifting circumstances of ANAT’s four primary program areas: art science research; embracing sound program (esp); emerging technologies; portable platforms (ANAT, 2009). In the past, these programs were perceived as fixed entities and their managers as administrators of objectives that emanated from a central authority. However, in 2008 ANAT decided that each program would have a single manager who has complete control over the program. As Artz notes, ‘the Program Managers are becoming more autonomous and really amplifying what ANAT does’ (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 22 August). ANAT is beginning to identify areas in which more flexible organizational strategies can mitigate the inefficiencies of static hierarchical bureaucracy.

However, ANAT’s operational reorientation does not worship blindly at the altar of decentralization. Much as Rackham observes, ‘we will still do what we have always done but in a much more structured way with our dedicated program managers running their areas. And we are looking to engage a much more business like manner for practitioners and the work they produce’ (Rackham, M 2008, pers. comm., 29 August). ANAT’s new, flexible approaches to labour management are, from time to
time, still subject to the traditional logics of central authority. ANAT’s Executive Director answers to its Board of Directors and is, therefore, ultimately responsible for ANAT’s successes and failures. As Rossiter observes:

It is a mistake to think the horizontal, decentralizing and distributive capacities of digital networks immune from a tendency to fall back into hierarchical and centralizing modes of organization and patterns of behaviour. Indeed, there are times when such a move is necessary. Decisions have to be made. The so-called ‘open’ systems of communications are frequently not only not open they also elide hierarchical operations that enable networks to become organized. (Rossiter, 2006, pp. 14-15)

Beneath the executive summit, however, ANAT has begun to unfold as a much more fluid network, capable of administrating increasingly diverse agendas. What is more, ANAT is beginning to act as a node in wider networks of relations that extend far beyond the borders of Art worlds. And it is at the site of engaging ‘a much more business like manner for practitioners and the work they produce’ that ANAT reveals its most striking move away from traditional Art world contexts.

Despite Rackham’s significant influence over ANAT’s shifting agendas, it is quite possible that the real seeds of ANAT’s current transformation were sown when the Board appointed Gavin Artz as General Manager in 2006. Artz secured the job not because of a strong history in the Arts (which he does not possess) but because he has experience in business. Not surprisingly, one of his first observations was that small arts organizations ‘tend to have a low tolerance of the business side of things’ (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March). He continues:

Small Arts organizations tend to be run by Artists and then they go off and do their Art. A successful organization just can’t be run like that. You certainly need to have someone who can decide where to hang paintings on the walls but you also need staff with the requisite qualifications and experience who can generate and carry out a solid business strategy. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March)

It was not long before Artz identified a potent business strategy laying dormant in one of ANAT’s most unique operations. As Australia’s leading organization working at the intersection of Art and technology, ANAT has become deeply invested in the
synergies between scientific research & development and the creative innovation of emergent forms of techno-cultural practice. As Artz continues:

Where ANAT is particularly innovative and strong is its ability to take the temperature of the techno-cultural climate and open up its doors to whomever wishes to perform in these areas. Some of the outcomes will not possess commercial value but a few will and the great advantage of those that do is that they come aesthetically primed. What I mean is that instead of spending years in a university research lab and coming out with a product that is held together with sticky tape, the particular intersection of science, technology and creative ingenuity that ANAT works so hard to facilitate often produces functional products that look beautiful too. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March)

The obvious commercial potential of ‘functional’ products ‘that look beautiful too’ inspired Artz to develop a groundbreaking strategy for ‘flexible’ intellectual property (IP). Artz calls this commercial strategy ‘Ancillary IP’. IP deals have traditionally tended to work against the interests of cultural producers and in the favour of their sponsors. The traditional IP deal, as Rossiter observes, ‘let us never forget, is always already an exploitation of people, of the producers of that which is transformed from practice into property, which in its abstraction is then alienated from those who have produced it’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 145). Unlike standard IP deals, however, Ancillary IP allows this ‘abstraction’ to work in the artist’s favour. An Ancillary IP product, for example, might emerge through a code artist who creates a software application – that has potential commercial appeal – as a component part of a larger work. She could sell the application to, for example, Apple, but submit the artwork as a whole to the public arena under a ‘some rights reserved’ Creative Commons license. In this way, the artist is still contributing to an open sphere of generative information but is able to sustain herself professionally (and contribute to the organizations that supported the creative process) through the sale of the application.

Advocacy for this sphere of open and generative information within the spheres of networked art is not always a political position. It is also an important resource for many creative producers providing an undulating digital river of content and tools. Consequently, the desire to contribute back into the pool of open information is frequently a desire to keep the resource alive. This desire is also a pertinent characteristic of the digital ethos reflecting an inclination towards creative re-use:
sample culture, mash-ups, remixology and so on. The Ancillary IP model perceives the artwork, much like Munster (Munster, 2006), as a territorial assemblage with component parts that can possess a multitude of functionalities. This means that any given component part of the artwork can work one way inside the artwork assemblage but have a completely different functional potential outside the artwork assemblage. Much in the way DeLanda notes that ‘a component part of an assemblage may be detached from it and plugged into a different assemblage in which its interactions are different’ (DeLanda, p. 10).

What is really groundbreaking about Ancillary IP is that it intends to provide a template for open and flexible R & D deals that allow creative producers the freedom to create what they like in an environment of their choice and retain all the proprietary rights to the artwork as a whole and the majority of proprietary rights to whatever commercial byproducts may or may not be produced. The most important aspect of Ancillary IP, then, is that it protects the creative process from commercial coercion and the artwork itself from direct commercial affiliation while still allowing the artist to generate economic capital. The problem, of course, is that opening the gates to commercial enterprise does tend to have coercive effects (a problem I unpack in detail in the following chapter). When I asked Artz how ANAT could be sure it would not fall prey to typical commercial motivations and start coercing its artists into projects with more commercial appeal or choosing the projects it supports based on their commercial potential, he responded:

We don’t choose our artists with any specific outcome in mind, we chose them because they’re already working in areas we are keen to explore or it’s an area they are keen to explore. And what makes us different from R & D departments (be they commercial or educational) is that they generally can’t spare the resources to just say ‘here’s an area we’re interested in, now do what you want’ which might produce only one commercially viable outcome out of, I don’t know, 30 works (none of which may have any commercial potential at all); but we can because ANAT works hard to create opportunities for creative pursuits that might otherwise go unnoticed or remain underdeveloped (due to a lack of resources) and that’s where real innovation happens. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March)
Artz makes a critical point here. ANAT still advocates the cultural distinction of specific types of creative production: namely, those creative outcomes that evolve through the unburdened pathways of creative imagination. In other words, there is recognition here that commercial agendas corrupt creative freedom. So, when Rackham says that ANAT’s goals are not to dismiss art but rather to widen ‘the scope of what it encompasses and what people think it encompasses’, she is not talking about blurring the boundaries of cultural distinction that distinguish non-commercial creative pursuit from commercially driven creative pursuit (the bedrock of the traditional high-cultural distinction). She is talking about inviting a whole new world of producers to participate in artistic production. ‘Art’ becomes ‘art’ here because it is rid of worn-out allegiances to archaic regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and dependencies on traditional Art institutions. But ‘art’ is still distinct from cultural products that are created explicitly for commercial gain. So, while it may be the end of Art it is not the end of ‘art’ worlds. The high-cultural distinction prevails but what we have are more fluid evaluative frameworks for what qualifies as art and what does not. And it would seem that the new high-cultural qualifier is really just a contemporary version of the old one: art is still qualified by a perceived distance from the market. But, and this is the crucial point, it is free from the constraints of formalism and rigid high-cultural categories. ANAT opens its doors to creative innovation from any sphere of human activity – whether it be engineering, biomedicine or waste management, wherever inspiration strikes – and Ancillary IP protects the enduring ‘disavowal of economy’ that distinguishes art while providing artists with a potential source of income. However, ANAT’s implementation of the Ancillary IP model is still very much in the development phase, as Artz explains:

We have to go up against legal departments and the like; also some of the more professional artists retain their own lawyers. It is getting to be a bit of a big deal. It ranges from Vicki [Sowry, program manager for the art research science area] highlighting an unfair clause to an artist through to their own lawyers doing the work. We have been working as an honest broker so host organizations and artists can trust we are looking out for mutually beneficial outcomes. Personally, I see it as a potential future for cross-discipline research, so it is in all our benefits to make it work. I think universities are coming from the models they use with employees – i.e. keep everything – so it is interesting to see genuine flexibility when they encounter the new situation. I don’t see those with power really abusing it in these situations. It is more we are building a new way of working and everything has to be tried out. Also it is business,
artists often get shielded from that. So someone is asking for something in a contract that they hope you will accept, but you can say no and negotiate terms (not a lot of people’s preferred head space). My experience is that artists are too willing to give up IP. Some are more savvy than others, but once again it is a new situation that artists don’t normally find themselves in. So as an artist you may not have considered what you are giving up as your IP. Entrepreneurship training is sorely needed in this new world for artists. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 11 September)

ANAT’s ultimate plan is to incorporate as a commercial company – as an adjunct of the not-for-profit organization – through which it can extract some of the potential Ancillary IP gains for itself and reinvest the profits back into ANAT; a plan that would give ANAT a tremendous independence from the parameters imposed on it by its reliance on government funding bodies. As Artz writes:

I am hoping that ANAT can create an affiliated company through which the commercial potential of some of these projects can be exploited for ANAT’s gain. So both arms of the ANAT world would be invested in a relation of mutual causality. ANAT allows for the creative pursuit of truly innovative products, the successes of which can be gainfully employed as commercial products, the success of which add to the strength of ANAT’s capacity to encourage and foster new creative pursuit. (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March)

Moreover, Rossiter sees this kind of independence as a natural progression of the new institutional form (a point I elaborate in the conclusion of this thesis). He writes:

My position is simply that while networks in many ways are regulated indirectly by the sovereign interests of the state, they are also not reducible to institutional apparatuses of the state. And this is what makes possible the creation of new institutional forms as expressions of non-representational democracy. (Rossiter, 2006, p. 39)

ANAT’s Ancillary IP model is an enormously important strategy for fringe technocultural organizations that are becoming increasingly distanced from formal funding avenues. By enabling productive affiliations and synergies between the cultural sector and external industries, ANAT is beginning to carve out a very unique cultural identity. Moreover, it denotes unprecedented innovation that is precisely the kind of activity that makes for successful transformation into a new institutional form. I am
not suggesting that ANAT’s new organizational logic can be applied across the board for fringe cultural organizations. Much as Rossiter notes, ‘there will be no universal model that applies to the dynamics of networks, which by definition are singular, albeit with patterns, tendencies and resources that may overlap’ (Rossiter, p. 14). However, strategic initiatives like Ancillary IP should certainly be considered by organizations like Turbulence.

This chapter has explored two organizations that are perfectly suited to the ‘scalar transformation’ of new institutional forms. However, each organization has exhibited different capacities to realize such significant reconfiguration. It is my observation that these differences are directly linked to the fact that Turbulence and ANAT are located in Art worlds with divergent commitments to networked art. As we saw in chapter three, Turbulence has been lulled into a false sense of security because networked art has received mainstream attention in Art institutions like the Whitney, which has seen techno-cultural agendas temporarily integrated into public and private cultural funding agendas. But as networked art has slowly fallen out of mainstream favour in NYC (and across the global stage of mainstream contemporary Art), Turbulence’s capacity to secure funding has dwindled accordingly. Thus it has not been until very recently that Turbulence’s funding has hit a crisis point and, therefore, it is only now that Turbulence is being faced with a choice between organizational adaptation or collapse. But Turbulence has a strong history of flexibility and inventiveness; when NRPA was muscled out of funding in the early 1990s Thorington reoriented her objectives and Turbulence was born. The next few years will be critical for Turbulence, as it will have to make some hard choices about how to (or whether or not it can) marry its political ideals with the logics of organized networks.

Whereas ANAT is located in a contemporary Art world that has failed to assign any mainstream cultural capital to networked art and has only just accepted cultural forms like ‘video art’ into mainstream institutional agendas (a cultural form that has been integrated into international contemporary Art worlds for decades). The Australian contemporary Art world is still coming to terms with 1960s and 70s ideas of ‘new media art’ let alone the protean forms of emergent techno-culture. ANAT,
therefore, has not been the victim of false expectations and has had more time to ponder its options and make choices about its future. Chapter six explores the dwindling status of networked art in the Australian contemporary Art world by unpacking its inconsistent history of support. What the following chapter reveals is a landscape of profound cultural conservatism that has, ironically, produced ideal conditions for the radical innovation of one its most marginalized cultural organizations.
Chapter Five Endnotes

1 Richard Stallman (the now notorious creator of the freeware Unix operating system) is considered the father of the open-source franchise, often touted as the ‘copyleft’ movement, ‘a sphere in which access is determined primarily by need and not price’ (Stallabrass, 2002, p. 8). Indeed, these ‘left-wing’ freeware movements were integral to the eventual development of the more conservative Creative Commons strategy launched by Lawrence Lessig et al. in 2001 (for more information see <http://www.creativecommons.org>).

2 It should be noted here that News Corp owns a third of Sky News.

3 There is a great deal of interesting work being done on copyright in the information age. The website for the ‘copyright’s counterpart conference’ (August 2008) is still live and provides a comprehensive list of scholars researching copyright and alternative legal frameworks (see <www.copyrightscounterparts.ca/html/00_main.htm>). For specific work on the copyright issues of the network society see: Howard-Spink, 2006; Ippolita et al, 2009.

4 The new institutional form will be an ideal platform through which to mobilize Anna Munster’s ‘digital aesthetics’ discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

5 It is important to note that at the same time that Thorington started Turbulence, funding for NRPA became more and more difficult to secure and public radio less interested in providing timeslots for ‘radio art’. In many ways, the birth of Turbulence coincided with the death of NRPA. The shift from one to the other also represents a seismic shift in broad socio-cultural focus from the one-to-many communication models of more traditional media to the many-to-many logics of digital networks.

6 The blurring of the lines between the professional and the amateur has been widely critiqued; perhaps most famously by former dot.com enthusiast now jaded technoskeptic Andrew Keen in his infamous book, The Cult of the Amateur (Keen, 2007). Keen argues that ‘democratization, despite its lofty idealization, is undermining truth, souring civic discourse, and belittling expertise, experience, and talent’ (Keen, 2007, p. 13). Keen’s book asks pertinent questions regarding the socio-cultural function of quality control and what happens to culture in its absence. Keen’s final position, however, is reminiscent of Lev Manovich’s email-list rant discussed in chapter two where Manovich claims that networked art was a ‘logical mistake’ (Manovich, 2004). In that, Keen sees the Internet as an irretrievably ‘low’ media system, largely thanks to the inflation of the amateur as legitimate cultural producer, which actually works to augment the status of ‘experts’ (those in possession of qualifications, endorsed by cultural institutions and so on) and thus reinforcing or emphasizing
cultural distinction. Keen is an outspoken advocate for the sanctity of traditional high-cultural values.

7 For example, many networked artworks implement innovative software design that functions as a component part of the project. If Turbulence were able to siphon this component part off by establishing an IP deal with the artist then the software could be made available as a commercial product and the majority of commercial gains could be directed to the Artist but small amounts could contribute to the costs of running Turbulence. There is a more detailed discussion of this commercial synergy towards the end of this chapter under the ‘Ancillary IP’ model.

8 Again, chapter three documents Rhizome.org’s move towards more conventional footing – by cementing an affiliation with the traditional contemporary Art organization New Museum – in an attempt to stabilize its access to funding.

9 A striking example of the way Turbulence are innovating new strategies for the distribution of cultural forms resides in the 2009 Turbulence project a (networked_book) on (networked_art) that is, in fact, a networked book on networked art (Networked, 2009). The idea was to commission academics and artists to write chapters for an open eBook on the topic of networked art that would be published on a dedicated interactive platform (not unlike amalgamating a wiki with facebook) and allow the public to join the networked community and contribute to/amend/critique/rewrite the chapters of the book and, indeed, to submit new chapters, etcetera. It is a project with the lofty ideals of democratizing discourse and, in doing so, democratizing the hermeneutics of Art and, in the process, access to networked art. But ‘networked’ has tended to be coopted by academics and the broad social response seems to be that the chapters are a little dense for broad public consumption, which has somewhat compromised their initial plan of opening out access and discussion. As Wired journalist Bruce Sterling notes, ‘Well, I’ll help ‘em spread the word, but you might want to read and attempt to comprehend a few of those dense network theory articles before you jump right in there crowing, “wow, network culture punditry, that’s 4 me, boyo”’ (Sterling, 2009). Academic discourse is a rarefied world much in the same way that Art is a rarefied world and if the desire is for the democratization of knowledge then that democracy needs to be carefully managed, organized, and different levels of access/education/economic status must be negotiated into the functionality of those spaces. Creating a space where everyone feels welcome and satisfied is a somewhat lofty goal. Networks need careful organization but ‘networked’ is, without question, a step in the right direction: towards new sites and modes of cultural engagement.
In 1997 the ‘Australian Film Commission’ authorized new media industry expert Rachel Dixon to compose a report concerning how ‘interactive art’ was being accessed in Australia. The report was titled ‘Other Spaces: The Marketing, Distribution + Exhibition of Interactive Art’ (Dixon, 1997). It found that interactive art was not being integrated into contemporary Art institutions particularly well. Dixon observed that the audiences of interactive art were largely limited to the sporadic forums of media art festivals and conferences and that the works themselves were circulating primarily amongst ghettoized groups of artists and academics. She argued that in order for Australian contemporary culture to flourish there was an immediate need for traditional Art institutions to invest in the development of new strategies for the distribution and exhibition of interactive forms. The importance of this recommendation is not only that it lobbied for the inclusion of interactive art into the Australian contemporary Art world but also that it outlined the importance of exposing Australian contemporary Art audiences to the techno-cultural landscape of the new millennium. The implication of Dixon’s report was that interactive art was more than a niche cultural form. It was indicative of a new form of culture. Why, then, over a decade later, is there still a striking lack of funding and exhibition opportunities for technology-based Arts in Australia?

The fact that Dixon’s report was commissioned at all illustrates that networked art has received moments of support within the Australian cultural landscape. These flashes of techno-cultural advocacy, however, have been consistently reined in by the logics of the traditional institution and the inherent conservativism of Australian cultural funding mandates. As a consequence, this chapter has to engage a somewhat narrower brief than those of previous chapters as the more expansive/inclusive term...
‘networked art’ has little to no currency within the Australian contemporary Art world. It has been subsumed under limited understandings of ‘new media art’ or ‘media arts’. In a conservative cultural landscape like that of Australia the term ‘media art’ is often employed as a claim to the cutting edge when it only extends, for example, as far as well established forms like video art. And if a form like video art (with its roots in the 1960s and 70s) is understood as the cutting edge of contemporary culture then the full scope of techno-cultural innovation is pushed beyond the cultural gaze and off contemporary cultural agendas. When this happens the cultural landscape stagnates much like a cultural field – limited to the mediation of legitimate cultural forms – which means the function of interfacing the ‘new’ of cultural production is marginalized at best and paralysed at worst.

What this chapter unpacks, then, is how this kind of cultural stagnation has achieved such potency in the Australian contemporary Art world. Despite occasional periods of techno-cultural recognition (within both Australian contemporary Art institutions and the agendas of public Arts funding bodies), emergent techno-cultural forms have been consistently discarded as irrelevant and delegitimized. We have already explored the reasons why networked art cannot be tacked on to the infrastructures of traditional Art institutions and this chapter does not repeat those arguments. What it focuses on, rather, is the historical narrative of Australia’s uneven and shifting relationship with technology-based art. What we find is that media arts have been valued and framed in the deeply limited contexts of traditional institution and outmoded regimes of cultural and aesthetic value.

I begin by arguing that one of the primary problems for ‘media art’ in Australia has been an inability for key governmental regimes and traditional Art institutions to get beyond the classificatory dilemma posed by emergent techno-culture. This classificatory issue has led to technology-based arts being shunted back and forth across a range of public Arts funding bodies and between a range of corresponding cultural institutions, never being allowed permanent residency in any one camp. Moreover, Australian dedicated media arts organizations are caught up in the same complex relations of conservative funding that delimit their capacity for adaptation and, therefore, their ability to engage the full scope of practices to which they are
committed. What we find here is that the incorporation of emergent techno-cultural forms into the Australian contemporary Art world has consistently led to their suffocation and to the patchy and fragile development of an Australian media arts community.

The first half of this chapter, therefore, is an analysis of the ways in which ‘fields’ constrain cultural innovation. Yet it is precisely ANAT’s location in a network of dwindling resources that provided the impetus for the organization’s potential transformation into a new institutional form. The final section of this chapter, then, is an analysis of emerging assemblages. The irony, of course, is that a climate of profoundly delimiting cultural conservativism has cultivated ideal conditions for real cultural innovation. ANAT’s transformation – if it is successful – stands to open out the opportunities for networked art in Australia (and across global networked art communities) in unprecedented ways. However, there is an emphasis here on the uncertainty of ANAT’s transformation into a new institutional form. In chapter five I argued that the integration of business models into networked art organizations is essential for their survival and transformation into new institutional forms. Without yielding this assertion, this chapter acknowledges that such an undertaking is a highly complex and fragile process. By outlining both the potential and risks that inhere in ANAT’s pioneering ‘Ancillary IP’ model we find an organizational transformation – while uniquely advanced – still indeterminate.

**The Classification Gap**

Australia has a moderate public Arts funding mandate and, in comparison with the UK and the US, an extremely weak private Arts funding sector. Accordingly, the large majority of Australian contemporary Arts institutions (both public institutions and not-for-profit Arts organizations) simply reallocate government funds. Funding for media art in Australia is almost entirely drawn from one of two sources: public Arts agencies or public Film agencies. The fact that film and Arts agencies have both contributed to the support of media arts in Australia might suggest that the ubiquitous forms are viewed as having a natural affinity with both formal film and Art genres. The reality of the situation, however, is that for the last two decades both
groups of agencies have been tacitly embroiled in debates regarding who should be burdened with the impure form’s sustainability. As Director of Sydney based d/Lux/MediaArts, David Cranswick, stated when I interviewed him at d/Lux’s offices in Sydney, 2008:

There’s an obvious distinction between film and Art in Australia. It’s like two tribes. And d/Lux sits in between all of that, which is in some ways advantageous because we can pull money from both sides but it’s vulnerable too because as Film Australia, or Screen Australia, makes a shift back to a more conservative model we’re totally locked out. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

And ‘making shifts back to more conservative models’ is precisely what Australian film and Arts agencies have done time and again over the last decade. But why have these agencies been consistently corralled back to more conservative ground? The short answer is that, as traditional institutional forms and integral component parts of the Australian contemporary Art world, the state of equilibrium for these agencies is a ‘more conservative model’. Accordingly, when I asked Gary Warner – a multi-media artist and former Project Officer for the Australian Film Commission (AFC, now Screen Australia) – why media arts funding has always found itself on the chopping block within public film agencies, he responded ‘mostly it has to do with people who have a sort of purist idea of ‘film’ and argue that media arts or indeed Art projects of any stripe should be dealt with by the Australia Council’ (Warner, G 2009, pers. comm., 12 August). Likewise, the Australia Council for the Arts has had terrible trouble justifying its continued support of media arts over the last decade. As RealTime editor Keith Gallasch recalls after witnessing the then CEO of the Australia Council, Jennifer Bott, justify the 2005 dissolution of its New Media Arts Board (NMAB) at a media arts community meeting:

The erasure of NMAB seemed to be solely in terms of cost-effectiveness rather than in terms of its success or potential. People were angry at the fixity of Bott’s position constantly reinforced in the manner of the modern politician with the ‘at the end of the day’ mantra. (Gallasch, 2005)

If cultural conservativism is woven into the fabric of traditional Art institutions and their funding counter-parts, the question becomes: how are progressive objectives
woven into their agendas in the first place? How does heterogeneity snake its way into an inherently homogenous system? Or how do deterritorializing effects gain any ground at all in highly territorialized assemblages? Both Screen Australia and the Australia Council have been periodically lobbied (by their staff, media arts administrators, artists and organizations) for media art’s legitimacy as an interdisciplinary form. In other words, at various times both public agencies have been both presented with and receptive to arguments that media arts have legitimate rights to both film and Arts funding. As Warner writes,

In essence, the fact the AFC funded any new media art projects at all was entirely because it was a passion of mine and there were progressive people in senior management positions who were prepared to trust that passion and could see value in supporting this kind of work. (Warner, G 2009, pers. comm., 12 August)

This kind of ‘passionate’ advocacy has kept technology-based art tenuously tethered to Australian film and Arts funding agendas despite these organization’s intuitive swings back ‘to more conservative models’. What is more, Warner’s quote also refers us to a basic principle of public cultural funding. Government’s require clear criteria for the judgement and assessment of cultural forms. Policy makers must engage a straightforward appraisal of how cultural forms and institutions can be mobilized in the service of the civic good. And, as discussed in chapter three, these discourses are established in consultation with ‘expert’ cultural administrators (curators, critics and, of course, public program managers). The program managers of public cultural agencies are appointed precisely because of their cultural expertise. Public cultural administrators decide not only what is culturally valuable but also what cultural programs best serve their communities. In this way, the individual managers of public funding agencies can have significant influence over the short-term undulations of cultural policy. However, the ‘moribund technics’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 14) of traditional institutions tend to neutralize these voices in the longer term.

We might say that the occasional integration of progressive objectives into Australian cultural funding mandates reflects the tactical undulations of specific
cultural agencies, while the ‘more conservative models’ restored in the cyclical stocktaking of organizational management tend to reflect the native infrastructures of traditional institutions. In other words, the brief periods of techno-cultural advocacy within key governmental regimes and Art institutions have always been brought back to more conservative ground in Australia because of the prevailing logics of organization that underpin Art worlds. It is important here to take a brief step back from the Australian contemporary Art world to unpack precisely how these logics of organization function to enforce categorical rigidity and locate networked art in the cultural no-man’s land of a classification gap.

As I have argued, the logics of organization that underpin Art worlds are certainly those of the traditional institution. But more than that these logics of organization involve the correlative regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that direct and specify the organization of Art institutions and symbiotic organizations like cultural funding bodies. Traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value are themselves organized according to a series of fixed cultural categories. The genres of Art worlds are fundamentally pinned to rigid high/low cultural distinctions that thus exemplify the manifestation of field logic. Traditional cultural institutions and cultural funding bodies are, with very few exceptions, organized according to the fixed categories of high-culture. We have visual Art institutions, Theatre companies, Dance companies, and publishing houses etcetera and, historically, each of these organizational categories (or genres) has operated with complete autonomy from its cultural siblings. Likewise, cultural funding bodies (whether public or private) tend to be organized in corresponding ways. The Australia Council, for example, is divided into five boards each with their own ‘expert’ staff, distinct funding allocations and policy initiatives – Dance, Literature, Music, Theatre and Visual Arts – and Australian film agencies like Screen Australia implement explicit ‘film’ funding objectives.

Bourdieu believes that each high-cultural genre achieves more and more autonomy as time unfolds. From the perspective of the field, the more established a cultural category becomes the more unique its identity, the more distanced it is from other cultural categories: the more pure the genre. I am, of course, referring to the cumulative function of the field critiqued in chapter one. As Bourdieu writes:
The evolution of the field of cultural production towards a greater autonomy is thus accompanied by a greater reflexivity, which leads each of the ‘genres’ to a sort of critical turning in on itself, on its own principle, on its own premises: and it becomes more and more frequent that the work of art, a vanitas which betrays itself as such, includes a sort of autoderision. In effect, to the extent that the field closes in on itself, a practical mastery of the specific attainments of the whole history of the genre which are objectified in the past works and recorded, codified and canonized by the whole corpus of professionals of conservation and celebration – historians of art and literature, exegetes, analysts – become part of the conditions of entry into the field of restricted production. (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 242)

The implication here is that the increasing autonomy of genre walks hand in hand with the increasing specialization of the cultural expert. Certainly, you rarely find curators, critics or ‘program managers’ of traditional institutions that do not make claims to a specific ‘area’ of expertise. Cultural expertise is almost always limited to a specific genre of cultural production and often to a particular period and/or geographic centre that is significant to that genre. These areas of speciality are endorsed through cultural qualifications like higher-degrees and/or specialized experience in Art institutions (exhibition histories, curatorial achievements and so on). The more specialized an Art administrator becomes the more expertise he/she is perceived as possessing and the more cultural capital he/she accrues. In the spheres of networked art, however, this kind of resolute specialization is far less common. As Rossiter notes after surveying the scholarly ‘Fibreculture’ (Fibreculture, 2009) email list on the topic of ‘creative labour and IP’ in the network society:

The range of creative activities any single person might undertake suggests that diversity rather than specialization is a defining feature of creative workers. This isn’t to say that specialization doesn’t occur in any particular idiom of creativity – I think it’s safe to assume that it would, but rather that respondents were not limited to one particular set of creative skills, trainings, or passions. Thus these respondents are clear exemplars of the so-called fragmented post-modern subject, traversing a range of institutional locations and socio-cultural dispositions. (Rossiter, 2006, pp. 138-139)

Yet from the perspective of traditional Art worlds Bourdieu’s observation of the increasing autonomy of high-cultural ‘genre’ seems plausible. The fact that modern debates regarding the purity of aesthetic forms can be traced back to early 20th century disputes about the high-cultural legitimacy of ‘fine Art photography’...
demonstrates the magnitude of the stabilizing forces at play in traditional Art worlds. Bourdieu himself engaged these debates in his collaborative work, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art* (Bourdieu et al., 1990) in which he reluctantly acknowledges that photography can, in fact, bear all the hallmarks of legitimate Art despite being an unarguably mass medium. His final position, however, is that ‘fine Art photography’ can never accrue stable high-cultural legitimacy because a photograph is, first and foremost, the social artefact of a mass medium. For Bourdieu, it is simply not possible for a mass medium to support Art. The emergence of video Art in the 1960s, however, recharged debates about the sustainability of rigid cultural categories more fervently than ever before (and Bourdieu never really engages these debates). In fact, it was during this time that Dick Higgins coined the term *Intermedia art* (Higgins, 1966). The Fluxus artist proposed the neologism in the service of his argument that:

> … media have broken down in their traditional forms, and have become merely puristic points of reference. The idea has arisen, as if by spontaneous combustion throughout the entire world, that these points are arbitrary and only useful as critical tools, in saying that such-and-such a work is basically musical, but also poetry. This is the intermedial approach, to emphasize the dialectic between the media. A composer is a dead man unless he composes for all the media and for his world. (ibid., p. 2)

While the frequent assessment that video art ‘emerged when the boundaries separating traditional art practices like sculpture, painting and dance were becoming blurred’ (Rush, 2003) is a common one it is not quite right. While it is certainly true that since the mid-20\textsuperscript{th} Century artists have flaunted traditional categorical boundaries with an increasing enterprise, the infrastructures that support artists have not been nearly so brazen. So despite the increasing prevalence of intermedial modes of cultural production, the large majority of contemporary Art worlds across the globe have remained faithful to the logics of the field. This fidelity to the field is a consequence of the fact that traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value have been augmented and bolstered by the ‘moribund technics’ of the traditional institution. The logics of the field and the logics of traditional institution are locked in interdependent relations that act as highly powerful territorializing forces: conventional regimes of value set it up and the traditional institution locks it down.
The problem, however (and a reality that Bourdieu simply failed or refused to see) is that emergent techno-cultural forms are often equally indebted to the histories and technics of film, visual Art, music, performance, dance, literature – not to mention a wide range of ‘popular’ media – and the list goes on. And yet (and as discussed in chapter three), within traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value, intermediality is often perceived not as a progression of the technics of cultural production but as a dilution of expertise and, therefore, a dilution of symbolic and cultural capital: a dilution of high-cultural value. What is more, the intermedial nature of networked art is the least troubling aspect of the classificatory issues that afflicts networked art’s access to contemporary Art worlds. What of the potential of networked art to blur the lines between, for example, the sciences and the creative industries? If the Art world cannot wrap their infrastructures around the intermedial nature of networked art how are cultural agencies and Art institutions going to accommodate its transdisciplinary potential? 6

Networked art blurs the boundaries not only of form and culture but also of broad social categories. This transdisciplinary characteristic is one of the reasons why networked art is so incompatible with the traditional logics of Art worlds and it is an incompatibility that will not be so easily overcome. The problems for networked art across global cultural landscapes are not the result of an army of retro-aesthetes standing like Centurions at the gates of Art worlds resolutely denying the slippery, enigmatic forms access and nor can these problems be overcome by an opposing army of techno-cultural enthusiasts. The problems networked art faces are a complex and deeply historical mix of institutional, economic, political, cultural and aesthetic dimensions and, therefore, will only find resolution in the complex and relatively slow-paced processes of systemic deterritorialization.

In Australia, the consequences of not quite knowing how to fit techno-culture into traditional cultural categories has seen techno-cultural forms awkwardly tacked on to the agendas of reluctant public Arts and film agencies under the banner of another rigid cultural category: ‘media arts’. But all this tactic has done is make futile attempts at imposing categorical stability where there is none. And as techno-cultural processes have permeated an increasing range of cultural categories we have seen
Australian cultural agencies abandon distinct ‘media arts’ objectives altogether. The justification for these steps away from the explicit support of ‘media arts’ are often framed by the argument that techno-culture has been subsumed by the Arts in general and that what needs to happen is the integration of digital strategies into the infrastructures of all formal Art categories. Yet this strategy still negates the most pressing organizational issue for the contemporary cultural climate: rigid cultural categories cannot accommodate the expansive and increasingly complex spheres of cultural production. This is the key point of this chapter and one of the primary observations of this thesis. Art is simply not limited to the formal cultural categories that outmoded field logics mandate. By attempting to integrate ‘digital strategies’ into standing logics of cultural organization the inter(trans)disciplinary nature of media arts is left largely unattended and the expansive sphere of techno-cultural forms are pushed even further to the margins of cultural funding and, therefore, to the margins of contemporary Art worlds. The solution for the issues at hand is not to attempt to fit emergent practice into existing cultural categories but rather to re-organize the way culture is managed.

**Funding ‘media arts’ in Australia: The Responsibility Gap**

In 2002, aware of the growing disparity between public visual Arts funding initiatives and the public funding initiatives that service the film and broadcasting industry, the then ‘Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts’ commissioned a report to inquire into the sustainability of the Australian visual Arts and crafts sector. The report would result in the Visual Arts and Crafts Strategy (VACS) that aimed to inject an additional fifty million AUD into the Australian visual Arts and crafts sector. One of the primary functions of VACS was to nominate a list of ‘Key’ Arts organizations. These ‘Key Orgs’ would be the recipients of VACS funds that were to be distributed by the Australia Council and the visual Arts bodies of State and Territory governments.

VACS was the single most important contemporary visual Arts intervention in the history of the Australian contemporary Art world. Despite, however, the existence of five dedicated media arts organizations in the early 2000s, the initial list of ‘Key
Orgs’ would only include one media arts organization, ANAT, under its ‘National and Service Organizations’ list. When ANAT was incorporated in 1988 its primary agenda was to act as a national body for the Australian media arts community. This agenda had the benefit of making ANAT more appealing to the Australia Council, as ANAT’s Executive Director Gavin Artz notes, “‘National’ makes a difference to the Australia Council, they need national programs and a national org is more a one-stop-shop’ (Artz, G 2009, pers. comm., 27 March). By the time VACS had nominated its Key Orgs in 2003, ANAT had been funded under the Australia Council’s national programs objectives for well over a decade. In other words, rather than reflecting any kind of measured commitment to media arts, ANAT’s capacity to fulfil ‘national program’ goals for the Australia Council was what assured its recognition as a Key Org.

Not surprisingly, the initial report for the ‘Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry’ made only the briefest of references to the increasing role of technology in the Arts. Moreover, despite repeated unsuccessful attempts on my part to seek clarification from the Australia Council regarding the token representation of media arts organizations in the 2003 VACS Key Org nominations, I am left to wonder if the particular omission of Melbourne’s Experimenta (a large ‘small’ media arts organization that is, and was at the time, very well established and highly esteemed within contemporary visual Arts communities) failed to qualify as a ‘key’ visual Arts organization because of its ‘hybrid’ status. Experimenta’s sponsors range across both public Arts and film agencies. ANAT, on the other hand, receives its funding almost exclusively from visual Arts funding bodies. Could it be that the inclusion of only one of five media arts organizations in the first VACS roll out was a classificatory judgement regarding the capacity of each organization to qualify as ‘visual Arts’ organizations? If so, these judgements would have to have been based on these organization’s funding histories as there is nothing inherent in any one of Australia’s dedicated media arts organizations that would locate them in one cultural category over another. In other words, it is highly possible that the exclusion of Experimenta, d/Lux, Brisbane’s Multimedia Art Asia Pacific (MAAP) and the Biennial of Electronic Arts Perth (BEAP) in the first roll out of the VACS initiative was based, at least in part, on
these organization’s failure to fit neatly into the cultural categories of ‘visual Art’ – a failure to fit into the logics of a cultural field.

At the same time that the ‘Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry’ was disregarding the large majority of Australian media arts organizations, the Victorian government was busy investing in the development of a newly incorporated cultural agency, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI). ACMI is a striking cultural institution that stands like a shining beacon of glass and chrome innovation in the cultural Mecca of Melbourne’s Federation Square. ACMI was purpose built to ‘celebrate, champion and explore the moving image in all its forms – film, television, games, new media and art’ (ACMI, 2009). Indeed, there was wide belief in the Australian media arts community (and even in the broader contemporary Art world) that ACMI would be a hub for media artists and audiences allowing the Australian media arts community to flourish and, therefore, usher in a new era of dedicated support for media arts (a point I will return to shortly). In fact, in the late 1990s and early 2000s public film funding agencies were integral to the support of Australian media arts. As David Cranswick argues, ‘funding from the AFC in the nineties was instrumental in new media organizations achieving any status at all’ (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December).

Gary Warner argues that the first dedicated public media arts initiative in Australia emerged through the AFC’s ‘New Image Research Fund’ that was a subsidiary of the ‘No Frills Fund’ that Warner lobbied hard for during the mid-1980s in response to the fact that, ‘at that point in time, almost all funding was going to 16mm documentary or feature script development. There was precious little in the way of experimental film funding’ (Warner, G 2009, pers. comm., 12 August). He continues:

By mid 1987 I could see that computer animation and interactivity (hypertext) were going to be fascinating new forms and argued at the AFC to slightly shift the emphasis of the fund toward these new media. Thus the New Image Research Fund. And people like Jon McCormack, Troy Innocent, John Tonkin, and many others received small grants. (Warner, G 2009, pers. comm., 12 August)
Both Warner and Cranswick speak of the synergies between Super 8, video Art, animation and code-play as if they were the most natural affiliates in the world and, indeed, the correlation does seem clear: they all work with moving images. Yet, as I have argued, these affiliations are no more natural or organic than those between Literature and hypertext or between aural composition and digital soundscapes or between abstract painting and digital image modulation, etcetera. Indeed, as outlined in chapter two, there are as many ‘media art’ histories as there are cultural categories and then some. The tendency to want to define techno-culture in terms of a specific cultural lineage reflects the desire to locate media arts within specific cultural categories. Yet this tendency is more than just a lingering attendance to traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. As we have seen in previous chapters, locating media arts within specific cultural histories has significant advantages as it allows media artists and administrators to make claims to specific funding agencies and for inclusion in specific types of institutional infrastructures. The problem, of course, is that claims to definitive categorical histories for emergent techno-culture will always be inadequate and, therefore, easily disputable from within public funding bodies and cultural institutions. Accordingly, despite the fact that the AFC demonstrated an impressive capacity for cultural innovation during the 1990s, Warner asserts that there was consistent infrastructural resistance within the agency regarding the funding of ‘Arts’ projects that was always going to hinder the AFC’s commitment to media arts in the long term:

It seemed there was also a slight unease in some political quarters – and I'm not sure how far this went to the Department level – about the funding of art oriented projects by the AFC, because this was supposedly the remit of the Australia Council. But we all know there wasn’t much early support there for new media arts – other than the funding of ANAT – and what did come along, came along very late in the day. (Warner, G 2009, pers. comm., 12 August)

The AFC’s erratic history with media arts is a prime example of the tactical initiatives of techno-cultural enthusiasts conflicting with the inherently conservative strategies of a traditional institution.
In 1998 the Australia Council finally came in to bat for the Australian media arts community by setting up a New Media Arts Board (NMAB). The NMAB was established to play a ‘leadership role in supporting media artists researching across science, technology and digital media contexts’ (Australian Film Commission et al., 2005). However, in 2005 the Australia Council claimed to be ‘restructuring’ its organization and decided to dissolve the NMAB. The Australia Council claimed that by dissolving the NMAB it was demonstrating that new media art no longer needed specialized representation to secure public funding. The implication being that new media art was not necessarily a specific sphere of practice but rather that emergent technologies offered a new range of tools for all Art forms. The Australia Council were attempting to table the decision as an overdue incorporation of a more sophisticated digital strategy across the entire organization. However, as David Cranswick observes:

The collapse of the New Media Arts Board was a bit disingenuous because the argument was, ‘You (the new media arts community) don’t need to be special any more, you’ve reached this kind of maturity where it can be accommodated and it’s just normal … but there’s no dedicated fund, there’s no corporate knowledge or expertise in the people who are assessing funding regarding what strategic or R & D benefits are manifest in each application. The New Media Arts Board was made up entirely of peers and people who knew about the community and the practice, so if you started talking about Web 3 or if someone was saying, ‘I’m going to write this software’, the people there could say, ‘that’s already been done or they don’t know what they’re talking about’ or whatever. There’s only one new media person on the Visual Arts Board so when push comes to shove it is just simple numbers, they’re always going to get outvoted. And it’s a very specialized area when people are talking about code. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

So, what was tabled as a move towards the holistic incorporation of a more sophisticated digital strategy was actually completely devoid of an explicit ‘digital’ consideration. In January 2005 a community meeting was held to discuss the Australian media art community’s concerns regarding the dissolution of the NMAB. The meeting was convened by ANAT, d/Lux/MediaArts, Experimenta and Australian contemporary arts magazine RealTime. At this meeting Jennifer Bott defended the decision by asserting that ‘It’s not just a board which validates an artform’ (Gallasch, 2005). This quote harbours a defensive acknowledgement that
‘validation’ (or legitimacy) was still a key issue for media arts at the time the Australia Council was arguing that the practice could successfully compete for funding against traditional Art forms. It might not be ‘just a board that validates an artform’ but it is patently evident that a dedicated national agenda plays an enormously important role in supporting an emergent practice in a contemporary Art world in which there are few other, if any, alternative sources for the generation of income. There can be no question that relations between public cultural agencies and cultural institutions are generative. The agendas of public funding bodies define the agendas of cultural institutions and these agendas define the parameters of Art worlds that inform the agendas of public funding bodies and round and round it goes.

In the wake of the NMAB dissolution, new media arts organizations have become increasingly isolated from the mainstream contemporary Arts community and funding opportunities have become even further and farther between. As Melinda Rackham notes, ‘ANAT has operated over the past 5 years on the same fixed Australia Council core funding despite doubling in program size, turn over and staffing’ (Rackham, M 2009, pers. comm., 10 October). Rackham refers us to a particularly important point. In the late 2000s, a time when network culture has become more pervasive than ever and offers up an increasingly vital system of tools for cultural production, the Australian contemporary Art world has all but completely dismissed this critical site of growth and change. This is precisely why there is no clear discourse on ‘networked art’ in Australian cultural funding bodies and mainstream Art institutions and why the only techno-cultural term with any currency in Australia is the nebulous and now rather antiquated term ‘media arts’. Much as Cranswick notes, ‘the Australia Council think, “oh, well, we’ve got ANAT and that’ll cover new media and that’s as big as it’s ever going to get”’ (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December). Key figures in the Australian contemporary Art world have completely failed to comprehend that emergent techno-culture simply cannot be dismissed as a niche.

Emergent techno-culture reflects a paradigmatic shift in the way we produce, understand and engage cultural artefacts and if the Australian contemporary Art
world fails to acknowledge the magnitude of this shift then it will cease to be able to frame itself as an administrator of contemporary culture. More and more we see emergent techno-cultural forms slipping effortlessly across an increasing range of cultural categories (and beyond) and in a field that requires clear categorical distinction this is a real problem. As Cranswick continues:

All our worst fears regarding the dissolution of the New Media Arts Board are being realized. Exactly what we said would happen is happening, exactly. At the time, The Australia Council said, ‘well it’s actually better for new media art because the pool of money is bigger, so you can compete for more money’ but we’re competing with the mainstream which means we’re automatically sidelined. Unless the Visual Arts Board is imputing into that process to monitor and say, ‘actually out of the kinds of overall art forms you’ve funded, new media has fallen down’ but they don’t have the power in that process to say, ‘you have to fund new media’. The Australia Council does not have a digital strategy. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

The sense within the Australian media arts community that the dissolution of the NMAB came out of nowhere, however, is incorrect. The fact that the original ‘Report for the Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry’ only nominated one new media arts organization and failed to acknowledge the existence of an increasingly vital ‘media arts’ community was representative of a broader dismissal of techno-culture within the Australian contemporary Art world. Again, the Australia Council and the Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry did not make their decisions in a vacuum. Their initiatives and ‘restructurings’ are the result of their investment in the network of relations that composes the Australian contemporary Art world. For example, when I interviewed Blair French – the Executive Director of the Sydney based Artspace – I encountered a familiar resistance to the emergent spheres of technology-based Art. Artspace is one of Australia’s most highly lauded contemporary Art institutions that, ironically, claims to have an explicit commitment to ‘interactive and other forms of developing technologies’ (Artspace, 2009). When I asked French to outline the specifics of Artspace’s ‘digital strategy’, he replied:

You know, I think what’s happened is that there’s a degree to which organizations like ourselves are facing the situation of there being such a diversity of possible platforms that are both physically located within a site and physically dispersed that there are so many possibilities, or certainly pushes towards, working outside the gallery space and other physical sites; so much
about communicative processes and development of communities of which the Internet is a component. So I guess in a sense our decision at the moment, or the one that we are enacting by default, is to use new media more as a tool than as a core-programming platform, so as a tool for our current more physical existing models of practice. As we grow that will grow out, I mean in our current business plan, which is a four year cycle business plan, there is a point at which we’ve actually indicated in, whatever it is, another 18 months time, one of the new strategies we’ll be rolling out will be an expansion of online content and in the first instance it will be more of an educational tool. At the moment I’d say our online content is promotional and informational, the next step will be educational and the final step will be creative programming. Now those all depend, and that’s probably over another five year cycle from now, on a certain growth in resources and a certain focus in the organization. (French, B 2008, pers. comm., 3 June)

The organizational strategy that Artspace is ‘enacting by default’ is, of course, a tacit acknowledgement that the organization is bound to traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that define its material and expressive dimensions and predetermine the scope of its programmes. Contemporary visual Art is played out in white cubes and, at a stretch, black boxes. I asked French if Artspace had any strategies in place for exhibiting networked art, to which he replied, ‘It [the exhibition of networked art] will succeed or fail on the quality of the artist thinking about that, not just the quality of the content but the way the artist approaches it’ (French, B 2008, pers. comm., 3 June). The implication here is that the onus of responsibility for the successful distribution of networked art rests on the artist’s capacity to tailor their works to the material dimensions of the traditional exhibition complex. The potential of institutional change – an investment in revising organizational logics and rethinking the role of space and time in the production, distribution and reception of ‘art’ – were issues that French had not considered. Again, French’s position here reflects field logic. There is a sense that the Art world is set, any new cultural form submitted to the field has to work out how to perform within its predetermined logics – if a form cannot adapt then it doesn’t belong. Or perhaps there is an assumption that organizational transformation happens organically, ‘as we grow, that will grow’ but the transformation required here is not likely to unfold naturally, it will, as I continue to argue, require a conscious engagement of new and costly logics of organization.
It is no coincidence that Artspace’s vague commitment to the shifting technics of contemporary Art making is in keeping with the Australia Council’s dissolution of the NMAB and the omission of any kind of digital strategy under VACS. I am not suggesting that Artspace is directly implicated in the dissolution of the NMAB or the lack of provisions for media arts under VACS, but rather that Artspace’s limited engagement with emergent techno-cultural forms is representative of a cultural climate that makes claims to cultural innovation but that operates within very rigid models of cultural production, distribution and reception. This is precisely how Bourdieu’s field functions – it is open to transformation but only within the limits of its predetermined boundaries.

The reason why the Australian contemporary Art world has seemed to close its once open doors to media arts is the same reason that Tate had to reassess its capacity to engage networked art and the Whitney’s Artpoht has become the static relic of an unfulfilled promise. The contemporary techno-cultural climate undermines the organizational logics of the institutions that drive Art worlds. Emergent techno-cultural forms sit across the boundaries of classification, they roam freely across borders of cultural distinction and traditional regimes of cultural and aesthetic value and they make a mockery of the material, legal and political infrastructures that define traditional institution. Even when dedicated media arts organizations are not constrained by bricks and mortar galleries they are tethered to the institutional agendas of a very limited range of government funding bodies. And without new more flexible platforms for the administration of emergent techno-cultural forms, contemporary culture stays tethered to these outmoded institutional templates. Again, as Rossiter argues, ‘there is an urgent need for new institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 13).

Interestingly, in November 2009 the Australia Council announced a ‘strategic priority area’ dedicated to ‘Arts content for the digital era’ or artsdigitalera. The artsdigitalera initiative is the brainchild of the newly appointed Digital Program Officer Fee Plumley (a former project manager for ANAT). The artsdigitalera program is not directly affiliated with any specific Australia Council Arts Board or Office and Plumley states that her role as ‘Digital Program Officer’ is ‘split between
the Major Performing Arts Board and the rest of the Australia Council (Plumley, F 2009, pers. comm., 5 November). The artsdigitalera initiative, then, is a broad organizational strategy rather than a board-specific (or form specific) initiative. In fact, it is fair to say that artsdigitalera is the first serious attempt at implementing a holistic digital strategy by the Australia Council (since its promise to do so in 2005). The artsdigitalera launched a new ‘Digital Culture Fund’ (DCF) – worth 160,000 AUD – that is intended to support the processes of digital art making (with an explicit emphasis on live events). This means, as Plumley notes, that while media arts organizations are eligible to apply for DFC funds ‘we are keen that artists lead the applications’ (Plumley, F 2009, pers. comm., 5 November). When I asked Plumley if there were any plans to extend the artsdigitalera focus to media arts organizations she replied:

… artsdigitalera already is an additional cash-injection into media arts practice generally. At the moment, at least, we don't plan to put that into any one/more organisation/s, but who's to say what the future of these pilots, or indeed the strategic initiative might hold. We're certainly trying to keep in direct contact with media arts orgs (as indeed with any arts org/artist). (Plumley, F 2009, pers. comm., 5 November)

The artsdigitalera programme is an exciting step forward for the Australia Council but the fact that it is artist-driven as opposed to organization-driven means that it doesn’t necessarily change things for Australian media arts organizations. Without solid administrative platforms networked artists are not adequately supported and the considerable legal and infrastructural problems that face networked art remain unattended. The irony of the artsdigitalera initiative is that Plumley acknowledges that ‘it’s not always the place of a funding body to be seen to ‘lead the way’’ (Plumley, F 2009, pers. comm., 5 November) and yet the Australia Council has no explicit plan to support the organizations that bear that particular responsibility (media arts organizations).13

What follows, then, is a look at how three of Australia’s most high-profile media arts organizations (ACMI, d/Lux/MediArts, and Experimenta) have become significantly impeded in their capacities to support the full scope of emergent techno-cultural
practice. These organizations are all constrained in different ways by their locations in specific networks of resource dependence. The specificities of these impediments, however, are all consequences of the media art organization’s awkward incorporation into a contemporary Art assemblage that is tightly organized according to the logics of the field.14

ACMI

One of the key consequences of the dissolution of the NMAB is that Australian media arts organizations with strong filmic backgrounds (namely: d/Lux and Experimenta) have remained highly dependent on public film agencies and, therefore, have developed an organizational bias towards the ‘moving image’. As DeLanda notes, ‘the less alternative sources there are for a given resource the more concentrated it is’, which means, ‘controlling organizations acquire the capacity to influence the behaviour of the dependent ones’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 77). This explains the comparatively heavy emphasis on ‘video art’ in the Australian media arts community.15 Media art and the ‘moving image’ have become somewhat synonymous in Australia. This is largely because video art has achieved mainstream high-cultural legitimacy.16 I am certainly not suggesting that video Art is passé but I am asserting that it does not necessarily engage or reflect the most pressing technocultural issues (issues of spatio-temporal plasticity, of connectedness and the reality of living digital lives) and should no longer exemplify the ‘cutting-edge’ of media art and when it does it reflects a climate of stagnant techno-cultural engagement. Certainly, when I asked Blair French why the diversity and scope of the Australian media arts community is so poorly represented within the Australian contemporary Art world, he replied:

There probably was a time when it wasn’t. In the early to mid 90s Australia was really ‘the’ place for media arts and a lot of the professionals of that time have now gone on to significant things internationally. Why that’s no longer the case is the big question…and a lot of people talk that down to cultural conservatism and financial conservatism, in particular. I mean, look at ACMI, that’s somewhere that could’ve been a real leader but now … I think it is cultural conservatism … There generally needs to be a commodity-based outcome for this culture. (French, B 2008, pers. comm., 3 June)
In *Interzone*, Darren Tofts corroborates French’s observation that the Australian media arts community had great expectations that ACMI would integrate ‘media arts into different contexts of access and reception’ (Tofts, 2005, p. 134). However, despite the fact that ACMI was conceived as a ‘world leading’ and ‘state-of-the-art’ (ACMI, 2009) cultural institution, it was assembled according to the logic of the traditional Art institutions (complete with ranging exhibition halls) and is, consequently, just as incapable of organizing social relations with emergent technocultural forms as the traditional Art institution. ACMI is an institution of the State; it is a statutory authority and has a consolidated funding relationship with Film Victoria. Strictly speaking, however, ACMI is not a dedicated media arts organization, it is an Art institution dedicated to the ‘moving image’ with an explicit media arts agenda. However, it is included in this discussion because it has played an integral role in the Australian media arts community and because it is the most well funded cultural institution with an *explicit media arts objective* in Australia. ACMI could be Australia’s Tate. Indeed, it did start out with an ambitious commitment to networked art.

In 2001 ACMI commissioned a work titled *acmipark* that was an impressive full-scale ‘networked’ installation. ACMI is particularly significant because it is the only Australian cultural institution to attempt an exhibition of networked art on the scale of *acmipark*. When I interviewed ACMI’s Games Curator, Helen Stuckey, via email in November 2008, and asked her about the work she replied:

> The work was I believe a very significant work historically. And an important example of institutions exploring the possibilities of network art. It was a very ground breaking work and a far more sophisticated environment than any cultural organisation had previously attempted in the network space. *acmipark* was created by artist's selectparks (Julian Oliver, Chad Chatterton and Andrea Blundel). It was a virtual place (a networked game) that visitors could download the client server for free and then log in from anywhere in the world. It was also a soundpark that encouraged its visitors to explore and work together to create social opportunities and sound compositions. (Stuckey, H 2008, pers. comm., 17 November).

Not surprisingly, the issues faced by *acmipark* were identical to those faced by Tate Net Art as it attempted to carve out strategies for the exhibition of networked art in
Tate Modern. The primary issues for *acmipark* were copyright risk, user management and cost and any attempts to circumnavigate these issues meant compromising the potential of the work. Much as Stuckey notes in a candid post-project analysis of *acmipark* titled ‘keep off the grass. *acmipark* – a case study of a virtual public place’ (and it is worth including the entire passage as it is such an insightful analysis of the issues at hand):

Copyright issues and a duty of care to other visitors/players affected the type of access that could be supported. Changes were made to the underground concert hall designed for the live performance of electronic music to a ‘live’ audience of avatars. The original concept was that it could support artist–initiated performances allowing for improv and collaboration with others … ACMI’s concern about possible copyright breaches through the user streaming of copyrighted content combined with the risk of obscene or offensive lyrics felt this freedom of access was too high a risk in an area they were not resourced to manage. The concert hall therefore exists as gated space requiring permission and approvals to access its streaming potential and is unable to support any organic community growth. A proposed graffiti and stencil art option was also considered problematic due to the possibility of lewd or inappropriate interventions and the civil ramifications of condoning an act illegal in the real space of Federation Square. What was lost in these changes was a sense of the individual having a unique identity in the world with opportunities for expression. Lost too was the ability to actively alter the world or their individual character within it … When you enter acmipark the End User License Agreement (EULA) presents a list of rules that are the equivalent of the conditions of entry for your physical presence at ACMI. In acmipark, however, this behaviour policing can be enforced by design. In removing all possibilities for transgression it also removes possibilities for innovation.

In placing such corporate constraint on the design of acmipark, lost too was the opportunity to identify with a community. Due to ACMI’s stipulations it was closed to the electronic music, stencil art and open source communities to which its creators, selectparks, belonged. By requiring a high–end PC, broadband and technical sophistication to access, it was also beyond the reach of most casual visitors. Further complicating access was the fact that due to budget constraints it was not rigorously tested across a range of hardware or as user friendly as commercial game releases. In addition the work was understood and supported by ACMI in terms of more traditional non–networked installation artwork and an audience of online users was never specifically sought. (Stuckey, 2006)

As chapter four demonstrated, the issues presented when pursuing the exhibition of networked art not only reveal the importance of rethinking space and the foundational institutional shifts this kind of deterritorialization prompts, but the more behemoth undertaking of shifting the ethico-legal infrastructure that underpins
outmoded copyright restrictions. Stuckey would go on to write in our email correspondence: ‘Please note that the issues faced by acmipark were of their time and may not be issues for ACMI anymore when addressing such works. As we learnt many things from the process’ (Stuckey, H 2008, pers. comm., 17 November). I am not aware, however, of the implementation of a single strategy (in Australia or otherwise) that could overcome even one of the problems faced by ACMI in facilitating acmipark (that would not restrict or distort the work in a debilitating way). Moreover, how Stuckey can be sure that the issues posed by acmipark were ‘of their time’ is unclear, as ACMI has not attempted to engage a networked artwork since, certainly not on the scale of acmipark (and, to my knowledge, nor has any other Arts institution in Australia). She notes, ‘although we have discussed a number of other potential network game projects, suitable funding has not been identified to develop work of this scale’ (Stuckey, H 2008, pers. comm., 17 November). It is not really surprising that ACMI cannot find ‘suitable funding’ for networked art as it cannot appeal to ‘Arts’ funding bodies because it has a consolidated funding line from Film Victoria. And defining ‘networked art’ within the parameters of Film Victoria’s objectives would almost certainly lead to the same resistance that Gary Warner experienced at the then AFC. It would seem that the widespread faith in ACMI’s ability to be a cure all for Australian media arts was unduly optimistic.

Overcoming a global lack of strategy regarding the issues exemplified by acmipark is a significant undertaking. And as a traditional contemporary cultural institution with significant investment in its bricks and mortar base, ACMI is pretty well stuck in the same position as Artspace, the Whitney, Tate and every other traditional institutional form that can see and feel the cultural shifts around them but are subject to a range of institutional restraints that delimit their capacity to interact with the transforming cultural climate. This new era of cultural engagement requires a shift in how conceive the administration of art. However, perhaps more importantly, as a cultural institution with a dedicated moving-image agenda, ACMI has a range of other objectives to which it must attend. In other words, its institutional identity does not rest on how well it represents or supports the Australian media arts community.
ACMI, therefore, is not compelled to invest in the timely and costly development of exhibition and distribution strategies to aid the development of networked art.

**d/Lux/MediaArts**

The Sydney based d/Lux/MediaArts, on the other hand, is a dedicated media arts organization. It is not an institution of the state but rather has a long history as a not-for-profit ‘moving image’ arts organization. d/Lux began its life in the early 1980s as ‘Sydney Super 8 Group’ it then transitioned into ‘Sydney Intermedia Network’ and, by 1996, had evolved into d/Lux/MediaArts. Accordingly, d/Lux has had a long synergistic history with the AFC (now Screen Australia). When it expanded into the territory of media arts, however, d/Lux found itself eligible for Arts funding and was able to develop relationships with public Arts bodies as well. But instead of being made more secure by this access to a range of funding bodies, the small Sydney based media arts organization has found itself slowly muscled out of both film and Arts funding in recent years. For a start, d/Lux has struggled to convince the AFC that digital network technologies are relevant to the future of the moving-image, as Cranswick recalls:

>I remember when d/Lux was transitioning from Sydney Intermedia into d/Lux, they went to the AFC wanting to do net based and online stuff and the AFC said ‘what’s the internet got to do with filmmaking?’ And a few years later when we went to them with the mobile platform for ‘Mobile Journeys’ and what have you, I’ll never forget, they said ‘why would we be interested in that? It’s a juvenile medium, it’s something my daughter uses for text’ and I was thinking ‘I don’t believe what I’m hearing’ but that’s the mindset. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

What is more, d/Lux is the only VACS nominated Key Org (d/Lux gained Key Org status in 2005 after the dissolution of the NMAB) that has failed to secure a corresponding Australia Council endowment. As I mentioned earlier, VACS funds are locally distributed by state and territory governments and nationally distributed by the Australia Council. There is a somewhat informal agreement between state/territory Arts funding bodies and the Australia Council that the national Arts agency will match the VACS allocations of local governments. This distribution
strategy gives local funding bodies that ability to define/respond to the cultural parameters of their own territories and the Australia Council’s role is to support the expertise of these local decisions. When I asked Cranswick why d/Lux failed to secure a corresponding Australia Council endowment he replied:

They [the Australia Council] just wriggled out of it. They just said that they’re not formally obliged to match VACS money … I can tell you that the major cultural organizations of NSW – the Opera House, the AGNSW, the Sydney Theatre Company – they will be ok. If you look at the spread of funding for the Arts in NSW, it’s the Opera House, it’s AGNSW, it’s the STC. That’s what we do. It’s clear. It’s just massive. You just do the numbers and it’s clear. The Opera House will pick up millions in public funding in 2008 for renovating which is great but there’s this complacency where they [Arts funding bodies] go, ‘well we’ve got an Opera House, we’ve got a State gallery, we’ve got a theatre and a contemporary theatre and a band of contemporary galleries’, but there’s no commitment or trust in the new generation of cultural practice, it’s that baby-boomer thing, they’ve got what they want and what they understand. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

I have not been able to get a clear answer from the Australia Council in respect of this unique decision. Whatever the reason for the decision, the Australia Council’s decision not to match d/Lux’s VACS allocation is in keeping with its decision to dissolve the NMAB but in direct contradiction with its justification that media arts can now stand shoulder to shoulder with formal Art forms at public funding tables. It is the notable disparity that is most striking: Why is d/Lux the only Key Org that does not receive a corresponding Australia Council allocation? Again, we see field logic at play here as the Australia Council effectively overrides the judgement of ArtsNSW regarding the value of d/Lux as they constrain and delimit what qualifies as Art. If there was ever any doubt that the collapse of the NMAB was, in fact, a de-legitimization of media arts in Australia then the Australia Council’s unique dismissal of d/Lux should provide some assurance.

Cranswick also suggests in the previous quote that the Australia Council’s dismissal was in fact a contextual judgement call regarding the cultural identity of Sydney and the role of media arts within that landscape. The suggestion is that Sydney is a site of mainstream culture – major Art galleries, major theatre companies and cultural icons
– and resistant to cultural innovation or experimentation. Certainly Artspace’s Blair French seems to agree:

On the whole, Sydney’s not a city culture that supports experimentation for its own sake … there’s a very strong link between the commercial gallery sector and the institutional sector in Sydney and there’s not really any University gallery sector of any strength in Sydney to provide a circuit breaker or a thinking space. Artspace is it … There are still some institutions that are utterly frightened of putting a video projection on the wall and these are major State reserves. (French, B 2008, pers. comm., 3 June)

If Cranswick is correct then this is a very clear territorial marginalization of media arts by the Australia Council. The Australia Council is making a judgement call about what kinds of Art certain territories can sustain (and overriding local judgements regarding this sustainability). Rather than seeing the lack of media arts opportunities in Sydney as a site that needs development and thus more funding, the Australia Council reinforces the marginalization of the form/s. No matter which way you slice it, the Australia Council’s marginalization of d/Lux is an overt judgement call about the value of media art as Art. It becomes clear here that the Australia Council operates according to field logic defining Art with a capital A and viewing anything outside that oppositional framework as outside its realm of responsibility. And, as we have seen, marginalized cultural forms are easily drawn into cycles of de-legitimization: as public funding bodies dismiss the form cultural institutions tend to follow and a chicken-or-the-egg dilemma ensues. Indeed, media arts have literally been pushed out of Sydney. Accordingly, there is a disproportionate emphasis on regional touring within d/Lux programs and when I asked Cranswick whether this was because d/Lux found it hard to secure exhibitions in Sydney, he responded:

Trying to get a show at Artspace or ACP [Australian Centre for Photography] is impossible. We don’t have anywhere to show it. These kinds of spaces in Sydney are locked into a mid-nineties model of contemporary Art and they will remain there, there is no indication that they will do anything but that. Australia has been regarded as one of the best countries in the world for new media but it’s in danger of losing that status thanks to what is essentially a funding crisis for new media organizations. Which is why we tour stuff as well because they show at P-Space [Sydney based Arts organizations Performance Space] or whatever and 500 people see it and then the show just evaporates. But we pick it up and groom it for touring and we can show it to audiences of 20,000 in 12 regional galleries across Australia and that’s good for regional audiences and
it’s good for developing infrastructure. Last week I took a show to Broken Hill and it was all just set up and I just had to press ‘play’ whereas three years ago I would’ve had to spend all week there showing them how to do it. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

This means that the regional galleries of NSW now have far better technological infrastructures for the engagement of media art forms than our bastions of contemporary Art in what is apparently one of Australia’s primary cultural centres. The media arts situation in Sydney is particularly dire. Media arts have all but been excluded from the contemporary Art world with Sydney’s ‘Performance Space’ being the only notable exception; but one ‘traditional’ Arts organization cannot carry an entire community of emergent techno-cultural practice. It is not surprising, then, that when I asked Cranswick whether he thought d/Lux should be participating in the development of new strategies for the exhibition and distribution of networked art outside existing models of exhibition, distribution and funding, he said, ‘Absolutely … but we can’t get the money to do it’ (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December). This is a critical point, developing alternative organizational strategies requires enough financial buoyancy to commit the requisite resources to the processes of research and development. In other words, developing funding alternatives requires funding. d/Lux desperately needs to make the ‘scalar transformation’ into a new institutional form but its dwindling resources are limiting its capacity to adapt, which, paradoxically, it needs to do in order to compensate for dwindling resources. Despite the fact that Cranswick recognizes that emergent techno-culture is patently incompatible with the traditional logics of the Australian contemporary Art world, d/Lux has literally become trapped on the margins of this very conservative cultural field.

**Experimenta**

Formed in 1986, Experimenta is a dedicated new media arts organization with a strong visual Arts background. Like d/Lux, however, Experimenta draws funds from both Arts and film agencies: the Australia Council, Screen Australia, Arts Victoria and the City of Melbourne. Melbourne has the most active private Arts funding
sector in Australia and while it is still a weak resource in comparison to the US and the UK (particularly in regards to ‘avant-garde’ forms like ‘media art’), Experimenta has access to a small pool of corporate sponsorships in addition to its public funding allocations. Compared to d/Lux, then, Experimenta is well nourished. However, compared to ACMI it is still a very small Arts organization. A part of Experimenta’s mission statement claims:

With our society so powerfully driven by technological change and the information economy, Experimenta’s mission to stimulate innovation and enrich all of our lives into the 21st century is not only acutely relevant, but also increasingly important. (http://www.experimenta.org).

However, when I interviewed Experimenta’s then Executive Director, Liz Hughes, in 2008 regarding the organization’s commitment to the ranging issues of supporting and exhibiting networked art, she noted:

One of the curatorial decisions I made when I started at Experimenta in 2002, was to showcase interactive media artworks that offered experiences beyond the point and click interface. This was partly to showcase the variety of interactive artworks that were on offer – as there were lots of amazing artworks that offered novel and surprising interactive experiences. Also I personally prefer to experience artworks in a way that doesn't feel like I am sitting at my workstation in my office … At present we have no plans to show net art, however, things change quickly at Experimenta as we are a small flexible organisation … (Hughes, L 2008, pers. comm., 2 July)

The interesting thing here is that while Hughes acknowledges the need for the development of new strategies for the exhibition and distribution of networked art, she does not seem to see Experimenta as playing a role in that development. In fact, she would go on to say:

Experimenta's main area is the exhibition, commissioning and touring of media arts and we are very interested in attracting large and new audiences to this area so we tend to show work that is robust and that will capture the imagination of a broad range of audiences … ANAT is more focused on providing research and development opportunities for artists and collaborations with industry, as well as exploring new exhibition platforms such as mobile phones. DLUX is also interested in producing works for mobile phones and exploring new platforms for media artwork. (Hughes, L 2008, pers. comm., 2 July)
Hughes seems to pass the buck here and suggest that the issues of strategy development for emergent techno-cultural platforms are ANAT or d/Lux’s concern but not Experimenta’s. This strikes me as a profound underestimation of the kind of development required for the implementation of new modes and sites of techno-cultural engagement. What is more, Hughes doesn’t seem to view Australian media arts organizations as subsidiary components of the same mission but rather autonomous bodies each with their own specific areas of attendance. It is as though Australian media arts organizations are perceived here as operating on parallel lines. Cranswick blames this kind of insular perspective on a growing inter-organizational competition that is a common outcome in climates of dwindling resources. He notes ‘the landscape of new media arts in this country was very cooperative and collaborative. But that’s what’s changing because of the increasingly poor funding’ (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December).

What is more, Hughes’ position also reflects an unquestioning faith in the traditional Art institution as the guardian of high-cultural legitimacy, which undoubtedly serves Experimenta well in terms of access to funding. The organization talks in terms that mainstream cultural agencies and Art institutions can understand through statements like ‘attracting large new audiences to this area’ with ‘work that is robust and that will capture the imagination of a broad range of audiences’. However, it seems that by tabling itself in terms of mainstream contemporary Art objectives Experimenta has neutralized its own desire (and responsibility) to innovate. Don’t get me wrong. What Experimenta does is critical to the sustainability of media arts in Australia. Exposing mainstream contemporary Art audiences to media art is a crucial component of networked art’s future cultural legitimacy and capacity to generate cultural and economic capital.

The views expressed by Hughes, however, while undoubtedly reassuring to cultural funding bodies and contemporary Art institutions, are somewhat inconsistent with Experimenta’s self-defined mission to expose mainstream audiences to what is really new about the techno-cultural landscape. Experimenta should keep doing what it is doing but it should be doing it in close consultation with other Australian media art organizations, as a component part of organized networks of ‘networked art’
initiatives. As Rossiter so aptly observes, ‘Those working in the creative sector cannot simply rely on old working patterns associated with art worlds, they have to find new ways of “working” the new cultural economy, which increasingly means holding down three or even four “projects” at once’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 139).

The narrow scope of ‘media arts’ that Experimenta engages is a consequence of its obligation to the logic of the traditional institution and its location in a particular network of resource dependence in which there is little support for techno-cultural innovation. Yet networked art communities need all hands on deck to grapple with the significant issues of exhibiting and distributing emergent practice (issues, for a start, of space, access and infrastructure). You cannot ‘organize networks’ and usher in new institutional forms if no one is willing to participate – if there is no network. This is one of the primary differences between traditional logics of institutions (in which external forces are carefully disciplined) and new institutional forms (in which openness to the renewal and reinvention of external forces is essential). It is here on the margins of the margins, in a poorly funded and increasingly fragmented ‘media arts community’ (where the full scope of emergent techno-cultural practice is so inadequately represented), that ANAT has begun to take steps towards institutional innovation and reformation that is unique to the case-studies of this thesis. It is precisely the tenuous circumstances of the Australian media arts community that have sponsored ANAT’s moves towards the organized networks of the new institutional form.

**Emerging Assemblages**

The Adelaide based ANAT is the largest media arts organization in Australia – and the only media arts organization that has been successful at implementing a more expansive ‘networked art’ agenda – receiving the majority of its funding through a consolidated funding line from the Australia Council with an additional allocation from ArtsSA under the VACS initiative. While it is still a very poorly funded contemporary Arts organization, by Australian mainstream Art institutional standards, it is the most well funded media arts organization in Australia. Since 2005, however, (in keeping with the Australia Council’s de-legitimization of media arts)
ANAT’s national funding allocation has remained the same despite the organizations demonstrated growth. Accordingly, ANAT has become increasingly aware of the limitations imposed on its development as an organization, which has prompted them to adopt a new logic of organization. Much as Melinda Rackham noted in an ‘ANAT Communications’ members email in early 2009:

The founding rationale of supporting new artforms, developed and exhibited by ANAT and like organizations, has changed. We now do much more than run programs that redistribute Government funding – we develop partnerships, seek sponsorships and out of necessity are pursuing income-producing strategies to become self-supporting. (Rackham, 2009)

Funding for the Arts in Australia has become out of step with the cultural landscape because it is tethered to the logics of traditional institutions, which are tethered to outmoded regimes of cultural and aesthetic value. Which is why the media arts organization must rethink its function and make the necessary moves towards financial self-sustainability. In 2008, as discussed in chapter five, ANAT’s then General Manager Gavin Artz developed the groundbreaking concept of ‘Ancillary IP’ and he did so precisely because:

ANAT has one revenue stream that can be cut off at anytime. Grants don’t give a surplus to pursue interesting ideas. ‘Reskin’ [an ANAT program initiative] showed me how great these artists were at rapid prototyping and coming up with IP. (Artz, G 2009, pers. comm., 27 March)

Artz’ vision is to filter funds generated from ANAT’s Ancillary IP profits through a ‘for-profit’ subsidiary and then back into ANAT’s not-for-profit core programming agenda. The most intriguing aspect of the ‘Ancillary IP’ model is that it does not diminish the artist’s control over the proprietary rights of the artwork as a whole. What is more, the Ancillary IP model provides an opportunity for return-on-investment (for both artists and investors) without exposing the creative process to commercial coercion, which could well allow arts organizations to become ‘self-supporting’ thus providing artists with a healthier slate of opportunities. If the Ancillary IP model is properly executed the ancillary product is a consequence of a larger creative process not the impetus. Therefore, the supporting Arts organization
can maintain an objective distance from any commercial gain or, put more directly, it cannot be accused of an overt commercial agenda because any potential profit will simply be an unpredictable by-product of an unencumbered initial investment. All artists would sign a contract at the outset of their grants/residencies/etcetera that provides funders with access to a percentage of whatever commercially viable ancillary products are created.

The details of the contractual agreement would be critical for Ancillary IP deals – particularly from the perspective of the artist’s rights – which is precisely why Artz observes that ‘Entrepreneurship training is sorely needed in this new world for artists’ (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 11 September). The potential of Ancillary IP, however, could not become criteria for funding; if it did the Arts organization would be in R & D territory which could well destabilize its relations with public and private Arts funding bodies, which, at least in the short term and quite possibly in the long term, will still be important links to maintain (a point I will return to shortly).

The downside from a business perspective, of course, is that Ancillary IP is not a predictive or particularly stable model as only a very small percentage of artists are likely to produce a commercially viable ancillary product. However, the upside is that when ancillary products do surface they will likely produce an ongoing return. Moreover, because Arts organizations like ANAT often perform a primarily brokering role between investors/facilitators and artists there is also the issue of how to divide Ancillary IP between all potential players. ANAT experienced precisely this kind of hiccup in its inaugural Ancillary IP deal, as Artz explains, ‘we had started working on our first IP development, but the plug was pulled on ANAT's involvement and the IP given to project partners’ (Artz, G 2009, pers. comm., 13 March). It is not a perfect strategy but it is a profoundly innovative one that provides a unique platform from which networked art organizations can begin to generate their own funds, define their own agendas, invest in their own development, in emergent cultural practice and, eventually, expose the Australian contemporary Art world to the real potential of the contemporary cultural landscape.
In early 2009, however, ANAT became embroiled in an internal schism that saw a very traditional Art world agenda pitted firmly against an explicitly commercial one. The schism revolved around ANAT’s desire to seek commercial outcomes, such as the Ancillary IP model, through the products and processes of the artists it supports. The end result of the schism saw Melinda Rackham resign from her post as Executive Director of ANAT and Gavin Artz subsequently assigned to the role. Rackham believes that the Ancillary IP model is dangerous. She argues that commercial agendas within Arts organizations inevitably corrupt the integrity of the creative process. As she notes:

Artists working with new and emerging technologies of media, wearable, virtual, augmented, mobile or gaming, have a remarkable opportunity and a corresponding responsibility to explore their inherent potentialities and experiment with unthought-of possibilities and combinations. If the stated (or implied) agenda is on developing a product for commercialization or gleaning intellectual property from creative practice, there leaves no room for unhindered play or spectacular failure – for a surprising juxtaposition or a leap of faith to occur. It is misguided and potentially disastrous to pluck these seedlings of creativity from the soil before they mature into fruit bearing trees. (Rackham, M 2009, pers. comm., 14 August)

The implication is that even if Ancillary IP is intended to be a retrospective commercial exploitation of the creative process, the shift within an Arts organization towards a business model has a corrupting force that will eventually come to define agendas and be woven into the criteria for deciding which projects should or should not be funded (according, assumedly, to their capacity to generate Ancillary IP outcomes). Rackham does not believe that commercial outcomes and arts organizations can be successfully married. She writes:

The delightful accident or the mysterious je ne sais quoi that characterise what we as a culture generally regard as great art or great invention, cannot be scheduled on a timeline or factored into an Excel spreadsheet. Emerging creative practices engage a complex eco-system of issues and sensibilities, and this is precisely why unconstrained, free-range playful exploration is vital for the reinvigoration of our intellectual, artistic and commercial sectors. The commercialization rhetoric is used to access other potential income sources from government and the corporate world, but no one ever really took it seriously. Discussions of commercialization were always creative stretches to fulfill funding criteria, then one day it appeared to be a new viable idea on how to make money from art … perhaps media art organizations have been caught
out by their own hype in pandering to political strategies and economic rationalism. (Rackham, M 2009, pers. comm., 14 August)

What Rackham is referring to is the push towards commercializing Art that has come from public funding bodies in developed countries over the last few decades in a bid to decrease the economic burden of the Arts on the public purse. It is a strategy that has long been tabled by public Arts funding bodies as ‘helping arts organizations help themselves’. In a *Sydney Morning Herald* article written by Joyce Morgan about ‘international arts entrepreneur’ Justin McDonald in April 2008, Morgan quotes McDonald as saying:

For too long arts companies have been urged by funding bodies to simulate the business sector … Who has not been told that they need to get more people with ‘business skills’ on their board, more people with financial, legal, marketing prowess to guide and restrain the willful artist … (Morgan, 2008)

Indeed, Artz is a member of the ANAT board and has a background in corporate business management and, before his appointment at ANAT, no experience as an Arts administrator. Artz was approved for his initial role as General Manager by the ANAT board precisely for his business acumen. And, at last count, only two of the six ANAT board members have explicit experience in making and/or administrating Art, the other four members are all ‘corporate’ experts (ANAT, 2009). As discussed in chapter five, when I interviewed Artz in his former role as ANAT’s General Manager at their Adelaide offices in 2008, he openly pursued the ‘Arts as a business’ model and argued that the problem with Australian media arts organizations was not diminishing public funds but rather the way their management consistently failed to exploit commercial potential (I included this quote in chapter five but think it warrants repetition here):

Small Arts organizations tend to be run by artists but a successful business organization just can’t be run like that. You need someone who can decide where to hang paintings on walls but you also need staff with the qualifications and experience to develop and carry out a solid business strategy … ANAT has made a conscious choice to hire our recent staff specifically from non-Artistic backgrounds: our marketing manager has a dedicated communications/marketing background and our accountant is a working accountant … (Artz, G 2008, pers. comm., 25 March).
The condescension in Artz’s tone when he flippantly concedes that ‘you need someone who can decide where to hang paintings on the wall’ is at the heart of the schism that has not only divided ANAT but tends to divide contemporary Art worlds in general. The problem with the ‘Art as a business’ model is that it has naively attempted to juxtapose the businessperson alongside the Arts administrator. Again, as Morgan quotes McDonald:

> Throughout the English-speaking world, the board system of governance in the not-for-profit sector has been a miserable failure … The pendulum has swung so far in the direction of appointing people to arts boards whose primary skill is to be business people and who are appointed on the grounds that maybe they’ve been a subscriber or an audience member or they’re described as a lover of the arts … Well, I’m a subscriber to Telstra but that doesn't mean anyone would put me on [its] board or put me in charge of communications policy … (Morgan, 2008)

The problem, of course, is that pushing business agendas on Arts organizations has resulted in the assignment of business managers with no education or expertise in the Arts and the assumption that Artistic directors are not, or perhaps cannot, be trained in business. As McDonald observes, ‘Are we so limited in our thinking that we can come up with no better way of doing business than a company limited by guarantee with a board of seven and an uneasy diarchy of general manager and artistic director?’ (ibid.). The Arts administrator needs to develop business skills. ANAT’s capacity to make the necessary transformation into a new institutional form rests on its capacity to subsidise its income through commercial endeavours. However, and this is the key point, ANAT’s capacity to implement business strategies – without alienating the ideas of creative integrity that are paramount to its credibility within the Art world (on which it continues to depend) – is reliant on a nuanced understanding of the complex and undulating value systems of Art worlds. And, as we have seen, the one regime of cultural value that has endured in ‘this new world’ is that art must possess a perceived distance from the market.

As discussed in chapter two, even new regimes of aesthetic and cultural value – like those proposed by Anna Munster in Materializing New Media (Munster, 2006) – are still sensitive to the overt commercialization of Art.17 New institutional forms must
be able to be, ‘plugged into different assemblages in which its interactions are different’ (DeLanda, 2006, p. 10), which requires it to operate appropriately in the heterogeneous contexts in which it is invested. In other words, if ANAT is going to pursue the potential commercial outcomes of emergent art practices then it needs to acknowledge and adhere to the ‘rules of Art’ (changed and changing as they are since Bourdieu’s observations but no less relevant to the politics of Art worlds) in conjunction with the rules of business. If one overcomes the other then ANAT’s transformation into a new institutional form will fail and it will either remain as a traditional arts organization or it will be transformed into a commercial R & D organization.

Ancillary IP is a groundbreaking concept and if managed properly it could open not just the Australian media arts community but global media arts communities up to the full force of transdisciplinarity, through which networked art will finally be able to freely evolve and flourish and through which new logics of organization and new institutional forms can begin to snake their way into the creative industries. Ancillary IP is a spectacular tool for the deterritorialization of cultural fields and the reterritorialization of cultural assemblages. I am not suggesting that Ancillary IP solves any of the problems posed by engaging networked artworks – exemplified in this chapter though acmipark – but it is the first step in attaining an autonomy from public and private funding dependencies and providing a basic foundation for new media arts organizations to pursue agendas independent from those imposed by traditional institutional frameworks. There is a powerful pool of knowledge within new media arts organizations that is largely untapped because the organizations are too busy trying to demonstrate the value of their existence (like d/Lux, for example). Australian media arts organizations (in fact, the majority of media arts organizations considered in this thesis) suffer under the Red-Queen-Effect, ‘It takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place’ (Carroll, 1871, p. 179). As David Cranswick points out:

Artists can’t stay here to develop their practice because there’s no money, by the same token, neither can people like me. Will Australia regain its reputation as one of the great centres of new media art? There’s a great attrition of
knowledge in Australian new media arts. Will I be working in Brazil in ten years? (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December).

Despite this clear need for alternative sources of income, implementing commercial strategies within existing new media arts organizations will not be a seamless merger and will undoubtedly be met with discontent, much as ANAT has experienced. As Artz noted in an email to me in 2009 regarding the implementation of Ancillary IP deals:

> There is a lot of support from the board but I believe someone senior in the organisation was not too happy about it. So we will see how things develop. I think the resistance was a basic lack of knowledge on how to engage on the business and IP front and also a feeling that the commercial is beneath the arts. I think social entrepreneurship is really making that the old way of thinking.

(Artz, G 2009, pers. comm., 13 March).

This ‘feeling that the commercial is beneath the arts’ is a precondition of the Art world and my research has not unearthed any evidence to suggest that this can evolve into a negotiable condition. Indeed, almost everyone I have interviewed for this thesis has expressed iterations of the position that overt commercial agendas have a corrupting influence on the creative process. However, this rejection on principle discounts the potential of there being commercial possibilities that protect the illusory separation of cultural and economic capital: commercial possibilities exactly like ‘Ancillary IP’. Artz is right when he speculates that the resistance encountered within ANAT is the consequence of a ‘lack of knowledge on how to engage business’ (the Art world is founded on this precise ‘lack’ of knowledge) but he is wrong to assume that Ancillary IP can be pursued within an arts organization without a comprehensive strategy regarding the careful integration of commercial outcomes into the value-systems of the Art world. Undertaken successfully, this transformation will be a vastly complex and difficult process that will require the willing and open collaboration of a range of industry experts (Art, business, legal and political).

This is not the only problem that introducing commercial agendas into an arts organization is likely to unearth. For a start, the increasing competition for new media arts funding that, as Cranswick noted above, has led a previously collegiate
community into a state of competitive inhibition would probably not be improved by the run-on effects of Ancillary IP. However, what is perhaps more troubling, is the threat that a new capacity to generate revenue could pose to new media arts organization’s public funding allocations (despite the government’s encouragement for Arts organizations to accommodate commercial agendas). David Cranswick analogizes this dangerous contradiction in the following anecdote:

The Australia Council were trying to get us to apply to the ‘Mega 3 mobile Network’, which is a joint venture between Telstra and Vodaphone, and I said, ‘Forget it!’ Because I am not walking into a room with Telstra and pitching an idea because there is the chance that they’re going to say ‘no thanks’ and then next week we’ll see our pitch on Telstra’s website. We told the Australia Council that there’s IP involved and they said, ‘well, you’re an Arts organization, you should be sharing the love’ and I said, ‘no, this is our IP’ but, for the Australia Council, our brief extends to supporting artists, to broke deals between the artists making the stuff and audiences accessing it, and that’s it. (Cranswick, D 2008, pers. comm., 8 December)

Cranswick has detected a public cultural body’s somewhat ironic disapproval of a media arts organization expressing even the vaguest commercial interest. Any commercial endeavours engaged by a media arts organization would, of course, have to be routed through a ‘for profit’ business subsidiary (which is certainly not unprecedented). However, the concern is that the corollary relationship between the for-profit and not-for-profit halves of the organization would influence the not-for-profit arm’s capacity to attract public funding (or private funding, for that matter). In other words, the concern is that if public funding bodies are looking for a reason to cut Arts funding then the fact that new media arts organizations might be able to implement strategies to generate their own economic capital (regardless how meagre the profits) could nominate the already marginalized practice as a reasonable target. The problem is that any Ancillary IP deal could only be supplementary (at least initially) to core funding relationships. The consequence of which is that even the slightest possibility of further cuts would not only be of real concern but a significant disincentive to engage commercial endeavour. In other words, there is a possibility that new media arts organizations will be damned if they do, damned if they don’t.
As I have said before, Ancillary IP is not a perfect strategy but it is without doubt a step in the right direction; it is a step that will allow internal control over the reconfiguration of how the media art organization operates and, consequently, underwrite its transformation into a new institutional form. ANAT is unique not because it recognizes that its activities are increasingly incompatible with the incumbent logic of instituting Art but because it is the only organization I have studied that has identified opportunity in this incompatibility. ANAT is simply refusing to accept the ‘in or out’ premise of Art world participation. Accordingly, Artz’ ‘Ancillary IP’ is now being touted as a global innovation and he finds himself as a frequent guest speaker at a range of non-Art world conferences (predominantly in engineering and the sciences). However, at this stage, there is no assurance that this impressive innovation will not get caught in traditional logics of organization that seek to discipline external forces in the context of a single operational agenda (in this case, a commercial one) instead of opening up the doors and carefully negotiating the range of new territories waiting to be engaged.

There is no question that new techno-cultural forms require new systems of management, new logics of organization, new modes and sites of engagement and distribution: new institutional forms. Investing in the strategies of the ‘new’, however, requires adequate funding and given that Australian public cultural funds for networked art have been waylaid by traditional logics of organization, the impetus for change has to come from those most deeply invested in the emergent conditions of network culture – media arts organizations. As Rackham so aptly points out:

Publicly funded Media Arts organizations support our culture to develop and appreciate new skills, ideas, dialogues and practices. As in any inventive venture – initiators, audiences and supporters are not constrained by the parameters of fashionability or commercial viability as they are generally 30 years ahead of mainstream uptake. (Rackham, M 2009, pers. comm., 14 August)
It is time for media arts organizations to lead the way and ANAT has taken an impressive and unique step in that direction. Whether or not it can adequately execute the potential that is harboured in its bold new agenda remains to be seen.

This thesis has uncovered a profound lack of strategy regarding the exhibition and distribution of emergent cultural forms like networked art. Moreover, we have discovered that cultivating these strategies requires access to significant economic capital. I have documented ANAT’s move towards Ancillary IP and all the promise of institutional reformation it holds. I have also noted, however, how the Ancillary IP model has to be carefully reconciled against its disruptive potential. If media arts organizations can make the complex and difficult transition to new institutional form through, among other things, the implementation of innovative and flexible revenue-raising activities, the exclusive boundaries of traditional Art worlds stand to witness the most profound deterritorialization they have ever experienced. New technologies have raised the field and the undulating flexibility of the ‘assemblage’ is now a far better tool with which to assess the products, relations, protocols and ecologies of Art worlds. However, the basic premise that underpins the regimes of high-cultural value through which centuries of cultural practice have been elevated to the echelons of Art is still firmly in place. This is the true genius of ‘Ancillary IP’ because it can separate the artwork, artist and networked art organizations from commercial contamination while securing an alternate source of income (if it is managed carefully and not allowed to tumble into an all-consuming commercial agenda). New media arts organizations are in desperate need of ways to generate economic capital through which they can invest in the ‘institutional remixing’ of new organizational logics and begin to ‘organize networks’.
Chapter Six Endnotes

1. It is difficult to pin down exactly how much money the Australian government invests in the Arts but a report released in November 2008 by the Australian Cultural Ministers Council, titled, ‘Cultural Funding in Australia: Three Tiers of Government 2006-2007’ claims that ‘total government funding of $5.6 billion was provided for cultural activities’ (Cultural Ministers Council, 2008). The report claims that ‘Broadcasting and film, including funding for radio and television services, film and video and multimedia, continued to be the largest recipient of funds, receiving combined federal/state/territory funding of over $1.2 billion in 2006–07’ (ibid.). The report also indicates that national and state film funding allocations outstripped national and state visual Arts funding allocations in 2006-2007 by some ten to one.

2. It should be noted that academic institutions have also played an important part in the support of the Australian media arts community. Elaine Lally, for example, argues in the 2006 Australia Council’s ‘New Media Arts Scoping Study Discussion Paper’, that higher educational facilities have been pivotal in providing training for and access to technological infrastructures for media artists and media arts communities (Lally, 2006). However, in her paper ‘the mass scoping study and nomad database’, Lisa Gye argues:

   The evolution of media arts education and its current profile in higher education institutions in Australia is poorly documented and, as a consequence, not well understood by those either within the field itself or in the broader community. None of this would matter much if such art practices were given the respect and attention they deserve within the very higher education institutions that purport to support them. (Gye, 2009)

   The institutions of universities and Art schools suffer under the same ‘moribund technics’ as all traditional institutional forms and, therefore, are as increasingly out of step with the transforming techno-cultural climate as cultural agencies and Arts institutions. The change required must be, as this chapter argues, facilitated on a systemic level not through the shortsighted and unsustainable tactical interventions that currently characterize the majority of media arts initiatives within cultural institutions.

3. Indeed, along a similar tangent, James Elkins makes the argument that the occurrence of Artists with doctoral degrees is an increasingly common phenomenon in his book *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art* (Elkins, 2009).

4. See, for example, Schwartz, 1986.

5. The dominant characteristic of photography for Bourdieu is that it is bound to the production of specific kinds of knowledge, which, therefore, undermine the quality of ‘uselessness’ that distances Art from commerce and qualifies it as a ‘restricted’ form of cultural production. For Bourdieu, the photographic artwork can never get
enough distance from, for example, family snaps or advertising campaigns to ever really qualify as Art. Here photography is understood as an impure form. Bourdieu’s views on photography serve to reinforce his argument that high-cultural categories are simply not open to re-evaluation, renegotiation or reinvention but rather are perpetually involved in a reflexive movement towards their own interior – locked in relations of their own becoming.

6 In 2005, the Australia Council participated in a ‘Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Science and Innovation Inquiry into Pathways to Technological Innovation’ alongside two other statutory authorities: the AFC and the Australian Film, Television and Radio School (AFTRS). The submission lobbied for the inclusion of the creative industries – ‘the engine room of the knowledge economy’ – in state led science and technology initiatives (Australian Film Commission et al., 2005, p. 3). Ironically and somewhat frustratingly, the submission demonstrates notable insight into the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary potential of the techno-cultural landscape and argues for an environment of ‘cross-agency collaboration’ (ibid., p. 3). The submission is, however, strangely inconsistent with the Australia Council’s concurrent decision to dissolve the New Media Arts Board. Moreover, there is little evidence to suggest that any strategies for enduring ‘cross-agency collaborations’ have been implemented. Likewise, neither have the ‘creative industries’ been woven into the fabric of public science and technology initiatives (to date). It would seem that insight and action are vastly different undertakings when faced with the huge tasks of transforming institutions.

7 According to ‘Cultural Funding in Australia: Three Tiers of Government 2006-2007’, federal visual Arts funding came in at just over one hundred million dollars for the 2006-2007 financial year, whereas federal funding allocations for Broadcasting and Film industries came in at over one billion dollars. VACS was a response to precisely this kind of cultural disparity.

8 The primary public film funding body in Australia at present is Screen Australia, a public body incorporated under the Screen Australia Act 2008 that amalgamated the previously independent national bodies Film Finance Corporation (FFC), Film Australia Limited and the Australian Film Commission (AFC).

9 There are a number of anthologies regarding the history of media arts. See, for example, Grau, 2007; Chandler and Neumark, 2005; Ascott, 2003. Moreover, and as outlined in chapter two, theorists like Anna Munster (2006) and Oliver Grau (2003) have argued that the histories of networked art must be opened out to acknowledge not only the intersecting relations of cultural forms but also media histories that implicate the histories of computer science, engineering and so on and so forth.

10 It is true that after the dissolution of the NMAB two more media arts organizations secured Key Org status and were incorporated into the VACS funding program:
Sydney’s d/Lux/MediaArts and Melbourne’s Experimenta; notably, the two new media arts organizations that co-convened the community meeting and did not already possess ‘Key Org’ status. However, ensuring that the Australia Council honoured its commitment has proven increasingly difficult for d/Lux, which might suggest that the Australia Council enabled these particular VACS inclusions as concessions in the face of explicit concerns expressed at the community meeting regarding the dissolution of the NMAB rather than as evidence of a renewed commitment to the media art community.

11 For a particularly striking account of how funding produces certain types of Art institutions see Gay Hawkins’ *From Nimbin to Mardi-Gras* (Hawkins, 1993).

12 The fact that the Digital Culture Fund (DFC) is focussed on ‘live’ digital events is undoubtedly a reflection of Plumley’s close affiliation with the Major Performing Arts Board (for more information see: <http://www.artsdigitalera.com/dfc>). The DFC is a pilot initiative, which means it is a trial initiative (the outcomes of which will be assessed in June 2010). The artsdigitalera initiative also launched the Geek in Residence programme that is angled towards both ‘technically confident artists and creatively confident technicians’ (artsdigitalera, 2009), a focus that could very well be the first step towards the ‘legitimate’ opening out of formal Art boundaries and categories within the Australia Council (for more information see: <http://www.artsdigitalera.com/gir>).

13 In any case, as the artsdigitalera initiative has only just been launched the impact of the program on the buoyancy of the Australian media arts community will have to be assessed in due course.

14 For the sake of word limit considerations I have not extended these discussions to three Australian Arts organizations with dedicated media arts agendas that probably should be included: the Brisbane based ‘Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific’ (MAAP), the ‘Biennial of Electronic Art Perth’ (BEAP) or Sydney’s Powerhouse Museum. However, I feel that the organizations discussed here give an adequate sense of the cultural landscape I am assembling.

15 For example, the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ Anne Landa Award, a moving image and new media arts award and exhibition, is consistently composed of video art. Moreover, the inaugural ‘Premier of Queensland’s National New Media Art Award’ in 2008, hosted by Queensland’s Gallery of Modern Art, was awarded to Peter Alwast for ‘Everything’ (a multi-media video work). Thematically the work was an astute interpretation of how technology has become woven into the fabric of our lives but in the end it was, ironically, a white-cube friendly piece that won out over some of the more challenging (or non-gallery-friendly) works considered.

16 By way of demonstrating the mainstream legitimacy of video Art in Australia, Sotheby’s Auction House included video work for the first time in an Auction on the
25 August 2009: TV Moore’s ‘The Dead Zone’. TV Moore was also the winner of the 2009 Anne Landa ‘new media’ Award.

17 See chapter two of this thesis.
CONCLUSION

We’ve come a long way from when culture was made by a handful of sources and collected and selected by an authoritative few. Whatever our culture is in the future chances are that – in the traditional sense that we’ve always understood it – it’s not quite Art.

-Marcus Westbury

This thesis has framed networked art not as a small ‘avant-garde’ niche of cultural production (although it is that too) but in terms of an emergent flexibility of cultural relations and processes. Networked art is characterized by its openness to new material, technical, political, economic, cultural and aesthetic dimensions. What unites networked artists, critics, administrators, organizations and audiences is not an allegiance to Art worlds or its regimes of cultural and aesthetic value but rather the codes of communication generated in the matrices of the ‘network society’ or the ‘information age’ or the ‘digital revolution’ or whatever metaphoric term you think best describes the pervasive effects of our increasingly techno-centric lives.

Networked art is the chimeric child of a digital ethos; its forms reflect an increasing tendency to engage creative expression with little regard for the pre-existing tenets of cultural production.

Networked art cannot be defined according to a limited set of technological or material apparatus. Networked art is visual art, media art, digital art, computer art, interactive art, hypertext fiction, virtual art, telematic art, performance art, sound art, video art, hacktivism, mash-ups, bio art, generative art, electronic art, radio art, wearable art, avant-pop and the list could quite literally go on and on. To think of networked art in terms of a specific genre of form is to underestimate how emergent information and communication technologies are altering the way we ‘live’ in the world. Moreover, to think that networked art can be contained at the margins of mainstream Art worlds is to misunderstand the extent of its reach and, again, to underestimate the universality of its appeal. As Tate’s ‘Intermedia Art’ curator, Kelli Dipple, observes, ‘it becomes impossible now, actually, to separate new media as a thing outside the museum because almost everything that you commission by
contemporary artists is going to involve some kind of ‘media’ because it has been creeping in since the 60s and it’s now getting to a point where we all live in this mediated world and artists are in this world we live in’ (Dipple, K 2007, pers. comm., 10 April). Indeed, it is almost impossible to separate emergent technologies from any sphere of human activity.

Networked art is both the product of and the impetus for new socio-cultural structures that are ushering in new regimes of cultural and aesthetic value (Munster, 2006) and new institutional forms (Rossiter, 2006). As Castells notes, ‘A network based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance’ (Castells, 2000, pp. 501-502). In fact, according to many of the theorists utilized throughout this thesis,¹ this susceptibility or openness to innovation – to change, to deterritorialization – is the defining feature of emerging social structures: the social structures of the network society. Networked art is conceived here as the architect of a new organizational logic for the administration of culture. And new social structures require new tools of analysis.

We have seen emergent techno-culture definitively undermine the comprehensive sociology of Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘field theory’. Bourdieu’s field is limited by an unyielding adherence to outmoded social class distinctions that have imposed infinitely rigid high/low cultural oppositions on the analysis of cultural production. The consequence of which is that the field simply cannot accommodate the slippery and mercurial forms of networked art. This thesis has consistently demonstrated that the increasing accessibility of Art – or what is now more accurately the neither intrinsically high nor low ‘art’ with a lower case ‘a’ – stands in direct contradiction to the basic logic of the field. Networked art provides irrefutable evidence that high/low cultural distinctions no longer stand to demarcate one field of high art from its ‘popular’ other.

I have not argued, however, that high/low cultural distinctions are no longer relevant to spheres of cultural production. What I have argued, with the aid of scholars like John Frow and Anna Munster, is that high/low cultural distinctions occur across all spheres of cultural production. There is, without question, legitimate high-pop and
legitimately popular-Art. We have also seen, however, the persistence of rigid high/low oppositions and fixed cultural categories across a range of cultural forums. In chapter two we saw how early discursive analyses of networked art tended to submit to outmoded regimes of cultural and aesthetic assessment in the absence of alternative evaluative schema. In chapters three and six we saw the relations between traditional Art institutions and public and private funding bodies structured around centuries old regimes of cultural and aesthetic value functioning to marginalize the seditious forms of emergent techno-culture. In chapter four we saw how the ‘moribund technics’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 14) of traditional institution are specified in accordance with these archaic regimes of value, reifying Art institutions in unique ways and imposing perhaps the ultimate barrier to entry for networked art in terms of mainstream cultural support.

And yet over the last few years we have also witnessed key discursive developments through, for example, the emergence of new regimes of aesthetic value composed explicitly for the complex spheres of networked art. And we have also witnessed new logics of organization slowly begin to surface in marginalized networked art organizations. I have explained these two pivotal deterritorializations as shifts away from field logic and towards the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of the ‘territorial assemblage’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). The territorial assemblage provides a methodological alternative to the field because it is always-already immersed in the dynamics of heterogeneity. Yet ‘the assemblage is fundamentally territorial’ (ibid., p. 323), which is what provides the concept with integrity and stops it falling into radical relativism. This thesis has argued that we can see the infrastructures of traditional Art institutions and the deeply entrenched regimes of cultural and aesthetic value as potent territorializing forces that have kept Art worlds extraordinarily stable for over two centuries. Networked art, on the other hand, has been explained here as a uniquely powerful deterritorializing force.

The first of the deterritorializing forces addressed in this thesis was, of course, explored through Anna Munster’s revised ‘digital aesthetics’. In chapter two we saw Munster initiate a shift towards conceiving of the artwork itself as a territorial assemblage. In fact, by viewing the artwork in this way Munster allows for the same
cultural product to possess a multitude of cultural values that are contingent on the context of the product’s distribution, which is a particularly ingenious aesthetic condition in the mutable spheres of network culture. In this way, specific kinds of aesthetic and cultural value can be assigned to an iteration of a networked artwork exhibited in a traditional Art gallery or distributed through the organized networks of new institutional forms; and another for its potential commercial adaptation in, for example, a pop-music film clip; and yet others if it is rearticulated in an advertising campaign or redeveloped as a medical device or a software application and so on and so forth. Munster’s digital aesthetics takes a pivotal discursive step towards the deterritorialization of archaic regimes of cultural and aesthetic value.

The second deterritorializing force explored in this thesis was unpacked through Ned Rossiter’s concept of the ‘organized network’, which conceives the new institutional form in an antagonistic relation to the logics of traditional institutions. For Rossiter, the new institutional form is necessarily opened out to the forces of the ‘constituent outside’ (Rossiter, 2006) and can, therefore, be perceived as a ‘territorial assemblage’. The organized network comes together (territorializes) in specific ways for specific purposes but is then deterritorialized for different functions in different contexts. In this way, we can envisage an organized ‘cultural’ network having a multitude of functional potentials: Arts administration, research and development, cultural consultancy and even commercial mediation (as in the case of Ancillary IP, discussed in chapters five and six).

This thesis has observed that conflicts between established modes of cultural territorialization and emergent deterritorializing forces are precisely what characterize the current climates of US, UK and Australian contemporary cultural landscapes. It has focussed on the limitations of traditional institutions in our increasingly techno-centric societies and, following Rossiter, argued for the ‘urgent need for new institutional forms’ (Rossiter, 2006, p. 13). We have observed the enormous import of political and economic forces in the production, distribution and reception of cultural artefacts and by tracing the specificities of these components we have seen three very different cultural landscapes emerge. The consistencies, however, between the US, UK and Australian contemporary cultural landscapes have
been identified as a consequence of deeply entrenched regimes of cultural and aesthetic value that specify and reinforce the rigidly stable logic of the traditional Art institution and its symbiotic funding agencies.

The importance of an empirical analysis like the one undertaken in this thesis is that it has taken a step back from aesthetic contemplation to look at the all-important institutional, political and economic forces that function to discipline and often constrain emergent culture; forces that have been largely overlooked in the zealotry of techno-aesthetic enthusiasm. More than this, this thesis contributes to the development of a new theory of cultural production – one that distances itself from the limited logic of the field and pursues the more flexible conceptual ground of the territorial assemblage. And yet after all this, I have really only touched on the broad range of issues awaiting the ‘scalar transformation’ of our new institutional forms and, therefore, our emergent cultural assemblages. And I think it prudent here – as the last gesture of this thesis – to sketch out some of the more immediate issues organizations like Turbulence and ANAT are bound to face in the tumult of deterritorialization that lies ahead. The final words of this thesis, then, serve as a kind of prompt – a where to from here.

**Administrating Network Culture**

One of the primary characteristics of the ‘organized network’ is its capacity to expand or contract – or, indeed, develop and dissipate – in order to achieve a particular goal or support a specific project. In this way, an organized ‘cultural’ network might be composed of more than one networked art organization (or other commercial and public organizations) at a time. In which case, these organizations would operate as component parts of a larger network. This kind of collaboration would be different from the standard ‘multi-stakeholderism’ that might accompany, say, a multi-site Art exhibition in which a number of Art institutions/organizations and funding bodies may be implicated but maintain their separate identities and merely work in consultation to define costs, procure funding and implement exhibition strategies. An organized network that implicates a number of individual organizations, on the other hand, would function as a whole under an oftentimes-
temporary amalgamation. This kind of new organizational logic has massive political and legal implications, not to mention correlative economic, technical and infrastructural concerns. And, as Rossiter points out, ‘The problem remains, however, that organized networks do not yet exist as recognized actors within the stratum of policy discourse or as concrete-potentialities’ (ibid., p. 34). This means, of course, that the politico-legal framework that could support the incorporation of organized networks as legally registered entities – allowing them to take advantage of the rewards of such an incorporation (for example, in Art world terms, eligibility for public and private funding) – is still non-existent.

One of the primary problems for solving the complex issues of legally incorporating organized ‘cultural’ networks is that the concept of ‘culture’ is deeply embedded in the histories of representative-democracy (as discussed in chapter three) despite the fact that emergent techno-culture exists across distinctively transnational spheres. As Rossiter argues, ‘the translation of democracy into the social-technical form of the Internet holds its own special problems. And these are all too frequently overlooked, as if the institutional frameworks of the nation-state contour seamlessly onto the Internet’ (ibid., pp. 40-41). In chapters three and six I explored the localized networks of resource dependence that define (and constrain) the functional potential of the large majority of public and not-for-profit Art institutions and organizations. The reality of the organized ‘cultural’ network, however, is likely to exist outside the limits of any one government and across the jurisdiction of many, which has both advantages and disadvantages.

As touched on in chapter five, the transnational potential of the organized ‘cultural’ network opens out the slate of opportunities exponentially by aligning individuals, technologies, techniques, traditional institutions/organizations (public and commercial) and new institutional forms in unprecedented ways, relations that have historically been outside the distinctively local proximities of Art worlds (with the notable exception of global Art markets, of course). However, the opportunity costs of this transnational potential may well come at the expense of eligibility for local funding, which means that (at least in the short term) the choice to seek legal incorporation as a transnational cultural network (should the politico-legal
framework become available to do so) would have to be taken under advisement. But as networked art organizations learn how to extricate themselves from government subsidies and engage the logics of the new institutional form, these kinds of economic costs may well cease to be of such pressing concern. As Rossiter writes:

The appeal of politics without democracy rests precisely with the potential for the political to refuse the passage of becoming instituted within the state form. Politics then resides within a non-or post-democratic politics, or politics unhinged from the theatre of democracy. This does not eradicate the operation of institutions per se, indeed my argument takes a completely opposite position. But it does bring into sharp relief the limits of democracy as the only available grammar for thinking processes of instituting politics within the social-technical setting of network cultures. (ibid., pp. 40-41)

Indeed, the post-democratic politics of the organized ‘cultural’ network reveals the importance of its role in terms of both global and local cultural landscapes. The socio-cultural function of the traditional Art institution has always been to bolster the experience and identity of local communities and is, therefore, bound to the politics of the nation-state. Whereas, the new institutional forms of the creative industries can link localities into transnational cultural spheres, providing much needed two-way cultural conduits between the local and the global. However, bridging the gaps between local and global cultural landscapes will likely produce political clashes between local cultural authorities – established to assert control over specific cultural landscapes – and the unrestricted influence of new institutional forms. These are just some of the more sweeping issues that organized ‘cultural’ networks will have to negotiate, not to mention the range of unpredictable and organization (or project)-specific problems that are sure to arise in such revolutionary institutional transformation.

Speaking of project-specific problems, I have not come any closer to answering Darren Tofts’ question posed in the introduction, ‘where is media art?’ (Tofts, 2005, p. 133). I have certainly demonstrated where it is not and is unlikely to be: traditional Art institutions. Tofts’ question, however, gets to the heart of what is lacking about analyses of networked art. There is still a great deal of work to be done in conceiving new strategies for the exhibition and distribution of emergent techno-cultural forms.
But the pressing need for this kind of work really only becomes clear once we have deciphered the full scope of limitations that beset the traditional Art institution in terms of supporting networked art. This is, again, why we are in such dire need of more comprehensive analyses of networked art that go beyond the aesthetic fetishization of form. Investing in the development of exhibition strategies outside the confines of the traditional Art institution is the next logical step in the development of new logics and strategies for organizing contemporary culture and the next logical step for the new institutional form. Yet the large majority of research being done on the development of new strategies for the exhibition of networked art is coming, ironically, from traditional Art institutions.

In 2003, NYC’s Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) spearheaded a project titled ‘Matters in Media Art: Collaborating Towards the Care of Time-Based Media’ with a multi-stakeholder research ‘consortium’ that included New Arts Trust (a San Francisco based not-for-profit organization that promotes technology based art), the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) and Tate Galleries. While ‘Matters in Media Art’ is an ambitious project for traditional Art institutions the fact that it is framed in terms of traditional institutional infrastructures indicates that whatever strategies it comes up with will always be limited to a very small scope of gallery-friendly networked art. In other words, the fact that the development of new exhibition strategies for emergent cultural forms has been largely limited to well-resourced Art institutions has, of course, waylaid any real progress in this area. This is yet another reason why networked art organizations need to expand the scope of their operations and develop business strategies to create the requisite income to engage these kinds of projects outside the restraints of traditional institutions. The real value of ‘Matters in Media Art’ resides – again, as argued in chapter four – in its commitment to the development of archiving strategies, a job to which the traditional Art institution – a repository of cultural artefacts – is perfectly suited. The exhibition dimension of the research project is also an important project for the institutional consortium, and indeed for traditional contemporary Art institutions everywhere. As I have argued, any mainstream support in this area, irrespective of how limited, can
only be a good thing for networked art communities. But it is, without question, not enough.

We need real endeavour in the development of exhibition and distribution strategies for emergent techno-cultural forms. We need to change the way we think about space and the correlative movement of objects and bodies. I would, therefore, like to close this thesis with a brief introduction of some of Erin Manning’s thoughts on new ways to conceive the body in space in her book *Politics of Touch* (Manning, 2007), ideas that refer us to a new matrix of space and movement. While Manning’s ideas are not specifically concerned with new strategies for the exhibition of cultural forms, her work in *Politics of Touch* can help us open out the possibilities of how we think through the exhibition of cultural artefacts. Scholars like Manning can guide new institutional forms to the new conceptual ground of managing materiality (both organic and inorganic) within network culture and point them towards the critical step of developing new modes and sites for the exhibition and engagement of emergent cultural forms.

**Issues of Space (and Time)**

The driving argument of *Politics of Touch* is that static spaces imbued with rigid embodied expectations function to constrain and falsely determine the inherently fluid nature of the sensing body that is always-already in movement. Manning writes, ‘Relational time-space, provisional embodiments are inventions of touch: the body senses in layers, in textures, in rhythms and juxtapositions that defy strict organization into a semiotic system’ (Manning, 2007, p. xiv). Manning makes the case that we need to deterritorialize the entrenched conditioning of sensation and movement that attempts to lock bodies into stable identities, she continues:

> The politics of touch outlined here is a politics engaged in a pact to invent new bodies … The proposition is that touch – every act of reaching toward – enables the creation of worlds. The production is relational. I can reach out to touch in order to invent a relation that will, in turn, invent me. To touch is to engage in the potential of an individuation. Individuation is understood throughout as a capacity to become beyond identity. We individuate inventively. Relationally, we engage in individuation that requires difference and repetition. Without
difference that repeats, we foreclose the process, returning the body to territorialization, national body-politics, stable genders, political consensus. (ibid., p. xv)

In this way, ‘the question posed is less “what is a sensing body in movement” than ‘how can I create a sensing body in movement?’ (ibid., p. xv). Manning’s goal is to liberate the body from politically imposed stasis by eliciting a call-to-arms for the reclamation of the body and its inherently fluid relation with identity. As she writes:

To capture movement is to stop sensing. *Politics of Touch* works with the paradox that a sensing body in movement will always circumvent a project that attempts to characterize in the name of touch, the senses, gender, race, politics. I accept this paradox and offer *Politics of Touch* not as a reading of what touch is, but as an exploration of what might happen if we are willing to direct our thinking toward movement, toward a relational stance that makes it impossible to pin down knowledge but asks us instead to invent. (ibid., p. xvi)

Manning wants us to understand our bodies in perpetual transition, as a site of recurrent invention. And it is precisely here that I draw the comparison between Manning’s conceptualization of a deterritorialized sensing body and the conceptualization of a deterritorialized strategy for exhibition. I read *Politics of Touch* in the context of exhibition as a treatise on the management of movement and materiality (again, both organic and inorganic). Certainly, there is a clear correlation between the white-cube exhibition complex (and the contemporary black-box) and Manning’s observation of the highly territorialized link between ‘state-sovereignty and its adjacent body-politic’ (ibid., p. xv). As discussed in chapter three, the white-cube was conceived as a utility of the nation-state to constrain our movement, to hush us, to slow our pace, to tell us not to touch, to define the parameters of our aesthetic relation with cultural artefacts in order to discipline the behaviour of the working classes in accordance with Bourgeois sensibilities. The white-cube exhibition complex is a very specific denial of the sensing body in movement. But if we conceive of the body in its relation to emergent cultural forms in accordance with Manning’s deterritorialization of the sensing body we can see the seedlings of a new strategy for the exhibition and engagement of networked art. In this way, the exhibition of networked art cannot be conceived as a singular model – a replacement
of the fixed dimensions of the white-cube or the black-box – but rather as a case-by-case or exhibition-by-exhibition tactical-strategy. What we have, then, is not only a rethinking of the relation between the body and the cultural form but also a rethinking of the idea of exhibition.

This tactically-strategic rethinking of exhibition requires a commitment to the individualities of cultural works. Here, the material and expressive dimensions of exhibition are unique to every cultural product, cultivating not only new spheres of engagement but new freedoms for production. There is no one permanent exhibition space that can accommodate a new, singular ‘exhibition complex’. This means, firstly, that organized ‘cultural’ networks would want to avoid being permanently tied to a single white-cube or black-box; permanence is antithetical to both the organized network and the tactical-strategy of the distribution and reception of the cultural form. The organized ‘cultural’ network would be more inclined to cultivate relationships with the caretakers of an open and ongoing range of public and private ‘spaces’. Any kind of space that can be accessed can be utilized in the processes of distributing and receiving cultural forms.

Secondly, the curators of organized ‘cultural’ networks would also take on a very different role to that of their traditional institutional counterparts (who generally work within the confines of fixed spaces). By closely collaborating with artists in the final stages of production, the networked art curator would work to sketch out the conditions of exhibition most suitable to the work. The artist’s role is changed here also: as exhibition becomes a part of the creative process, part of the work itself. These kinds of shifts in the logics of exhibition have, of course, been unfolding for decades – from Duchamp through conceptual Art and so on – but the point of re-conceiving ‘exhibition’ is that it allows for these kinds of flexibilities to be interpreted within a different context of possibility – out of the white-cube – and become a component part of a much larger shift in the organization of culture.

In many ways, the white-cube defines the forms it serves. This new logic of space opposes that of traditional exhibition complexes. In the traditional Art institution (or playhouse or theatre, etcetera) the Artist creates for a predetermined space but in this
new logic of exhibition the cultural form defines its space. By opening out the scope
of how space can be employed in the distribution and reception of cultural forms we
open out the scope of creation both in terms of the artist and the audience/user; we
liberate artists and audiences from traditional constraints. In this new approach to
distribution and reception we cultivate a new approach to production: the embodied
relation with the cultural form does not begin with predetermined limits. It is open to
its own becoming.3

This is only the briefest of introductions to the re-conception of the distribution and
reception of cultural forms and these new strategies will, of course, be riddled with
difficulties. There are many reasons why certain spaces (that may be ideal for the
distribution and reception of individual works) are not practical (safety, copyright
restrictions, cost – for a start). But these kinds of negotiations will be a part of the
new logics of ‘exhibition’ that will have to become an integral function of organized
‘cultural’ networks. The trick, of course, will be to ensure that flexibility and
mutability remains a core principle of distributing emergent cultural forms and not to
fall into habits where easy relationships are forged. It is a natural inclination to
favour easy and productive relations with, say, a particular exhibition space, but
these kinds of easy relationships produce static and predictable conditions that start
to replicate the rigidity of white-cubes. It is a willingness and readiness to engage
conflict and difference that distinguishes these new logics of organization from the
stable monotony of traditional strategies for disciplining cultural production,
distribution and reception. As Rossiter notes:

While accumulation of best practices suggests that organized networks may
develop common platforms of communication, the pragmatic decision is one
that emerges internally from the culture of dissension characteristic of a
network of networks. The relational dynamic between the act of decision and
the culture of dissension may be the basis upon which the scalar transformation
rests. How to manage this is an open question. (Rossiter, 2006, p. 35)

The ‘open questions’ of cultural transformation that lie ahead can only be answered
in practice, through the recognition that new strategies and logics for organizing
culture are not only necessary but are a matter of some urgency. It is an exciting time
for cultural organizations, producers and audiences who, for the first time in over two centuries, are all perched on the precipice of a richer, more diverse and more spectacularly responsive cultural assemblage. And yet, while we have come a long way from ‘when culture was made by a handful of sources and collected and selected by an authoritative few’, we still have a long road ahead of us before we can rest assured that emergent culture has been liberated from the constraining hands of failing regimes of value and the archaic authority of traditional institutions.
Conclusion Endnotes

1 See Munster, 2006; Rossiter, 2006; DeLanda, 2006; and, of course, Deleuze and Guattari, 1987.

2 MoMA, SFMOMA, New Art Trust and Tate research ‘consortium’ outlines its goals in the following:

Often only fully realized in their installed state, time-based media works are complex systems that pose new challenges for their custodians. Effective approaches to their stewardship rely on the blending of traditional museum practice with new modes of operating that derive from and respond to the complex nature of these installations. In many cases artists are very specific about the way in which the work should be installed and the technology used to show it. The installation of these works requires new skills and new areas of collaboration within museums. Whereas internationally agreed standards exist for the handling, installation and care of traditional works of art, there are no such standards at present for time-based media works. This project aims to raise awareness of the requirements of these works and to provide a practical response to the need for international agreement among museums. (MoMA, 2009)

3 Manning also provides a stunning account of how a new ‘politics of touch’ helps us to conceive of new local-global cultural relations through her discussion of ‘the tango’, which holds significant relevance for the transnational potential of organized ‘cultural’ networks. She writes:

The tango opens the way for an engagement with a cultural phenomenon that is at once fiercely nationalistic and startlingly inventive. To think tango both as transcultural improvisation and as a national artifact is vital to the project of Politics of Touch because it reminds us that there is not clean slate onto which bodies are written and politics are made. Even while they potentially resist the boundaries of the state, transcultural phenomena often remain embedded within national imaginaries. Politics – like bodies – emerge out of frictions, accidents, disagreements, and interlockings that are both firmly institutionalized within pre-constituted space-times and that create emergent space times. We must remember, however, that whether sanctioned by the nation-state or positioned transculturally in excess of the national body-politic, there is no body that exists before it moves. This means that bodies must always be stilled to be characterized. It is a back-gridding process. When stilled, politics – and bodies – can be stabilized in the name of a large system (state sovereignty, the nation – state, the body politic). But even then, these ‘stable’ compositions must be ferociously maintained and contained, lest they begin to reach toward one another, engaging compositions that remind us that bodies are always stranger (unheimlich) than they first appear. (Manning, 2007, p. xvii)
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