

THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF CULTURAL AUTONOMY: DIY SPACES IN NEW YORK  
CITY

SUNY PURCHASE

The Uncertain Future of Cultural Autonomy: DIY Spaces in New York City

Shahzeb Alkhamash  
Senior Project II  
Professor Tamburri  
Completion Date (May 14th)

Cover Page	1
Table of Contents	2
The Uncertain Future of Cultural Autonomy: DIY Spaces in New York City	
Opening Statement	3-5
Methodology	5-6
The Spectre of Capital	
The New New York - 21st Rather than 20th Century Paradigm	6-9
The Agendas and Prescriptions of Capital	9-11
Reclamation of the Public Sphere	11-12
Physical Venues as Integrative of People, Thought and Action (Public Sphere)	12-14
Coordinating the Struggle	
The Need to Assess and Draw From Many Sources	14
Economic Cooperatives (All Boroughs)	15-17
LatinX (The Bronx)	17-20
Sofar (All Boroughs)	20-26
ABC No Rio (Lower East Side)	26-29
Findings	
Conclusions and Further Inquiries	29-30
Bibliography & References	31-33

# The Uncertain Future of Cultural Autonomy : DIY Spaces in NYC

*“The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.” - F. Scott Fitzgerald.*

New York City has always been the trading center of America, attracting some of the wealthiest, most visionary and hardest working people in the world. It grew into the industrial center of the Gilded Age, developing rapidly into a global leader of architecture, manufacturing and finance, and residents gained reputations as noteworthy industrialists and resilient, proud, hard-working men and women. And over the decades as waves of immigrants from Europe and Asia joined the ranks and displayed the skills and character necessary to thrive in a hostile, turbulent environment the City became an iconic melange of cultures. Artists like Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jackson Pollock, Bob Dylan, Patti Smith and Jean-Michel Basquiat were, through the generations, ravished by New York City, and their work honored the collective pneuma, appraising it's interwoven narratives and a correspondent sense of supercharged Being. American civilization is beholden to New York City; it is the portrait of America's genius, having upraised diversity, global exchange, experimentation and the determination to succeed in the face of adversity.



Figure 1. *Immigration to New York City by Country Of Origin Between 1880-1930*

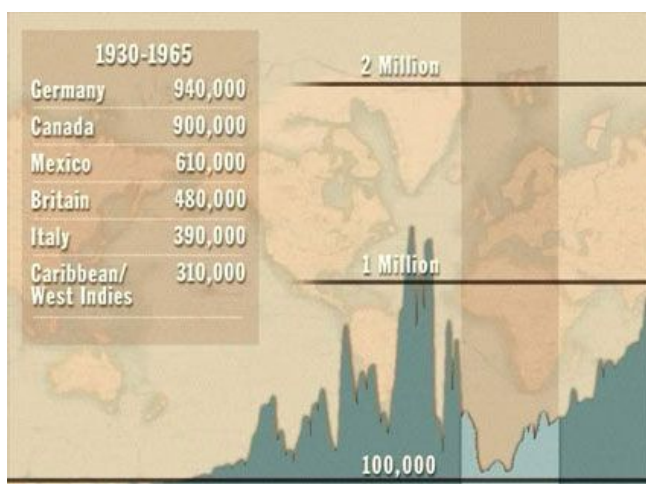


Figure 2. *Immigration to New York City by Country Of Origin Between 1930-1965*

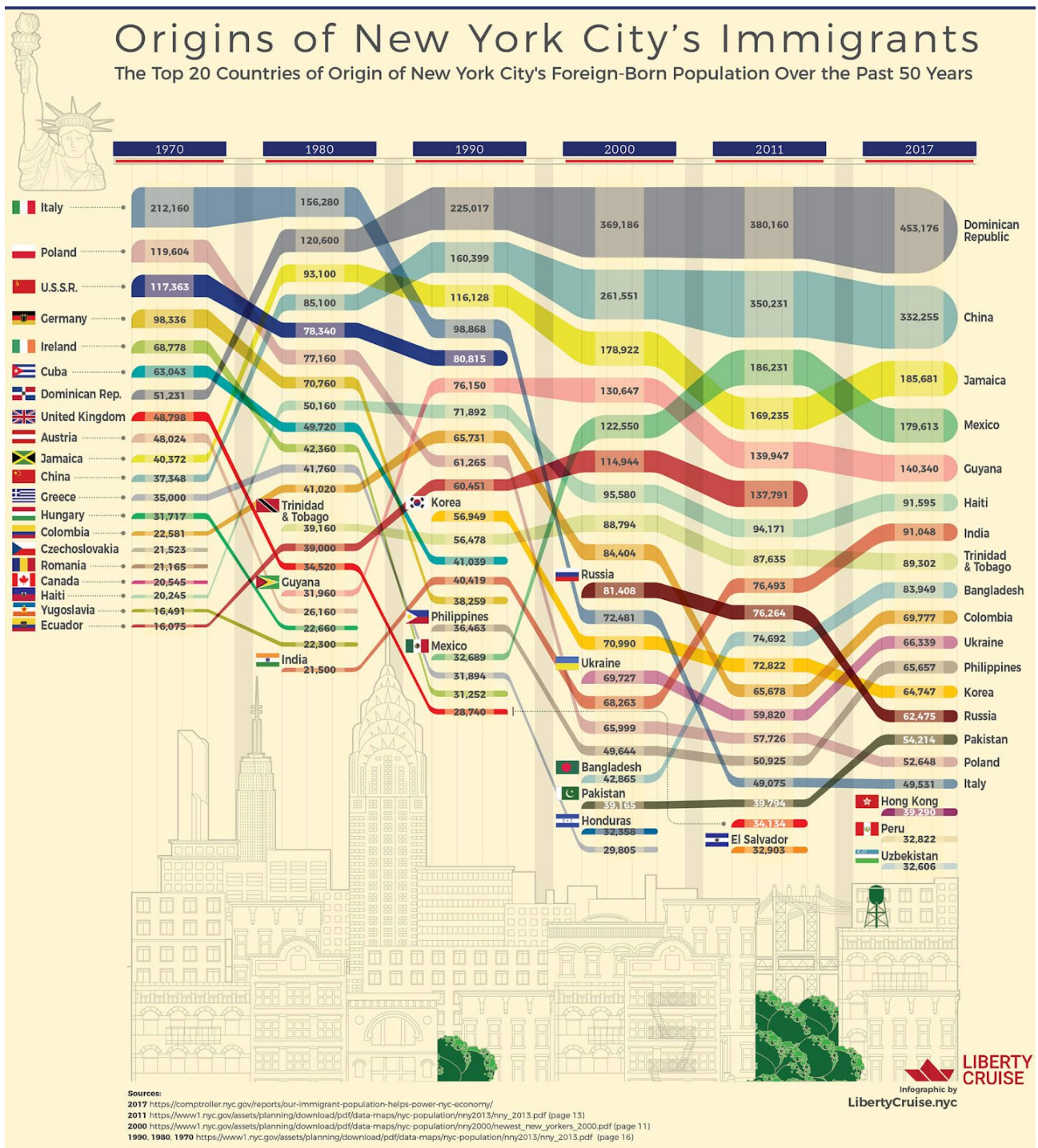


Figure 3. Immigration to New York City by Country of Origin 1970-2017

Today, New York retains an extraordinary skyline, but a diametric sense of futility and depletion has become a fixture of working-class life. The working-class experience in New York has become overburdened with high rents and living costs, job insecurity, subsistence wages, and perpetually worsening public transit and education systems. These circumstances are predicated on an intensifying entanglement of public institutions and corporation-centric administration and regulation. New York City in the 21st Century is no longer a publically stewarded civic being. It has been converted into one of the many heads of the hydra of global corporatocracy. Corporatocracy in the 21st century is widely understood to be the product of “multinational corporations that control the world economy as a whole, including the political and cultural spheres,

even those sectors that are not directly monopolized”, propagating and guiding governmental machineries to serve elite financial interests in a manner “incompatible with real democracy”.<sup>ii</sup>

Such remittent circumstances impact the entirety of the city, and they greatly influence the integrated regions which surrounds New York City as well. If the material condition of the majority of citizens becomes structurally overshadowed by corporate interest, the City’s cultural fabric will be rapidly erased and reconstituted; with so many intersections of life currently flanked by the gerrymandered structure of neoliberal corporatocracy the programs and ecosystems which supported local culture are decomposing.

It is vital that community-based organizations and local enterprises ascertain means of thriving in a corporatocratic ecosystem in order to preserve the integrity of our public spheres, or to put it another way, our settlements and agency within our community - the civic architecture must be reinforced at it’s foundation. It is vital that New York City’s working and middle class reassert their role in the management and authorization of public spaces and practices. It is vital that the People coalesce and demonstrate that we will not settle for being shepherded by syndicates of state and corporate power erasing the very essence of citizenry.

The transformation occurring now has shown itself to be one that actively minimizes people’s sense of “being at home” anywhere, where anxiety, exhaustion, stagnation, mental illness and poverty prevails, chewing you up and spitting you out. Under the program of New York corporatocracy we are expected to be uplifted by the new, modern buildings, and upcharging faux-dive bars, and yipster condominiums, while all around us, if not but for their innate strength, the People are being flattened. We must strive to reclaim the city as a medium for the thousands of cultures that give it its epic spirit and for the potential vectors of development nascent therein. Symbolic, social, economic, historic power lies in being a city that respects and empowers its population, who have the means to amalgamate the wisdom of a million communities and histories in a supportive homeland. In this paper four organizations will be examined, each of which serves to build and enhance the autonomy of diverse communities across the main boroughs and put forth various means of conserving and supplementing useful models of civic consortium. This paper seeks to offer weight to the notion that independent art scenes, self-starters and grassroots movements, as well as anyone who wishes to preserve that which is cherished in their community, can operate with influence in New York City, despite challenges, by identifying and outlining productive pathways still available to the public.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This essay will proceed by describing the emergence of corporatocracy in New York City and the deleterious consequences it has produced for communities throughout the city; articulating the ways in which commercial and policy platforms serve corporate “citizens” while impairing an array of indigenous platforms. After accomplishing this, the essay will devote itself to the practical matter of ascertaining the opportunities emerging for community-based, socially active organizations, insofar as adapting to this climate. Ultimately the paper will seek to be of use for ongoing activism and empower public reaction by disclosing methods with which to confront disenfranchisement through innovation and collaboration, across a variety of vocations.

In phase one of the paper the scale and arrangement of corporatocracy in New York will be shown to weaken important public platforms and antagonize small businesses, non-profit organizations and local populations. In essence, how corporatocracy is integrated into the social

fabric, redirecting control of public affairs towards corporate actors and away from large swathes of the population.

In order to illuminate a widely-cast network of power, an assessment which references and expands on research already published on economic trends and socio-commercial precedents and practices will be provided, to elucidate the tangible application of civic privilege by corporations, and use this to argue how certain social crises are tied to this macroeconomic arrangement, by synthesizing published discourse with relevant statistics, press coverage, and evidence which corroborates an overarching disruption. It is not as if this has not transpired in regions around the world, or yet New York's own history. This critique echoes outcries of the early-twentieth century period of monopolization, trusts and boss politics. It is prudent to refer to seminal discourse from this period as well, in order to identify parallels between 20th and 21st century corporatocracy, which will serve to offer a sobering distillation of the power structure. A convincing case that there is an inhumane civic cost to the corporatist framework can also be made by determining, with specific examples, to what extent corporate welfare is unimpeded by social costs or democratic frictions, as this would allow us to gauge the extent to which the civic pathway has been diverted away from the consent and well-being of the masses, towards a routine which fundamentally upholds the wellbeing of a corporate cohort.

After establishing the depth of this crisis, four organizations will be examined, each of which serves to build and enhance the autonomy of communities across the boroughs, and put forth various means of conserving and supplementing useful models of civic consortium. What will be obtained from this are tools for the gritty independent art scenes, grassroots movements, self-starters, activists and advocates, as well as for anyone who wishes to strengthen that which is cherished in their local community to maintain and boost their effectiveness in New York City, despite challenges, by identifying and outlining organizational solutions still available to the working-class.

\*\*\*

## **The Spectre of Capital**

### ***The New New York - 21st Rather than 20th Century Paradigm***

When we think of New York, we most likely think of the twentieth-century city, the metropolis born from a confluence of restless, desperate people who arrived as underdogs and became the city's life force<sup>(1)</sup>. But the historical foil to the masses have always been a cohort of elites - the Anglo-Teutonic old money echelon of Vanderbilts, Fricks, et al and the added notches of industrial Baron's such as Rockefeller and Carnegie, and in the most recent eras real estate and corporate monopolists such as Robert Moses and Jeff Bezos.

In the 20th century, like now, these two strata represented radically different civic and social prospects. The former, multicultural, exuberant, acclimated to grit and giddy with freedom and curiosity, explored new ideas and created unforeseeable undulations in the fabric of this old city. This plurality quickened breeding grounds for socialists, unionists, suffragists, gangsters, newspapermen, and artists. Gusts of change and transformation emanated directly from the immigrant and black neighborhoods and in particular the nightspots and bars in which these new residents congregated. These cultural mutations threatened to usurp the civic prerogatives of the era's ruling class. Burton Peretti's *Nightclub City* argues that nightclubs succeeded over time in

changing local norms of propriety and behavior. New York's migrant populations were initiating a "cross-pollination of nightlife and politics".<sup>2</sup> Nefarious efforts to defang this working-class chimera quickly became par for the course in halls of power, as the revanchist anxiety of the 19th century-American establishment coagulated into an explicit imperative to horde socio-political capital by depriving and disenfranchising minorities. "The Elites of New York reinforced their ancestors' system. They squeezed the working-class, reducing the number of industrial jobs, and pitted immigrants and blacks against each other for dwindling resources."(^HGCLS) Instruments towards this effect included municipally rezoning valuable Manhattan industrial districts and reserving them for specific kinds of exclusive offices, apartment houses and department stores

*"The zoning ordinance passed by New York City in 1916 effectively separated manufacturing from retail and residential land uses and altered the Manhattan skyline through its requirement that tall buildings incorporate setbacks from their property lines to ensure adequate air and light to their surroundings. While a variety of social as well as economic concerns motivated the invention of zoning, by the end of the 1920s it had become clear that economic interests outweighed all others. Nevertheless, the imposition of zoning restrictions expressed desires for social order and had an impact on the physical form of Manhattan that reflected a dominant version of the professional-managerial class' ideals of urban life."*<sup>3</sup>

as well as leveraging the environment of news media to proliferate disinformation, racial hostilities and promote political stratagem;

*In the early 20th century, nativists protested the mass immigration of the "new immigrants" from Eastern and Southern Europe, such as from Russia, Poland, Italy and Greece. Nativists viewed these immigrants as too Jewish and too Catholic. These immigrants were not even considered "whites" at least through the first generation. This opposition led to infamous laws in the early 1920s that significantly curtailed immigration from these parts of Europe by placing strict and limited quotas from these areas."*<sup>4</sup>

and furthermore, reinforcing a juridical caucus through the racial bribe which would service the assimilated "whites" and impair non-whites.

*"Historians have suggested that the Great Migration was the beginning of a process which turned race, defined by skin color, into a salient social category in the US North. The establishment of a binary black-white racial classification reduced the importance of ethnicity and allowed the acceptance of previously discriminated immigrants into the white majority. At the same time, immigrants responded to black arrivals with increased attempts to differentiate themselves and signal Americanization."*<sup>5</sup>

Here we can step back and perceive an exemplary, ancestral formation of corporatocracy. Recognizing the intersectional character of the early 20th century corporatocratic project provides a lens through which an indictment can be more fully authenticated in the assessment of 21st century corporatocracy. Despite the U.S.'s nominal adherence to legal parity between all individuals, the arena of American democracy, and furthermore, of cities, has been systemically weighted to favor certain groups over others, plainly manifest in the overwhelming majority of white men occupying the most influential roles in society. Hegemony in legislative, mass media, educational, and financial institutions affords a privileged group the ability to shape the explicit and implicit character of the polis, frequently alongside processes that discriminate against the marginalized population and deprive them of full participation in the demos. Civic privilege is a binomial in which the amplification or diminution, legitimization or condemnation of voices in the public arena is refereed by these gatekeeping institutions that actively or circumstantially project and reinforce

specific cultural terms. The dominant incorporated exponents retain authorization over the natural order, the means to address crises in a way framed by their own interests, and the public project. The early 20th century elites strived to stabilize a particular frame of civic life by employing as many institutions to their program of civic life as possible, in essence, the same process that would be implemented by the fascist movements of Europe, but in the context of our capitalist republic.

What this means is the exercise of influence over local and national government for the advancement and protection of class or supremacist interests encroaches and forecloses on the lived denotations of citizenship for working-class and minority cultures, which are undermined and incapacitated on the structural level. This amounts to the circumscription of the polis as a sphere of action, experience and organization. The subsumption of the cities biopolitics to a capitalist city-project which negates the historical agency and cultural territory of the masses. At the start of the 20th century the camps in conflict were the white American bourgeoisie and the waves of new settlers. But in the 21st century, New York City's soul is being overhauled, snatched from indigenous populations of all backgrounds, as the spade of global capital breaks all familiar ground, buying, restructuring and colonizing the city section by section with the help of the governing bodies.

Neoliberalization, a free-market governmental philosophy which holds deregulation, privatization, and facilitation of speculative practices as economic and civic ideals, was the process initiated in response to the fiscal crisis of the 1970s. Joshua Freeman summarizes how prior to this "Government played an unusually expansive and expensive role in New York life, as a liberal political culture and decades of popular struggle had led to the creation of massive public healthcare, education, housing, and transportation systems and — compared to much of the country — generous welfare benefits. Local tax revenues and federal and state aid lagged behind spending, including municipal labor costs pushed up by extensive unionization. An exodus of largely white middle-class families to the suburbs, an aging and increasingly poor population, and the movement of jobs out of the city all added to the fiscal woes, obscured by the increasing use of borrowed funds for operating expenses. The brokerage firms and banks that underwrote City bond offerings and held much of the debt happily went along, profiting from trading activity and high, tax-free interest. But when the deep recession hit in 1973 — sending the unemployment rate in New York to 12 percent by 1975 — assets turned into liabilities, and investors grew reluctant to buy City bonds. Nonetheless, the City had to keep borrowing to refinance debt coming due. Each month, a dwindling pool of lenders demanded higher interest rates. In the spring of 1975, the lenders disappeared entirely, raising the prospect of default."<sup>6</sup> Kim-Phillips Fein posits that though "There was not necessarily a premeditated plan to seize and transform New York's government, nor were the actors who gained power during the crisis necessarily acting upon an ideology constructed in the abstract, the scare of the near-bankruptcy brought together the elite groups within the city, and enabled them to act in concert in ways that otherwise would have proved difficult to attain."<sup>7</sup> While David Harvey defines neoliberalism, in his book *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, as a class project designed to impose class on society through liberalism<sup>8</sup> and economists Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy decry "the restoration and increase of the power, income, and wealth of the upper classes"<sup>9</sup> as the chief object of the neoliberal agenda. Either way, the deepening of operational symbiosis between the governmental and private-sector is the central axis by which the nullification of the native population in the historical and cultural arena has taken place.

The popular systems that had been erected in the eras of the New Deal and Great Society were allowed to erode as the city became increasingly open to big business, real estate developers and upscale professionals. While turning its administrative focus away from big government programs City Hall also began the mass privatization of public space, as well as become the



superintendent bureaucracy meant to optimize that process. Taking care of New Yorkers was deemed less important than the advancement of more financially lucrative ventures - attracting tourists, corporations, and gentry. In fact, the social programs and civic culture of the progressive eras were portrayed on a national level as the source of the crisis, rather than the white flight, deindustrialization and multi-continent spanning economic recession that was its real cause.<sup>10</sup> The framework of the crisis was congenial with the notion that prioritization of big businesses and corporate/financial elite would save the city, while the principles of spending and regulation that supported the labouring class would ensure default and meltdown.<sup>11</sup>

The most integral element of postindustrial New York's plan for reviving its economy was and has remained gentrification. It can be defined literally as a resettling of gentry into urban localities where previously they were largely absent. Jeremiah Moss points out how "Where early gentrification had been driven by middle-class people looking to move into affordable and diverse localities, now the city brought in big real estate developers and corporations with generous tax abatements and other government subsidies. Public money for the poor was rerouted to the rich. In 1979 the National Association of Black Social Workers vowed to oppose gentrification in cities across the country, along with austerity measures, 'since these plans aimed at removing poor blacks from inner city areas'. Evictions skyrocketed, along with the numbers of homeless New Yorkers."<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah Moss quotes Neil Smith "The class remake of the city was minor, small scale, and symbolic in the beginning, but today we are seeing a total class retake of the central city. Almost without exception, the new housing, new restaurants, new artistic venues, new entertainment locales - not to mention the new jobs on Wall Street - are all aimed at a social class quite different from those who populated the Lower East Side or the West Side, Harlem or neighborhood Brooklyn in the 1960s. Bloomberg's rezoning of, at latest count, 104 neighborhoods has been the central weapon in this assault."<sup>13</sup> This was the means for facilitating a hyper-accelerated version of gentrification, coinciding with corporate cultural takeover.

### ***The Agenda and Prescriptions of Capital***

During each year's budget process, the Economic Development Council and its Members assign discretionary funding to the municipal agencies and non-profit organizations responsible for providing local services to communities. "Schedule C" funding, as it is called, encompasses all City allocations to Housing and Buildings (1.75%), Youth Services (0.88), Technology (0.75%), Parks and Recreation (0.59%), Libraries (0.43%), Economic Development (0.28%), and Cultural Affairs (0.17%). 4.85% of the total city budget in 2014. City Hall's meager commitment to the "Economic Development" and servicing of the working-class. Putting aside for a moment the procedural dimensions which affect the ways in which this funding materializes, it is reasonable to say that what is conferred in these utilities and public initiatives is miniscule compared to the wider transmutations being actively initiated. De Blasio's 2020 budget boasts about its \$125 million cut to financial assistance for families in need (TANF) — a \$59 million cut to vital health services for vulnerable New Yorkers — a \$25 million cut to education funding. Overall, nearly 1 billion dollars cut from programs meant to aid the City's non-capital-wielding residents thrive, rather than subsist. Concurrent with the austerity policy the city was prepared to offer Amazon \$1.7 billion in state grants and tax credits—plus \$1.3 billion in as-of-right perks from the city. This to a company which has obtained vast market share through price gouging, unethical competitive tactics, subsidances-wages, and mass worker layoffs; until the working-class outcry caused Amazon to pass up the bargain - presumably preferring to base themselves in a city where the company's breakneck growth would not be hampered by any working-class backlash. This is an extreme, and underappreciated, example of corporatocracy in the 21st century, wherein taxpayer money is sleight

of handed away from emergency, educational, and family services by unctuous political veterans to literally pay for monopolists like Amazon and Uber to clear away the native economic structures, making further displacement and reappropriation of land by gentry that much simpler.

Middle and lower class neighborhoods are being transformed at an astonishing rate, as real estate is consumed by venture capitalists and converted to businesses which primarily serve wealthy clientele. Central Harlem, Bushwick, Mott Haven. This is considered an economic and cultural boon by the establishment and financially flexible in New York's middle and upper class enclaves, despite the fact that it inherently alienates natives of these neighborhoods- remolding demographics, dramatically raising the cost of living in an already severely precarious economy and driving a wrench through the interpersonal languages that spoke for long-time residents. The paltry trickle of developmental funding for these neighborhoods is simply tokenistic in the face of the diametrically opposed forces of capital and the corporatocratic support for radically transformative commercial projects.

Neil Smith's and Michael LeFaivre's "Class Analysis of Gentrification" indicts the corporatocracy of systematic land grabbing, of colluding towards a "devalorization cycle of declining real-estate values- through which inner-city neighborhoods have been historically developed into deteriorated areas in order to create the necessary conditions for gentrification."<sup>14</sup> Tom Slater elaborates on this, stating "Abandonment and gentrification are tied together within the logic of an economic system, demonstrating that they are integrally linked products of specific decisions made by the primary actors in the real-estate market-financial institutions, developers, government, landlords. Smith and LeFaivre's description of the real-estate devalorization cycle stresses the commodity function of city neighborhoods under capitalism."<sup>15</sup> These long-term, long-range real estate projects are mediated by the institutions of the state. Fundamentally, it appears that City Hall has made a mission of taking neighborhoods back from average people, first slowly, then rapidly, seemingly without concern for the thousands of families ousted in the course of gentrification, let alone concern for native cultural authorship in the environment.

One side effect of this is that small businesses, community-based organizations, artist-run, collective-run, collaboratively-run, or collaboratively-curated spaces which have often been able to exist outside the periphery of the State, as an extension of locally maintained activities are now in constant danger of breaching laws and regulations. A medley of torporial bureaucratic paperwork and licensing applications and fees frequently press down on and demoralize young, exhausted, financially unstable or uneducated groups of citizens. Sig Legengger writes in *Right-Of-Way Gentrification: Conflict, Commodification & Cosmopolitanism*, "Looking closely at liquor tribunals, we see neoliberal rhetoric not only embedded in the dominant symbolic economy but also normalised by city bureaucracies."<sup>16</sup> Rather than seeing these local fixtures as potentially marketable or worthy of civic backing, the structural bias is seen to complement gentrifiers and big business with gateways and means of suppression that are selectively employed against native productive processes in order to portune the migration of gentry and invasive businesses. And as these large-scale businesses nestle into these same communities, these locally based, small-scale entities face overwhelming disadvantages when trying to defend income streams, legal parity, leases and contracts from other organizations and institutions. An anecdote from Legengger is illuminating here, "In every single case of the new establishments I reviewed there was a sense of purpose and possibility from both applicants and hearing officers. However the case was altogether different for long-established Mexican restaurants. The tone of Rosa Linda's, Aztec Sol's and Patzquaro's liquor board hearings were openly confrontational. Each restaurant wanted to serve alcohol or augment their existing bar in order to vie within the increasingly competitive neighbourhood. Unlike hearings for the new restaurants, the tenor of these transcripts was outright patronising. Clearly not satisfied with the establishment of neighbourhood need, the hearing officers demanded proof of

economic necessity, essentially forcing applicants to argue for the [chance] to stay afloat in Highland's rapidly expanding restaurant scene".<sup>17</sup> Tom Slater writes in *The Revanchist City* "As cities compete aggressively to make themselves attractive places to live in and in which to invest, they are more willing to impose harsh penalties on those people seen as 'undesirable' by tourists, shoppers, commuters, and investors. Furthermore, the punitive strategies to deal with 'unruly' citizens are usually put forward by their architects as common-sense, a *fait accompli*, even sacrosanct. The approach of urban planning to megapoleis becomes increasingly like a constant expectation of the gentrification of underproductive areas that neither the state, nor architecture, nor the private sector seem to be able to rationalize democratically."<sup>18</sup>

The corporatocratic superstructure of capital, gentrification, and commercialization poses to usher in a new metaphysics of *city*. The people, as a whole, are unpersoned in favor of an almost ritualistic enshrinement of the high-end. Where the indigenous populace and their utilization of space is physically, financially and culturally undermined to make the physical and symbolic space as fully acclimated to the grammar of global consumers and speculators as possible. The postindustrial neoliberal program, in this period, is to transform as much of the public domain, the city itself, into amusement for the ultra-rich, and venture capitalists have taken their place in the queue. Keeping on this metaphysical path, it might reach asymptotically towards becoming a spatial medium or habitat that maximizes the returns of elite-consumption enterprise. A sponge for wealth and a laboratory for the ultra-rich. But for now, having not yet reached that fictional singularity, the most widespread corporatocratic ablations are confined to the unremarkable categories of glamour and leisure and deliberately vacuous works of art that erase the average resident's correspondence with the street. The psychogeography of anti-plebeian governance.

### ***Reclamation of the Public Sphere***

Joaquín Barriendos Rodríguez writes insightfully about the symbiotic connection between the human experience and the corporatocratic environment, "[The] semantic impoverishment of the idea of "inhabiting a city" is clearly discernible if one observes the links of citizenship of the inhabitants where there has been a clear displacement in the mechanics of connection between the various levels of community involvement (from the immediate surroundings of neighborhood, work or education, to spaces for leisure and tourist corridors)."<sup>19</sup> In our context of civic diminishment and social displacement, the indigenous struggle to reclaim the urban environment and cultural trajectory from corporatocratic domination is clearly of paramount importance. The civic relation between the public and their urban territory must be strengthened. Jane Jacobs writes in *The Death and Life of American Cities* "think of city neighborhoods as organs of self-government. Our failures with city neighborhoods are, ultimately failures in localized self-government. And our successes are successes at localized self-government. I am using self-government in its broadest sense, meaning both the informal and formal management of society."<sup>20</sup> The struggle to do so intersects across a variety of disciplines and industries, but coalesces around a contemporary class consciousness.

In *The Culture of Cities*, Sharon Zukin proclaims modern cities are symbolic cities. Symbolic economies influence the actions of citizens and produce inroads into a city's material economy (based on land, labor and capital). The waning of urban industrial bases, procession of fiscal crises and the emergence of a corporatocratic revisioning of the city have altered the symbolic economy. She posits "The symbolic economy features two parallel production systems that are crucial to a city's material life: the *production of space* with its synergy of capital investment and cultural meanings, and the *production of symbols*, which constructs both a currency of commercial exchange and a language of social identity."<sup>21</sup> Material processes are co-orbital with processes of cultural production. The nature of who dominates, lives in, uses and profits from physical spaces in

modern cities is more and more a *physical and symbolic* contest amid polarized cultures.

Her book also points to the reality of local cultures undergoing homogenization. Often times this is linked to the commercially derived facsimiles that developers try to pass off as urban villages, what is sometimes referred to as Disneyfication, or what she calls “pacification by cappuccino”, to solicit the middle-class. The most obvious way this occurs is through the erection of conspicuous architecture (such as condos seen in Brooklyn, retail plazas seen in the north and south Bronx, and huge skyscrapers seen in Queens) which invoke symbolic associations with wealth, safety, and vogue. As this occurs, the neighborhood is transformed from within through the weaving of a new physical, symbolic, financial and cultural terrain. Zukin claims that the identification of the public culture and space is “being replaced by culture represented as “consumable goods, sites of delectation, and themed experiences”<sup>22</sup>. Accompanying this phenomena is the “hybridizing [of] the public and private (commercial) spaces in the city, and the loss of public stewardship to the encroachment of control by private interests.”<sup>23</sup> For instance, Bryant Park is currently being redesigned by a nonprofit corporation, with a board of directors firmly entangled in the private sector. And amid these new projects, all these uses of place claim to encourage diversity and self-direction, while usually striving to attract a very specific type of customer (e.g exorbitant covers and prices at nightclubs as well as overt discrimination, or the need for high-end brands to maintain their cultural associations of prestige) and unsaddling those ideals from the socioeconomic ground up. The cultural “pollination” which occurred and evolved throughout New York in the 20th century is being *reversed* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the city now becoming enfolded by corporate logic and directed by upper-class consumerism.

Although systemic power is contoured to serve the “higher” interests of investors or gentry, contentious negotiations for public stewardship can sometimes resolve in favor of the indigenous citizenry.

### ***Physical Spaces as Integrative of People, Thought and Action***

The aim of any organization, or even individual, striving to combat corporate takeover of the city’s spaces and culture should be to install structures which promote intra-neighborhood identification, participation, discourse and monetary chains. The current corporatocratic model for gentrifying neighborhoods exists as a feedback loop where neighborhoods serve either as the loci of speculative growth economies, or of ghettofication. Perennially migratory post-citizens are girdled into neighborhoods that correspond to their class status in the city’s portfolio of social commodities, expanding and homogenizing the heavily policed domain of the gentry while compressing the old and new poor in faraway and degenerating slums and rookeries, and day by day the number of homeless people increases. Strengthening and anchoring neighborhoods with positive feedback systems that promote stewardship over space, industry and culture by residents is a primary bulwark to corporatocratic socioeconomic replacement.

Rallying and fostering communities on a grassroots level is complex and challenging, but also brings with it a very real and very immense horizon of opportunity. Beyond the class and cultural neoliberal warfare on indigenous structures, one can perceive how the 21<sup>st</sup> century American urban polis wears a rash brought of ideological frictions: nostalgia and disenchantments with the 20th century imaginary, the zeal for digital technology and the fatiguing barrage of the New, the omnipresent trauma of racial schism and climate catastrophe, and the need for entertainment and pleasure, among a myriad of other conundrums. What we don’t seem to have is coherency of meaning or action. In such moments, civic dialectics become convulsive and prone to sudden, catastrophic meltdown.

Material and psychological attunement to the environment are necessary building blocks of sociological progress. In the alarmingly deterritorialized 21st century, it can be argued that the public's fervent reappropriation of settled space could summon a necessary reappearance of meaning, drive, and cohesion that would reverberate across all dimensions of civic life. Beyond the spiritual and social gains, such reforms would ideally converge in protective economies contributing to a native middle-class that can provide further feedback power, slowing and resisting the displacement and dislocation latent in our current economic environment. Reviving the ideological foundation of American life, self-determination, in the contemporary context of urban communities can be used to resist the disintegrative programs of the postindustrial corporatocracy. It requires the utilization and expansion of physical, conceptual, and sociorelational drivers that insinuate material and symbolic possession of land, culture and history into these neighborhoods. By invigorating the neighborhoods, acting locally, and thinking globally, we can begin to form the basis of a humanistic alternative beyond the neoliberal program of the State and its schematic atrophying of Place and Habitant. Integrating neighborhoods with material and cultural networks affords a more satisfying lived experience, preserves internal flows of wealth, and generates better fields for the fostering of political representation and reform.

Physical venues used by entrepreneurs, activists, performance venues and artist collectives must be put into use as incubators for exchange between themselves and the neighborhood in which they exist, rather than simply operating as commercial forums. Although it does not stand as a common business procedure, broadening the use of a private establishment through entanglement with community activity substantiates a highly meaningful and viable model. Firstly, modern marketing theory supports the notion that patrons do not merely utilize a venue for a service, they affiliate to an even greater degree with the sense of lifestyle, engendered by what the space or product means to them. It follows then, that a venue that promotes in locals the belief that it exists not simply to perform transactions of goods and services, but to involve their ideas, their way of life, give a platform to their passions and act as partners in their struggles, would be consistently and fervently supported. This feeling of community identification would provide enormous boosts to attendance, word-of-mouth, perhaps even investment. Secondly, as the number of unique functions increases, (live performances, local open mics, workshops, discussions, seminars, fundraisers for local campaigns or families in need, heritage festivals, and anything else that excites and empowers the neighborhood) and broad, personal connections with the community emerge, people begin to include it in their daily lives. Children, adolescents, adults and the elderly all have a means to benefit from such venues. Using a space to focalize a relevant sense of possibility, productivity and cohesion in, say, low-income neighborhoods is a priceless form of community empowerment. Thirdly, as venue owners thus become enmeshed with the spirit of the community they can then begin the task of consolidating neighborhood plans that partner with other local organizations and residents to create new social and physical institutions. It is necessary that the venue owners communicate the need for the community to protect and lift itself by acting in concert with each other, as the city does not wish to support middle and lower class people and neighborhoods.

A kind of communal and cultural syndication must take place in these neighborhoods, and through these venues, an insistent promotion of belonging, community fabric and direct management of the environment, and economic solidarity among residents. The local syndicate can be thought of as the heavenly inverse of the gang/mafia phenomena that sometimes takes hold in communities struggling against the odds. A notable encapsulation of such an image was provided by the music group The Village People. A nominal "gang" yet whose members live full, respectable lives, free of deprivation and violence, pursuing creative fulfillment, promoting respect between cultures and standing up for what is good and decent. Today, that kind of imagined urban renaissance is at our fingertips, the conditions, though dire, are actually better than ever to incite

something that in different times was called utopian. Chinese wisdom affirms when a society goes to an extreme in one direction, systemic changes in the other direction become imminent. For the past 40 years corporatocracy has been allowed to brutalize, dehumanize and sterilize a city that had for a century stood out as the capital city of human self-realization. Empowered, self-governing, self-industrializing democracy and culture on the local and urban level is what must occur to regain *that city, that spirit*. All of this can be kickstarted by re-imagining the role of commercial venues, to serve as the indexers and projectors of community power that has gone unharnessed or demolished by the various instruments of corporatocracy. And there are a wide and exciting variety of ways to approach this new, alternative DIY venue.

\*\*\*

## **Coordinating the Struggle**

### ***The Need to Draw From Many Sources***

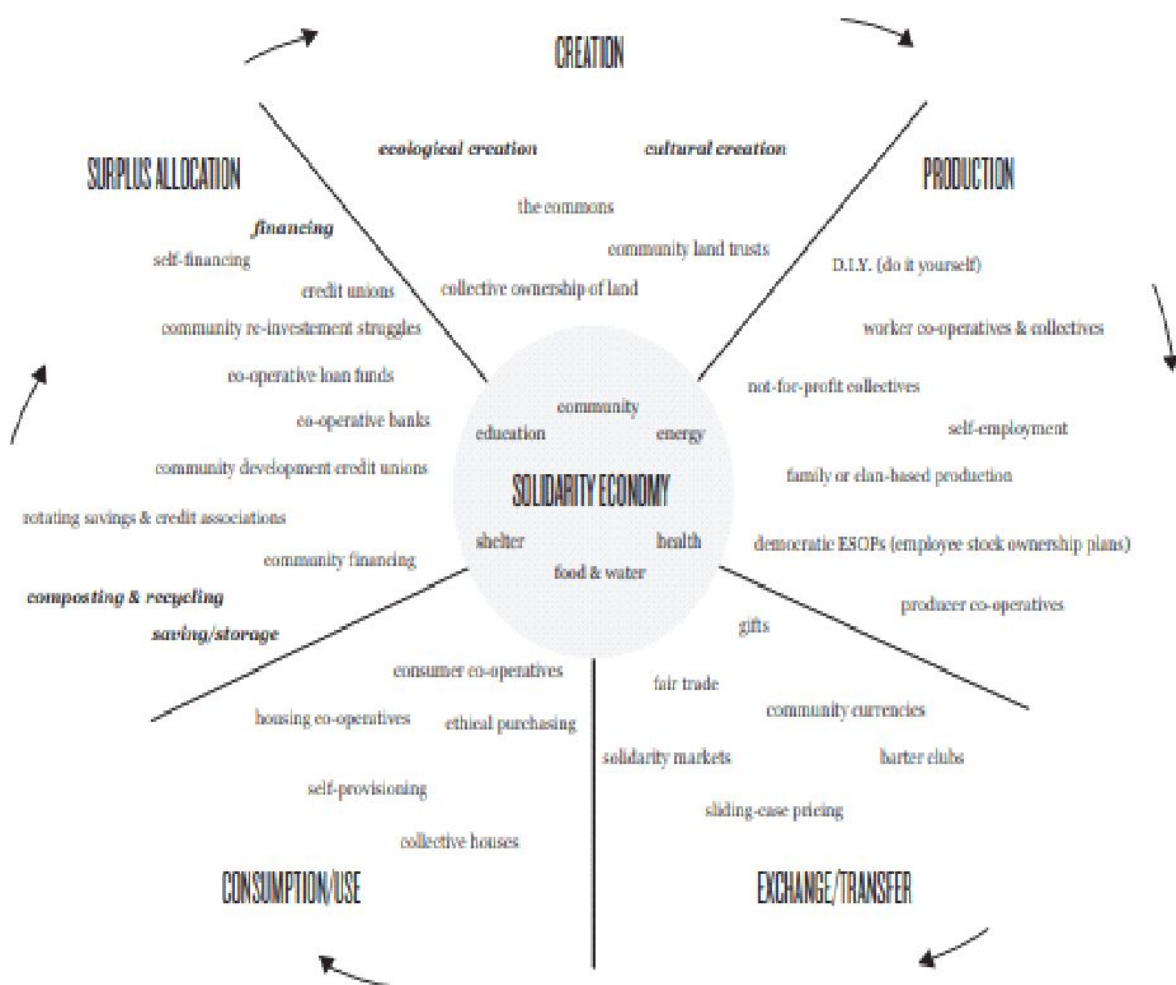
There are several reasons why the would-be urban entrepreneur/organizer/art-lover benefits from the principle of internalizing an eclectic, ever-growing inventory of business strategies, concepts, and insights, from many sources. One can start by acknowledging the extremely wide and diverse field of neighborhoods that make up New York City; each one different in its ethnic composition, its intergenerational characteristics, its physical channels of movement, the existing industry, distinct spending habits, governmental aspects, and cultural affinities. Every venue will utilize specific kinds of innovative tools and different strategies to becoming successful in these distinct environments. Sometimes the features which drive success will be subtle, and sometimes they will be glaring. In order to compete and thrive in this arena while also generating meaningful bonds with the community, those who operate venues should be prepared to tinker with their customary notions of what a venue is or should be capable of. Applying lessons and practices illuminated by the study of venues from the past or in other industries, or in similar and different areas, and the suggestions of patrons and community members bolsters the venue and its abilities. There is simply too much out there, too many great venues, too many untapped creative avenues, too many new ideas and strategies, too many issues to address, for there not to be a constant cause for improvement and furthering the sophistication of the enterprise. Whether it be effective marketing strategies, digital tools and networks, exciting and powerful types of content, these all can be used to empower the operations of the organization.

As such, the following pages will assess the functional achievements and viability of four Do-It-Yourself organizations currently embroiled in issues of race, class, privation, curation, and participation. They each demonstrate different proficiencies where it comes to maintaining operations on a budget, connecting to local audiences, cultivating unique spheres and ensuring their own continuity. This section will include commentary from the venue, and attempt to elaborate ways in which technological and conceptual experimentation have been successful. Specifically, it will strive to answer the question of what options are available for promoting grassroots culture and redistributing power in the social fabric.

---

## Economic Cooperatives in NYC

“Cooperatives are an under-appreciated resource and economic strategy. Challenges to cooperatives living up to their potential include that the model is not well known and is often denigrated which reduces people’s exposure to the model and precludes potential services and supports from agencies that help small businesses. In addition, capitalization and access to capital for cooperatives are limited; and state (and federal) laws are not equivalent and often preclude the licensing of certain kinds of cooperatives. Meanwhile, cooperatives are an old model that has been used by every group throughout history, about half the world’s population (an estimated 3 billion people) are connected to cooperative enterprises for their livelihood in some way (according to the International Cooperative Alliance). Cooperative businesses have lower failure rates than traditional corporations and small businesses, after the first year of startup, and after 5 years in business.”<sup>24</sup>



(Image credit Ethan Miller)

Figure 4. A Solidarity (Cooperative) Economy

## ***Interview with Dr. Gordon Nembhard, posted on Sharable.net***

***Mira:*** How might cooperatives support broad social change, based on your research, and what can people do in their own communities to support the development of a cooperative economy locally?

***Dr. Gordon Nembhard:*** Cooperatives solve economic problems in different ways than conventional for-profit businesses. They operate on the values and principles of democratic participation, inclusion, solidarity, sharing, sharing, and 'for need' rather than 'for profit.' Cooperative businesses stabilize communities because they are community-based business anchors, and they distribute, recycle, and multiply local expertise and capital within a community. They enable their owners to generate income and jobs, accumulate assets, provide affordable, quality goods and services, develop human and social capital, and at the same time are family and community friendly. Co-op members acquire a variety of general business and industry-specific skills. They also develop leadership skills and team building experience, and a sense of their own agency. All these skills are transferable and members use them in other aspects of their lives – thus increasing their capacity as good citizens and change makers.

Cooperative economic development has been successful in urban as well as rural areas, among women and men, and every racial and ethnic group around the world. They develop – and survive – as a response to market failure and economic marginalization. Cooperatives address market failure and fill gaps that other private businesses and the public sector ignore like the provision of rural utilities in sparsely populated areas, affordable healthy and organic foods in food deserts, access to credit and banking services, affordable housing, child or elder care, to markets for culturally sensitive goods.

Cooperatives address such issues as community control in the face of transnational corporate concentration and expansion, the pooling of resources and profit sharing in communities where capital is scarce and incomes low and increased productivity and improved working conditions in industries where work conditions may be poor and wages and benefits usually low. Cooperatives can be part of the solution in rebuilding after economic recessions – they, like other elements in the solidarity economy, start where people are and build from the ground up.

Fannie Lou Hamer once said that “Cooperative ownership of land opens the door to many opportunities for group development of economic enterprises which develop the total community rather than create monopolies that monopolize the resources of a community.” In the 1970s, she advocated for all kinds of cooperatives to meet the needs of people, and as necessary to establish economic independence in the face of economic and political discrimination and retaliation.

Increasing awareness of and information about cooperatives among the general public and government agencies and employees is one of the most important first steps. We also need expanded, less restrictive, and more uniform co-op laws (at state and federal levels) and supportive infrastructure, particularly for startup, capitalization, and financing (at all levels). This includes establishing loan funds, small business services, and workforce funding dedicated to cooperative development. The Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies in NYC suggests the use of municipal economic development corporations and departments of small business services to grow worker cooperatives and that cities could prioritize worker cooperatives as preferred contractors.



---

## ***Project X (Bronx Poetry and Art Collective)***

### ***Interview with Project X Organizer and Artist Michelle:***

#### ***Shahzeb: What is Project X? What led you to create Project X and how long has it been around?***

***Michelle:*** Project X is a community based organization based in the Bronx. Its an arts organization, and right now we do a lot of work with poets. Specifically, it's about bringing poetry to the Bronx and lifting the voices that are there and creating a space for poets to share their work and also have professional development opportunities. Workshops, engaging with other organizers and artists, and collaborations. Speaking about things like race, racism, gentrification, all the things the people in the community are constantly talking about and giving a voice to that. We have a slam that happens in the Bronx. Our features are Latinx poets. And thinking about the diaspora of what that means from different perspectives. We have an open mic, our slam, and throughout the season people compete to be on our slam team for the following year. 5 people get a fellowship, which comes with a lot of professional development opportunities. We give them kind of a Tour and they get to perform. They feature at our culminating event which this year is our festival on August 10th.

*It's been around for three years. Our founder Noelle Quinores, who is a community organizer came together with a bunch of organizers, particularly in the Bronx with an idea to create a space for people of color that highlights and features Latinx people, so they don't have to keep going to other places. He was really tired of being the only person of color. He also wanted to push back against the toxic aspects of such slam spaces. So they created Project X. I started as a community/audience member and then I joined the organizing team for the same reasons it was created. I knew so many people and poets that were dope, but I was also tired of going to spaces that didn't look like us and having to leave and go to Manhattan or Brooklyn, so it was great to have a space that was run for and by us.*

#### ***How does Project X obtain and utilize its physical spaces?***

***Michelle:*** We have a lot of connections across the Bronx with different spaces, mostly personal and professional among other organizers and artists. The main venue we work with is in the South Bronx, it's called Mott Haven Bar and Grill. But we move around every year. Last year it was at Ivy Studios, also in the South Bronx. We work with others too, for example Dreamyard. We have a great connection with Bronx Art Space, Andrew Freedman Home, these are places we've been in conversation about doing events there. These are businesses and organizations that we think are dope, that are usually run by people of color, we love the work they do and love to collaborate and support each other.

*Given that there were so many anxieties in the institutional poetry circles in Manhattan, do you see any changes in the work of the poets now that they have this kind of comfortable space to present their work?*

*Well yes, for example, there's a lot of Afro-Latino members who talk about being Black and Latino or blackness, and feel empowered to talk about that in our space, or say poems about gentrification and how its related to a lot of stuff that's happening in the Bronx unfortunately, and not that that's*

*the only things they talk about, but this is definitely the space where they feel empowered to do so. And then they get a good response too, and they can connect and meet people based on what they spoke about.*

***Are there any challenges or looming problems that have presented themselves for Project X?***

***Michelle:*** *We're very grassroots so we don't really have to deal with licensing or competitors, I think it's because we really try to collaborate and build that collaboration across organizations and support each other and help in any way we can. We don't suffer from a lot of the interpersonal issues that can hamper a culture, overall we're trying to dismantle those kinds of institutions. I guess fundraising. We run things ourselves and we don't get paid for it. It's not a non-profit or a business. We're all privileged enough to have jobs and paychecks. I more do it because it's something I'm passionate about it, but it can feel like working two different jobs... If I could do 100% Project X I would if I didn't have to pay bills. But that's a part of being super grassroots.*

***What would you consider a major achievement of the organization?***

***Michelle:*** *I definitely think that seeing poets grow, their professional development. Also seeing them come back and work with us again. One of our slam poets from the first year is collaborating with us again... Actually really we're working with him, helping to set up a workshop for Black Queer and Trans Writers and I think work like that is a huge accomplishment. We also are trying to be more intergenerational and think about how we can work with some of our elders and mentors for example, and young people. One of our organizers is a high school teacher and so we do well working with high school age students, but I also work with 5th grade, so like "How can we work with the kids who are even younger"?*

***What kind of work is Project X doing to further those missions?***

***Michelle:*** *Yeah, I think a big part of that happens through the spaces where we do our performances. For example slam at Lehman College, our slam team has performed and work with students and conducted workshops in public primary schools. More so right now we're supporting organizations that are currently doing that and trying to learn from them to see if we as organizers want to create or collaborate in programs like those.*

***What organizations are those?***

***Michelle:*** *We have a relationship and have had events with say for example Dreamyard, who do incredible workshops in the Bronx with high school and even much younger students. They do afterschool time programs, they have a fashion workshop that they do over the summer - we're actually trying to get their students to do a showing of their work at our festival. There's also The Point, they do really good workshops also for young people. There's also a program called Bronx Loaf that we wanna work with to see if they can bring some of their young poets. And lastly we have someone on our slam team right now who works with Urban Word New York City and several of our members have hosted open mics and things like at Irvingwood.*

***You mentioned a festival? Is it the first festival? How long did it take you to organize that from start to finish?***

***Michelle:*** *Yes, it's our first festival. Our season is from October to June, so in August we have*

*what's called a retreat and we plan for the year. We had been thinking about doing a festival since the last year's retreat. The slam team had gone to the national slam event in Chicago and we'd had a conversation like 'That's cool but like, what about the Bronx? We're taking our artists outside of the place where we do so much work and the space where all the organizers and artists are.' So we came together and revised our vision where it came to this year's culminating event. We wanted to have a great time here. And also, yes we may primarily deal with poetry but we are an arts organization, so the idea of a festival gave us the great opportunity to try and incorporate Dancers, Visual Artists, Workshops, Music, DJs. We're trying to be intersectional and not just Slam Poetry which can be very narrow in the world of arts. So we started organizing it in August and the plan is set now. Two of our main organizers do a lot of applying for grants, and we got a big grant from the Bronx Council of the Arts which is really exciting. So we have a budget now and a space. We did it little by little, kind of backwards, like 'What do we need to know now?'. There's still a good amount of logistical details that needs to be worked out.*

Project X has succeeded on multiple fronts and demonstrated the potency of collaborative and locally focused strategies.

As an organization, it relies on the principle of communities conducting activities that celebrate shared histories and engage with contemporary realities, such as gentrification, displacement, racism, educational opportunities and cultural marginalization. The organization is operated by a team of veteran and emerging poets but thrives thanks to the support of existing local venues and organization and its spiritual identification with their role. These poets use their artistic abilities to incisively communicate the spirit and personality of the Bronx, and in return businesses, organizations, and individuals host their events and invite their artists. By making the choice to come together as an association of latinx and Afro-Latin writers and performers, they invoked the whole cultural turf of the Bronx. The people want to see them thrive, in part because they are chroniclers of the ongoing project of Latinx diaspora. Invoking shared race and history has served the organization extremely well, and it has helped the organization to nourish and be nourished thanks a few critical reciprocal processes.

The immediate recognition of Project X, in funding, partnerships, and platforms is a reflection of the demand for their work, but not in the typical market sense. What is being supplied and demanded is a "product" that affirms the cultural-solidarity, personal worth, and internal progress of the community. The product is not being sold, it is being created, collectively. These young artists, with their poetry, electrify a cultural base that is often under or misrepresented. Speaking for the people, to the people, in the language they are familiar with, provides not only validation but a sense of progress and historicity, of meaningful existence. Meaning is the currency of this organization. Their work provides camaraderie and personal impact to the bars, schoolhouses, and even street corners where they perform. This supports the notion that the integration of a community with its own cultural production and is a transposable model for utilization of almost any kind of space.

Can this a model that can be sustained, and furthermore, improved? The answer to the first seems to be yes. There is an exemplary precedent for this kind of collective movement and mindset in the Bronx. One that has developed into a full-fledged global cultural powerhouse. Hip-Hop. In the Bronx's "burning" years - a truly awful demonstration of the mindset of real estate moguls and

corporatocratic technocracy, where it was deemed acceptable to burn property en masse and collect insurance, and close over 50 fire houses in the Bronx, respectively, heavily contributing to *massive* social and economic fallout- Hip-Hop rose up as a positive cultural outlet and a form of kinesthetic healing. It encouraged dancing, poetry, self-education, awareness of political structures, self-determination and outlaw mentality. But primarily, at its core, it was about community and pride. This kind of cultural formula is extremely hard to destroy because it is an ever-present human compunction.

The original hip-hop events were in abandoned buildings, parking lots, and in middle-of-the-street bloc parties. Today, hip-hop is used to warm and empower the souls of communities all over the world, in wartorn and ravaged lands like Yemen, Syria and South Africa. In fact, those communities are currently world-noted and thriving. This formula, of community and pride, is inherent to human beings, it cannot be debased, groups and individuals find ways to engage in these kinds of activities with next to *nothing*. As long as there is a shared history, a shared struggle, a shared hope, then people will want to give artists and performers modeled like Project X a platform, because the favor is instantly returned. Project X banked on a sense of the Bronx as a family, and as a Bronx resident, I feel this is a limitless and minimally tapped resource. Jane Jacobs counsel is germane to the success both Hip-Hop and Project X as well, having implored locals to “use parks and squares and public buildings as part of the street fabric; use them to intensify the fabric’s complexity and multiple use. They should not be used to island off different uses from each other, or to island off subdistrict neighborhoods; [sic] use them to emphasize the functional identity of areas large enough to work as districts.”<sup>25</sup>

How can Project X's model be improved? Well, the solution is already underway. Festivals, workshops and multimedia projects. Much like the trajectory of hip-hop, Project X is striving to incorporate a wider set of artists and event-structures into their sphere of influence. Instead of taking their poets to a prestigious spoken word competition in Chicago they decided to design a festival that would invite and showcase a whole cross-section of the community to experience their and other artists work. This festival will be featuring dancers, visual art, poetry, hand-made fashion and crafts. Such an event is likely to provide massive recognition, networking opportunities, and funding useful for expanding and improving future operations. This takes their empowerment narrative and deepens its resonance, strengthening personal and material engagement with their ideas and mission, and imbuing every artist, operator and guest with a sense of pride and possibility - a major form of capital that cannot be downplayed. If I were an organizer at Project X I would also be trying to get the local News 12 The Bronx station involved, for their ability to positively report on the event and therein attract more artists and vendors to get involved.

---

### ***Sofar Sounds (Digital Platform/Global Event Production)***

***The following is “An Interview with Rafe Offer: Co-Founder and CEO of Sofar Sounds” published on Chris Mitchell's blog [Travelingmitch.com](http://Travelingmitch.com).***

Because it is lengthy, rather than having the reader wade all the way through the entire interview, the flow of dialogue will be interrupted to offer commentary and analysis that demonstrates the utility of this business model in our context of native-empowerment and cultural autonomy through

intelligent use of physical space.

**Chris Mitchell:** *Thanks so much for taking the time to sit down with me, I've been a fan of Sofar for quite some time. If you wouldn't mind, can you talk about where the idea for Sofar came from or what it was born out of?*

**Rafe Offer:** *Thanks for having me, Chris. It's a pleasure to chat and I so appreciate your kind words. Sofar Sounds was born from frustration — in this case, of a few friends. Three of us were at a Friendly Fires gig in Soho, London and everything felt off. People were talking, the glasses clanging at the bar were competing with the music, and we couldn't believe how many people were busy watching the show through their phones instead of connecting with the musicians on stage.*

*We ended up leaving the gig knowing there needed to be a better way to experience live events. A few weeks later, we invited some people over to a London flat where a friend played a couple of songs for us on his guitar. There were about 8 people in the room and I swear, you could hear a pin drop. It was really special.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *That's beautiful stuff, and, thankfully, I feel like that's still true at all the Sofar shows that I've been to in recent memory. So, If you were to explain Sofar Sounds to someone who knew nothing about it, how would you break it down for them in a few sentences? How is it all set up?*

**Rafe Offer:** *We're reimagining live events through curated, secret performances in intimate settings around the world. Sofar transforms everyday spaces - from living rooms, lofts and rooftops, to retail stores - into unexpected venues for live shows. Every Sofar experience is wholly unique, a "choose your own adventure" of sorts that empowers discovery of artists, spaces, people, neighborhoods and cities, whether at home or abroad. Every Sofar experience is wholly unique, a "choose your own adventure" that empowers discovery of artists, spaces, people, neighborhoods and cities, whether at home or abroad.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I like the idea of it being a "choose your own adventure," and quite agree. I've never been to two shows that were alike, which I suppose is the goal. On that note, what, in your own words, is the inherent goal of Sofar Sounds? What do you hope to accomplish or what void are you aiming to fill (or already filling)?*

**Rafe Offer:** *We want to put on great live events for guests around the world where they feel they can connect with each other and the artists performing. And more importantly, we want to support the artists who play for us. Many Sofar artists are at the beginning stages of their career and it can be tough — booking gigs, building a following, earning some cash. We want to help them along in this process.*

*Artists who play a Sofar know they'll be performing to an engaged audience who comes open and eager to hear and connect to their music or comedy or poetry...whatever their art may be. These intimate shows lead to more fans who are likely to follow an artist on social media after a show or, better yet, go see them at another gig.*

**Christopher Mitchell:** *Something people might not realize is that Sofar Sounds is about a lot more than just music, it's really about performance and that can take a lot of forms, which, in my opinion, is*

*fantastic. People around the world have been nothing if not receptive to that it seems.*

*As far as I can tell, Sofar seemed to spread to other cities largely by word of mouth or organically. In that sense, do you feel like this was a movement that people were genuinely yearning for?*

**Rafe Offer:** *It's a good question. I do think so, yes — people talking at gigs happens everywhere. And phones are everywhere, on all the time, so it's nice to be able to take a couple of hours away from a screen and on the floor surrounded by other passionate music lovers. People are definitely yearning for a place to just be together, and discover something IRL (in real life.)*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I really get the sense that Sofar Sounds was born out of your discontent with modern audiences at concerts. How do you feel Sofar Sounds confronts that?*

**Rafe Offer:** *Yeah. As noted above, that was a huge part of it. And it's still very much an issue at many gigs. We have a long way to go! At the same time, as Sofar grew, it became a way to also support new music and give musicians a live platform to share their work to a focused audience.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *It's quite something that you can find these "focused audiences" at Sofar shows literally all around the world. Sofar Sounds, in general, seems to place a fair bit of merit on locations. Personally, I've attended numerous shows, and each location was strikingly different.*

*Why does Sofar place such importance on location, and how do you think that influences the show?*

**Rafe Offer:** *When we first started Sofar, the majority of events were taking place in people's homes. Almost 10 years later, we're now curating events in all sorts of unique places, but stress on keeping them intimate. Even in bigger spaces, we keep our capacities at just over 100 people.*

*Whatever the location may be — Sofar creates an immersive ambiance that brings guests and artists closer together, without the pretense or crowds, that empowers discovery of artists, spaces, people, neighborhoods and cities, whether at home or abroad. Some of my personal favorites include a boxing ring in London, the top of a ski jump in Oslo and the top of the Willis Tower in Chicago. Taking people to a new location adds an element of suspense and fun, while also encouraging them to get away from "normal" gig behavior — instead staying focused on the music in a friendly atmosphere.*

*"It has exceeded my initial dream, by a large margin. When we started, it was simply about creating a gig that was special — one with our friends and musicians we loved and who we wanted to support."*

\*\*\*

Already, here, an incredibly forward-thinking and transformative process is being developed. The issue at hand was the fact that the experience of performance events was being marred by systemic conditions. The nightlife crowd in Rafe's hometown was full of self-centered and consumerist tendencies and personalities: people were noisy and disengaged, vendors took advantage of the opportunity to sell as many drinks as possible, deepening the cacophony, and social media frenzy killed the immediacy and depth of the interaction between performer and audience. The performers, their fans, and the average showgoer were made to put up with this, frankly, demeaning state of

affairs. What could have been a very enjoyable moment was poignantly stifled by a commercial standard that didn't actually value what those people were there for. The artists presence there is merely a ploy to get customers to show up and drink. Many attendees come simply for the general posture of being at a live show, whether for their dates or their online followers. Sure, the artist most likely gets paid, but they are likely as unfulfilled as the fans paying to watch them in discomfort, at most shows such as this.

Sofar's digital platform was always meant to facilitate a physical platform. One with certain kinds of cultural tendencies. The primary one is engagement between the crowd and the audience. This yields the highest level of satisfaction for the artist, certainly. But what about for the audience? Most businesses would not be able to get away with not telling their customers what exactly is being offered to them. Attendants are kept in the dark about where the event is until 48 hours before, and about who is performing till they get there. But a new, and often unusual location, gives each event a cinematic, once-in-a-lifetime quality, and a shared sense of unity and excitement between guests. The sense that you and a select handful of daring participants are assembling for a "happening" comprised of setting and content. Whether that be a beatboxing symphony at someone's apartment or Afro-Caribbean Jazz in a museum you hadn't ever thought to visit. The counterintuitive quality of this model is precisely what allows it to completely reprogram attitudes and processes that have stagnated in the world of performance and produce a radical confluence of place, artist, and congregational identity. This is what allows the unspoken bond to form, between audience and artist, and trust and vulnerability to exist between individuals. The artist and the audience become more present, more open to possibility. As someone who has been using Sofar for shows for a few months, I speak from experience, it is highly rewarding for everyone. Every moment is precious, is just this once and yet forever. Everyone is present and important. It reminds one of the real intention behind art, connection.

\*\*\*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I agree with you on all fronts there, the location plays a big role in what Sofar has become. Do you feel that Sofar Sounds, in its current state, lives up to the dream that you initially had for it, or is that "dream" always evolving and expanding?*

**Rafe Offer:** *It has exceeded my initial dream, by a large margin. When we started, it was simply about creating a gig that was special — one with our friends and musicians we loved and who we wanted to support. We joked that one day we'd do it outside the UK...maybe in New York. And one day maybe a famous musician would want to perform. When it started to take off - and spread beyond London, it was always a bonus.*

*And when people from cities we had never even heard of got in touch, like Aalborg or Yekaterinburg, we were a bit awestruck. Now today yes, the dream continues to evolve to adjust to where we are and how we're expanding.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I'll definitely have to check them out right after this (as should my lovely readers if they've got a minute). Speaking of artists, the lineup for an event isn't typically disclosed until arrival. Why is that policy in place, and why do you feel it's important?*

**Rafe Offer:** *At Sofar, not only do we not disclose the lineups in advance, we also don't have any opening or closing acts. We want all of our artists to be treated equally with a guest's full attention*

and encourage people to join us on time and stay until the end.

**Chris Mitchell:** *I think that's a great policy and adds a touch of mystique to the whole thing anyhow. You've been running Sofar Sounds for a while now, What's been your favourite memory from the journey of founding Sofar Sounds from 2009 until now?*

**Rafe Offer:** *Watching people connect at the Sofar. We've had at least 15 people get married who met at Sofar either as guests or as volunteers. I still can't believe that. I imagine many more have also found new friendships or love that we don't even know about. The fact that we have created a vibe and environment that enables people to meet other like-minded people and even fall in love — that's up there for me as an all-time favorite thing.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *Obviously matchmaker was your true calling in life! Now, speaking of connecting people, social media has played a large role in Sofar's growth. Sofar's Twitter account, for example (@sofarsounds), regularly showcases great photos from shows around the world. How have you guys utilized social media to take this whole movement to another level and to what end?*

**Rafe Offer:** *The majority of Sofar cities all have their own social media accounts, in addition to our main global accounts (@sofarsounds on both Instagram and Twitter). These local accounts are managed by the city leaders around the world, offering them the opportunity to not only promote their shows and the Sofar brand, but also create a unique local flavor that best suits their community and culture. It's part of what makes us feel truly global. You can walk into a Sofar almost anywhere in the world and the guiding principles are the same, with the city's own cultural flair.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *Does Sofar, in your opinion, still embody the same underlying principles that it was founded upon? (or perhaps even more so?)*

**Rafe Offer:** *For sure. Sofar has evolved and grown massively, but our core principles of respecting the musicians and being respectful and attentive at performances are the same. We'll continue to host Sofars in unique and unusual spaces, all to support a diverse group of emerging talent. None of those things have changed and won't for the foreseeable future.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I love it, and I'm excited to see some more shows on the horizon. What are you most proud of as it relates to Sofar Sounds?*

**Rafe Offer:** *That we've helped thousands of musicians get more fans, some cash to help them along and — in many cases — get discovered by media, record labels, their next manager; anything that helps them sustain their careers. We want to be a part of what helps an artist pursue their talent as full-time musicians, doing what they love for a living and bringing joy to all of us with that talent.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I can certainly identify with the importance of supporting local talent that could get lost in the fray as a freelance writer and blogger. I've also seen some incredible shows with Sofar that I've connected with in ways that I just haven't with other, larger shows. Generally speaking, what is it about Sofar that captures people so wholeheartedly? Why is there such a buy-in?*



**Rafe Offer:** *That's tough to answer, as I think it changes for different people. For some, Sofar is the chance to meet people on the night and to discover their new favorite artist(s). For others, they may see us as we are disrupting the music industry in our own small way, by providing an alternative to enjoy live gigs. But at the end of it all, we are a very human way of enjoying a night out — together as one, in a small and discovered space, enjoying great art, in a one-off event.*

**Chris Mitchell:** *I can identify with all of those answers in some regard, though particularly the notion of the show being so human and down to earth.*

*What, Rafe, do you hope is the first thought that pops into people's minds when someone says "Sofar Sounds"?*

**Rafe Offer:** *I have two answers here — one for those who have been to a Sofar show before and one for those who haven't. If they haven't attended, I'd love for them to think, "Woah! I hear that Sofar is a really good time and you can enjoy it around the world!" And for those who have, we hope they're saying, "Can't wait to go again!"*

**Chris Mitchell:** *Well I know that I, for one, can't wait to go again. Thanks so much for chatting with me today, Rafe, it's much appreciated. Before taking off, I should kindly ask you - where do you hope to take Sofar Sounds from here?*

**Rafe Offer:** *I'd love it if people can find and enjoy Sofar on any given night, in their city or places they travel to, literally anywhere around the world. This would hopefully enable a lot of the world's best emerging musicians to sustain their careers, via Sofar tours and new audiences and gigs around the world.*

\*\*\*

The second great success of Sofar is the apparent democratization and decentralization of the music industry. The kind of anticipation built around these events, with each artist being one of three that will define the night, allows the artist to have the full attention and recognition of the crowd, as opposed to how it works in standard bills, wherein the openers often get completely ignored by a crowd - many people arrive late, or go straight to the bar and choose to wait only till the headliner. This is rarely the case at Sofar events. Because of this, the organization gets numerous applications from local, small-time artists, to be featured on their bills, and many of them do end up being Sofar acts, and gain followings, and even get signed as a result. This is a new way to uphold cultural autonomy that goes beyond models like Youtube, in being able to provide very small-time artists with a live performance platform that they wouldn't be able to secure without x-number of followers or ticket contracts at standard venues. Furthermore, beyond getting applications from artists, they get applicants from people who want to start local Sofar programs all over the world. Cities in Finland or Thailand, that do not necessarily have the most developed independent music scenes, are able to begin hosting events and fostering independent, music-loving communities through incorporation with Sofar. Before Sofar, it would've taken enormous capital injection to do so, in that the operating costs of individual artists and venues tend to be high, let alone a thriving city-wide scene, but their digital network and licensing system has allowed these artists and music communities to flourish from the comfort of peoples homes, and even make money off of it, with minimal inputs. This is reminiscent, I would like to add, of The organization expanded so incredibly fast because of its unwavering commitment to up-and-coming artists, the independent music communities of hundreds of cities, and

the human need for meaningful congregation and its intelligent and ingenious ability to connect people through a simple app concept - use home spaces to present and connect surprise artists with people holding deep love for music and performance. This is a somewhat less of a business model, and more of a social model facilitated through clever marketing. Comparable systems can be deployed in new ways, and for hungry organizers and promoters in New York city neighborhoods, on an even more local or independent level. After all, the concept of a surprise performance isn't copyrightable.

\*\*\*

*Chris Mitchell: Hey, if that's the future of music, then sign me up, my friend.*

---

### ***ABC No Rio (Lower East Side Cultural Center)***

ABC No Rio, a decrepit old venue on the Lower East Side, has beaten all the odds, and is now considered by all to be a symbol of triumphant resistance to gentrification through art and protest.

***Interview with Steve Englander by Amelia published in Maximum Rock N Roll***

***What is ABC No Rio primarily used for now?***

*I don't really think there is a primary use now. In the past there was what I'd call "signature" events that sort of defined ABC No Rio. From its founding to the mid-'80s it was visual art; from the mid- to late-'80s it was performance art; after that, spoken word and performance poetry and anti-folk; in the early- to mid-'90s on it was punk and hardcore; in the mid-'90s it was more political and street protest oriented, and tied to the squatters movement on the Lower East Side.*

*For the past fifteen years or so though, I don't think you can say there is any signature activity that defines ABC No Rio. Nowadays it is different things to different people. It's one thing to some kid coming to a punk show who's just started a band, and something different to a retired public school teacher coming to a poetry reading. It's one thing to an activist banging out posters or t-shirts in the print shop, and something else to a European traveler visiting the zine library. It's one thing to a musician who's been regularly coming to COMA for years, and obviously something else to some bar-hopper who stumbles into an art opening.*

*Is it considered a "community" space? And for what community? I understand the LES resembles itself but little these days...*

*Some people do consider ABC No Rio to be a community center, and sometimes we do refer to ourselves that way. But now I don't think "community" is limited to the geographic area in which we are positioned. I think it's more about a community of shared values and commitments and ideals. Anyone can use our facilities and attend events here, and even propose events. But we still hold on to this idea of being politically and socially engaged, and tend to attract people that feel that's important.*

*You're right, the Lower East Side has changed so much in the past 30 years. We think the neighborhood has changed much more than ABC No Rio has! When ABC No Rio was founded, many of the people doing things here and coming to events here lived on the Lower East Side or in*

*the East Village. That isn't the case anymore. People are coming from all the boroughs, even from all over the greater metro area, like Long Island and New Jersey. We serve the City as a whole, and not just our neighborhood.*

***Is ABC No Rio 100% volunteer run?***

*Yes, a collective of volunteers runs all ABC No Rio projects and programs. I don't know if any other institution that operates in a similar way on as large a scale and scope.*

***Why is punk important at ABC No Rio?***

*The ethic of DIY is a defining feature of ABC No Rio. I think that's why the Matinee originally found a home at No Rio, and then the commitment of the punk collective to working in that way continued to impact No Rio over the following decades. Sort of a powerful feedback loop. Also, there's always been a sense of community among the volunteers working on the Matinee, a sense of being part of something. People do come and go, but it seems that sense of community stays.*

***What are key things to keep a space like ABC No Rio running?***

*The main thing that keeps ABC No Rio going is the commitment of all the volunteers to working on their projects. Without those projects, no ABC No Rio; and without the volunteers, no projects. On my end, it's really about not overstepping, and making sure the volunteers have a sense of "ownership" or investment in the projects they're working on.*

***How often do you have to work with the City to ensure ABC No Rio keeps going?***

*Although we get a little bit of funding for exhibitions, the City has no involvement on our day-to-day operations or our projects and programs.*

*We have received substantial City funding to build our new facility, and we're working closely with the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and Economic Development Corporation. Both agencies are involved in the administration and management of phase one of construction for the new facility. The design of the new building, though, was created independently of the City.*

***What advice do you have to people looking to start an all-ages community space with a venue, art space and resources like screen-printing or a zine library?***

*We've shared ideas about this a few times in the past: we think it's actually easier now to do DIY stuff. There's more acceptance for autonomous projects. People seem to have more confidence to just do it themselves. Nowadays there are so many DIY projects, and not necessarily just limited to punk or hardcore. But maybe the projects are more ephemeral. It's tougher to keep things going for the long haul.*

*The most important thing is to have that confidence and know you can do it. Keep going and persevere even when you fuck up. Learn from your mistakes. Be flexible. Listen and be open enough to take in new ideas and listen to other points of view. Share ideas and resources. Most importantly, take action when opportunities present themselves. And start small, with just one or two projects and then build from there.*

To summarize, ABC No Rio's primary mission has been to provide a long-term home for the East Village's underground, hardcore, all ages music scene. But extending from this is that community's struggle to address the politics of housing and real estate, bespeak self-management and proliferate activism through exhibitions dealing with war, homelessness, racism etc, creating a cadres of socially aware artists and artistically aware activists, going beyond the scene and into the cultural battlefield. In this manner, an incredibly small venue, is able to deliver major promote social justice, equality, anti-authoritarianism, autonomous action, collective processes and to nurture alternative structures and institutions operating on such principles. The venue's mission of developing critical analysis and an expanded vision of possibility for our lives and the lives of our neighborhoods, cities, and societies, is also the definitive purpose of this essay.

It is interesting to consider the fact that the venue bridges the 1970's period of financial and social fallout with the current period of financial inequality and gentrification. The punk subculture started in New York in that dire context and organized itself around a prescient distrust of government, corporations, and consumer culture. Gritty and recalcitrant art exhibitions hold fast to the spirit of the old, substantially more dangerous Lower East Side, before the arrival of the conspicuous consumers and condo-developers.

Throughout the years their community has tried to evince the notion that the methodology of collaborative use, sharing utilities, and the power of collective values and oppositional culture can ensure security and leverage, prevent eviction and protect the cherished essence of a historic population that sees no litter but the soulless boutiques and condominiums. This model, while being almost completely volunteer-run and extremely low-margin, has allowed them to continually support a cultural smorgasbord of photography, visual art, clothing, books, magazines, music and political content. Much in line with Solidarity NYC's theories, providing fiscal support to and hosting other organizations and programs such as Books Through Bars, HC/Punk Collective, Visual Arts Committee, Food Not Bombs, and PrintShop has allowed their mission and ideas to permeate and produce to a greater degree. Winning land rights over their lot in 1997, after nearly 20 years, was only possible because of the organizations communal efforts, and has signified a major upswing for the organization. For example, funding has increased dramatically, and the collective has commissioned the construction of a redesigned, eco-friendly/sustainable complex, with the approval of the Housing and Development Council. This will only further accelerate and empower the organization and its beneficiaries, as well as stand as a living landmark of native-cultural struggle, designed to aim for a new horizon free from all the failures of our current systems.

(see figure below)

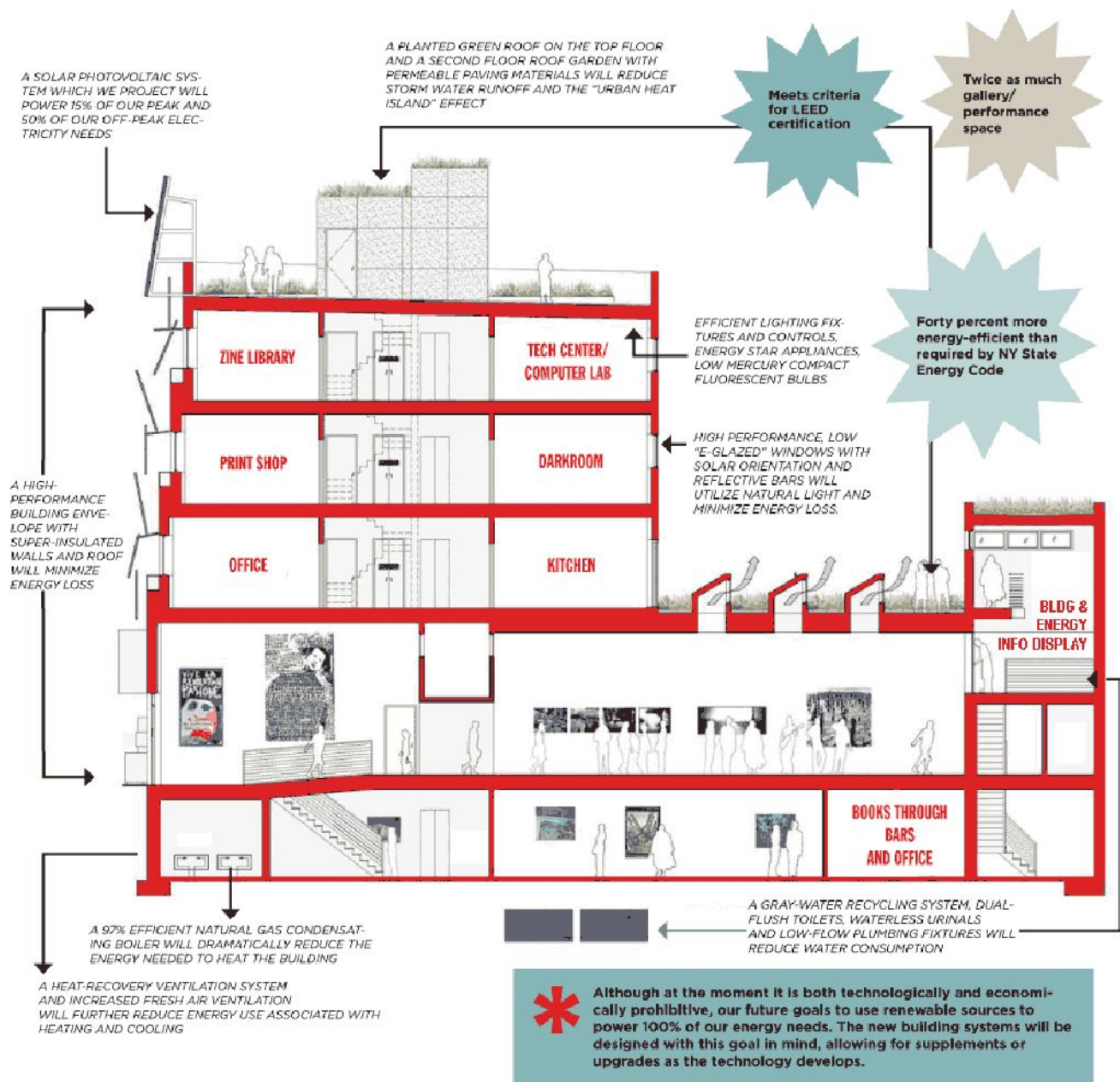


Figure 5: Blueprint of ABC No Rio's new building, at the same location.

## Conclusion

This much is clear. Corporate power is winning. It has all the entrenched, systemic advantages. But there are also clearly enough tools to combat it, to reclaim a critical mass of public space, in the name of maximal political ownership over our homeland. Whether it be by emulating Project X, unifying boroughs with poetic homages to their roots and mentoring the new generation with workshops, and performing regularly on street corners and in bar and grills, in schools and on self-organized festival stages. Or by trying to envision how spaces, residences, landmarks, or private holdings can be congregationally experienced, awaken people's sense of radical possibilities and reveal the virtuous craving for unadulterated, communal cultural activities, as Sofar Sounds does in cities all over the world. Or by creating communal bonds of sweat and labor in the form of

cooperative networks that practice local and wide reaching solidarity, striving for productive sustainability of goods and self-management out of economic dependence and stagnance for low-income communities. Or by seizing abandoned properties, turning them into cultural centers, and harnessing the explosive art and positive outrage found throughout this cities streets to fight tooth and nail with the state, like real indigenous people, as ABC No Rio has done for 30 years. There are means for its citizens to direct and elevate the cultural and political experience of New York City even as it is besieged by global, systemic, iniquitous forces.

There is a movement waiting to be born. The natives of New York have talent, have ingenuity, have perseverance, have grit, and have culture on their side. At the end of the day, most New Yorkers don't want to have to live anywhere else, but also don't have the means to thrive here, as our situation stands and progresses. If we want to keep this city in the hands of the working-class, people of color, the young, and the open minded, as is a right *and* responsibility, we have to find ways to unify with our neighbors and build the kinds of institutions that will anchor our cultures and populations and amplify their voices and political power. It is inconceivable that a native New Yorker could not call New York their home, and so means for not being forced out and/or bored to death must be conceived, and *quickly*. The window of opportunity for the masses to stop corporate capture of the city's physical and spiritual nature is nearing it's sill. And even if, with the visionary use of cooperatives, of cultural factories, of digital technology, and of grassroots engagement and activism, the cost of rent is still too damn high, and corporations and government systems and developers and the children of wealth still manage to capture and reshape the city that once held all the promise and mystery in the world, turning it into an a sterile corporate fishtank, at least the children of the old New York will have closed it's book on a word of valor and defiance, of love and duty, trying to keep the promise we all believed in. One final, grand chapter - and a toast to the great ones.

### **Further Inquiry:**

I believe this paper has been able to address a small tip of an iceberg of indigenous New York organizations that resist corporatocracy, neoliberalism, gentrification, and cultural proscription, and of the utmost importance is committing to further research on these types of organizations, whether they be oriented towards commercial, cooperative, artistic, service-based, or any other mode of activity that has been initiated to serve the movement towards the people's autonomy and public stewardship. There are likely thousands of such examples, past and present, and I think a staggering amount more if we consider the rest of the world. I believe think tanks, should be approach the task of taking inventory and academic synthesization of their methods, strategies and cultures extremely seriously, as this paper strives to do on a humble introductory basis, in order to spawn more of them and effectively integrate those that exist. If this were to occur, I believe corporatocratic disintegration of New York City and others around the world would be halted, and even more impressive, a recomposition in the opposite direction for cities all over the world could become inevitable. A new, local and large scale economic model to fit the 21st century is necessary and possible, if the intellectual assiduity and physical effort can be mustered.

## **Bibliography:**

- i) Bhandari, Ravi. "Rise of the Global Corporatocracy: An Interview with John Perkins." *Monthly Review*, Monthly Review, 30 June 2014, [monthlyreview.org/2013/03/01/rise-of-the-global-corporatocracy-an-interview-with-john-perkins/](http://monthlyreview.org/2013/03/01/rise-of-the-global-corporatocracy-an-interview-with-john-perkins/).
- 1) Phillips-Fein, Kim. "How the Rich Seized Control of New York." *The New Republic*, The New Republic, 13 Apr. 2017, [newrepublic.com/article/142015/rich-seized-control-new-york](http://newrepublic.com/article/142015/rich-seized-control-new-york).
- 2) Peretti, Burton W. *Nightclub City Politics and Amusement in Manhattan*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. p 10.
- 3) Grazian, David. "Urban Nightlife, Social Capital, and the Public Life of Cities," *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (Dec., 2009), pp. 908-917
- 4) Garcia, Mario T. "Nativist, Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in the US Has a Long History." *National Catholic Reporter*, National Catholic Reporter, 27 June 2018, [www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/ncr-today/nativist-anti-immigrant-sentiment-us-has-long-history](http://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/ncr-today/nativist-anti-immigrant-sentiment-us-has-long-history).
- 5) Fouka, Mazumder, Tabellini. "From Immigrants to Americans: Race and Assimilation during the Great Migration", May 2018, MIT, p. 2.
- 6) Freeman, Joshua. "If You Can Make It Here." *Jacobin*, Jacobin (Issue No. 15-16), 3 Oct. 2014, [www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/if-you-can-make-it-here](http://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/if-you-can-make-it-here).
- 7) Phillips-Fein, Kim. "How the Rich Seized Control of New York." *The New Republic*, The New Republic, 13 Apr. 2017, [newrepublic.com/article/142015/rich-seized-control-new-york](http://newrepublic.com/article/142015/rich-seized-control-new-york).
- 8) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkWWMOzNNrQ>
- 9) <https://books.google.com/books?id=&pg=PAPA551>
- 10) <https://books.google.com/books?id=&pg=PAPA551>
- 11) Freeman, Joshua. "If You Can Make It Here." *Jacobin*, Jacobin (Issue No. 15-16), 3 Oct. 2014, [www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/if-you-can-make-it-here](http://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/10/if-you-can-make-it-here).
- 12) "Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul." *Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul*, by Jeremiah Moss, Dey St., an Imprint of William Morrow, 2018, p. 37.
- 13) "Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul." *Vanishing New York: How a Great City Lost Its Soul*, by Jeremiah Moss, Dey St., an Imprint of William Morrow, 2018, p. 39.
- 14) Slater, Tom. / *Revanchist City*. The Encyclopedia of Urban Studies. editor / Ray Hutchison.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.

15) Slater, Tom. / *Revanchist City*. The Encyclopedia of Urban Studies. editor / Ray Hutchison. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.

16) Langegger, Sig. "Right-of-Way Gentrification: Conflict, Commodification & Cosmopolitanism." *Urban Studies*, p. 10.

[www.academia.edu/9294202/Right-of-way\\_gentrification\\_Conflict\\_commodification\\_and\\_cosmopolitanism](http://www.academia.edu/9294202/Right-of-way_gentrification_Conflict_commodification_and_cosmopolitanism).

17) Langegger, Sig. "Right-of-Way Gentrification: Conflict, Commodification & Cosmopolitanism." *Urban Studies*, p.10

[www.academia.edu/9294202/Right-of-way\\_gentrification\\_Conflict\\_commodification\\_and\\_cosmopolitanism](http://www.academia.edu/9294202/Right-of-way_gentrification_Conflict_commodification_and_cosmopolitanism).

18) Slater, Tom. / *Revanchist City*. The Encyclopedia of Urban Studies. editor / Ray Hutchison. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009.

19) Rodríguez, Joaquín Barriendos. "Atlas of Transformation." *Public Space/Gentrification*, [monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/p/public-space/public-space-gentrification-joaquin-barriendos-rodriguez.html](http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/p/public-space/public-space-gentrification-joaquin-barriendos-rodriguez.html).

20) "The Uses of City Neighborhoods." *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs, Vintage Digital, 2016, p. 129.

21) "Whose Culture, Whose City?" *The Culture of Cities*, by Sharon Zukin, Blackwell Publishers, 2009, p. 3.

22) "Learning from Disney World" *The Culture of Cities*, by Sharon Zukin, Blackwell Publishers, 2009, p. 52-59.

23) "Whose Culture, Whose City?" *The Culture of Cities*, by Sharon Zukin, Blackwell Publishers, 2009, p. 40.

24) Luna, Mira, et al. "Interview: The Deep Roots of African American Cooperative Economics." *Shareable*, 4 Mar. 2019,

[www.shareable.net/interview-the-deep-roots-of-african-american-cooperative-economics/](http://www.shareable.net/interview-the-deep-roots-of-african-american-cooperative-economics/).

25) "The Uses of City Neighborhoods." *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, by Jane Jacobs, Vintage Digital, 2016, p. 114.



## References:

(INTERVIEWS)

COOPERATIVE ECONOMIES

<https://www.shareable.net/interview-the-deep-roots-of-african-american-cooperative-economics/>

SOFAR SOUNDS INTERVIEW

<https://www.travelingmitch.com/mostrecent/rafe-offer-interview-sofar-sounds>

ABC NO RIO INTERVIEW

<http://maximumrocknroll.com/create-to-destroy-abc-no-rio/>

Figure 1.

<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/immigration-timeline>

Figure 2.

<https://www.libertyellisfoundation.org/immigration-timeline>

Figure 3.

<https://libertycruise.nyc/packages/origins-of-new-york-city-s-immigrants>

Figure 4.

<http://solidaritynyc.org/>

Figure 5.

<http://www.abcnorio.org/newbuilding.php>