



**THE TORONTONIANS**

**FIVE CORE PRINCIPLES OF A SOCIAL ECONOMY**

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**FOR KATHARINE RANKIN'S  
PLANNING THE SOCIAL ECONOMY**

## Summary

This paper introduces performance company Mammalian Diving Reflex and the company's Torontonians' initiative, a youth-centred long-term mentorship program and succession plan, located in the Toronto neighbourhood of Parkdale. The paper uses the company and its initiative in an interdisciplinary case study to derive five core principles of a social economy: community, social capital, mentorship, enterprise and performativity. The paper reads the case against the literature relating to these five principles identifying similarities and differences and locating the initiative within best practices. The paper's main purpose is to propose new ways to consider and mobilize these potentially powerful concepts in the direction of equity within the context of a social economy.

## **The Torontonians: five core principles of a social economy.**

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### **Mammalian Diving Reflex**

Mammalian Diving Reflex (Mammalian) is a Toronto-based performing arts organization founded in 1993. The company is engaged with formal approaches to performance-making known as 'social practice,' which involve collaborations with nonprofessionals, interventions in the public sphere, participation, and a dedication to tinkering with social hierarchies, creating performances that manifest and demonstrate more equitable ways of being together. This work is strongly influenced by the writings of French curator and critic Nicholas Bourriaud and his book *Relational Aesthetics* (Bourriaud, 1999) who calls for a reexamination of modernism and a reengagement with utopias after the nerve-wracking experiments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Bourriaud proposes 'micro-topias,' "where people once again learn(t) what conviviality and sharing mean"

(Bourriaud, 1999, page 70). Bourriaud cites a number of artists including Rikrit Tiravanija, Liam Gillick and Jeremy Deller who all create encounters between people as works of art, the simple act of eating a meal in a gallery taking on additional significance, with utopian potential. While very influential, Bourriaud was criticized for neglecting the fact that galleries are very political spaces, charged as they are with carrying and transmitting codes of being and seeing, and that a party in a gallery was often just a party in a gallery (Bishop, 2004). British critic and academic Claire Bishop responded by citing Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau and their call for a frothy antagonism as the heart of democratic participation. Bishop presented examples that directly engaged politics, sometimes in ways that left the viewer wondering if the artist was perpetuating exploitation even further. Santiago Sierra, for example, in *Chechnya Refugees who Cannot be Paid Remunerated to Sit Inside Boxes* (2000), paid refugees not legally entitled to work to sit inside boxes for the duration of the show. Artur Zmijewski's film *Them* (2007) triggered an encounter between various Polish identity groups (Jewish youth, nationalist youth, elderly Christian women and young antiglobalization activists), which turned violent. The disagreement between Bourriaud and Bishop shadows a discussion in the wider and more directly engaged activist communities about the role of antagonism within global anti-inequity movements (Churchill, 2007; Juris, 2005; Panitch, 2002).

Another axis upon which the art debates in the early 2000s played-out is important for a contextual understanding of Mammalian. While Bishop was engaging with Bourriaud across the English Channel around conviviality and antagonism, she was also dealing across the Atlantic with American critic and academic Grant Kester who advocated for a "dialogical art," one that emphasized dialogue across difference (Kester, 2003). Kester's pet projects by artists including

WochenKlausur, Suzanne Lacy, and the Toronto-based duo Carol Conde and Karl Beveridge. These projects involved notions of community and deliberately engaged with the socially excluded and marginalized. Bishop claimed that the framework used by social practice artists was drawn from “a tacit analogy between anti-capitalism and the Christian “good soul” and is driven by the misguided idea that “art should extract itself from the useless domain of the aesthetic and be fused with social practice” (Bishop, 2006, page unknown).

Mammalian’s work attempts to reach across both of these two conflicting axes: the dualities of conviviality/antagonism and aesthetics/ethics in socially engaged forms of artistic practice. The company proposes a new subjectivity: a civic figure who attempts to conflate these two dualities. The conviviality/antagonism duality is resolved through inducing a charming awkwardness that sees discomfort as a necessary state to endure (even enjoy!) on the way to a meaningful conviviality. The ethics/aesthetics duality is resolved by creating a well-crafted performance of the ethical, making the doing of good a theatrical and spectacular production. The company calls the figure who attempts to bridge these two divides *The Social Impresario*: an attention grabbing and shameless promoter of the aesthetic dimension of attending to a social purpose, triggering awkward encounters across difference to produce new social configurations (O’Donnell, 2006).

Currently, one area of social purpose for the company is a mentorship program that mobilizes local resources in collaboration with a cohort of young people aged 14-16 years old who have all, at one point or another, lived in Parkdale. The neighborhood and its social dynamics are central to the Torontonians Initiative.

### **Parkdale: The Neighborhood Context**

Parkdale, Toronto can be examined through the analytic of gentrification: a process that Zukin (1987, 132) claims is “a radical break with suburbia, a movement away from child-centered households toward the social diversity and aesthetic promiscuity of city life,” with the most relevant processes at work being a regional and metropolitan deindustrialization and “concentration of professional and technical jobs and cultural markets in the urban core.” Ley (2003) and Bain (2003) point to social processes that prompt the artist to look for cheap rents in marginal areas to protect a sense of authenticity as well as access spaces where it is possible to make noise and a mess without attracting too much attention. The gentrifiers and developers move into this terrain once it has been secured and made attractive by the artist with the inevitable rise in rents eventually driving the artist out. Cameron *et al.* (2005) refer to this type of gentrification as ‘second-wave,’ where affluent buyers enter the neighborhood on the heels of the artists and he contrasts this with a ‘third-wave’ public-policy driven initiative where culture is deliberately used by civic leaders and business to development neighborhoods with, for example, the building of new condominiums. The new buildings along the south side of Queen Street, west of Dufferin Street to Lisgar Avenue belong to this category. Parkdale presents a mix of these two models, with artists beginning the process followed by the City and businesses stepping in, taking over and ramping up the intensity.

Parkdale, originally a village then later an affluent near-beach-front area of the city, experienced an economic change when the Gardiner Freeway - a ten lane thoroughfare - cut off the neighborhood's access to the lake. A key feature of Parkdale is the inexpensive housing in rows of apartments along Jameson Avenue, as well as a number of very large buildings on Westlodge, home to predominantly immigrants (City of Toronto, 2010). Visible minority youth account for 74% of the youth population, many of whom are refugees from places including Sri Lanka, Tibet and, most recently, Hungary (City of Toronto, 2010). While concerns about gentrification and the fate of the neighborhood exist (Slater, 2004), there are no planning activities for the area listed on the City's website (City of Toronto), therefore it's safe to assume that the apartment buildings and their inhabitants are not at risk of any immanent physical gentrification. Related to the gentrification is the fact that Parkdale has a relatively high concentration of artists and is surrounded by neighbourhoods that are even more densely populated by artists, three of the postal codes clocking in amongst the ten highest concentrated areas of artists in the Canada (Hill Strategies, 2010).

Parkdale is thus a very particular kind of neighbourhood with very specific and substantial populations: people relatively new to the country, many of them refugees and one of the highest concentrations of artists in the country, the two groups living side-by-side in the context of culture-driven gentrification. Conflicts over the physical gentrification appear to be confined to the incoming affluent and the very low-income rooming house dwellers - many of whom struggle with mental health issues, as efforts have been made over the last fifteen years to eliminate this form of housing (Slater, 2004). Slater and Mazer and Rankin (2010) outline this conflict without mentioning the presence of the apartment buildings and their residents of

primarily immigrant families. This omission may be intentional, those living in the apartments not likely to encounter the gentrifying newcomers who, by and large, are either converting the large Victorian housing back into single family dwellings or occupying the single-family stock north of Queen Street. While the new-comers and their families may not be physically affected by gentrification they may still be subject to what Mazer and Rankin, in their examination of social dynamics in Parkdale, refer to as ‘displacement pressure:’ “the social, emotional, and symbolic dimensions of displacement - the everyday ways in which people are dislocated from the social spaces of the neighbourhoods” (Mazer and Rankin, 2010, page 822). They point out that “social space...encompasses both the material amenities associated with particular places in the public domain (goods and services provided by the retailers, housing, social services) and the social symbolic, and affective dimensions that are also constitutive of those places (the collective use values, feelings of security or insecurity, processes of inclusion and exclusion, symbols of neighbourhood identity”(page 824). Mazer and Rankin refer to Butler and Robinson’s concept of ‘tectonic’ social relations in which “social groups or ‘plates’ overlap or run parallel to one another without much in the way of integrated experience in the areas’ social and cultural institutions” (Butler and Robson, 2001, page 2157). It is within a similar context of tectonic social relations in Parkdale that the Torontonians initiative is located, as it attempts an intervention into the neighbourhood to make a very public tweak of the tectonics, shifting from a situation that - to take the geological metaphor further - is characterized by a ‘transform fault’ between social groups, in which they move past each other to a ‘convergent fault’ (Cox and Hart, 1986) where they come together and mix. The situation of gentrification possesses productive possibilities with positive potential having been identified in the relationship between urban children and incoming gentrifiers (Formosa, 2010).

## **The Torontonians**

In 2005, After 12 years of collaborating with adults to make contemporary theatre-based performances for adults and under the influence of discussions in the visual arts surrounding artistic social practice, Mammalian Diving Reflex began to collaborate with children (*Diplomatic Immunities: life at age nine*, 2005) and cemented the collaborative relationship in 2006 with the company's first international success, *Haircuts by Children*, which continues to tour today to Europe, America, the UK and Australia. In 2007, Mammalian initiated *Parkdale Public School vs. Queen Street West*, a multi-year, multi-project, mega-project that fostered creative collisions between children at the initial school of engagement and artists and businesses in the area. Projects within this fold included *Eat the Street*, featuring a jury of children performing as food critics, eating at twelve of the neighborhood's restaurants over the course of a month and presenting awards to the establishments, who were all winners. The audience was invited to have dinner with the children, furthering the performative affect with the suggestion and manifestation of a momentary community. *The Senior Strings vs. Blocks Recording Club* featured the senior strings class accompanying three bands that participate in ownership of Blocks Recording Club, a cooperatively run music distribution company in Toronto.

In 2010, 14-year-old Sanjay Ratnan, who had participated in *Eat the Street*, contacted the company, looking for artistic activities during the summer. Together with the company, Sanjay gathered some friends and, in collaboration with myself, shot a short dramatic video based on a script I had written about the emotional and physical challenges of touring artistic work (*The Torontonians*, unreleased). The mismatch between the ages of the characters, their life concerns and the ages and concerns of the young performers was intentionally used as way to generate an aura of professionalism. This was in contrast to, for example, facilitating a video workshop where the youth were asked to represent their own concerns in their own voice, a more common form of community arts empowerment. It was a serious dramatic text intentionally placed outside their range of experience to challenge them and demonstrate trust in their abilities to engage with difficult material.

This was followed by a rapid succession of modest projects throughout the rest of the year, the forming of The Torontonians initiative and a successful application to the Metcalf Foundation to institutionalize our youth wing (The Young Mammals) with the funding of a three-year position. The Metcalf Foundation's goals to "build a just, healthy, and creative society" are in harmony with the mandate of Mammalian, with the specifics of their unique combination of concerns including social, environmental and the performing arts, matching closely to those of the social impresario.

Mammalian's intention is to continue to collaborate with The Torontonians, creating a variety of performances, events, videos and other art objects, gradually involving the youth in the core operations of the company, with the ultimate objective being that they will staff, manage and

direct the company. Additionally, there is the intention to keep an eye out for any interests and aptitudes that the young people possess and find opportunities for development, further training and, if there is the desire, assistance in setting up various enterprises that are of interest and seem feasible. This long-term mentoring and succession plan has yielded a number of insights into the overlapping areas of community, mentorship, social capital, enterprise and performativity. The company is developing a framework for understanding the different aspect of the initiative and attempting to pioneer modes of critique, theory and practice in developing a social economy.

The following section outlines the principles that have been derived and explains their function and application within the company's initiative.

## **Community**

The intention of the initiative is to produce a notion of place-rooted community that is aware of itself both in relation to those inhabiting the community but also to individuals and organizations who the company collaborates with on the international stage. The company is facilitating often-awkward encounters across demographic divides (O'Donnell, 2006), bringing the young people, their families and artists in the neighborhood into collaborative contact in the context of a culture-driven gentrification, with local businesses acting as the venue for these encounters. Most importantly, however, is that this notion of community is predicated on friendship, which serves as the motor behind the process. The adults in the company as well as a number of associated artists, academics and other adult friends of the company are intentionally including the young people in their lives (and vice-versa), with the understanding that the youth are more than simply collaborators and future colleagues but, in fact, close friends with a shared locale

and overlapping interests. Efforts are also being made to include parents, siblings and the youth's friends in aspects of the initiative to ensure that the benefits spread beyond the immediate members. The mechanics behind the triggering of friendships rest primarily on a very deliberate positioning of unstructured social time as central to the initiative. While community development through a deliberate deployment of friendship might be challenging with adults members of the community, the youth not only have free time, but they have educational requirements to meet through volunteer participation in community organizations, which they satisfy through their participation with Mammalian.

The key implication of the fact that friendships are, in fact, developing between the adults and the young people is that a community of care is occurring naturally, slipping in through the side door as a logical byproduct of friendship.

## **Mentorship**

Mammalian is adopting a deep form of mentorship based, again, on the concept of friendship rather than, more typically, guidance or stewardship. The notion of mentorship is also approached with the idea of mutuality of benefits, the Torontonians initiative being very long-term, based in a particular geographic area and flexibly involving a multitude of stakeholders in a spectrum of arrangements and responsibilities. To date, participants have been businesses in the neighborhood including a dozen restaurants, a number of galleries, The Gladstone Hotel (in a very resource-intensive project, mostly donated by the hotel), The Drake Hotel, The Metcalf Foundation, The Toronto Community Foundation, and dozens of artists and a number of

researchers. It is understood that these organizations - while offering their resources to the project and the youth - most definitely benefit from their association with the youth. The young people are regularly called upon to make appearances as guest speakers in classes at the University of Toronto, York University, the Metcalf Foundation's board retreat and are increasingly sought after for projects in collaboration with galleries and hotels in the neighborhood. In these instances, any tendencies towards feelings of warm altruism on the part of the institutions are quickly dispersed when the young people prove to be hilarious and riveting, the hosts hopefully realizing the degree to which they are, in fact, the benefactors. This, it should be pointed out, is not because these particular young people are unique or "gifted" in any way but rather because they are permitted to be themselves. Again, like the approach to social capital that sees value travelling in both directions, Mammalian's notion of mentorship is conceived as always mutual.

### **Social Capital**

The Torontonians initiative is concerned with tapping and generating a specific notion of social capital related to the potential inherent in bridging divides between different sociocultural groups. Mammalian is attempting to create new networks both for the youth and the company, acting as an institutional agent (Stanton-Salazar, 2011), situated amongst the youth and our growing international network of artistic and cultural organizations. Mammalian has been locally and nationally recognized as artistically innovative since its inception, with an international reputation growing rapidly over the last five years since the success of *Haircuts by Children* and subsequent projects. It is the company's connections with local, national and international curators, presenters, artists and academics that the youth are invited to treat as their own, though

what exactly that will mean remains to be seen. From the other perspective, it is recognized that within the relatively homogenous world of artistic social practice, meaningful and dependable connections with individuals and communities outside of the art world are also very valuable. Evidence of this is clearly supplied by the sudden spike in the company's success upon engaging with young people (since 2006, the company's budget has increased by over 400%, all due to the success of *Haircuts by Children* and subsequent projects with young people) and other projects that have established its reputation as skilled at facilitating these and similar social encounters. The form of artistic social practice is rare in its valuing of individuals and groups for qualities that are intrinsically possessed and, further, for valuing the development of social relations between individuals and groups who are quite unlike each other. The realm of the aesthetic recognizes the power of contrast, juxtaposition and, above all, difference. That lasting and committed connections across difference has the potential to yield value that can be captured and shared leads to an understanding of social capital as a form of personal augmentation. If done carefully, with constant attention paid to monitoring the equitable disbursement of benefits, this approach to social capital appears to be autocatalytic, a feedback loop that sees mutual benefits accrue and grow.

## **Enterprise**

The cultural turn in city and economic planning has exploded over the course of the last decade (Bailey, 2004; Florida, 2002; Kunzmann, 2004; Landry, 2000), with notions of the importance of creativity, the creative economy and the "Creative City" dominating – if not triggering - the proliferation of cultural plans generated by the major cities across Canada during the last decade. The idea's most prominent proponent is Richard Florida whose key (and controversial) claim is

that a culturally rich, creative city is the key to success in a post-industrial economy (Florida, 2004).

Rather than challenge the veracity of this assertion, Mammalian is attempting to test its limits by putting the Creative Cities money where its mouth is. Mammalian offers itself as a testing ground for a vision of an interaction with a group of young people and, in turn, a wider community in the midst of a wave of a culture-led gentrification (Cameron et al., 2005). The intention is to get the kids gigged-up and remunerated and to be as creative as necessary to do this, bringing the youth into the core operations of the company. In addition, Mammalian will collaborate with those youth interested in spinning off related and alternative enterprises.

### **Performativity**

Mammalian Diving Reflex is a performance company first and foremost and is interested in public acts that demonstrate ways of being together that attempt to dispense with hierarchy and instill values of equity and that consider profit from a number of angles beyond monetary: affective profit. Coming from the world of performance where the company is involved with an artistic practice that views social circumstances as the material of our cultural production, the concept of performativity is central. The Torontonians initiative is intended to be a performance for the international activist-artist community: a performance of the possibilities of an unusual economic relationship between the company, the young people in the surrounding neighborhood and the various institutional networks that the company is engaged with. There is an attempt to perform new and tricky identities, trusting the aptitude of those involved to be able to continue the work. Arianne Moscote Friere quotes Steve Wilson from Winnipeg's Graffiti Gallery, a

youth skills building and employment program: “the powerful thing about the word artist is that you can call a 14-year-old an artist or emerging artist... and it helps set them on a more positive path.” That said, the identity of artist is not one that can bear too much economic weight, particularly when talking about the first stirrings of a 14-year-old in an art workshop. However, in a world that values people based strictly on their participation in very specific economies, the identity of artist is free to function as a catch-all for someone with the most basic level of political enfranchisement: everyone’s an artist. There is the possibility for the artist to be the figure of a social entrepreneur who cobbles together resources to create work that deals with the neoliberal remit by performing the identity of someone granted a base income to engage with community fortification. That not everyone can access this is a problem, but that should not stop those who can since central to the agenda is the intention to work toward creating more equitable situations where there is a greater possibility of wider involvement in such a model.

### **The Literature**

I turn now to the literature of a number of different disciplines to locate the Torontonians initiative, comparing and contrasting its core principles. The goal is to demonstrate that the insights derived from six years of working with the young people of Parkdale and, in particular, the last year and a half of the Torontonians initiative provide a solid, practice-based approach to planning the social economy. To this point, the company has developed this work in, more or less, a vacuum, informed primarily by the insights of performance studies and the desire to perform equitable social relations. I suggest that artistic social practice can serve as an exciting realm for developing and testing ways of being together socially and economically grounded in

principles of fairness and justice. I will examine literature in the fields of the social economy, community development, urban planning, education, mentorship, gentrification studies, political economy, sociology and performance studies.

## **Community**

The Torontonians initiative is occurring in the context of a neoliberal public policy featuring the public sector backing away from providing social services, particularly in the realms of “housing, workforce development, health and even income and in-kind assistance” and that “community is implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, expected to fill the gaps left as the state retreats” (DeFilippis et al., 2006, page 675). This, for DeFilippis, means, “Communities, because of their central place in capitalist political economies, can be vital arenas for social change. But they are also arenas that are constrained in their capacities to host such efforts.” DeFilippis warns that a romantic focus on the power, resilience and resourcefulness of community in response to damage that is caused by neoliberal policies tends to avoid consideration of the effects of these policies and creates a vision of activism disconnected from considerations of the global political economy. In addition, organizations dedicated to ameliorating the effects of neoliberal policies often use the strategy of “push(ing) people into the labour market as the least bad alternative, regardless of the conditions of the work itself, even if the job makes them worse off financially than receiving social assistance.” Pointing to the mechanism behind this, DeFilippis cites the Regulationist critique, observing “that community organizations are shaped through their relations with the state and or private foundations, lose their autonomy, and become instruments of state social and economic policy.” The same concerns exist in performance theory with the aforementioned debate between Bishop and Kester. Bishop’s concern is that socially engaged art

could just as easily be described with DeFilippis' words on community organizations: "shaped through relations with state or private foundations and losing their autonomy." Kester, then later performance theorist Shannon Jackson in her 2011 book *Social Works: Performing art, supporting publics* both point to a contradiction that is evident in DeFilippis, she writes: "if our focus is primarily on disrupting the 'System' or on establishing our agency outside of it, where is the place for imagining new forms of systemic connection and democratic governance?" In DeFilippis, this contradiction can be spotted in his concern that community organizations are shaped through their relations with the state while still maintaining the concern that the state is withdrawing. This withdrawal, while certainly shaping organizations, leaves the possibility for systemic connection.

DeFilippis' other concern is with the problematic notion of community itself and he cites Young who worries that "If community is a positive norm, that is, if existing together with others in relations of mutual understanding and reciprocity is the goal, then it is understandable that we exclude and avoid those with whom we do not or cannot identify." He is concerned that the goal of unity is impossible and is a costly burden to bear. This, it seems to me, is a particular consideration of community that neglects the temporal dimension, critiquing community as a fixed entity and does not acknowledge that community is an ongoing process that, under some conditions, navigates and tries to address difference, rather than flatten and ignore it. Laurie McGauley cites Miguel Abensour as

"listing the criteria for community not as group identity at all, but rather as friendship, which he argues is a fundamentally political principle. Friendship is,

among all the passions, one of the most sublimated and rational human connections, the least likely to inspire romantic idealism. Friendship involves a moment of judgment and conjures both individual egotism as well as the tendency toward the solidarity of community. In particular, friendship instills a connection in separation, or a tie that knots us together, while preserving the separation between the members of the community” (Abensour in McGauley, 2006, page 94).

As a base for community development and activism, friendship acts as a very clear and decisive principle toward a hint of Polanyian reembedding of the economic in the social (Polanyi, 2001). This is particularly true when community organizations are often expected to find partnerships within the private sector, creating entrepreneurial links potentially based in friendship in a networked economy (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2004). If the principle of friendship operates between the staff of community organizations and their partners, there is the potential that decisions will not be made strictly on the narrow liberal notion of the *homo economicus* (Pareto, 1971), propelled primarily by self-interest. This idea of friendship also finds resonance in Faulk’s description of the workers at the Bauen hotel in Argentina, where a non-ideological *compranerismo* is a motivating factor to participate in what often is a very demanding and taxing effort (Faulk, 2008). The economy of the international social practice arts industry, and the cultural economy in which it occurs, is characterized by a demand for a global display of local engagement, often mediated through friendship connections. Artists from foreign countries are regularly requested to form collaborations with local non-artists in relationships that are facilitated by the presenting companies through the mobilization of friendship networks. In the case of Mammalian, for example, there has been more than one occasion where the children

participating in the projects have been the students of someone close to the host company, in one instance the festival director's mother. This familial proximity contributes to dynamics that take into consideration much more than narrow economic interests that, in the case of the performing arts, would ordinarily be expressed in forms such as the audition cattle call, when we're talking of casting, for example.

In the field of artistic social practice there is the glimmer of the basic income that Little (in DeFilippis *et al*, 2006) calls for. The resources the company generates, primarily through providing performance (often performative of instances of social justice and minority voice facilitation), provides freedom from the market and allows the company to devote time to contributing to community alternatives. Admittedly, there are many people left out of this equation, but the approach furnishes an anchor for an understanding of a way to perform community. The productive potential is strong as the whole Mammalian operation - beyond the Torontonians initiative - is increasingly considered among the best practices in a growing circle of artists-activists in many other parts of the world. The intention is to serve "as a base for mobilization with an alternative social vision, and as a place to connect with wider social and political movements" (DeFillippis *et al*, 2004, page 684).

## **Mentorship**

Mentorship is presented here as a component in a social economy, considers as something that should be operating constantly and reciprocally between members of organizations and between organizations and institutions. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will be examining youth mentorships in particular, though the principle derived - again based in friendship - can apply

elsewhere. Within the literature on mentorship and arts education, there is a clear tendency toward the goal of normative socialization, with metrics most often focusing on grades, attendance and compliant behaviour (Bloustein 2009; Suveges, 2010; Carter 2011; Freire 2009; Duxbury et al, 2007). The figure of the “at-risk youth” plays a large role in this area, with employability seen as the goal of many of these initiatives even if not particularly employment within the arts themselves. The arts, instead, are expected to provide a range of skills that are to be applied in any employment setting: people skills, the ability to form and implement a plan, confidence, etc. (Shirer, 2005). That the arts experiences targeted at “at-risk youth” are being deployed to build employment skills in areas *outside* the arts indicates that while the knowledge economy demands certain creative skills, those targeted for employment within the arts themselves, for the most part, have to fund their acquisition of skills privately. This is particularly so in a climate that has seen the reduction of art in education (People for Education, 2008), which seems odd given the importance placed on culture, creativity and art within prevailing discussions on economic development (Florida, 2004; Elgar, 2008; O’Donnell, 2006). An inequity is evident, then, in arts participation and in eventual engagement with an arts career. This inequity, like most, is particularly pronounced along racial lines (Suveges, 2010; Fix *et al*, 2007).

Research on mentorships indicates that a high level of adult commitment is required with the Big Brothers and Sisters providing 100 hours a year (Walker, 2007), while Mammalian – though still in the early stages of the initiative – has invested (very roughly) about 500 adult hours in the past year, which amounts to over ten weeks of labour. This is not necessarily spent one-on-one, though there are abundant efforts made to create and facilitate moments of personal introspection

and sharing, which travel both ways between the adults and youth. In addition, successful programs tend to create environments that are unstructured (Barr, 2006) and offer an intermediary space that is generally more accepting and supportive (Noam *et al*, 2004). It is noted that an important aspect in this intermediary space is the fact that adults and children/youth are spending time together in a social way (Rhodes, 2004; Walker, 2007). Though, again, a rough calculation, efforts are made to spend more time socializing than on artistic projects, as a mentorship strategy, but also because it's simply more personally rewarding for both the youth and adults.

Walker calls the diminishing amount of time that young people and adults spend in each other's company "a major social transformation" triggered by "working parents, single parent families, the growth of a distinct youth culture (and) the reduction of local funding for recreational programs" (Walker, 2007, page 7). all are causes related to a scaling back of social supports and a diminishing role of government. Noam looks toward a future evolution of the 'after-school' environment, noting that a nascent "after-school sector" exists, where a variety of organizations overlap in order to provide activities for young people, stepping in where government has stepped back and creating public-private partnerships to deliver service to the youth, mentorship being a key component.

Walker cautions against implementation of major policy to focus on mentorship and instead suggests that imagination and flexibility are required in institutions that deal with youth and that "infiltration, not consolidation, is where mentoring's greatest usefulness lies" (Walker, 2007, page 16) in a remark that resonates with Roy's conception of the development worker as a

“double agent” (Roy, 2007). Noam (2004) takes this idea further, introducing a less paranoid framework and creates a topography of partnerships between arts organizations, governments, foundations and businesses in the after-school field. These public-private partnerships range in depth of intersection from *functional*, *collaborative*, *interconnected* and *transformational*. It’s this forth type that is of interest to Mammalian. Noam acknowledges the transformational type to be the most complex, where “partners are doing more than creating a strong community and a joint mission. They go one significant step further and develop together” (Noam, 2004, page 101).

### **Social Capital**

The mentorship model the company is developing is built firmly on the shaky concept of social capital, but not the social capital DeFilippis’ critiques that fails to address social circumstances and does not confront problems of power. Instead, the focus is on empowerment, fundamental to which is social justice (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999 in Stanton, 2011). Thus “manifesting one’s capacity as an empowerment agent is not only about enabling the authentic empowerment of the student or young person, but is also about participating with them in changing their world in a significant way.” Taking this one step further is Noam’s transformational intersection, where it is understood that both the young person and the mentor’s world will be transformed.

Stanton-Salazar’s social capital framework examines two principal phenomena: “adolescent participation in multiple socio-cultural worlds” and “the role of nonfamily adults agents in the social development and educational attainment of adolescents” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). He

places the concept of institutional agent at the center of this. Social capital, in his formulation, is not about the personal networks a youth might mobilize of questionable value, but of tapping into the network of others and making them your own. The institutional agent participates in this process by “occup(ying) one or more hierarchical positions of relatively high-status and authority” and “acts to directly transmit or negotiate the transmission of highly valued resources.” Stanton-Salazar points out “Discourses are not mastered by overt instruction but by ‘apprenticeship’ into social practices through scaffolded and supported interaction with people who have already mastered the Discourse.” Young people “require resource-full relationships and activities socially organized within a network of socialization agents, natural or informal mentors, pro-academic peers, and institutional agents distributed throughout the extended family, school, neighborhood, community, and society” (Stanton-Salazar, 2011, page 1069).

Within Mammalian’s practice, the three ideas, “social capital,” “institutional agent” and “empowerment” relate back to the earlier reference to Abensour and his concept of friendship as political principle, which puts the company in the role of institutional agent. Mammalian facilitates a flow of social capital and, in turn, empowerment in a transformational intersection that is intended to affect the company directly through connecting youth who will eventually take over the company. Thus Mammalian will benefit from the value the youth acquire through this process once the youth become core to the company, a process that is currently underway through their mentorship. It is important within the framework of Noam’s intersections that the transformational aspect have real meaning, thus the empowering of the youth must mean an empowering of the company which, conveniently, is an empowering of the youth.

## **Enterprise**

The company's approach to mentorship and social capital grounds the beginnings of plans toward offering the young people work within the company, work with other organizations both locally and internationally. As well as the support toward attempting other cultural enterprises or enterprises that rest within the skill set of the staff and other associates working around and with Mammalian. This not without its problems, problems beyond mere logistics. Inviting young people to participate in the so-called creative economy is to invite them into a risky enterprise. Arts employment programs "devolve responsibility and liability onto the young individual, mask rising unemployment, increase insecurity for those who do have jobs and increase the proportion of casual workers in the workforce" (Bloustein, 2009, page 9). As Sanders has pointed out "the extant literature has proffered mixed results on (social enterprises') effectiveness and that microenterprises perpetuate poverty." However Boustein, in an examination of the music programs for youth, concedes that "new forms of independent youth enterprise are certainly risky and potentially exploitative, but they also often bring to the fore new forms of agency, networking, collaboration and trust; aspects that make the risky creation and representation of the self in a shifting world seem more manageable and worthwhile" (Bloustein, 2009, page 3).

At the heart of Mammalian's efforts is a strategy we termed 'stealth pedagogy:' claiming to focus on exclusively on the edification of the youth while consciously triggering learning in the various institutions that engage the company, a learning based on the conditions established around how the youth are treated. While based in a concern with shared knowledge production across generations and institutions, these efforts are the key behind our approach to the entire enterprise. In *Youth Radio and the Pedagogy of Collegiality*, Vivian Chavez and Elisabeth Soep

(2005) identify a pedagogy of collegiality they claim is ascendant stating that there is a “radical reconfiguration now taking place in education.” What they describe has hints of another Polyanian re-embedding with the focus of this movement including “youth learning, community development, “marketable skills,” citizenship, personal expression, aesthetic innovation, and social change” (Chavez and Soep, 2005, pg 410). The key attribute to their framework is that the work that is happening between the young people and the adults is focused on “joint production,” which resonates with Noam’s notion of the “transformational.” Young people and adults are all invested in a project with both vulnerable to critique because they are creating work that will be judged by audiences beyond themselves. In the case of the Youth Radio project, the adult mentors’ careers will be affected by the quality of work they produce. The mentors are not merely facilitating expression by the youth for vaguely defined goals of empowerment or skills sharing, but are making work together that will reflect on both parties.

### **Performativity**

In *Do Economists Make Markets?: on the performativity of economics*, Mackenzie et al (2007) discuss the philosophical concept of performativity and its deployment within the social sciences. Their claim that economic "representations of the world can be understood only in their close entanglements with that world" (MacKenzie et al, 2007, page 4) can be just as easily applied to artistic social practice. Works of art are commonly considered to be tweaked representations of reality, particularly forms like dramatic theatre or, as in the case of dance or more abstract forms, simply expressions of feeling and generators of affect. While representing the world in particular ways is sometimes intended to trigger an active response in the audience, artistic social practice can be seen as using social dynamics as material. This use of social

dynamics as material, then, is not merely commenting on reality, it is remaking it. *Haircuts by Children* is not a performance *about* the empowerment of children; it - for a brief moment - *is* empowerment.

Economic geographers Katherine Gibson and Julie Graham (writing as J.K. Gibson-Graham) examine “how subjects “become,” and more specifically how they may shift and create new identities for themselves despite the seemingly hegemonic power of dominant discourses and governmental practices”(Gibson-Graham, 2006, page 24). Their work with what they call community economies attempts at “creating spaces of identification”(page 133) in which new subjectivities are cultivated where individuals “imagine becoming actors in the community economy, identifying with various economic subject positions such as cooperator, gift giver, alternative capitalist, and so forth” (132). The Torontonians initiative performs against the dominant representations of a capitalist hegemony (Gibson-Graham, 1996) by demonstrating new postcapitalist possibilities. The company utilizes artistic social practice as a venue, testing ground and creative laboratory to enact new economic ways of being together through an internationally connected emphasis on the specific locale of Parkdale and specific social groups (children, artists, businesses) within that locale.

### **Conclusion**

Mammalian Diving Reflex’s Torontonians initiative has produce a theoretical critique and framework for considering and manifesting a social economy based on specific understandings of key concepts: community, mentorship, social capital, enterprise and performativity. Passing the project through a review of the literature on art education, mentorship and the social

economy has begun to stabilize the understanding of where these concepts lie within a wider interdisciplinary field and affirms that the company is pointed in an exciting and groundbreaking direction. Community tries to skirt romanticism or attachment to identity with reference to Abensour's notion of the political principal of friendship, similar to the idea of *compranerismo*. This principle, then, plays a large part in the style of mentorship with the literature supporting the move toward a focus on socializing and unstructured time. Noam's after-school sector, intermediary space and idea of transformational relationships between institutions is helpful in conceiving of a wider institutional role for the company in what could be considered a casual public-private partnership in the collaborative stewardship of young people in the neighbourhood. Taking this whole bundle to the international arts market sees both the risk (even likelihood!) of exploitation and onerous working conditions, but attempts to maintain a commitment to social justice will be made within the company, between the institutional partners and with any enterprises that are spun off. All of this is based on an underlying vision that this initiative is an attempt to perform atypical social relations for the benefit of general adoption. The maintaining of these atypical social relations in the face of the various challenges will thus constitute the struggle underlying the project. The possibility of running aground around with potential pitfalls existing both with the prospect of economic failure and, ironically, with economic success. Worst-case scenarios include generating a vibrant community of artists, attracting even more attention to the neighbourhood and calling forth opportunistic speculators both to the area and to the youth, themselves. Concerns also coalesce around the wisdom of revving the youth up and prepping them for a challenging lifestyle characterized by precarity and near-continuous travel. Currently the young people themselves pose the biggest challenge to scaling up the initiative in that they are determined to distinguish themselves from their peers

through their involvement and resist attempts to recruit close friends. Elitist exclusivity and the hoarding of cultural and social capital present profound but essential challenges to the initiative. The young people involved do not, at this point, have a clearly articulated vision toward equity or social justice. In fact, if anything, those who are contemplating a career in the arts and culture industries are more interested in being famous, irrespective of what they become famous for. In my 2006 book *Social Acupuncture* I tackle this thorny issue of near meaningless fame: “At bottom, the desire for fame is the desire to be loved unconditionally by a lot of people, most of whom you don’t know. It’s the desire to be able to be yourself wherever you are and have that expression respected and supported. And as such, fame shouldn’t be underestimated as a potentially progressive social force and political tool”(Page 39). Shannon Jackson hopes that “through social art projects that provoke a reflection on the opportunity and inconvenience of our enmeshment in systems of labour, ecology, able-bodiedness, social welfare, public infrastructure, kinship and more, expanded artworks might induce a kind of ‘infrastructural avowal,’ that is, an acknowledgement of the interdependent systems of support that sustain human beings, even though we often feel constrained by them” or, by extension, are, in fact, exploited by them.

On a personal note, the young people are often surprised by the company’s generosity, early traces of caution and (particularly on the part of parents) suspicion giving way to vocal gratitude. However, I take great pains to make it clear that this is a business deal and not altruistic charity. It is expected that they will repay Mammalian and me by assuming responsibility for the artistic direction and administrative management of the company. For those who are contemplating other paths, I still insist that generosity is not the motivation. I explain that when I am in my

dotage, unable to deal with solid food, all I ask is that that they drop by every few months and feed me a mashed banana.

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