Encountering the Counter-Institution:
From the Proto-Academy to Home Workspace Beirut*

Gregory Sholette, May 2016

What we have witnessed in our own time is the death of universities as centers of critique. Since Margaret Thatcher, the role of academia has been to service the status quo, not challenge it in the name of justice, tradition, imagination, human welfare, the free play of the mind or alternative visions of the future.
— Terry Eagleton[1]

1997–2001 The Proto Academy (Edinburgh, Scotland)

1999 16 Beaver Street (Manhattan, USA)

2001–2007 The Copenhagen Free University (Copenhagen, Denmark)

2002 The School of Missing Studies (Belgrade, Serbia)

2002 *Cátedra De Conducta* (Havana, Cuba)

2005 ArtSchool in Palestine (Ramallah, Palestine)

2006 Manifesta 6: Temporary Art School (Unrealized: Nicosia, Cyprus)

2006 unitednationsplaza (Berlin, Germany)

2007 The Public School (Los Angeles, USA)

2008 Night School (New Museum, NYC)

2008 TradeSchool cooperative (USA)

2009 University of Trash (Queens, NY)

2009 The Kindness and Imagination Development Society (the KIDS, NY)

2009 Bruce High Quality Foundation University (Brooklyn, NY)

2009 The Art School in an Art School (Syracuse, NY)

2010 SOMA Summer (Mexico)

2010 School of the Future: Infinite Enrollment (Brooklyn, NY)

2010 Anhoek School (Brooklyn, NY)

2010 Home Workspace (Beirut, Lebanon)

2013 The School of Engaged Art: Chto Delat? (St. Petersburg, Russia)

2014 Strange Teaching, Rainer Gahahl (USA and Germany)

Select and schematic, my timeline of pre-Occupy pedagogical art experiments conveys three things right from the start. Some are obvious, others are not so pronounced. All three, however, suggest a dynamic process at work in which the converging interests of artists and cultural workers around the globe both confront and make use of conditions opened up by what David Harvey describes as the radical reshaping and re-engineering of capitalism in the post–Cold War era.[2] This essay examines this convergence and its contradictions, concluding with a focus on my own activity teaching in Beirut at Home Workspace in the spring of 2015. My aim is to try to coax out answers to several questions about the way the educational turn seeks to mix together art and learning in a new way, but often does so through the ironic reiteration of social forms and collective institutions that neoliberalism has broken down and assigned to its dark surplus archive of past hopes and failed experiments. It is my contention that our current survival, but also any possible utopian horizon, weakened as it may be, is to be found in the mobilization of that missing dark matter reserve.[3]

Three things I know about the Educational Turn

The first, most obvious comment to make about my timeline is the fact that at the very moment when established academia begins to sing the swan song that Terry Eagleton so eloquently testifies to, a throng of alternative, Do It Yourself (DIY) educational experiments start to crop up from the US to Europe, and from the Caribbean to the Middle East. This is the so-called "Educational Turn," which the Curatorial Dictionary describes as "a tendency in contemporary art prevalent since the second half of the 1990's, in which different modes of

educational forms and structures, alternative pedagogical methods and programs appeared in/as curatorial and artistic practices."[4] These informal edu-projects blossom from failed socialist nations, flailing democracies, war ravaged states, and the most dyed-in-the-wool capitalist republics. They take the form of para-fictional schools, curated exhibitions, discursive art programmes, and one project that whimsically describes itself as a "school within a school."[1] The collective aim of this "turn" is to refresh or completely supplant conventional models of artistic training perceived to be conceptually exhausted, corrupted by market forces, or both at the same time. Some of these pedagogic experiments generate alternative systems of learning, operating as far from mainstream academia and its monopoly on professional accreditation as possible, perhaps even hoping to outrun the enclosures of the coming knowledge economy. Others maintain some level of connection to the international art scene, looking upon its admittedly tainted resources as assets for leveraging or hacking the cultural status quo. In either case one goal appears paramount: the desire to establish a non-traditional, highly discursive learning environment within the setting of a debtless and tuition-free setting; that is to say, within a secure space of artistic and intellectual inquiry, unhampered by the economic and ideological bullying of the capitalist marketplace or oppressive state authorities. At least this is the collective aspiration of the educational turn.

My second observation about this laundry list of pedagogic projects is more speculative and less self-evident. It seeks to answer two questions raised in Claire Bishop's important study *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*.[5] First, why do these DIY learning experiments bubble up just at the turn of the twenty-first century, while their programmes are by and large influenced by mid-twentieth century theories of critical pedagogy? And second, why do practitioners of the educational turn so often claim that what they are doing is actually making art, rather than, say, just producing an alternative approach to studying art? The challenge posed by these uncertainties takes us to the central contradictions of art in the era of neoliberal enterprise culture. Bishop's research shows that many of these participatory pedagogical projects are conceptually rooted in the sweeping cultural critique of the mid- to late 1960s, including such avant-garde art experiments as

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[1] See the Syracuse, New York based *Art School in an Art School* program at http://theasintheas.org/ as well as Irish scholar Emma Mahoney's important theorizing of interstitial distancing in which a heterotopic micro-institution operates inside and simultaneously apart from a larger institutional structure as outlined in her paper "Opening interstitial distances in the neoliberal university and art school," forthcoming from the *Performance Research Journal on Radical Education.*

Joseph Beuys's Free University, initiated in 1969, and the radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's theories regarding the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* that first appeared in print the previous year. It is tempting to conclude from this linkage that the sweeping mid-twentieth-century rejection of the status quo finally comes to fruition during the hyper-distended, all embracing art practice of the millennial generation. This causal logic has a powerful attraction. Its line of reasoning is similar to the argument that if it were not for the Civil Rights Movement some fifty years earlier then Barack Obama would never have become the first black US president in 2009. However undeniable in reality, this account does not explain the timing of ensuing events. Why fifty years later for example? Why not forty or sixty years? Why not some other stretch of time? The answer can only lie in the specific composition of social and economic conditions that permits, or perhaps even forces, a later generation to reappraise past possibilities and discover within them a key to addressing their own circumstances.

My final general observation about the educational turn has to do with a peculiar desire shown by its practitioners to appear legitimate, or, more accurately, to pilfer legitimacy and then display this contraband to the public, typically in a semi-ironic fashion. This spectacular "self-credentialization" is most apparent in the naming of a specific project. More often than not these pedagogic art projects conspicuously wrap their enterprise in an officious-sounding title such as academy, university, school, foundation, institute, or centre, all admittedly solemn monikers that contrast with the fact that not one of them offers a recognized degree or professional certificate to their participating "students". This DIY baptism is somewhere between an invocation and incantation. "In the name of the Father", the fraudster implores, simultaneously drawing power from the same patriarchal prestige they recite, disrupt, hack and hope to reinvent. One of these imaginary bureaucracies even brazenly adopted the supra-governmental stature of the United Nations, an earnest parody that simultaneously lampooned the authority of this institution, while expressing a serious desire to revisit Post–World War II ideals of transnational agency at a moment of failed states and fragmented national identities.[6] Many of these pedagogical experiments are short-lived affairs, lasting only as long as a single exhibition, or until external funding holds out; or, they begin to dissolve when participants realize that their increasingly precarious lives make it impossible to allocate enough time to read and meet and discuss books and ideas with any degree of regularity or intellectual discipline. The instability of the educational turn is overtly at odds with the sobriety of the epithets its practitioners project into the public sphere. Still, none of this diminishes the

seriousness of the needs that bring these experiments into being. The challenge of sustainability also underscores the remarkable longevity of some projects such as 16 Beaver Street, The School of Missing Studies, and The Public School. It also calls attention to the much larger question of what a politically empowered society might accomplish if it were to distribute its economic resources to the education, health and culture of human welfare. The gap between trying to survive existing social conditions and envisioning a very different social horizon is a genuine concern of the educational turn in all of its varied forms.

Informal organizations and artificial micro-institutions are also not limited to mock-academies and provisional art schools. It is probably not a coincidence that more or less at the same time as the educational turn we witness a wave of ersatz centres, bureaus, laboratories, offices, leagues, departments, societies, clubs, and even bogus corporations ready to fill the gaps opening up in a society aggressively shedding its own social mandate.[7] Often associated with the practice of Tactical Media, some of the more prominent mock-institutions include Critical Art Ensemble (1987), Bureau of Inverse Technology (1991), RTmark (1996), Institute for Applied Autonomy (1998), Center for Tactical Magic (2000), Carbon Defense League (2004), Office of Anti-Propaganda (2007), and Los Angeles Urban Rangers (2009). In the era of digitized self-representation appearances are nine-tenths of the law. Or to put this a different way, ontogeny recapitulates hyperbole. For what is common to almost all of these mock-academies and tactical counter-institutions is the way their creators go out of their way to make themselves appear truly consequential even when their day-to-day operation is decidedly informal. For instance, the "administrative staff" of most of these tactical entities is less than five people. In some instances, it is no more than one person with a laptop and an MFA. Sporting impressive looking logos and convincing mission statements, even a modicum of computer graphic training goes a long way towards establishing a sense of embellished legitimacy. Just such a ruse helped The Yes Men "image correct" the Dow Company's environmental injustice by successfully scamming the BBC in 2007 with a counterfeit website as a lure. Which is to say, the rise of fictionalized institutions is particular to the contemporary enterprise culture of neoliberal capitalism, the latter making it possible for Tactical Media to emerge in the first place.

Perhaps it is also no surprise to add that the trope of restaging historical events and speeches appears not long after this, including Jeremy Deller's recreation of the Battle of Orgreave in 2001; Mark Tribe's re-enactment of The Port Huron Project in 2006; and Sharon Hayes

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reading the speeches of President Ronald Reagan in 2002 and restaging the Civil Rights protest "I AM A MAN" in 2009. In the absence of some broader concept of social progress, oppositional political power works with the tools at hand, and leveraging power "from below" is the greatest weapon of the weak, whether that is a start-up or a disaffected artist or pseudo-academy. Sometimes this also means stepping whole-heartedly into a world of hallucination, and I don't mean the one that artists often generate. I mean the delusory state of modern capitalism where the educational turn commences at the most aggressive moment in capital's post–Cold War mobilization that even President Clinton's Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan described as a phase of "Irrational Exuberance".[8]

This does not make a real collective desire to reinvent art education complicit with neoliberal ideology, but rather suggests that it was this phase of capital that had opened up contradictions within its own hegemony, inconsistencies that artists and cultural workers, including tactical media practitioners, were particularly well-suited to explore and exploit. These contradictions only really become fully manifest decades after in 2011 as armies of "knowledge workers" still reeling from the 2007/2008 financial collapse storm city squares, occupy public spaces, and refuse to vacate. "Generation Richard Florida" had been handed their collective inheritance, the toxic gift of a jobless future.[9]And it is here that a central fact comes into focus: Is it possible that after decades of extreme social and economic instability, after wave after wave of what Naomi Klein calls capitalism's "shock doctrine", that the spontaneously irreverent and informal experiments of the educational turn have mutated under pressure into something more like a survival programme for the precarious? To put this differently: Is it possible that the pedagogical turn now functions more as a means of existential adjustment to the lowered expectations of a post-crash capitalist reality, and less as an overt critique of capitalism's edu-factory and debt-based knowledge economy? If so, this might explain both the continuing proliferation of pedagogic experiments that appear to become especially visible between 2009 and 2010, just following the global financial collapse, and their increasing acceptance by the mainstream art world.

A place to learn, a place to build a place to hide: Tapping the post-Cold War surplus archive

About mid-way along the educational turn's axis appears The Atlas Group. Its mission statement is straightforward: "The Atlas Group is a project established in 1999 to research and

document the contemporary history of Lebanon." The practice of this operation takes the form of an archive filled with notebooks, videos, photographs, various objects, and other documentary materials. Within this archive are hundreds of notebooks bequeathed to The Atlas Group by Dr Fadl Fakhouri, a famed historian of the fifteen-year civil war that seethed through Lebanon between 1975 and 1990. There are dozens of videos by former Lebanese hostage Souheil Bacher documenting his detention, along with several American and English nationals, in the 1980s. There are also a series of black-and-white photographs entitled *My neck is thinner than a hair: Engines* that detail the twisted metal aftermath of assorted car bombings. The last set of works was made by Lebanese-born artist Walid Raad, who is the only "real" person associated with The Atlas Group. Both Fakhouri and Bacher and their documents are Raad's invention. With only one actual member, The Atlas Group is another "mockstitution." Its pedagogical ambition is equally subversive — to generate seemingly realistic archival content about the Lebanese Civil War in a form that is, like The Atlas Group, both real and imaginary. "Consider whether some of the events of the past three decades in Lebanon were actually experienced by those who lived them", asks Raad, laying bare the possibility of epistemic slippage between any effort to write official history and the inevitable interruption of this project by multiple, even contradictory interpretations spilling forth from an archive overloaded with fragmented narratives, first person accounts, individual rumours and collective hopes.[10]

At first we want to dismiss the significance of this factual mutability, insisting that it is particular to the Middle East where making and owning the dominant narrative is so clearly linked to economic and military power. For example, in Beirut, which on first encounter appears to be a staggering urban maze where structured disorder requires endless negotiations of space as well as time. In some neighbourhoods a riotous skin of graffiti, religious handbills and political posters overspreads walls, many still pitted with bullet holes. In other locations sleek glass towers and mega-billboards solicit members of the creative class to make this their home. Lebanese curator and writer Rasha Salti points out that the very walls of Beirut have served as a "ledger of the quotidian, of its wars, an endless scroll of concrete, stone mortar and paint snaking through neighbourhoods; they collected markings that mapped who ruled in a particular moment in a particular geography."[11] And everywhere great slabs of memory compete with one another, threatening one other with erasure in a titanic rivalry whose first encounter is easy to misconstrue. A broken tree juts through the foundation of a fallen building marking a tragedy of the long civil war, or an easily overlooked architectural detail

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that recalls years of French colonial rule. Like a shadow city within the city, this ever-present penumbra reveals an ever-present surplus archive whose logic rules Beirut from the margins. But this multi-level, negotiated reality is becoming less easy to quarantine, and learning to read differing, even contradictory reports while imagining alternative outcomes is fast becoming a necessary tool in all of our real-world survival kits. There are additional lessons relevant to the genealogy of the pedagogical turn that we can glean from the city of Beirut and its half-real, half-invented urban persona. Because it was in that brief moment after the civil war when this small Mediterranean city began to assertively rebound, just as decades-old Cold-War alliances vanished and a flood of deregulated market forces came to fill the void.[12] In that historical opening any number of small-scale cultural institutions emerged out of the rubble, including, in 1993, The Lebanese Association for Plastic Arts, known as Ashkal Alwan; in 1997, the photographic archive known as the Arab Image Foundation; and in 1999, the aforementioned Atlas Group.

Survival Lessons: Home Workspace Program Beirut

The cultural sector is always close to the ground and therefore also close to the archive as opposed to official "history". Perhaps this is due to a shared precariousness that artists have with the poor and working classes, or it might be thanks to a degree of *ressentiment* that both groups feel towards the wealthy and powerful. Far from the gleaming simulacrum of Solidere, the artistic infrastructure of Beirut also began to mend in the 1990s thanks to a handful of determined individuals who established cultural projects. Foreign foundations financed most of these cultural projects that were typically located in buildings abandoned during the war.[13] In 1993 Christine Tohme co-founded Ashkal Alwan and in an interview just two years later she described Beirut's cultural infrastructure as anything but "normalized":

> For me, as for the artists in Lebanon with whom I work, a real post-war period has never been reached … There is no official cultural backbone in Lebanon, there are platforms, individual initiatives, cultural associations such as Beirut DC, The Arab Image Foundation … During this particular crisis, Ashkal Alwan, through emergency funds, was able to support a number of artists who wanted to document the crisis.[14]

More than a decade later Ashkal Alwan was still extant, thriving in fact, and moved its operations into a former furniture factory in the former industrial Jisr el Wati area of the city. Tohme and Ashkal Alwan officially launched a Beirut-based experiment in art education called Home Workspace Program. Named after a series of two-week-long curated programmes the organization has hosted since 2002, the actual guiding motif for what would become Home Workspace Program can be glimpsed a year earlier during the Home Works Forum of 2010. Organized around the theme "IN AND OUT OF EDUCATION…What Can We Teach Nowadays?" the programme's press release focused on the gap between the art world and the academy.

> Despite several art degree-granting universities in Lebanon, the gap between what is being taught in academia and what is actually being practiced within the contemporary art scene is widening.[15]

The thematic of the forum initiated a dialogue around education within the context of post–civil war Beirut, but also as a direct response to the same sense of institutional failure that sparked other similar educational projects in other locations. The new educational programme founded the next year embraced the city of Beirut as a public sphere of learning in which "students, artists and professionals meet and exchange ideas in a constant process of everyday education." Beirut would become both the site of research as well as a platform "from which ideas will sprout."[2]

As a charter member of the HWP Curriculum Committee (CC) from its inception in 2011 until 2015 my role was principally a supportive one: helping to establish the broad thematic areas of learning, selecting visiting scholars and processing student applications. During this time one or more resident professors were selected to run Home Workspace for a given year including visual artist Emily Jacir, theatre producer Matthias Lilienthal, artist and writer Jalal Toufic, and artist and e-flux founder Anton Vidokle. In my final year on the Committee between 2014 and 2015 the CC decided to step into the role of teachers ourselves. Each CC member selected a two-week period to programme with seminars and guest lecturers, all of which were intended to compliment the overall thematic entitled

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[2] All citations are from press materials for the Home Works 5 panel "In and Out of Education," Beirut, Lebanon, Spring, 2010.

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Setups/Situations/Institutions. This title and theme was selected to highlight the nature of what Home Workspace Program had been seeking to accomplish — the development of a sustainable yet informal learning programme — and it began with a three-week preface organized by local playwright and multi-media artist Lina Saneh, who introduced a group of carefully selected students from the region and abroad to Lebanon and Beirut. This was followed by sections organized by Joana Hadjithomas, Walid Raad, Khalil Rabah, Lina Saneh, as well as guests What, How & for Whom/WHW, the Zagreb-based curatorial collective.

My learning unit took place in April and was scheduled to coincide with my Spring Break at Queens College CUNY in New York City. It was entitled "Encountering the Counter-Institution", and its aim was to investigate new, as well as older, overlooked ways of organizing cooperative cultural spaces, inter-active public art projects, and other DIY institutions. This approach was based on a class I had initially taught in 2001 as Chair of the Masters of Arts in Arts Administration programme at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago entitled Extreme Arts Administration, or XXA for short. For my updated Beirut version of XXA I hoped to put a spin on Slavoj Zizek's "pervert's guide" to cinema, with my own guide to perverse cultural institutions. Peering inside the "heads" of normative, hierarchically structured organizations was one objective. Imagining techniques of resistance, mimicry, and methods of hacking these structures was another, as was unblocking individual and collective fantasies about life and work, learning and self-organizing, and tools and techniques. This process, in turn, pivoted on a series of lectures, workshops and assignments drawing upon the history of community organizing, tactical media and the tradition of the autonomous cooperative movements.[16] Equally important were two external guests I invited: artist Rick Lowe of Project Row Houses in Houston, Texas, and Josh MacPhee of Justseeds Cooperative and Interference Archive in Brooklyn. Neither had previously visited Beirut and I purposely invited artists whose practice was somehow distant from, if not overtly critical of, the global art scene, and whose reputations were highly regarded within a different cultural sector.

Soon after Rick Lowe agreed to visit Home Workspace Program he was awarded a so-called "Genius" grant from the MacArthur Foundation. Lowe is the founder of Project Row Houses, a neighbourhood nonprofit art and cultural organization located in Houston's largely African-American Third Ward. The project was born in 1993, when the Alabama-born artist acquired

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a block of elongated "shotgun shacks" slated for demolition and sought to enhance the historical and architectural richness of the neighbourhood through an arts-based revitalization. Lowe began developing practical solutions for much-needed low-income housing. Since that time, Project Row Houses has grown to include several dozen homes, a library, a multimedia centre, an art gallery, and a residential programme for young mothers, which provides low-income women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-six with affordable housing, childcare, and workshops in self-management. My curiosity about Lowe's participation was this: What would a community-based artist from a black neighbourhood in the American South bring to the table in Beirut, Lebanon?

Similarly Josh MacPhee had co-founded two thriving autonomous art organizations and I hoped to bring his expertise to students in search of "setups and situations" for developing their own counter-institutional projects. In 1998 MacPhee, together with a group of independent graphic artists located in the US, Canada and Mexico, created Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, an online platform that sells grassroots-oriented and anarchist-inspired political art. The cooperative is an actual community whose shareholders meet annually to share ideas, discuss their programme, and decide how to spend earnings. MacPhee's newer endeavour is Interference Archive (IA). Located in the semi-industrial Gowanus area of Brooklyn, IA's organizational model aims to achieve the highest level of political and economic autonomy possible given the less than ideal circumstances of contemporary life, including renting a space in an increasingly gentrified part of the city. IA contains over ten thousand items including hundreds of political posters, pamphlets, magazines, adverts, zines, and other publications from around the globe. Seeking total independence, it supports itself through donations, art auctions and volunteer labour. My question regarding MacPhee was: How might such hands-on knowledge of autonomous survival in one of the most voracious capitalist markets on earth be useful in the context of Beirut, where these processes were only just getting underway?

Over the course of the seminar, Lowe challenged participants to "leave their categories outside the door", and MacPhee diagrammed methods of cooperative organizing on large sheets of paper. Several of us made a fieldtrip to the still under-construction Sursock Museum, which will be dedicated to the Lebanese Civil War. We also visited a multi-purpose cultural space known as The Mansion in Zoqaq al-Blat. Co-founded by architect Ghassan Maasri, the enormous estate building is now filled with artists' studios, a library, garden and a

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café, all without external funding, a process that resonated strongly with both MacPhee and Lowe.[17] While at The Mansion we discussed issues related to Beirut's own rapidly developing gentrification, including protests over efforts to privatize the low-income neighbourhood in and around the seaside area known as *Raouché*.[18]

Going into the programme I assumed that most if not all of the participating artists would be most interested in culture jamming and creative methods for dismantling the very idea of the institution. They had come to Beirut from Canada, Germany, Austria, Ukraine, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Turkey, Yemen, Algeria, and the Gulf States, among other locations. But what I discovered instead was that many longed to create their own sustainable organizational bodies that would be responsive to their own needs and interests. Before long they were holding their own separate meetings and readings aimed at encountering the counter-institution and using ideas drawn from Lowe, MacPhee and myself, among others. This is how one of the group's organizers, Mary Jirmanus Saba, described the project:

> The reading group has turned into a kind of cooperative, and we showed together during open studies. There are four of us, and occasionally a fifth involved…As a co-op, we are still aiming to talk once a week on Skype, and help each other with our work production, although the reading group is still an aspiration it's been put on hold for a bit as we readjust to new time commitments. We have an aspirational financing scheme to help each other produce work, but this also is just in a beginning; it's a bit tricky since we are all in different places but we are committed to figuring out a way to make real community and have some control over our conditions of production, together.[3]

Experiments in pedagogy as art began as spontaneous acts of resistance that often sought to reanimate a seemingly broken and irreparable educational system. Often carried out by broken-hearted art students, but also forlorn teachers, curators, theorists and administrators, this necromancy is often pulled in slightly different directions including reviving critical educational theories from the past as well as imagining a new kind of art academy from the margins or "from below". My principle argument here is that tendencies within the educational turn over the past ten plus years have nudged these projects into becoming more

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[3] Email to the author from Mary Jirmanus Saba, December 1, 2015.

like actual methods of survival than pure experiments within the shattered social landscape left by neoliberal privatization and deregulation. Akin to this "economization" is the strong possibility that the educational turn is becoming a standard part of the mainstream art world, or as Mick Wilson cautions, "I do believe that there is an unfolding of change as something like a "genre" or "trope" [that] emerges, consolidates, is appropriated in a number of ways, and loses the sheen of novelty/ "avant-garde-ish-ness"/ currency."[19] Wilson is also quick to add that perhaps the entire orbit of this "turn" began by overplaying its own radical outsider status. Clearly more research is needed here, but one thing that stands out to me is that Home Workspace in Beirut is a useful example of both this consolidation and of necessary organizational adaptation if for no other reason than because of the way the nation of Lebanon is itself still undergoing a process of post-war reconstruction. This local process also presents important object lessons for comprehending and surviving the broader deconstructive contradictions that neoliberal capital is generating.

Seeking to resurrect the social and cultural imaginary of a city or a nation and its institutions is nothing new. The world has witnessed efforts like this before, including successful efforts, in the aftermath of the Second World War for example, made by the Soviet Union to reconstruct large portions of Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and other Eastern regions, as well as of course the Cold War-driven Marshall Plan that helped to rebuild Europe. What is novel today is the attempt to remake a complex social organism *not* through the agency provided by a collective political project, but through the energy of a privately driven endeavour, whether this is a Solidere or a curated work of art. This is a process, perhaps an absolutely necessary process at this time, that appears unique to the era of failed governance and unrestrained capitalist hegemony and seems to most often involve a process of repetition and mimesis that is particular to the post-industrial economy in so far as artists and other cultural workers imitate in miniature, sometimes ironically but always with an informal, anti-market twist, the managerial, affective and intellectual power of institutions including the business corporation, the scientific laboratory, sometimes even of a state or municipality, and of course also the educational function of a university. It is my contention that these mock institutions and schools that are not schools represent the most positive side of this new trend, particularly when they seek to expose or reverse-engineer corporate misdeeds and ossified academic routines, or when they fulfil a social need that would otherwise go dangerously unheeded.

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I have also argued here that the initial, often militant rejection of a creeping utilitarian business metric within higher education came about in the late 1990s, literally at the giddy zenith of the post-Communist "boom-boom" capitalist economy. Less than a decade later we are witnessing one of the most regressive moments in capitalism's social history; that is to say, the epic narrative that brought us bourgeois values of citizenship and the public sphere have been reduced to a cruel contest of survival. But by framing the educational turn against the backdrop of neoliberal boom and bust I do not mean to suggest everything cultural is determined by the means of production at a given moment. Clearly, the critical intention of these pedagogic projects sought to push back against the monetization of learning. That said, when the means of production itself emerges *as* the dominant disposition of a given society, one could argue that ideology no longer misrepresents some difficult to see underlying condition of alienation and/or exploitation that is based on the extraction of capitalist exchange values and has instead placed that reality directly in front of us. This is a moment when culture is all about business, or as Zizek quips, *it's the political economy, stupid!* And what this calls for is more, not less educational experimentation like HWP, and like the other pedagogical projects catalogued on my timeline. If we are to survive and hopefully outlast the repetitive failures and continual crisis of twenty-first-century capitalism and its anaemic brand of democracy then we must reverse Eagleton's lament, used here in my epigraph, by insisting on an educational turn that continues to keep turning and learning and turning, doing so in the name of justice, tradition, imagination, human welfare, the free play of the mind and, above all, for "alternative visions of the future".

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[1] Terry Eagleton, op-ed for *The Guardian* online (December 17, 2015), http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/dec/17/death-universities-malaise-tuition-fees.

[2] David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), ix.

[3] Gregory Sholette, *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

[4] Curatorial Dictionary, http://tranzit.org/curatorialdictionary/index.php/dictionary/educational-turn.

[5] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

[6] Unitednationsplaza, the knock-off name selected by Anton Vidokle for his Berlin-based discussion group in 2006, alludes to the cancellation of a temporary art school that was set to open as part of Manifesta 6 in a politically disputed section of Nicosia, Cyprus, just months earlier.

[7] For a fuller discussion of these and other developments, see my volume *Dark Matter: Art and Politics in the Age of Enterprise Culture*, 2006.

[8] David Kotz, "Neoliberalism and the US Economic Expansion of the 1990s", Monthly Review, Volume 54, No. 11 (April 2003), 15–33, http://people.umass.edu/dmkotz/NL_and_US_Exp_90s_03_04.pdf.

[9] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

[10] "Interview of Walid Ra'ad by Alan Gilbert", *Bomb* Magazine, No. 81 (Fall 2002), http://bombmagazine.org/article/2504/walid-ra-ad.

[11] Rasha Salti, "Urban Scrolls and Modern-Day Oracles" in *Whither Tactical Media*, special issue of *Third Text*, Gene Ray and Gregory Sholette eds for Issue 5 (September 2008), 671.

[12] Eric Mottu and Najla Nakhle, "Lebanon: Real GDP Growth Analysis, 1997-2009", International Monetary Fund (March 11, 2011), https://www.imf.org/external/country/LBN/rr/2011/030311.pdf.

[13] "The Lebanese contemporary arts scene has been rapidly developing…", Artquest.org, http://www.artquest.org.uk/articles/view/lebanon.

[14] "War and art practice in Lebanon, interview with Tohme" in The Power of Culture (October 2006), http://www.powerofculture.nl/en/current/2006/october/tohme.html.

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[16] Part of the content also focused on my own experience organizing and running the artist's collectives Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D) in 1980, and REPOhistory in 1989.

[17] The Mansion website is http://mansion-blatt.blogspot.com/

[18] Joey Ayoub, "The Campaign to stop the destruction of Rouche's Al Dalia, Hummus For Thought: May 2014", http://hummusforthought.com/2014/05/15/the-campaign-to-stop-the-destruction-of-raouches-al-dalia/

[19] Extracted from an email exchange between myself and Mick Wilson dated Sunday, January 10, 2016 at 8:32 AM, with the subject heading, "Re: expansion and contraction of the "educational turn" in art?"