
CULTURE COIN: A COMMONS-BASED, COMPLEMENTARY CURRENCY FOR THE ARTS AND ITS IMPACT ON SCARCITY, VIRTUE, ETHICS, AND THE IMAGINATION

Vijay Mathew and Polly Carl
Emerson College

Abstract

This article argues that the current economic design of the US not-for-profit arts sector, specifically theatre, fails to support the long-term wellness of the cultural worker and the cultural commons. As a solution, we propose a global, commons-based alternative economy and complementary currency called Culture Coin that creates new wealth, abundance, and virtuous social behaviors by matching unmet needs with underutilized resources that our current economy fails to circulate. The current design of our arts economy results in generative artists being disproportionately poorer, unjust disparities in how resources are distributed, and social behaviors in the nonprofit sector that mimic for-profit, commercial enterprises. The arts sector has an over-dependence on uncompensated or undercompensated “sweat equity” and volatile philanthropic funding. We detail the value and characteristics of a commons framework for entrepreneurial activity and describe internet-enabled peer production as a way to build cultural commons as well as the most effective way to collectively co-create and deploy the Culture Coin project.

Introduction

We are in a critical historic moment full of both seemingly impossible challenges and promising opportunities for the future relevance and vibrancy of the not-for-profit theatre in the US. Do we courageously keep aging 20th century institutions afloat with well-intended, yet slow and incremental innovations, or do we attempt to leverage their various forms of accumulated capital to support the development of a new generation of disruptive entrepreneurial models for theatre making? Can we develop a new commons-based - as opposed to a market-based - approach to arts entrepreneurship for cultural workers and organizations?

In the not-for-profit theatre in the United States, much artistic work is created through volunteerism, for very little money, with uncompensated “sweat equity” where there is no traditional market exchange. This kind of artistic activity incubates a community’s artistic vibrancy; well established not-for-profit organizations benefit from it, but are not designed to give back to it. Such activity is the result of human energy, motivations, passions of people to wanting to make art and wanting to participate in an artistic and cultural community that transcends commercial markets. Volunteerism and sweat equity, and a shared community purpose are the fuel that creates a cultural and artistic commons that is meaningful and relevant to an arts community. However, this energy is exhaustible over time. And it’s precisely this energy that HowlRound seeks to nourish and sustain through the idea of a Culture Coin.

The Culture Coin Vision

The theatre sector—local, national, global— and, by extension, the arts sector becomes a leader in civic engagement by championing a new and ethical economic model through its expertise in art and community making. The not-for-profit theatre and arts can become thriving

and abundant, with more artistic activity, participation, diversity, and relevance than ever before. By implementing the Culture Coin complementary currency, the needs of artists, culture makers, and organizations of all kinds can be met more effectively resulting in a more resilient, sustainable, equitable arts culture fully engaged in civic discourse. We as artists and culture makers openly acknowledge our role as global citizens using our creativity and tools of innovation and collaboration to contribute to humanity's greatest challenges.

A Tilt of the Head: Getting to the Vision

What will we do when private philanthropy and foundations can no longer support the not-for-profit theatre as much as they used to? The not-for-profit frame that has been the driving economic model of the American theatre is caught between mission and survival. As Peter Dobkin Hall suggests in his essay, "A Historical Overview of Philanthropy, Voluntary Associations, and Nonprofit Organizations in the United States, 1600-2000,"

Nonprofits were once constrained by legal definitions of charity that required them to serve a fairly narrow range of charitable, educational, or religious purpose; today all that the law requires of nonprofits is that they not distribute their surpluses (if any) in the form of dividends and that their beneficiaries be of a general class of persons rather than specific individuals. (p. 57)

Though the not-for-profit structure is used because it incentivizes a collective behavior around a perceived public good—in our case, theatre—as Hall (2006) points out, what defines a not-for-profit is becoming ever less clear so as to "defy the efforts of scholars and lawmakers to measure them against any abstract standard of charitableness, public benefit, or voluntariness" (p. 58). In this context it's becoming more difficult to differentiate market or profit driven enterprises from not-for-profit entities.

In a shifting global economy, our dependence on contributed revenue seems unrealistic as our relevance is no longer self-evident in a culture with so many interests competing for people's money and time. The truth is, we never anticipated that "unlimited economic growth"—a prevailing economic design principle of the 20th century—was a myth that would upend the not-for-profit arts dependence on charity. Without the promise of resources like philanthropic support extending well into the future, artists find themselves in the midst of indulging the most basic competitive instincts of a market economy. The theatre has hired a professional arts administration corps with innovative marketing and audience engagement initiatives that attempt to generate more earned revenue over the long term. But if the not-for-profit enterprise is to stay relevant and distinct from the corporate sector, we will need to consider alternatives to market ideology and behavior. We suggest that rather than abandoning the not-for-profit, we use its associations with value-based activity to our advantage and embed the idea of virtue back into the not-for-profit.

Can we make our way back to the "tilt of the head" that led to the creation of not-for-profit theatre as so clearly articulated by one of its founders, Zelda Fichandler in 2011:

What drew us to the way we went? What was the vision, the inciting incident? Actually, there was no incident, no high drama, there was simply a change of thought, a new way of looking at things, a tilt of the head, a revolution in our perception. . . . The fabric of the thought that propelled us was that theatre should stop serving the function of making

money, for which it has never been and never will be suited, and start serving the revelation and shaping of the process of living, for which it is uniquely suited, for which it, indeed, exists. The new thought was that theatre should be restored to itself as a form of art. (para. 12)

The Virtues of the Starving Artist

The term “generative artist” refers to those artists who originate artwork and to whom authorship is attributed. They create the work. “Interpretive artists” are those artists like actors and designers that collaborate on a work that already exists. These are terms with the rise of devised and ensemble work that get blurred all of the time, but prove a useful distinction in understanding disparities in our current infrastructure.

Todd London and Ben Pesner’s study, *Outrageous Fortune*, put our field on notice when it came out in 2009. It points out that generative artists, those who make the work we see on our stages, live the most precarious economic existence of any person working for theatres that produce art and culture for their local communities. Their contributions to the vibrancy of the arts is grossly undercompensated and unsupported over the long term relative to the salaried administrative staffs at these institutions. Our theatres have encountered a failure of imagination in their design—unable to create an infrastructure that supports long-term wellness of the cultural worker. But ask any arts administrator, not one of them would say he intends to impoverish and economically exploit artists with no thought to the future of the art.

At the same time, Hans Abbing, in his important study *Why Are Artists Poor* (2004), makes two critical points in helping us understand the evolution of the “starving artist.”

1. Artists believe they are unfit for non-arts professions, and believe they are better off in the arts despite the prospect of a low income.
2. The average artist is more interested in non-monetary rewards than other professionals and such rewards are thought to be available in abundance in the arts.

The economics of the not-for-profit infrastructure, one heavy on administrative overhead and in the large institutions, high salaries for administrators, play into an emotional mindset of many artists—the virtue that comes with starving for your art. And in this scenario everyone seems to hold the virtue card. Arts administrators by virtue of working in the not-for-profit will claim they make less than if they worked in the corporate sector *and* their work brings art to audiences—a virtuous activity. And artists will claim the virtue of not “selling out” to corporate greed for the sake of their creative impulses. In both cases, the market or in this case the “anti-market” is the frame that defines virtue.

In this scenario no one is actually ethically at fault for the huge salary disparities in our field. This is collateral damage stemming from a fundamental design flaw in our money system that promised unlimited economic growth ensuring charitable overflow. It’s also a design flaw in the economics of our arts institutions—notions of virtue that leave artists disproportionately poorer.

Internal Design Flaws and Ethical Problems

These attitudes toward the virtues of the disparity in pay for artists lead to systems within our theatres that create an ethical conundrum for the field. The vast majority of theatre organizations are designed to use freelance artistic labor. Using commercial market logic, organizations budget to get these artists for the lowest allowable price that the market, laws, and union contracts can bear, so that expenses are minimized. Supporting and sustaining artists for

the sake of the long-term health of the field is not the priority in the decision-making about how resources are allocated. As Oskar Eustis, artistic director of the Public Theatre in New York said in the 2011 *In the Intersection* convening of commercial and not-for-profit theatre producers, “It’s the mission of the nonprofit that’s the danger right now. That’s the thing that’s being eviscerated” (p. 172). Further, as resources become scarcer in a shifting economy, bottom line budgeting takes priority over ethical questions of fairness.

Theatre organizations struggle to fulfill their missions while at the same time stewarding the future sustainability and health of their arts community whether local or national or global. Yet we would argue that stewardship of, contribution to, and participation in the whole arts community should be a core value of any arts organization that’s granted 501c3 corporate status in the US. Though not in the legal code, if you’re a public benefit organization, the ethical implication is that you are interdependent with the public and other organizations that do similar work. However, it does little good to call out organizations for not participating in their ethical, core duty to their community. Despite best human intentions, institutional and economic design will always trump individuals.

Our perception is that the managers of large and mid-size not-for-profit arts organizations have become the true “generative artists” of those theatres. Artistic directors, managing directors, senior staff are the “generative artists” because they steward the relationships with all the revenue sources, the funders, the sales without which there would be no art making as they have the agency to define it. They “generate” institutions, perpetuate them, provide employment for many, and are the primary generators for art in their community—and because of that, they are rewarded with middle-class or even upper middle-class standards of living, job security, retirement accounts, and health insurance. In a context of financial scarcity, the managers eat first—and as the logic and ethics of the current not-for-profit design would have it, perhaps they should. Perpetuating the managers’ own material security and future becomes the priority and agenda when resources are scarce, and resources are almost always scarce. Actual “generative artists” such as playwrights are displaced to become “interpretive artists” for the “generative work” of the not-for-profit managers.

The professionalization of the arts is one of the great successes of the not-for-profit arts sector, however the ethical issue is that this success comes at the expense of the freelance artists as well as all of the junior staff, interns, seasonal workers, temp workers who continue to live with no security and no financial future unless they are lucky enough to break in, earn money in other industries, or get a senior staff position. This contributes to burn out and turn over into entirely different fields for many artists. For the past several decades we’ve been in a slow churn of burning out our human capital.

The Commons as Frame

Peter Barnes in *Capitalism 3.0* (2006) describes the commons as:

A set of assets that have two characteristics: they’re all gifts, and they’re all shared. A gift is something we receive as members of a community, as opposed to individually. Examples of such gifts include air, water, ecosystems, language, music, holidays, money, law, mathematics, parks, the internet, and much more. (p. 5)

Natural assets are depletable but cultural and creative assets are abundant, continue to grow in number, and in the framework of a commons, can be harnessed for the benefit of all. If someone learns, experiences, or uses something in the cultural commons, it's not at the expense or the detriment of someone or something else. There's enough to go around. The irony though is that in order to produce the "un-depletable" cultural commons within the US not-for-profit arts sector, we depend upon uncompensated or undercompensated "sweat equity" which is labor that never gets properly compensated monetarily. These are unrequited labors of love situated in a gift economy that doesn't circulate.

In his book *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World*, Lewis Hyde (2007) differentiates the church, or the university, or the museum, from the market:

It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, while the sale of the commodity leaves no necessary connection. (p. 72)

Not-for-profit arts organizations depend on the generative and interpretive artists as well as the underpaid junior staffers, interns, and other workers to in effect "volunteer" their work and provide that "feeling bond." The systemic inequality and the unsustainability of supporting long term involvement in creating the cultural commons puts our human capital—and therefore the potentially transformative capital of artistic community—in as precarious a place as our natural resources. What should be a commons of abundance instead becomes a depletable commons.

In contrast to the arts sector, in the internet technology field, volunteers who produce intellectual and technological commons such as open source software are not subject to the crushing scarcity of financial and material resources that afflict not-for-profit artists because their skills are commercially viable and in demand in the commercial economy and culture. In the technology commons, there is ultimately a commercial, market subsidy enabling a volunteer software developer to participate in a labor of love. The not-for-profit arts also has a commercial, market subsidy in the form of financial fortunes that fund foundations and the personal fortunes that account for direct donations. In addition, the commercial entertainment sector subsidizes larger not-for-profit theatres through enhancement funding. However these subsidies fall short of supporting the enormous overhead and infrastructure of institutional theatre, and rarely trickle down to the under-resourced artist and culture maker, aka "cultural commoner." Volunteer software developers for open source projects have direct access to financial support through their well-paying day jobs, whereas not-for-profit theatre artists depend on dysfunctional arts institutions, low-paying day jobs in related or unrelated fields, student loans, credit card debt, or family subsidy.

Peer Production

Cultural, intellectual, artistic, technological, and creative commons are constructed by people in a shared community with a collective vision for solving some problem or addressing some need for that community. Commons emerge through a process driven by "peer production" enabled by the internet that widely distributes the capacity for individuals to become knowledge and/or cultural producers.

Yochai Benkler and Helen Nissenbaum (2006) in their paper "Commons-based Peer Production and Virtue" define "commons-based peer production" as:

a socio-economic system of production that is emerging in the digitally networked environment. Facilitated by the technical infrastructure of the Internet, the hallmark of this socio-technical system is collaboration among large groups of individuals, sometimes in the order of tens or even hundreds of thousands, who cooperate effectively to provide information, knowledge or cultural goods without relying on either market pricing or managerial hierarchies to coordinate their common enterprise. (p. 394)

According to Benkler and Nissenbaum, peer production can be defined by two key characteristics: decentralization and social cues. Like the world of DIY and the rise of the amateur, cultural participants have access to tools to edit their images and create their own website. People are no longer waiting for authorities to give permission. We see this all the time in the theatre. More artists are self-producing and marketing their own kickstarter campaigns – i.e. acting entrepreneurially -- rather than waiting for an artistic director of an established theatre to call. Producing information and motivating behavior now relies on peer cooperation around social production. A decade or so ago if you wanted to organize a political rally, for example, that activity was driven by capital needs like access to a printer and a budget for copying fliers. “Human effort and creativity. . . obviates the need for centralized capital investment” (p. 399).

In addition, participation in commons based activities is highly motivated by non-monetary values. People participate in voluntary activities because they care deeply about the issues involved. We volunteer to recycle at home because we deeply value the long-term sustainability of the environment. There are so many volunteers, unpaid and under paid interns in the theatre because people highly value feeding their creative souls.

An essential feature of commons-based peer production is volunteerism and self-selection. In the first place, individuals have chosen freely to participate and are free to continue or cease to participate as they please. (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006, p. 405)

Describing their research on people’s motivations for contributing and participating in commons-based peer production, Benkler and Nissenbaum state:

While understudied and difficult to predict and manage by comparison to a more simple picture of human motivation as driven by personal wealth maximization, peer production begins to offer a rich texture in which to study the much more varied and multifarious nature of human motivation and effective human action. (p. 403)

By current design the theatre is motivated to spend the bulk of its energies and research on understanding motivations for purchasing tickets. For example, theatre marketing departments have put a lot of energy into dynamic pricing which the airline industry popularized, trying to predict what motivates a potential ticket buyer to pay more for a show. The commercial theatre sector has led the way convincing the not-for-profit that for a show with a lot of buzz people are willing to pay extremely high, last minute ticket prices.

Part of the reason for exploring the possibilities of the Culture Coin complementary currency come from our desire to understand another side of human motivation, the side that is value driven, not market driven.

Although it is entirely possible that the persistent and pervasive practice of spending time and effort producing something of value and giving it freely to be used by others for no compensation can be explained as self-serving behavior in pursuit of, say, reputation, a more efficient and direct explanation in many, if not most cases, is the pleasure or satisfaction of giving—generosity, kindness, benevolence. (Benkler & Nissenbaum, 2006, p. 408)

Apart from describing this emerging production process for creating the commons, the core argument of Benkler and Nissenbaum's paper is that the design of this production process and its resulting social dynamic leads to "virtuous" and ethical behavior in contrast to a 20th century theatre model that for all of its good intentions has left too many artists underpaid and undervalued. As Todd London eloquently argues in a HowlRound essay that analyzes Diane Ragsdale's report, *In the Intersection: Partnerships in the New Play Sector*, every not-for-profit will say that it means well and is contributing nobly to its community but for London that's not enough:

I don't, though, care about intentions, if the practices of our theatres impoverish and alienate the artists on whose backs they're built. I don't care about intentions of administrators if the work is boring and homogenous. I don't care about how hard we work, if our work betrays bred-in-the-bones principles. Taking money from commercial producers, creating product for the commercial theatre, bringing people from the New York marketplace theatre in to meddle in the local, homegrown, nonprofit art theatre, using commercial success as a lure for local patronage—these practices betray those principles. (London, 2013, para. 26)

Inventing new principles or recapturing old ones motivates HowlRound to explore the possibilities of alternative thinking around currency exchange for the theatre. Can we bring words like virtue and generosity and values front and center into not-for-profit arts practice? Can we, as Benkler and Nissenbaum (2006) suggest, create a "context or setting that is conducive to virtuous engagement and practice, thereby offering a medium for inducing virtue itself in its participants" (p. 403).

Complimentary Currency: Expanding our Imaginations

Why do we need a complementary currency? Because our current currency and economy is not meeting our sector's needs and serves as a disincentive to virtuous commons-based but still entrepreneurial behaviors. In order to be vibrant, relevant, virtuous, and sustainable we need new interventions and new thinking around what constitutes value, and how to quantify new definitions of success.

HowlRound's commons-based peer produced platforms such as the New Play Map and HowlRound Journalism¹ currently provide space for sharing knowledge, information, and conversation. These platforms are also creating a new social community with new opportunities for virtuous behavior. Our platforms have replaced scarcity with abundance. Our next step is to design and deploy a commons-based complementary currency to meet more and different needs

¹ For more information on the New Play Map and Howlround Journalism, see <http://newplaymap.org/> and <http://howlround.com/>.

that our current ticket based arts economy cannot meet alone. Using peer production, we will have an information system that will produce new knowledge about existing and underutilized resources and that will make formerly invisible resources visible, empowered, and activated in our sector. The monopoly that the national currency has as the only system in which the arts works, severely limits our imaginations.

As Gwendolyn Hallsmith and Bernard Lietaer state in *Creating Wealth: Growing Local Economies with Local Currencies* (2011):

It might be better to describe complementary currency systems as “information systems,” “social incentive schemes” or something else that doesn’t include the words money or currency. (p. 212)

Our existing monetary system is not explicitly designed to have positive social purpose in the way that many complementary currencies are defined. Culture Coin has strong social purpose and application, which is to increase our field’s artistic activity, support culture makers to be able to make more art over the long term, meet material and even basic survival needs, and in Hallsmith and Lietaer’s terms: “community building” and “identity reinforcement”—both actions that are related to commons-based virtue and ethics.

The basic functioning of a complementary currency is:

to meet needs that remain unfulfilled after transactions facilitated with conventional money have taken place. Similarly, unused resources are those that haven’t been used in economic transactions mediated by conventional money. (Hallsmith & Lietaer, 2011, p. 218)

In terms of using complementary currency for specific applications, Hallsmith and Lietaer suggest that complimentary currency systems are all about reorganizing our social relationships within an existing community in such a way that real changes in behavior can happen. The key to deploying such a system requires:

Finding sufficiency in matching unmet needs with underutilized resources creates an abundance that is otherwise not as available. These transactions are a source of real wealth, and can liberate all sorts of skills and talents that are otherwise ignored. (p. 68)

As HowlRound has uncovered in its work and conversations with the theatre community, our sector is full of underutilized and undervalued resources and unmet needs. And there seems to be great enthusiasm in our initial Culture Coin research around the idea of being compensated for what has heretofore been sweat equity for the sake of virtuous behavior. According to Hallsmith and Lietaer,

Research has shown that more people volunteer and that the turnover of volunteers in nonprofit organizations is significantly reduced when a complementary currency is used to reward volunteers. (p. 110)

It's this idea of concrete reward for virtuous behaviors that HowlRound is exploring with Culture Coin.

Culture Coin's Commons-based Development and Deployment

Through the ArtsFwd Business Unusual Challenge administered by EmcArts in New York, HowlRound chose to engage in "crowdsourcing"—to take (using ArtsFwd's language) a "half-baked" idea and use a specific form of peer producing, community sourcing, and open sourcing for idea generation and development of the idea. This production methodology enabled anyone in the arts community to voluntarily self-select to participate in developing the initial kernel of the Culture Coin with us. The two questions we asked the crowd during the finalist phase in the challenge were:

1. What are resources, assets, or expertise that you HAVE that currently go unused, are under-utilized, and could benefit your fellow artists, organizations, audiences? Answer from your various perspectives as an organization, an artist, and/or an arts-goer.
2. As an artist or as an organization, what are resources, assets, expertise, or support that you NEED? How could those resources help you make a stronger impact and support your creative and cultural work?

These two questions will be the foundational structure of the internet-based information system that will manage Culture Coin. They are questions that form the basis of any economy: matching needs to resources. When Culture Coin is deployed, this market of "resources" and "needs" will be a constantly changing and expanding dataset that's peer produced and self-reported by anyone who wants to participate in the artistic and cultural sector's economy. Because it will be on the internet, Culture Coin will be enabled to impact local communities as well as global communities, in effect becoming a global complementary currency. Circulation of needs and previously uncirculated resources can happen anywhere and are not restricted by geography and national boundaries.

Here is a small verbatim sampling of community responses received by us via public posting (Howlround, 2013) during the ArtsFwd Business Unusual Challenge to the above questions about resources and needs:

Anne:

What I have to offer:

I have seven years of experience in digital marketing and advertising with an emphasis in graphic design, I read at least one play per week, which makes me a great literary resource, I have an MFA in directing, which makes me a great audition coach or auditor in addition to being a solid director, and a comprehensive knowledge of contemporary British playwrights and their work, making me a great resource for companies looking to incorporate those voices. I also have non-profit events planning experience, so I can help you with logistics. I've served as a teaching artist at theatres and universities, so I'd be happy to help your education department by teaching for you or consulting for your education department.

What I need:

Space for readings, rehearsals, and performances as well as design and technical resources, contract assistance and copying services.

Catherine Castellani:

Resources I HAVE and can share: top-notch office administration skills (any kind of scheduling, logistics, or just plain keeping after people), fine expository writing skills (meaning, I can draft press releases, program notes, etc.).

Resources I NEED: studio or rehearsal space suitable for informal readings, office/desk space (especially outside of regular business hours), discounted theatre tickets. I can see how these can be traded quite readily.

I generally pay for studio/rehearsal space (cash), and am looking into co-working situations for the office space. I used to work temp/freelance, but since having a kid and requiring health insurance, I have a regular day job. Honestly, the pay is so low and the benefits so non-existent for admin work in the theatre, I would feel better about bartering my skills than being an employee. I think I would be happier being a playwright/volunteer admin with office-use privileges after-hours than trading my day-time hours for scant pay. I am NY-based, and space is always at a premium. The most attractive aspect, for me, is that by developing barter arrangements and trust, I'd also be expanding my personal artistic and business community.

The Tesseract Theatre Company:

In addition, as our organization grows, we are having trouble keeping up with such a small staff. Volunteers are needed as photographers to properly capture rehearsals and productions as well as other theatre company events, so that we can grow our following on social media outlets as well as local media publications. We are also in need of a volunteer who could help update our website on a regular basis and make design changes.

Vivian from REDEFINE Magazine:

it would be nice to give more back to our writers, who are definitely not getting paid enough for their hard work but are willing because they believe in our philosophy. I would love for their effort acknowledged in even more ways, financially or otherwise.

Variations Theatre Group:

What we would realistically be able to provide is...rehearsal space.

World Fringe Network:

A unique understanding of the global fringe touring sector.

personal connections with festival directors and artists.
 the ability to pair festivals with performers.
 information sharing to performers about how to take part in global festival circuit

we need time with a computer programmer to develop the on-line regional and fringe touring guide. We need to be able to do market research with Fringe Festivals and regional venues.

Lana from Rude Mechs:

co-production program that we offer to local artists to get their work staged in our space for free with advice if wanted, and free marketing/publicity. The Scenic Co-op - it's not quite underused, but if we increased awareness / use, the library of free scenic materials could be larger/better and available to more people. 18 years of producing our own work and 14 years of managing a space = small business management - we are killer money managers/survivors.

All new computer equipment and software (especially a free and sophisticated crm tool). Technologically super savvy forward-thinking person dedicated to making all aspects of our art and admin work thrilling. An archivist (we may get one soon). All new production gear for venue. A new venue, heh. Cheaper health insurance. Without these things, we move a little more slowly, do a little less than we could, a little less well. We spend more time on slapping bandaids on problems, and less time on the art-making and visioning.

These responses show that resources that could support more arts and culture making in a sustained way potentially exist in a variety of places but are currently out of circulation, unused, or underutilized because our existing system of exchange ignores them and has no way to formally activate them. These unmet needs are left to stagnate, resulting in a less efficient and effective arts sector overall. The resources mentioned here are both material and intellectual. The intellectual resources will be much more capable of circulating outside geographically limited communities. For example, skill sharing or consulting could happen anywhere in the world with communications technology such as the telephone or video conferencing whereas the circulation of rehearsal space, housing, food, equipment is limited to geography. The digital form of currency that Culture Coin will take will be accessible anywhere there is internet so if someone earns Culture Coins in one geographic place, she/he will be able to spend those Culture Coins in an entirely different geographic place.

Here is a scenario found in the comments section of Shareable Magazine's article on Culture Coin from theatre artist Mark Rud that refers to what the circulation in the Culture Coin economy could look like:

Imagine that non-theatre artists can also join the exchange (they could); a photographer earns CC by doing a production's ad shoot; she uses CC to rent a studio for her own projects; the studio uses CC to "pay" a model for its upstart ad campaign, and that model (with unused admin skills) also earns CC crunching numbers for an improv troupe; then he uses his combined CC in trade to "hire" a sound designer for his students' ballet

showcase. And so on... Such (hypothetical) projects presently are impossible to conceive in total because there is no "market" for those untapped skills/resources. While everyone appreciates the value in one-time artistic barter, CC is NOT a bartering tool because of its universality. THAT's the benefit of its more codified exchange format. It's the difference between a roadside fruit stand (one-time, one-on-one) and an urban Farmer's Market (diverse, multivariate, proliferate).

David Dower, Director of Artistic Programs at ArtsEmerson offers a scenario for how a large organization could leverage their resources to dynamically stimulate artistic activity and support within their local arts community:

Say donors put one million in cash into the cultural economy for a building or endowment, rather than into a show or an annual fund. This becomes a resource removed from circulation.

To get it recirculating, the theatre then puts a percentage of that donation into the Culture Coin economy—let's say even 10% of the cash value each year, or \$100,000 in Culture Coin for every million in the lock box.

They distribute it via:

500 hours of shop rental available during unscheduled time, to be purchased with Culture Coin currency.

10% of seats available only through Culture Coin exchange so that culture workers can engage the art.

500 hours of rehearsal space available during unscheduled time in studios.

Eight weeks of theatre space available for an itinerant ensemble/company during unscheduled times.

These resources are all available now for purchase with Culture Coin. (Dower, 2013, para. 6)

The major next step for the self-selecting community of Culture Coin developers will be to decide on the mechanics of how resources are valued and how Culture Coins come into being. The most promising existing model that we know of is the "mutual credit system." Time Banks use a specific form of this system. As with any complementary currency model, it will need to be customized to fit the particular context of the arts, which will require continuous feedback and input from potential participants.

To begin the technical development and deployment process, we will first build a simple and functional Culture Coin website that will be iterated as self-selecting participants in various geographic communities provide feedback and use Culture Coin. This website will manage the listing of resources, the transactions, the user accounts, and the community feedback forums. We imagine this internet platform development process to be as inclusive as possible being a project that is truly co-created by the global arts community. The more real-world experience and feedback the arts community is able to generate and that we are able to immediately implement, the more effective and scalable the economy will be. Through rapid iterations based on user

experience, the internet platform will seamlessly evolve into a tool that is designed to effectively accomplish its goal of managing the Culture Coin economy. In this kind of process, development is always ongoing as more is learned and experienced. The public “launch” happens at the beginning of the process, not at the end.

A New Head Tilt

When Zelda Fichandler tilted her head in the middle of the 20th century to launch a theatre movement, she did so in an era where head tilts were primarily “I” activities—individuals leading communities willing to follow with big ideas. But this new century requires a new kind of tilt, one in which “I” becomes “we” and big ideas are generated from peer-produced activities that can have global impact. We are entering an era in which enabling other people’s entrepreneurial activity and creating entrepreneurial communities through shared platforms and infrastructure will be as effective or even more effective than enabling just the private individual.

List of References

- Abbing, H. (2004). *Why Are Artists Poor?: The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*. Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press.
- Barnes, P. (2006). *Capitalism 3.0: A Guide to Reclaiming the Commons*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Benkler, Y. & Nissenbaum, H. (2006). Commons-based peer production and virtue. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, 14(4), 394-419. Retrieved from https://www.nyu.edu/projects/nissenbaum/papers/jopp_235.pdf
- Davis, P.M. (2013, July 17). Culture Coin: An alternative currency to sustain artists. *Shareable Magazine*. Retrieved July 17, 2013 from <http://www.shareable.net/blog/culture-coin-an-alternative-currency-to-support-and-sustain-artists>
- Dower, D. (2013). Practical Applications of the Culture Coin. *HowlRound*. Retrieved May 28, 2013 from <http://howlround.com/practical-applications-of-the-culture-coin>
- Fichandler, Z. (2011). Address to the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society in Celebration of the Third Annual Zelda Fichandler Award. *HowlRound*. Retrieved [date] from <http://howlround.com/address-to-the-stage-directors-and-choreographers-society-in-celebration-of-the-third-annual-zelda>
- Hall, P.D. (2006). A historical overview of philanthropy, voluntary associations, and nonprofit organizations in the United States, 1600-2000. In W.W. Powell & R. Steinberg (Eds.), *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook*. Retrieved from <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/fs/phall/Powell%20Essay-Final%20-%20rev.pdf>
- Hallsmith, G & Lietaer, B. (2011). *Creating Wealth: Growing Local Economies with Local Currencies*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

HowlRound. (2013). Share your ideas with HowlRound, Business Unusual National Challenge. *ArtsFwd: Next Practices for Arts Leaders, an EmcArts initiative*. Retrieved from <http://artsfwd.org/howlr-challenge-finalist/>

Hyde, L. (2007). *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (25th anniversary ed.). New York, NY: Vintage.

London, T., Pesner, B., Voss, Z. (2009). *Outrageous Fortune*. New York, NY: Theatre Development Fund

London, T. (2013). What price idealism, or who you gonna dance with. *HowlRound*. Retrieved May 15, 2013 from <http://howlround.com/what-price-idealism-or-who-you-gonna-dance-with>

Ragsdale, D. (2012). *In the Intersection: Partnerships in the New Play Sector*. Boston, MA: HowlRound / Center for the Theater Commons.

Schiller, Ben. (2013). Creating an alternative economy for underpaid artists with a brand new currency. *Fast Company Co.EXIST*. Retrieved August 5, 2013 from <http://www.fastcoexist.com/1682736/creating-an-alternative-economy-for-under-paid-artists-with-a-brand-new-currency>