

Arizona State University

JUS 591:

**Social Enterprises:
Innovation, Justice, and
Community Development**

Conspire to Work Together

Social Economy
Arizona



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INTRODUCTION

The social innovation project at Conspire is comprised of two primary sub-projects: (1) the promotional video and (2) an article for Conspire's zine, *Pholx*. The video (the more significant of the two sub-projects) is chiefly a promotional piece that broadcasts Conspire, and all that it is, to a general audience. The length of the video is approximately seven minutes long; weaving together photos, interview audio recordings, written text, and video footage. Through these combined mediums, the video touches upon several aspects of Conspire, including the organization as a cooperative enterprise, art gallery, vegan cafe, smoothie bar, platform for ad hoc political and artistic expression, art and clothing retailer, public space, and cultural center. Compilation of the video and audio content derived from in-depth interviews with Conspire members. Interview material was, through significant revision, compiled to form a voice-over to video and photographic material that, together, encompassed the video. Photographs, video, and voice-overs were included strategically to highlight the diverse facets of Conspire and the varied perspectives of its membership. The video intentionally highlighted the virtues of Conspire and, as a promotional piece, aims to generate greater awareness of Conspire, draw greater foot traffic to its space, and facilitates community interaction beyond the networks it currently reaches.

The short article, Art and Protest, written for *Pholx*¹ fulfilled two purposes. It assisted Conspire by providing significant content (just over one-thousand words) for its May edition and posed a poignant question about Conspire's identity and how it contributes to the social economy in Phoenix. The article's content reflected the student team's area of interest and expertise,

¹ PHOLX is a zine which attempts to highlight and explore those persons responsible for developing the contemporary emergent culture in Phoenix and beyond. It provides a platform for artists, writers, and musicians to share ideas and work, while also providing a condensed calendar of cultural concentration so interested people can stay well informed about current news, events, projects and shows.

tailored to specific subject matter suggestions from *Pholx* editor, Joseph Grether. In the end, the article addressed the confluence of art and politics, using the late, infamous immigration legislation in Arizona (the one year anniversary occurring in April) as an exemplar of this relationship. The alternative identity of Conspire as part of the social economy was considered in its relation to activism, protest art, and the construction of public space. Observations about Conspire in the context of political critique and community engagement were posed within the article, ultimately suggesting that the cooperative embrace its political identity. The article appears in the May edition of *Pholx*, available at Conspire and free to the public.

The following report introduces Conspire as a cooperative and growing part of the local social economy in Phoenix. It elaborates on the innovative features of the projects noted above, with particular emphasis on their relevance for Conspire as well as the course from which these projects initially emerged. Contextualizing these projects as part of a broader discussion of Arizona's emerging social economy, the report outlines the organizational characteristics of Conspire, what it offers to the social economy, and where it may be headed in the future. Following this, the report focuses upon the process of undertaking the videography and writing projects. Not only does this discussion offer clarity into the dynamics of the broader collaboration, but it also reveals unique features about Conspire as part of the emerging social economy in Phoenix, how it operates as an arts collective and cooperative, and how the student created innovation projects can be utilized by Conspire to promote their development in the future. Finally, the report offers constructive feedback on the Conspire social innovation project as a whole, offering a candid reflection on the experience and process.

SECTION ONE: CONSPIRE AND THE EMERGING SOCIAL ECONOMY IN PHOENIX

Background Information

Conspire is primarily an artist collective that hosts the sale of the products of its membership. Artwork includes everything from large canvass paintings, woodwork, clothing, and jewelry, among other artistic crafts. Several of these artistic mediums are featured in a rotating gallery within Conspire. The quantity of members remains relatively fluid, with artists flowing in and out for a variety of reasons. The collective is explicitly inclusive, permitting membership to local artists with quality work and desire to contribute to the cooperative. The collective steadily maintains a couple dozen active members, many of which not only contribute art but also run the organization's other activities. Most central to of these activities is the vegan café and smoothie bar, which, according to members, is the resource engine of the organization. These two enterprises generate the income necessary for Conspire to partake in its other identities, such as hosting weekly open-mic poetry, monthly First Friday Art Walk activities, their Anarchist Library, Free Store, Open Stage, and general capacity to become a key player in the cultural scene of Phoenix.

Conspire is operated and organized as a worker cooperative. Though processes and decision-making structure is relatively informal, there remains a strict adherence to determining the day-to-day operation of the enterprise as well as long-term, strategic vision in a democratic fashion (Zamagni, 2010). The absence of formalized structure means that there is little explicit delineation of authority, even if it were done democratically. According to members, influence in the organization is typically based upon seniority, respect, and perceived dedication to the

organization's success. Nevertheless, any member can propose the Conspire undertake particular projects, revisit certain norms or policies, initiate discussion of organizational management and direction. Such concerns are generally aired at monthly meetings (though they are not routinely scheduled). Even with these mechanisms for consensus, members each hold their individual, nuanced understanding of Conspire, its current purpose, and where they hope it will go in the future. Generally, it seemed, members were fairly content with level of ambivalence that the organization maintains. Meanwhile, others felt that Conspire's unwillingness to be defined manifests as one of its primary virtues.

Conspire's Innovative Features

It appears that the anarchic identity of Conspire is its foundation for innovative practices and exceptionality within Arizona's social economy. The character of the organization is wholly multi-dimensional. Among other features, it hosts poetry, political protest, and sells art and smoothies, along with a collection of donated books and clothing. Though this ambivalence was frustrating while researching the organization, Conspire's membership became impassioned when questioned about their organization's diffuse, transforming nature. In fact, interviewed members perceive a static organizational mission or means of operation as something antithetical to its purpose. Art, of course, is all about creativity, fostering novel reactions and interpretations of an ever-changing environment. Conspire's unwillingness to be categorized exudes its willingness to be transformed, not only by current members, but also by the community at-large. Through these means, it acts as a coalescence of diverse community expression. As long-time member Graeme Litugow put it, Conspire is "less of a money-making venue" than "an art piece

in itself – something that the community can watch develop and grow” (Litugow, Graeme. 2011. Personal Interview, April 15).

Of course, Conspire does operate as a for-profit worker cooperative. As such, selling goods and making a profit is a key goal of Conspire, no matter how foreign it may seem to its aesthetics or ideology. Though operating within the wider marketplace, like many social enterprises, its scale is decidedly local. Much of Conspire’s art and kitchen sales are recorded during the First Friday Art Walk, which places the enterprise near the center of the country’s largest monthly art festival. Otherwise, the cooperative makes a steady income from the art population and people who happen to pass by or take a particular interest in particular artists.

As much as Conspire is a staging point for artistic expression and interaction, it is a space for political dialogue and protest. Each first Friday of the month, the lawn and backyard of Conspire transforms into a marketplace of art and ideologies, exchanged through prices or protest literature. At this venue, not only do activists maintain a steady, streaming audience of curious individuals, but an open, sympathetic stage to voice concerns and search for public allies. Therefore, Conspire is a place for meeting, discussion, and staging verbal and pictorial protest, a rare sympathetic square of earth that encourages and ratifies fringe expression. Individuals can create a space for their representation to a public audience (typically on First Fridays) that would otherwise be unavailable. Further, activists can protest at Conspire without feeling alienated while doing so, which can be the case when expressing oneself atop city streets or against private, unwelcoming storefronts. If the social economy is truly about promoting solidarity, innovation, and social progress, then certainly the creation of democratic spaces and dialogue is imperative.

Opportunities and Challenges

The numerous innovative features of Conspire position the enterprise to become a key player for several communities of Phoenix. As just noted, activist groups know the organization as a community center to organize alternative, fringe politics that are unable to access private means of communication or material space. Conspire, set within the First Friday Art Walk, has a unique opportunity to embrace this identity and revive downtown Phoenix as a central location of public expression and unmediated interaction. The renowned arts festival is also a primary platform to display the success of Conspire as a democratically operated organization. The sale of locally produced goods, meanwhile, offers a rare opportunity for consumers and producers to interact. As one member said, at Conspire “you can meet the person who made your clothes.” Therefore, Conspire is not only a venue where producers may maintain a close relationship with their labor, but also recognize and un-alienated interaction with the consumer. The alternative offered by this system of artist-consumer interaction could, intuitively, illustrate the positives of localized consumption and production, as well as illustrate a rare experience of un-alienated economic activity.

As Conspire moves forward, continues to grow, and is recognized for its innovations, it could face serious challenges to its integrity. The uniqueness of Conspire nurtures what David Harvey termed “collective symbolic capital,” the exclusive social connotations one identifies with a certain commodity which, taken together, recasts itself as an inimitable good – a monopoly (Harvey, 2001). Like all monopolies, its exceptional status permits greater capital accumulation. Understanding the profit gains that come with neighboring such an organization, retailers, typically those with the greatest capital, find themselves within what is referred to as

the “Roosevelt Row Arts District,” which now appears a sign of wishful thinking, as it is still largely undeveloped, but may indeed become dead-on foreshadowing of urban renewal. This begs the question: will the development of the area surrounding Conspire, now comprised of empty dirt lots, rental homes, and a homeless youth drop-in center, retain what made it special when those are replaced by Starbucks or chain brewpubs? Harvey gives ample evidence that Conspire may eventually lose its edge. Greater yet, under such circumstances, Conspire may simply maintain an attenuated version of its previous self. Such an arrangement would fulfill a dual role: operating as the necessary token of uniqueness amidst homogenized shops and restaurants (maintaining the monopoly) and assuaging protests of sterility, “Disneyfication,” or “selling out.”

Conversely, Conspire could face the unique challenges that accompany continued marginalization, no matter how much integrity this position affords. If stuck at the margins and struggling financially, this wholly unique organization could follow the worn path of the struggling social enterprise. Conspire must ensure that it does not become a space of self-exploitation that simply draws visitors without the financial means to purchase art, menu items, or otherwise support the enterprise. Surely, this is a challenge for Conspire as it attempts to survive and flourish. Fortunately, membership recognized this obstacle, ultimately conceiving of the promotional video project to address this pressing need by drawing shoppers.

SECTION TWO: CONSPIRE TO WORK TOGETHER

Photo Shoots and Video Overview

The photo shoots were a key component of the video project. Though the shoots were designed to be integrated into the greater promotional video, the photographs taken of the women's designer clothing at Conspire could proceed as a stand-alone project. Two volunteer models displayed significant portions of the featured clothing at Conspire. Models mixed and matched various articles of clothing, hats, dresses, blouses, and skirts, among other items, taking considerable artistic license with their final fashion compilations.

The two amateur models, Kristing Stoble and Brittany Towle, donated their time at two separate fashion shoots, along with an amateur photographer, Caleb Drost, which the student team connected with through Conspire. Through consultation with the photographer, specific times and locations were determined to best capture the designer wares. The initial photo shoot took place within Conspire, rotating from room to room, highlighting the organization's numerous identities. The second shoot transpired at various spots within downtown Phoenix. By choosing these locales, the student team attempted to demonstrate how Conspire and its featured clothing are local. First, the models – along with student team member Amanda – picked out various articles and accessories to make out fits completely designed by designers at Conspire. Then a room was chosen to best went with the theme of each room or the setting that was chosen for the shoot. Over 1,300 photos were taken at Conspire and another 800 off-site. After several hours and a lot of wardrobe changes there was enough photos for Conspire to use and to integrate into the video. The next step was to edit all the photos that attempts to highlight the various identities of Conspire, what makes it unique within the greater Phoenix area, how it

interacts with the community, and why people (artists or otherwise) should pay it a visit. In addition to such broad promotional themes, the video touches upon how individual artist members understand the enterprise, revealing a personal side and sense of fluidity that the organization cherishes.

Photo Shoot and Promotional Video Objectives

The content featured in the video and photographs reflects the project's broad objective, to illustrate the diverse identities of Conspire. The student team, like many others spoken to, was initially uncertain about what Conspire has to offer due to its numerous activities. As the team became increasingly familiar with the organization (and started to feel a little at home), we realized that Conspire suffers from deep ambivalence against the outside world, which contributes to a veil of mystification regarding what it represents. Conspire offers a diverse and exciting array of programs and artistic opportunities, but they remain not only unpromoted, but relatively hidden. While the organization is known to many downtown artists and their extended networks, to most of the population in the greater Phoenix area, they are either unknown or misperceived. Thus, the video strived to answer the question: what all goes on at that place and how is it relevant to those living, working, and creating in the broader phoenix area?

Since the organization has a website, facebook site, and has promoted itself among the artist community in Phoenix, we initially figured that all we needed to do was answer the above question and interest would follow. Next, we considered audience. In designing the video, we conceived the audience as people with some understanding of First Friday Art Walk and downtown Phoenix, who had perhaps even heard of Conspire or directly visited it. We also understood that even regular visitors to the First Friday Art Walk could shuffle through Conspire

and leave without a complete notion of what it really is. With only a fuzzy understanding of what Conspire offered, it was doubtful people would return to purchase goods, and even more unlikely that they would partake in other events Conspire hosts.

Clarifying what Conspire offers to the community was linked to two auxiliary objectives: to invigorate foot traffic and, ultimately, sales. By intentionally highlighting designer clothing, artwork, and vegan menu items the video intends to give the audience greater reasons to visit Conspire. The video also presented sale items within a framework of socially conscious consuming. Video content promoted shopping at Conspire as a means to buy local goods, thus stimulating the local economy, while supporting the work of local artists (Rusch, 2001).

Secondly, the video aims to highlight the less commercial elements of Conspire, including the hosting of events (including Poetry Night), ad hoc political gatherings, its free store, First Friday Art Walk, and their anarchist library. By drawing upon interview material, it also attempted to show that Conspire is, according to member Kristin Lerch, simply a place to hangout and meet people, to become involved in the community. Audio and photography content explicitly promoted Conspire as a space for artists and non-artists alike by highlighting how, for many of Conspire's members, the place is like a second home.

Photo Shoot and Promotional Video Production

Production of the video required several phases, the first of which (following its design discussed above) required the organization of the photo shoots, a primary aspect of the video and overall project. The fashion shoots, in turn, required their own set of planning. The designer clothing was scouted to determine the particular body types necessary to best showcase available

clothing. Afterward, we recruited two amateur models for two separate fashion shoots. We undertook the shoots in partnership with a volunteer photographer.

The video also required capturing the various aspects of Conspire through photographs and video. The student team attended several main events hosted by Conspire, including First Friday Art Walk, Third Friday Art Market, and Open-mic Poetry Night. In addition to these special events, we spent considerable time photographing Conspire in its day-to-day activity. This included photographs of Conspire's kitchen, library and art gallery, closet, and yard area. Due to the evolving state of the organization, each visit presented a new interior design and layout, echoed by a freshly landscaped and newly organized scene outside.

The student team coupled the visual content of photography and video with audio clips garnered through in-depth, in-person interviews with six of Conspire's members. Each member of the student team interviewed participants for 15-20 minutes apiece, over a span of two weeks in April. Interviewees were generally comprised of the "regulars," meaning collective members that spent a considerable amount of time at Conspire. Not only were these individuals the most easy to schedule for interviews, but they also contained significant knowledge about the organization.

The student team undertook the interview process rather informally, but remained focused upon addressing specific issues and drawing perspectives on particular topics. Each interviewee asked approximately 15 questions, with a variety of probes interweaved as well. Interview questions only focused upon a few main themes. Initially, we questioned interviewees about the general, background information on Conspire, where it is coming from and to where it is headed. Next, the various programs and activities of Conspire were touched up to draw

personalized descriptions of each. The student team probed for broad descriptions of each aspect of the organization, drawing quotes that could be overlaid with corresponding photographs for the final video. Finally, the interviewees (all artists) were asked to discuss their own particular brand of artistic expression. We asked what art they did, why they did it, and how Conspire contributes to them as artists.

After the gathering of data was completed, the student team proceeded to sort, organize, and edit content. First, we confronted the impressive collection of photographs. Out of over a thousand taken during the photo shoots, we were able to delineate a few dozen of the highest quality and that best exemplified the variety of clothing available. A similar, but less time consuming process also was undertaken with video content and photographs of Conspire. Once we had a feasible set of photographs with which to work, we began importing photographs into Picasa for editing. Edited photos proceeded to be placed within a queue for possible inclusion in the video. A similar process of sorting and editing was required for lengthy audio recordings. After interviews, the student team combed recordings for relevant material and quotable content from interviewees. As with visual content, we positioned exceptional audio spots for video integration.

The culminating phase of video production meant pairing visual and audio content while ordering these pairs within a logical narrative describing Conspire. During this process, the student team discovered that much of the audio content was relatively longwinded and therefore unquotable within a necessarily brief video clip (a failure of interview technique). In the end, this forced the team to carefully choose audio spots that were succinct, and model the visual content around those quick phrases. Even with such constraints, the video was able to capture the varied

programs of Conspire, as well of how key members individually perceive and appreciate the organization.

Content and Purpose of 'Pholx' Article

The article in *Pholx*, titled “Art & Protest”, brings together a variety of academic thought and perspective to formulate a discourse on how Conspire may grow as an organization and, more generally, improve the social economy. Using personal accounts of the confluence of art and politics in Arizona’s anti-SB1070 protests (particularly the one-year anniversary protest that occurred in April), the article considers the power behind this politics-art convergence, as well as its possible roots and the reason for its being. The article argues that – separately – art and politics often fall prey to sterilization and commoditization when detached from participatory, democratic movements. In these circumstances, art and politics lose their normative value and potential for social agitation. To retain the normative worth, art and politics should purposefully be fused within democratic movements. Together, art and politics form a unique pair that enables the imagination and expression of social alternatives. Conspire, positioned at the intersection of art and fringe politics, should intentionally create and support open, inclusive places for art and politics to merge.

It remains to be seen how the content of the article contributes to the key objectives of Conspire. Though the content was a reaction to witnessing political protest at Conspire, fused with direction from member and *Pholx* editor Joey Grether, the article’s thesis may run counter to the organization’s future plans – whether it will embrace its apparent political identity or remain strictly relegated to hosting artistic expression. Indeed, the project was encouraged to be one of personal opinion and semi-original thought, rather than a puff-piece highlighting the

virtues of Conspire. Nevertheless, the article addressed a constant theme that seems to confront the organization: its identity. By focusing on the political role that Conspire has come to play in Phoenix, perhaps participants and members will take time to reflect on what this role entails. As Conspire's hosting of political activity comes to rival that of art, the organization could smoothly encompass an additional identity or reevaluate its purpose.

Relation to Course Objectives

In addition to fulfilling objectives on behalf of Conspire as a social enterprise, the creation of the video enabled the student team to address several key course objectives. Simply attempting to define Conspire forced the student team to confront the complexities and tensions within organizations that claim commercial and social missions. As noted, the video project necessarily reflected the varied nature of Conspire to both highlight it as commercial venture and social actor. Navigating the diffuse, cooperative management structure of Conspire also forced the student team into interactions with an organizational form that beforehand was merely described within classroom confines. The project succinctly illustrated that social innovation remains a nascent field of human action, with significant room for growth and improvement. Likewise, the sector is still in the process of defining self-definition, much like Conspire itself.

Though the article's contribution to Conspire remains somewhat uncertain, it undoubtedly contributes to the zine while encompassing numerous course themes. In addition to adding considerable content to the zine (over one thousand words), the article addressed themes commonly found within *Pholx*. As the article title suggests, it deals with the role of art in modern society. It did not take long to see how ideas of protest art and social expression have much in common with social enterprise. Both social enterprise and political art attempt to express an

alternative means of human association. Meanwhile, they each strive to balance ideological purity with practical necessity, often giving into market forces. Therefore, the critical perspectives raised by class readings were/are readily transferrable in relation to artwork and culture.

SECTION THREE: PROJECTING INTO THE FUTURE

Project Strategic Plan

The strategic plan for Conspire's continued utilization of the student team's video/photographs remains somewhat nebulous. The project is intended to be featured via the website and social networking sites of Conspire and the student team designed and undertook production with goal in mind. However, the planning and compilation of the video occurred without the type of collaboration between the student team and Conspire members, in particular Joey Grether and clothing designers, that was originally envisioned. Without consistent input and suggestions for the video, concerning content, style, and tone from Conspire members, there remains considerable ambiguity as to how it will be utilized by the organization. Nevertheless, through future feedback from Conspire members and corresponding revision, the video could become a useful promotional piece. In addition, through the incorporation of the video on the SEAZ website, and its associated social media pages, particularly its Youtube page, it could accomplish a couple of its key promotional goals. Regarding the photographs from the fashion shoots, while they will likely be used by Conspire to promote its clothing, lack of sustained collaboration between designers and the student team leaves open the possibility that the shoots did not best reflect the artistic conception of the featured clothing designer.

The strategic plan for the article is intentionally short term and simple. The article is currently published and available in the May edition of *Pholx*. Conspire freely makes the zine available to any visitors that wish to pick it up. At this moment, the student team is unaware of the quantity of readership of the zine, and therefore its ultimate impact is difficult to measure. Although the strategic plan for the zine article portion of the social innovation project is largely complete, it is noteworthy that *Pholx* editor Grether expressed desire to have Brian continue to submit scholarly pieces for the zine on an occasional basis. Future articles submitted by Brian will likely attempt to apply scholarly debate to the tangible context of Phoenix, ultimately bridging the gap between high theory and real life experience.

Challenges and Opportunities

Through interactions with Conspire and numerous members to accomplish the social innovation project, it became apparent that Conspire faces several unique challenges. The student team spent considerable time attempting to understand Conspire – what it really is, what all it does, how it operates, and even who are actually members there. Initially, the student team assumed that whatever ambivalence we perceived was primarily due to our lack of experience with cooperative organizations. After becoming more familiar with the organization and speaking directly with members, however, it became apparent that even members paused before attempting to succinctly answer such questions. Further, some of the noted questions proved unanswerable. Sometimes, stumbling attempts to respond to these questions were followed by sincere desire that Conspire begin to outline clearer (but not rigid) structure. Conspire faces the test of institutionalizing some salient sense of purpose while maintaining its perpetually transforming nature that keeps it innovative and in-tune with the surrounding community.

Organizational structure may prove crucial for Conspire's sustainability, but alone it does little to define the cooperative's mission and purpose. To echo what was noted in the preceding paragraph, Conspire lacks a clear definition of its identity, purpose, or long-term goals. Its democratic structure ensures a variety of perspectives and goals. As members and their individual perspective come and go, organizational goals will continue to evolve. Through interviews, it was evident that each member expressed their own wishful prediction of where they would like to see Conspire end up. These desires were not articulated as concrete convictions to be discussed at the next membership meeting. Rather, they were ambivalent hopes, as in "This is where *I'd* like to see the organization go, but we'll just see what happens." It appears that the individual desires of members mostly linger reticently, as there is not an explicit venue for deliberation, or perhaps there is a cultural aversion to such planning. Either way, it is apparent to the student team that Conspire could benefit from serious discussion of its mission and the resulting sense of organizational consensus around a common vision.

Both the video and zine article addressed this final issue – Conspire's identity. In reflection, it appears that both of these sub-projects landed upon this issue less because it was a fruitful, easy endeavor and more because we ourselves could not seem to get past it. In essence, then, these two projects attempted to answer the most basic questions about Conspire's identity and, in turn, broadcast our findings (and lingering questions) to a broader audience. The shortcomings of the video's final production and the article's tone of curious grappling with tentative deductions are a reflection of the public's fuzzy conception of Conspire. Considering this, perhaps the final products of this project (in particular the video) may be better utilized as an impetus for Conspire to undertake an internal, concerted search for common identity than an outward expression of its fractured, albeit beautiful, personality.

SECTION FOUR: PROJECT OVERVIEW

Lessons Learned, Discoveries Made

The social innovation project was typified by frustration and discomfort, sprinkled with kernels of joy and growth. As such, the experience was riddled with small lessons and acute discoveries. More than anything else, the social innovation project revealed the crucial need for planning and organization. Here, we are not speaking in relation to Conspire, but to our own student team's undertaking of the project. The countless components and phases of the video project, set within succinct timeframes, meant that each task needed to be completed well and in strict accord with the overall vision.

Ideas for Enhancement

The surprising level of autonomy given to student teams as they undertook the project posed several difficulties that could be remedied through improved policies. Firstly, the student teams could be better incorporated into the formation of the project. This could ensure that projects do not require skills, knowledge, or interests that the students do not readily possess. If special trainings are required, such as video editing training, it would be better scheduled at a date when student teams have been able to reflect on the immensity and purpose of the project. Secondly, explicit facilitation between the student team and partner organization is essential at the outset of the process to ensure communication and project clarity. Thirdly, the sooner the student team receives project expectations the better. In the case of Conspire, the student team maintained significant misunderstanding about what the project truly was. Finally, the additional essays required while the project was being undertaken exacerbated confusion on the purpose of

the social innovation report. For example, the Observation Paper (which was written without the Innovation Project Guidelines) resulted in the student team composing largely irrelevant interview questions and incorrectly outlining the project goals to Conspire members upon our first visit. Generally, the student team felt that it was writing about working on the social innovation project as much as we were actually working on the project.

CONCLUSION

The social innovation project at Conspire resulted in the creation of both a promotional video and article featured in the zine, *Pholx*. In addition, the project compiled dozens of quality photos of designer clothing created by collective members. The details of these projects were touched upon, along with specific attention on the process of their creation. Throughout the development of the project, the student team undertook considerable activity to acquire content. Meanwhile, the team was immersed in Conspire, witnessing and reflecting upon real life issues concerning the social economy and the operation of cooperative organizations. The report considered the objectives and potential strategic use of each component of the project. Afterward, we discussed the unique challenges and opportunities that Conspire faces, along with suggestions for overcoming obstacles. Reflecting on this process, the report closed by noting valuable learning acquired and offering suggestions for the improvement of the social innovation project as it moves forward.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY

Interview Methodology

All six interviews were undertaken in-person and recorded with video and/or audio. Interviews generally lasted between 15 to 20 minutes apiece.

List of interviewees (date and location) by team member Brian:

1. Graeme Litugow, Conspire member (4/25/11, Conspire)
2. Kristin Lerch, Conspire member (4/25/11, Conspire)
3. Caroline Brelenda, Conspire member (4/25/11, Conspire)

List of interviews (date and location) by team member Amanda:

1. Russ Kazmieviczak (4/27/11-5/1/11, Conspire)
2. Ethan Brown (4/27/11-5/1/11, Conspire)
3. Shiek Smmad (4/27/11-5/1/11, Conspire)

Photo Shoots Methodology

The student team organized the photo shoots. Photographs were taken by student team members and volunteer photographer Caleb Drost. Two volunteers, named Kristin Strobel and Brittany Towle, modeled clothing.

List of photo shoots (Date, location, models, main photographer, team member(s) present)

- 4/14/2011: Conspire, Kristin Strobel, Brittany Towles, Caleb Drost, Brian Hennigan and Amanda Strobel
- 4/18/2011: Downtown Phoenix - various locations, Caleb Drost, Amanda Strobel

Miscellaneous Photography Methodology

Student team members each undertook video/photo documentation of Conspire and its various locations, outlined below (Event, date, location, team member(s) present):

- First Friday Art Walk, 04/01/2011, Conspire and adjacent locations, Brian Hennigan
- Non-event, 04/14/2011, Conspire, Brian Hennigan and Amanda Strobel
- Third Friday Art Market, 04/15/2011, Conspire and adjacent locations, Brian Hennigan
- Non-event/ interviews, 04/25/2011, Conspire, Brian Hennigan

Video Production Methodology

The main production of the video component integrated both the audio/video of interviewees and the photographs from the two photo shoots (both discussed above). Team member Amanda Strobel was responsible for integrating video footage and photographs into the final project. This team member also compiled existing content and edited the final video production. Team member Brian Hennigan offered support through planning and final production feedback.

'Pholx' Article Methodology

Writing of the article was undertaken exclusively by team member Brian Hennigan, with direction from zine editor Joey Grether. The original draft of the article was submitted to Grether on April 25, 2011. The final draft of the article was published in *Pholx* on 05/01/2011.

Innovation Project Report Methodology

Team members Amanda Strobel and Brian Hennigan compiled the content for the Social Innovation Report. Brian Hennigan undertook the main writing of the report. Team member Amanda Strobel offered support and feedback throughout the composition process

APPENDIX B: PHOLOX ARTICLE: ART & PROTEST

Art and Protest

by Brian Hennigan

The evidence is right in front of us. You notice it serendipitously in the mundane – the writing on the back of a t-shirt before it turns and weaves through the crowd of protestors. You glimpse what it says, “artists are the social conscience of...” and then it slips away, and your eyes draw upward following arms attached to signs, posters broadcasting custom slogans of objection. Others have stenciled silhouettes of Chavez and King and Zapata, maybe to remind us of the tragic recurrence of it all while showing that it can, again, be overcome. Meanwhile, the iconic prints of Ernesto Yerena weave classic claims for human decency with stubborn stances on modern politics, highlighting the relative exceptionality of today’s argument for equality. The confluence of art and politics is, and has been, recognized for centuries. Protests confronting SB1070 over the past year once again proved this true in Phoenix. Posters, murals, paintings, and tagging (along with the less-discussed writing and music) cropped up to form a diverse articulation of political dismay. Together, these works of art were able to overcome the left’s typical cynicism toward Arizona politics and illustrated that, as John Steinbeck inimitably put in his classic protest novel, “repression only works to strengthen and knit the repressed.” The parallels of *The Grapes of Wrath* and today’s protest art are certainly remarkable, as they express issues with poverty, immigration and all of the social strife that accompany it. Likewise, one would be hard-pressed to differentiate between art and politics – where the art ends and the politics begins – in either case. In fact, it is clear that an attempt at dichotomization would be impossible. Here politics and art are one and the same. If the convergence of art and protest is undeniable and – in the greater scheme of things – striking and unique, we have to ask, “why, what are the psychological or social underpinnings of the artist’s proclivity toward political action?” In his study of political vanguardism, anarchist anthropologist David Graeber hesitantly, but I think correctly, came close to answering this question. He wrote, “The answer must have something to do with [Marx’s theory of] alienation.” Activists and artists, he noted, both experience the act of “first imagining things and then bringing them into being.” This unalienated production and creativity – the ability to determine the fruits of one’s own labor and to benefit from it, autonomously or collectively – positions both groups to envision and aspire for worlds with less alienated creation and social relations, not only within the arts or political movements, but everywhere.

Even if we take Graeber’s assessment as true, it definitely does not erase all ambiguity. Certainly art and protest can walk together, hand in hand. When it happens, we need not look far to see the brilliance of the relationship. At the same time, we know that not all art is political, nor most politics artistic. Strangely enough, both art and politics can be highly political and participatory, as seen through SB1070 protest described above, or, in converse, posed as pure spectacle for disinterested aesthetic experience (await November election coverage or visit an art museum).

Further, art may become depoliticized through commoditization, unable to escape or transcend its saturation in market demands of homogeneity for apolitical consumption. Many postmodern thinkers believe the recent trend of artistic professionalization (and resulting pacification), according to Marxist geographer David Harvey, has diminished the political stance of artists, society's "creative core." As such, he proposed that the political left must revitalize artistic hubs as "centers of political estrangement [to] mobilize the political and agitational powers of cultural producers." Harvey, and many others, understand such revitalization as a means to overcome the left's current inability to offer alternative, utopian visions for society – an endgame to inspire action, to overcome the impasse of "dreams that seem unrealizable and prospects that hardly seem to matter." Unfortunately, Harvey proposed little more direction of how to go about this revitalization.

Though I doubt that it holds all the answers, consulting the literature of urban geography and discussions of democratic space may provide some bearing. Since the earliest endeavors of republicanism, the importance of open space (whether metaphorical or physical) was apparent. Open space is not only a scene the Habermasian "public sphere" of collective citizen deliberation, but also the individualized representation. According to Lyn Lofland, public space is a "powerful medium of communication," particularly for groups "that cannot command significant private space," which make such spaces crucial for "the outcasts, the proletariat, the underclass." It would not be a stretch to include artists and political protestors within Lofland's list, as they are always struggling for an audience and continually excluded from private places (consider the politics of "graffiti" and "free speech zones").

In fact, numerous activist academics stress the importance of physical space and representation. "Social movements," Don Mitchell asserts, must "occupy and reconfigure material spaces in the city. Indeed, these movements are premised on the notion that democratic (and certainly revolutionary) politics are impossible without the simultaneous creation and control of material space... public democracy requires public visibility, public visibility requires material public spaces" (emphasis in original).

Considering the above discussion – the classic collusion between art and politics and the apparent necessity of material space for meaningful expression – perhaps leftist (or otherwise fringe) movements would do well to focus on intentionally creating/supporting open, inclusive places for art and politics as a means to revitalize "agitational" expression and political engagement, mobilization. In view of Conspire as a case study, we can see that such a convergence is not awkward, but rather a natural occurrence. Although initially established as a platform for local artists, it is also a place for political organizing and soapbox expression. It became evident that Conspire is an equally rare spatial oasis for artists as it is for activists and oppressed groups in general. Amidst increasingly sterilized urban landscapes (see Mill Avenue), commoditized art and homogenized political discussion, enclaves that purposefully uphold diversity, free expression and spontaneity will become principal spaces for artistic voice and political change. This seems apparent because, really, where else could that happen?

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