THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE BOOK: ON ARTISTS' BOOKS AND RADICAL OPEN ACCESS

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Abstract *In this essay we argue that the medium of the book can be a material and conceptual means, both of criticising capitalism's commodification of knowledge (for example, in the form of the commercial incorporation of open access by feral and predatory publishers), and of opening up a space for thinking about politics. The book, then, is a political medium. As the history of the artist's book shows, it can be used to question, intervene in and disturb existing practices and institutions, and even offer radical, counter-institutional alternatives. Yet if the book's potential to question and disturb existing practices and institutions includes those associated with liberal democracy and the neoliberal knowledge economy (as is apparent from some of the more radical interventions occurring today under the name of open access), it also includes politics and with it the very idea of democracy. In other words, the book is a medium that can (and should) be 'rethought to serve new ends'; a medium through which politics itself can be rethought in an ongoing manner.*

INTRODUCTION

The medium of the book plays a double role in art and academia, functioning not only as a material object but also as a concept-laden metaphor. Since it is a medium through which an alternative future for art, academia and even society can be enacted and imagined, *materially* and *conceptually*, we can even go so far as to say that, in its ontological instability with regard to *what it is* and *what it conveys*, the book serves a political function. In short, the book can be 'rethought to serve new ends'.[1] At the same time, the medium of the book remains subject to a number of constraints: in terms of its material form, structure, characteristics and dimensions; and also in terms of the political economies, institutions and practices in which it is historically embedded. Consequently, if it is to continue to be able to serve 'new ends' as a medium through which politics itself can be rethought - although this is still a big *if* - then the material and cultural constitution of the book needs to be continually reviewed, re-evaluated and reconceived. In order to explore critically this 'political nature of the book', as we propose to think of it, along with many of the fundamental ideas on which the book as both a

1. Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, 2nd ed., Granary Books, New York, 2004, p49.

concept and a material object is based, this essay endeavours to demonstrate how developments undergone by the artist's book in the 1960s and 1970s can help us to understand some of the changes the scholarly monograph is experiencing now, at a time when its mode of production, distribution, organisation and consumption is shifting from analogue to digital and from codex to net. In what follows we will thus argue that a reading of the history of the artist's book can be generative for reimagining the future of the scholarly monograph, both with respect to the latter's potential form and materiality in the digital age, and with respect to its relation to the economic system in which book production, distribution, organisation and consumption takes place. Issues of access and experimentation are crucial to any such future, we will suggest, if the critical potentiality of the book is to remain open to new political, economic and intellectual contingencies.

THE HISTORY OF THE ARTIST'S BOOK

With the rise to prominence of digital publishing today, the material conditions of book production, distribution, organisation and consumption are undergoing a rapid and potentially profound transformation. The academic world is one arena in which digital publishing is having a particularly strong impact. Here, the transition from print to digital, along with the rise of self-publishing (Blurb, Scribd) and the use of social media and social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Academia.edu) to communicate and share scholarly research, has lead to the development of a whole host of alternative publication and circulation systems for academic thought and knowledge.

Nowhere have such changes to the material conditions of the academic book been rendered more powerfully apparent than in the emergence and continuing rise to prominence of the open access movement. With its exploration of different ways of publishing, circulating and consuming academic work (specifically, more open, *Gratis*, *Libre* ways of doing so), and of different systems for governing, reviewing, accrediting and legitimising that work, open access is frequently held as offering a radical challenge to the more established academic publishing industry. Witness the recent positioning in the mainstream media of the boycott of those publishers of scholarly journals - Elsevier in particular - who charge extremely high subscription prices and who refuse to allow authors to make their work freely available online on an open access basis, in terms of an 'Academic Spring'. Yet more potentially radical still is the occupation of the new material conditions of academic book production, distribution, organisation and consumption by those open access advocates who are currently experimenting with the form and concept of the book, with a view to both circumventing and placing in question the very print-based system of scholarly communication - complete with its ideas of *quality, stability and authority* - on which so much of the academic institution rests.

In the light of the above, our argument in this essay is that some of these

more potentially radical, experimental developments in open access book publishing can be related on the level of political and cultural significance to transformations undergone in a previous era by the artist's book. As a consequence, the history of the latter can help us to explore in more depth and detail than would otherwise be possible the relation in open access between experimenting with the medium of the book on a material and conceptual level on the one hand, and enacting political alternatives in a broader sense on the other. Within the specific context of 1960s and 1970s counterculture, the artist's book was arguably able to fill a certain political void, providing a means of democratising and subverting existing institutions by distributing an increasingly cheap and accessible medium (the book), and in the process using this medium in order to re-imagine what art is and how it can be accessed and viewed. While artists grasped and worked through that relation between the political, conceptual and material aspects of the book several decades ago, thanks to the emergence of open access online journals, archives, blogs, wikis and free text-sharing networks one of the main places in which this relation is being explored today is indeed in the realm of academic publishing.[2]

In order to begin thinking through some of the developments in publishing that are currently being delved into under the banner of open access, then, let us pause for a moment to reflect on some of the general characteristics of those earlier experiments with the medium of the book that were performed by artists. Listed below are six key areas in which artists' books can be said to offer guidance for academic publishing in the digital age, not just on a pragmatic level but on a conceptual and political level too.

1) The Circumvention of Established Institutions

According to the art theorist Lucy Lippard, the main reason the book has proved to be so attractive as an artistic medium has to do with the fact that artists' books are 'considered by many the easiest way out of the art world and into the heart of a broader audience'.[3] Books certainly became an increasingly popular medium of artistic expression in Europe and the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. This was largely due to their perceived potential to subvert the (commercial, profit-driven) gallery system and to politicise artistic practice - to briefly introduce some of the different yet as we can see clearly related arguments that follow - with the book becoming a 'democratic multiple' that breached the walls held to be separating so-called high and low culture. Many artist-led and artist-controlled initiatives, such as US-based Franklin Furnace, Printed Matter and Something Else Press, were established during this period to provide a forum for artists excluded from the traditional institutions of the gallery and the museum. Artists' books played an extremely important part in the rise of these independent art structures and publishing ventures.[4] Indeed, for many artists such books embodied the ideal of being able to control all aspects of their work.

2. The relation in academic publishing between the political, conceptual and material aspects of the book has of course been investigated at certain points in the past, albeit to varying degrees and extents. See the 'Working Papers' and other forms of stencilled grey literature that were produced and distributed by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1960s and 1970s, as discussed by Ted Striphas and Mark Hayward in their contribution to this issue.

3. Lucy R. Lippard, 'The Artist's Book Goes Public', in Joan Lyons (ed), *Artists' Books: a Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, Rochester, New York, Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1993, p45.

4. Joan Lyons, 'Introduction', in *Artists' Books*, op. cit., p7.

Yet this movement toward liberating themselves from the gallery system by publishing and exhibiting in artists' books was by no means an easy transition for many artists to make. It required them to come to terms with the idea that publishing their own work did not amount to mere vanity self-publishing, in particular. Moore and Hendricks describe this state of affairs in terms of the power and potential of 'the page as an alternative space'.[5] From this perspective, producing, publishing and distributing one's own artist's book was a sign of autonomy and independence; it was nothing less than a way of being able to affect society directly.[6] The political potential associated with the book by artists should therefore not be underestimated. Accordingly, many artists created their own publishing imprints or worked together with newly founded artists' book publishers and printers (just as some academics are today challenging the increasingly profit-driven publishing industry by establishing not-for-profit, scholar-led, open access journals and presses). The main goal of these independent (and often non-commercial) publisher-printer-artist collectives was to make experimental, innovative work (rather than generate a profit), and to promote ephemeral art works, which were often ignored by mainstream, mostly market-orientated institutions.[7] Artists' books thus fitted in well with the mythology Johanna Drucker describes as surrounding 'activist artists', and especially with the idea of the book as a tool of independent activist thought.[8]

2) The Relationship with Conceptual and Processual Art

In the context of this history of the artist's book, one particularly significant conceptual challenge to the gallery system came with the use of the book as a platform for exhibiting original work (itself an extension of André Malraux's idea of the museum without walls). Curator Seth Siegelaub was among the first to publish his artists - as opposed to exhibiting them - thus becoming, according to Germano Celant, 'the first to allow complete operative and informative liberty to artists'.[9] *The Xerox Book* and *March 1-31, 1969,* featuring work by Sol LeWitt, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, Joseph Kosuth, Lawrence Weiner and other international artists, are both examples of artists' books where *the book* (or the catalogue) *itself is the exhibition*. As Moore and Hendricks point out, this offered all kinds of benefits when compared with traditional exhibitions: 'This book *is* the exhibition, easily transportable without the need for expensive physical space, insurance, endless technical problems or other impediments. In this form it is relatively permanent and, fifteen years later, is still being seen by the public'.[10] Artists' books thus served here as an alternative space *in themselves* and at the same time functioned within a network of alternative spaces, such as the above-mentioned Franklin Furnace and Printed Matter. Next to publishing and supporting artists' books, such venues offered a space for staging often highly politicised, critical, experimental and performance art.[11] It is important to emphasise

5. Hendricks and Moore, 'The Page as Alternative Space: 1950 to 1969', in *Artists' Books*, op. cit., p87.

6. Pavel Büchler, 'Books as Books', in Jane Rolo and Ian Hunt (eds), *Book Works: a Partial History and Sourcebook*, London, Book Works, 1996.

7. Clive Phillpot, 'Some Contemporary Artists and Their Books', in Cornelia Lauf and Clive Phillpot (eds), *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books*, New York, Distributed Art Publishers, 1998, pp128-9.

8. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, op. cit., pp7-8.

9. Germano Celant, *Book as Artwork 1960-1972*, New York, 6 Decades Books, 2011, p40.

10. Hendricks and Moore, 'The Page as Alternative Space. 1950 to 1969', op. cit., p94.

11. Brian Wallis, 'The Artist's Book and Postmodernism', in *Artist/Author*, op. cit.

this aspect of artist book publishing, as it shows that the book was used as a specific medium to exhibit works that could not otherwise readily find a place within mainstream exhibition venues (a situation which, as we will show, has been one of the main driving forces behind open access book publishing). This focus on the book as a place for continual experimentation - be it on the level of content or form - can thus be seen as underpinning what we are referring to here as the 'political nature of the book' (playing on the title of Adrian Johns' classic work of book history).[12]

3) The Use of Accessible Technologies

As is the case with the current changes to the scholarly monograph, the rise of artists' books can be perceived to have been underpinned (though by no means determined) by developments in technology, with the revolution in mimeograph and offset printing helping to take artists' books out of the realm of expensive and rare commodities by providing direct access to quick and inexpensive printing methods.[13] Due to its unique characteristics - low production costs, portability, accessibility and endurance - the artist's book was regarded as having the potential to communicate with a wider audience beyond the traditional art world. In particular, it was seen as having the power to break down the barriers between so-called high and low culture, using the techniques of mass media to enable artists to argue for their own, alternative goals, something that presented all kinds of political possibilities.[14] The artist's book thus conveyed a high degree of artistic autonomy, while also offering a far greater role to the reader or viewer, who was now able to interact with the art object directly (eluding the intermediaries of the gallery and museum system). Indeed, Lippard even went so far as to envision a future where artists' books would be readily available as part of mass consumer culture, at 'supermarkets, drugstores and airports'.[15]

4) The Politics of the Democratic Multiple

The idea of the book as a real democratic multiple came into being only after 1945, a state of events that has been facilitated by a number of technological innovations, including those detailed above. Yet the concept of the democratic multiple itself developed in what was already a climate of political activism and social consciousness. In this respect, the democratic multiple was part of both the overall trend toward the dematerialisation of art and the newly emergent emphasis on cultural and artistic processes rather than ready-made objects.[16] Artists' desire for independence from established institutions and for the wider availability of their works thus resonated with the democratising and anti-institutional potential of the book as a medium. What is more, the book offered artists a space in which they were able to experiment with the materiality of the medium itself and with the practices that comprised

12. Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998, http://doi.org/msw

13. Hendricks and Moore, 'The Page as Alternative Space', op. cit., pp94-95.

14. Joan Lyons, 'Introduction', in *Artists' Books*, op. cit., p7.

15. Lippard, 'The Artist's Book Goes Public', p48; Lippard, 'Conspicuous Consumption: New Artists' Books', in *Artists' Books*, op. cit., p100. Is there a contradiction here between a politics of artists' books that is directed against commercial profit-driven galleries and institutions, but which nevertheless uses the tools of mass consumer culture to reach a wider audience (see also the critique Lippard offers in the next section)? And can a similar point be made with respect to the politics of some open access initiatives and their use of social media and (commercial, profit-driven) platforms such as Google Books and Amazon?

16. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, op. cit., p72.

it, and thus ultimately with the question of what constituted art and an art object. This reflexivity of the book with regard to its own nature is one of the key characteristics that make a book *an artist's book*, and enable it to have political potential in that it can be 'rethought to serve new ends'. Much the same can be said with respect to the relation between the book and scholarly communication: witness the way reflection on the material nature of the book in the digital age has led to questions being raised regarding how we structure scholarly communication and practice scholarship more generally.

5) Conceptual Experimentation: Problematising the Concept and Form of the Book

Another key to understanding artists' books and their history lies with the way the radical change in printing technologies after World War II led to the reassessment of the book form itself, and in particular, of the specific nature of the book's materiality, of the very idea of the book, and of the notions and practices underlying the book's various uses.

When it came to reevaluating the materiality of the book, many experiments with artists' books tried to escape the linearity brought about by the codex form's (sequential) constraints, something which had long conditioned both writing and reading practices. Undoubtedly, one of the most important theorists as far as rethinking the materiality of the book in the period after 1945 is concerned is Ulises Carrión. He defines the book as a specific set of conditions that should be (or need to be) responded to.[17] Instead of seeing it as just a text, Carrión positions the book as an object, a container and a sequence of spaces. For him, the codex is a form that needs to be responded to in what he prefers to call 'bookworks'. These are 'books in which the book form, as a coherent sequence of pages, determines conditions of reading that are intrinsic to the work'.[18] From this perspective, artists' books interrogate the structure and the meaning of the book's form.[19]

Yet the book is also a metaphor, a symbol and an icon to be responded to.[20] Indeed, it is difficult to establish a precise definition or set of characteristics for artists' books as their very nature keeps changing. As Sowden and Bodman put it, 'What a book *is* can be challenged'.[21] Drucker, meanwhile, is at pains to point out that the book is open for innovation, although the latter has its limits: 'The convention of the book is both its constrained meanings (as literacy, the law, text and so forth) and the space of new work (the blank page, the void, the empty place).' Books here 'mutate, expand, transform'. Accordingly, Drucker regards the transformed book as an intervention, something that reflects the inherent critique that book experiments embody with respect to their own constitution.[22] One way of examining reflexively the structures that make up the book is precisely by disturbing those structures. In certain respects the page can be thought of as being *finite* (e.g. physically, materially), but it can also be understood to be *infinite*, not least as a result of being potentially different on each respective viewing/reading. This allows the

17. James Langdon (ed), *Book*, Birmingham, Eastside Projects, 2010.

18. Ulises Carrión, 'Bookworks Revisited', in James Langdon (ed), *Book*, Birmingham, Eastside Projects, 2010.

19. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, op. cit., pp3-4.

20. Ibid., p360.

21. Tom Sowden and Sarah Bodman, *A Manifesto for the Book*, Impact Press, 2010, p9.

22. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, op. cit.

book to be perceived as a self-reflexive medium that is extremely well-suited to formal experiments. At the same time, it allows it to be positioned as a potentially political medium, in the sense that it can be used to intervene in and disturb existing practices and institutions.

6) The Problematisation of Reading and Authorship

As part of their constitution, artists' books can be said to have brought into question certain notions and practices relating to the book that had previously been taken too much for granted - and perhaps still are. For instance, Brian Wallis shows how, 'in place of the omnipotent author', postmodern artists' books 'acknowledge a collectivity of voices and active participation of the reader'.[23] Carrión, for one, was very concerned with the thought that readers might consume books passively, while being unaware of their specificity as a medium.[24] The relationship between the book and reading, and the way in which the physical aspect of the book can change how we read, was certainly an important topic for artists throughout this period. Many experiments with artists' books focused on the interaction between author, reader and book, offering an alternative, and not necessarily linear, reading experience.[25] Such readerly interventions often represented a critical engagement with ideas of the author as original creative genius derived from the cultural tradition of European Romanticism. Joan Lyons describes this potential of the artists' book very clearly: 'The best of the bookworks are multinotational. Within them, words, images, colors, marks, and silences become plastic organisms that play across the pages in variable linear sequence. Their importance lies in the formulation of a new perceptual literature whose content alters the concept of authorship and challenges the reader to a new discourse with the printed page'.[26] Carrión thus writes about how in the books of the new art, as he calls them, words no longer transmit an author's intention. Instead, authors can use other people's words as an element of the book as a whole - so much so that he positions plagiarism as lying at the very basis of creativity. As far as artists' books are concerned, it is not the artist's intention that is at stake, according to Carrión, but rather the process of testing the meaning of language. It is the reader who creates the meaning and understanding of a book for Carrión, through his or her specific meaning-extraction. Every book requires a different reading and opens up possibilities to the reader.[27]

THE INHIBITIONS OF MEDIATIC CHANGE

We can thus see that the very 'nature' of the book is particularly well suited to experimentation and to reading against the grain. As a medium, the book has the potential to raise questions for some of the established practices and institutions surrounding the production, distribution *and* consumption of printed matter. This potential notwithstanding, it gradually became

23. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, 'The Dematerialization of Art', *Art International*, 12, 2 (1968).

24. Langdon, *Book*, op. cit.

25. This has been one of the focal points of the books published and commissioned by UK artist book publisher Book Works, for instance, Jane Rolo and Ian Hunt, 'Introduction', in *Book Works: A Partial History and Sourcebook*, op. cit.

26. Joan Lyons, 'Introduction', *Artists' Books*, op. cit., p7.

27. Ulises Carrión, 'The New Art of Making Books', in *Book*, op. cit.

apparent (for some this realisation occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, for others it only came about later) that the ability of artist's books to bring about institutional change in the art world, and to question both the concept of the book and that of art as the singular aesthetic artefact bolstered by institutional structures, was not particularly long-lasting. With respect to the democratisation of the artist's book, for example, Lippard notes that, by losing its distance, there was also a chance of the book losing its critical function. Here, says Lippard, the 'danger is that, with an expanding audience and an increased popularity with collectors, the artist's book will fall back into its edition de luxe or coffee table origin … transformed into glossy, pricey products'. For Lippard there is a discrepancy between the characteristics of the medium which had the potential to break down walls, and the actual content and form of most artists' books which was highly experimental and avant-garde, and thus inaccessible to readers/consumers outside of the art world.[28]

28. Lippard, 'The Artist's Book Goes Public', op. cit., pp47-48.

PROCESSES OF INCORPORATION AND COMMERCIALISATION

Interestingly, Carrión was one of the sharpest critics of the idea that artists' books should be somehow able to subvert the gallery system. In his 'Bookworks Revisited', he showed how the hope surrounding this supposedly revolutionary potential of the book as a medium was based on a gross misunderstanding of the mechanisms underlying the art world. In particular, Carrión attacked the idea that the artist's book could do without any intermediaries. Instead of circumventing the gallery system, he saw book artists as merely adopting an alternative set of intermediaries, namely book publishers and critics.[29]

29. Carrión, 'Bookworks Revisited'; Johanna Drucker, 'Artists' Books and the Cultural Status of the Book', *Journal of Communication*, 44 (1994).

Ten years later Stewart Cauley updated Carrión's criticisms, arguing that as an art form and medium, the artist's book had not been able to avoid market mechanisms and the celebrity cult of the art system. In fact, by the end of the 1980s the field of artists' publications had lost most of its experimental impetus and had become something of an institution itself, imitating the gallery and museum system it was initially designed to subvert.[30] Those interested in artists' books initially found it difficult to set up an alternative system, as they had to manage without organised distribution, review mechanisms or funding schemes. When they were eventually able to do so in the 1970s, the resulting structures in many ways mirrored the very institutions they were supposed to be criticizing and providing an alternative to.[31] Cauley points the finger of blame at the book community itself, especially at the fact that artists at the time focused more on the concept and structure of the book than on using the book form to make any kind of critical political statement. The idea that artists' books were disconnected from mainstream institutional systems has also been debunked as a myth. As Drucker makes clear, many artists' books were developed in cooperation with museums or galleries, where they were perceived not as subversive artefacts but rather as low-cost tools for gathering additional publicity for those institutions and their activities.[32]

30. Stewart Cauley, 'Bookworks for the '90s', *Afterimage*, 25, 6, May/June (1998).

31. Stefan Klima, *Artists Books: A Critical Survey of the Literature*, Granary Books, New York, 1998, pp54-60.

32. Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books*, op. cit., p78.

Following Abigail Solomon-Godeau, this process of commercialisation and incorporation - or, as she calls it, 'the near-total assimilation' of art practice (Solomon-Godeau focuses specifically on postmodern photography) *and* critique into the discourses it professed to challenge - can be positioned as part of a general tendency in conceptual and postmodern 'critical art practices'. It is a development that can be connected to the changing art markets of the time and viewed in terms of a broader social and cultural shift to Reaganomics. For Solomon-Godeau, however, the problem lay not only in changes to the art market, but in critical art practices and art critique too, which in many ways were not robust enough to keep on reinventing themselves. Nonetheless, even if they have become incorporated into the art market and the commodity system, Solomon-Godeau argues that it is still possible for art practices and institutional critiques to develop some (new) forms of sustainable challenge from *within* these systems. As far as she is concerned, 'a position of resistance can never be established once and for all, but must be perpetually refashioned and renewed to address adequately those shifting conditions and circumstances that are its ground'.[33]

THE PROMISE OF OPEN ACCESS

At first sight many of the changes that have occurred recently in the world of academic book publishing seem to resemble those charted above with respect to the artist's book. As was the case with the publishing of artists' books, digital publishing has provided interested parties with an opportunity to counter the existing (publishing) system and its institutions, to experiment with using contemporary and emergent media to publish (in this case academic) books in new ways and forms, and in the process to challenge established ideas of the printed codex book, together with the material practices of production, distribution and consumption that surround it. This has resulted in a new wave of scholar-led publishing initiatives in academia, both formal (with scholars either becoming publishers themselves, or setting up cross-institutional publishing infrastructures with libraries, IT departments and research groups) and informal (using self-publishing and social media platforms such as blogs and wikis).[34] The phenomenon of open access book publishing can be located within this broader context - a context which, it is worth noting, also includes the closing of many book shops due to fierce rivalry from the large supermarkets at one end of the market, and online e-book traders such as Amazon at the other; the fact that the major high-street book chains are increasingly loath to take academic titles - not just journals but books too; and the handing over (either in part or in whole) to for-profit corporations of many publishing organisations designed to serve charitable aims and the public good: scholarly associations, learned societies, university presses, non-profit and not-for-profit publishers.

From the early 1990s onwards, open access was pioneered and developed

33. Abigail Solomon-Godeau, 'Living with Contradictions: Critical Practices in the Age of Supply-Side Aesthetics', *Social Text*, 21 (1989).

34. See, for example, Janneke Adema and Birgit Schmidt, 'From Service Providers to Content Producers: New Opportunities For Libraries in Collaborative Open Access Book Publishing', *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 16 (2010).

most extensively in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields, where much of the attention was focused on the online self-archiving by scholars of pre-publication (i.e. pre-print) versions of their research papers in central, subject or institutionally-based repositories. This is known as the Green Road to open access, as distinct from the Gold Road, which refers to the publishing of articles in online, open access journals. Of particular interest in this respect is the philosophy that lies behind the rise of the open access movement, as it can be seen to share a number of characteristics with the thinking behind artists' books discussed earlier. The former was primarily an initiative established by academic researchers, librarians, managers and administrators, who had concluded that the traditional publishing system - thanks in no small part to the rapid (and, as we shall see, ongoing) process of aggressive for-profit commercialisation it was experiencing - was no longer willing or able to meet all of their communication needs. Accordingly, those behind this initiative wanted to take advantage of the opportunities they saw as being presented by the new digital publishing and distribution mechanisms to make research more widely and easily available in a far faster, cheaper and more efficient manner than was offered by conventional print-on-paper academic publishing. They had various motivations for doing so. These include wanting to extend the circulation of research to all those who were interested in it, rather than restricting access to merely those who could afford to pay for it in the form of journal subscriptions, etc;[35] and a desire to promote the emergence of a global information commons, and, through this, help to produce a renewed democratic public sphere of the kind Jürgen Habermas propounds. From the latter point of view (as distinct from the more radical democratic philosophy we proceed to develop in what follows), open access was seen as working toward the creation of a healthy liberal democracy, through its alleged breaking down of the barriers between the academic community and the rest of society, and its perceived consequent ability to supply the public with the information they need to make knowledgeable decisions and actively contribute to political debate. Without doubt, though, another motivating factor behind the development of open access was a desire on the part of some of those involved to enhance the transparency, accountability, discoverability, usability, efficiency and (cost) effectivity not just of scholarship and research but of higher education itself. From the latter perspective (and as can again be distinguished from the radical open access philosophy advocated below), making research available on an open access basis was regarded by many as a means of promoting and stimulating the neoliberal knowledge economy both nationally and internationally. Open access is supposed to achieve these goals by making it easier for business and industry to capitalise on academic knowledge - companies can build new businesses based on its use and exploitation, for example - thus increasing the impact of higher education on society and helping the UK, Europe and the West (and North) to be more competitive globally.[36]

35. John Willinsky, *The Access Principle: The Case for Open Access to Research and Scholarship*, Cambridge Mass., The MIT Press, 2009, p5.

36. Gary Hall, *Digitize This Book! The Politics of New Media, or Why We Need Open Access Now*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2008; Janneke Adema, *Open Access Business Models for Books in the Humanities and Social Sciences: An Overview of Initiatives and Experiments*, OAPEN Project Report, Amsterdam, 2010. David Willetts, the UK Science Minister, is currently promoting 'author-pays' open access for just these reasons. See David Willetts, 'Public Access to Publicly-Funded Research', *BIS: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills*, May 2, 2012: http://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/public-access-to-publicly-funded-research--2.

37. David Harvie, Geoff Lightfoot, Simon Lilley and Kenneth Weir, 'What Are We To Do With Feral Publishers?', submitted for publication in *Organization*, and accessible through the Leicester Research Archive: http://hdl.handle.net/2381/9689.

38. See the Budapest Open Access Initiative, 'Self-Archiving FAQ, written for the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI)', 2002-4: http://www.eprints.org/self-faq/.

39. Although 'author-pays' is often positioned as *the main model* of funding open access publication in the STEMs, a lot of research has disputed this fact. See, for example, Stuart Shieber, 'What Percentage of Open-Access Journals Charge Publication Fees', *The Occasional Pamphlet on Scholarly Publishing*, May 9, 2009, http://blogs.law.harvard.edu/pamphlet/2009/05/29/what-percentage-of-open-access-journals-charge-publication-fees/.

40. Maria Bonn, 'Free Exchange of Ideas: Experimenting with the Open Access Monograph', *College and Research Libraries News*, 71, 8, September (2010): 436-439: http://crln.acrl.org/content/71/8/436.full.

41. Patrick Alexander, director

To date, the open access movement has progressed much further toward its goal of making all journal articles available open access than it has toward making all academic books available in this fashion. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. First, since the open access movement was developed and promoted most extensively in the STEMs, it has tended to concentrate on the most valued mode of publication in those fields: the peer-reviewed journal article. Interestingly, the recent arguments around the 'Academic Spring' and 'feral' publishers such as Informa plc are no exception to this general rule.[37]

Second, restrictions to making research available open access associated with publishers' copyright and licensing agreements can in most cases be legally circumvented when it comes to journal articles. If all other options fail, authors can self-archive a pre-refereed pre-print of their article in a central, subject or institutionally-based repository such as PubMed Central. However, it is not so easy to elude such restrictions when it comes to the publication of academic books. In the latter case, since the author is often paid royalties in exchange for their text, copyright tends to be transferred *by* the author *to* the publisher. The text remains the intellectual property of the author, but the exclusive right to put copies of that text up for sale, or give them away for free, then rests with the publisher.[38]

Another reason the open access movement has focused on journal articles is because of the expense involved in publishing books in this fashion, since one of the main models of funding open access in the STEMs, author-side fees,[39] is not easily transferable either to book publishing or to the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS). In contrast to the STMs, the HSS feature a large number of disciplines in which it is books (monographs in particular) published with esteemed international presses, rather than articles in high-ranking journals, that are considered as the most significant and valued means of scholarly communication. Authors in many fields in the HSS are simply not accustomed to paying to have their work published. What is more, many authors associate doing so with vanity publishing.[40] They are also less likely to acquire the grants from either funding bodies or their institutions that are needed to cover the cost of publishing 'author-pays'. That the HSS in many Western countries receive only a fraction of the amount of government funding the STEMs do only compounds the problem,[41] as does the fact that higher rejection rates in the HSS, as compared to the STEMs, mean that any grants would have to be significantly larger, as the time spent on reviewing articles, and hence the amount of human labour used, makes it a much more intensive process.[42] And that is just to publish journal articles. Publishing books on an author-pays basis would be more expensive still.

Yet even though the open access movement initially focused more on journal articles than on monographs, things have begun to change in this respect in recent years. Undoubtedly, one of the major factors behind this change has been the fact that the publication of books on an open access basis

has been perceived as one possible answer to the 'monograph crisis'. This phrase refers to the way in which the already feeble sustainability of the print monograph is being endangered even further by the ever-declining sales of academic books.[43] It is a situation that has in turn been brought about by 'the so-called "serials crisis", a term used to designate the vertiginous rise of the subscription to STEM journals since the mid-80s which… strangled libraries and led to fewer and fewer purchases of books/monographs'.[44] This drop in library demand for monographs has led many presses to produce smaller print runs; focus on more commercial, marketable titles; or even move away from monographs to concentrate on text books, readers, and reference works instead. In short, conventional academic publishers are now having to make decisions about what to publish *more* on the basis of the market and a given text's potential value as a commodity, and *less* on the basis of its quality as a piece of scholarship. This last factor is making it difficult for early career academics to publish the kind of research-led monographs that are often needed to acquire that all important first full-time position. This in turn means the HSS is, in effect, allowing publishers to make decisions on its future and on who gets to have a long-term career on an *economic basis*, according to the needs of the market - or what they believe those needs to be. But it is also making it hard for authors in the HSS generally to publish monographs that are perceived as being difficult, advanced, specialised, obscure, radical, experimental or avant-garde - a situation reminiscent of the earlier state of events which led to the rise of artists' books, with the latter emerging in the context of a perceived lack of exhibition space for experimental and critical (conceptual) work within mainstream commercial galleries.

Partly in response to this 'monograph crisis', a steadily increasing number of initiatives have now been set up to enable authors in the HSS in particular to bring out books open access - not just introductions, reference works and text books, but research monographs and edited collections too. These initiatives include scholar-led presses such as Open Humanities Press, re.press, and Open Book Publishers; commercial presses such as Bloomsbury Academic; university presses, including ANU E Press and Firenze University Press; and presses established by or working with libraries, such as Athabasca University's AU Press.[45]

Yet important though the widespread aspiration amongst academics, librarians and presses to find a solution to the monograph crisis has been, the reasons behind the development of open access book publishing in the HSS are actually a lot more diverse than is often suggested. For instance, to the previously detailed motivating factors that inspired the rise of the open access movement can be added the desire, shared by many scholars, to increase accessibility to (specialised) HSS research, with a view to heightening its reputation, influence, impact and esteem. This is seen as being especially significant at a time when the UK government, to take just one example, is emphasizing the importance of the STEMs while withdrawing support

of the Pennsylvania State University Press, provides the following example: 'Open Access STEM publishing is often funded with tax-payer dollars, with publication costs built into researchers' grant request … the proposed NIH budget for 2013 is $31 billion. NSF's request for 2013 is around $7.3 billion. Compare those amounts to the NEH ($154 million) and NEA ($154 million) and you can get a feel for why researchers in the arts and humanities face challenges in funding their publication costs'. (Adeline Koh, 'Is Open Access a Moral or a Business Issue? A Conversation with The Pennsylvania State University Press, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 10, 2012: http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/is-open-access-a-moral-or-a-business-issue-a-conversation-with-the-pennsylvania-state-university-press/41267)

42. See Mary Waltham's 2009 report for the National Humanities Alliance, 'The Future of Scholarly Journals Publishing among Social Sciences and Humanities Associations': http://www.nhalliance.org/research/scholarly_communication/index.shtml; and Peter Suber, 'Promoting Open Access in the Humanities', 2004: http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/writing/apa.htm. 'On average, humanities

journals have higher rejection rates (70-90%) than STEM journals (20-40%)', Suber writes.

43. Greco and Wharton estimate that the average number of library purchases of monographs has dropped from 1500 in the 1970s to 200-300 at present. Thompson estimates that print runs and sales have declined from 2000-3000 (print runs and sales) in the 1970s to print runs of between 600-1000 and sales of between 400-500 nowadays. Albert N. Greco and Robert Michael Wharton, 'Should University Presses Adopt an Open Access [electronic publishing] Business Model for all of their Scholarly Books?', *ELPUB. Open Scholarship: Authority, Community, and Sustainability in the Age of Web 2.0 - Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Electronic Publishing held in Toronto, Canada 25-27 June 2008*; John B. Thompson, *Books in the Digital Age: The Transformation of Academic and Higher Education Publishing in Britain and the United States*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005.

44. Jean Kempf, 'Social Sciences and Humanities Publishing and the Digital "Revolution"' unpublished manuscript, 2010: http://perso.univ-lyon2.fr/~jkempf/ Digital_SHS_ Publishing.pdf;

and funding for the HSS. Many scholars in the HSS are thus now willing to stand up against, and even offer a counter-institutional alternative to, the large, established, profit-led, commercial firms that have come to dominate academic publishing - and, in so doing, liberate the long-form argument from market constraints through the ability to publish books that often lack a clear commercial market.

TWO STRATEGIES: ACCESSIBILITY AND EXPERIMENTATION

That said, all of these reasons and motivating factors behind the recent changes in publishing models are still very much focused on making *more* scholarly research *more accessible*. Yet for at least some of those involved in the creation and dissemination of open access books, doing so also constitutes an important stage in the development of what might be considered more 'experimental' forms of research and publication; forms for which commercial and heavily print-based systems of production and distribution have barely provided space. Such academic experiments are thus perhaps capable of adopting a role akin to, if not the exact equivalent of, that we identified artists' books as having played in the countercultural context of the 1960s and 1970s: in terms of questioning the concept and material form of the book; promoting alternative ways of reading and communicating *via* books; and interrogating modern, romantic notions of authorship. We are thinking in particular of projects that employ open peer-review procedures (such as Kathleen Fitzpatrick's *Planned Obsolescence*, which uses the CommentPress Wordpress plugin to enable comments to appear alongside the main body of the text), wikis (e.g. Open Humanities Press' two series of Liquid and Living Books) and blogs (such as those created using the Anthologize app developed at George Mason University).[46] These enable varying degrees of what Peter Suber calls 'author-side openness' when it comes to reviewing, editing, changing, updating and re-using content, including creating derivative works. Such practices pose a conceptual challenge to some of the more limited interpretations of open access (what has at times been dubbed 'weak open access'),[47] and can on occasion even constitute a radical test of the integrity and identity of a given work, not least by enabling different versions to exist simultaneously. In an academic context this raises questions of both a practical and theoretical nature that have the potential to open up a space for reimagining what counts as scholarship and research, and of how it can be responded to and accessed: not just which version of a work is to be cited and preserved, and who is to have ultimate responsibility for the text and its content; but also what an author, a text, and a work actually is, and where any authority and stability that might be associated with such concepts can now be said to reside.

It is interesting then that, although they can be positioned as constituting two of the major driving forces behind the recent upsurge in the current

interest in open access book publishing, as 'projects', the at times more obviously or overtly 'political' (be it liberal-democratic, neoliberal or otherwise) project of using digital media and the Internet to create wider *access* to book-based research on the one hand, and experimenting - as part of the more conceptual, experimental aspects of open access book publishing - with the *form of the book* (a combination of which we identified as being essential components of the experimental and political potential of artists' books) and the way our dominant system of scholarly communication currently operates on the other, often seem to be rather disconnected. Again, a useful comparison can be made to the situation described by Lippard, where more (conceptually or materially) experimental artists' books were seen as being less accessible to a broader public and, in some cases, as going against the strategy of democratic multiples, promoting exclusivity instead.

It is certainly the case that, in order to further the promotion of open access and achieve higher rates of adoption and compliance among the academic community, a number of strategic alliances have been forged between the various proponents of the open access movement. Some of these alliances (those associated with Green open access, for instance) have taken making the *majority* if not indeed *all* of the research *accessible* online without a paywall (*Gratis open access*)[48] as their priority, perhaps with the intention of moving on to the exploration of other possibilities, including those concerned with experimenting with the form of the book, once critical mass has been attained - but perhaps not. Hence Stevan Harnad's insistence that 'it's time to stop letting the best get in the way of the better: Let's forget about Libre and Gold OA until we have managed to mandate Green Gratis OA universally'.[49] Although they cannot be simply contrasted and opposed to the former (often featuring many of the same participants), other strategic alliances have focused more on gaining the trust of the academic community. Accordingly, they have prioritised allaying many of the anxieties with regard to open access publications - including concerns regarding their quality, stability, authority, sustainability and status with regard to publishers' copyright licenses and agreements - that have been generated as a result of the transition toward the digital mode of reproduction and distribution. More often than not, such alliances have endeavoured to do so by replicating in an online context many of the scholarly practices associated with the world of print-on-paper publishing. Witness the way in which the majority of open access book publishers continue to employ more or less the same quality control procedures, preservation structures and textual forms as their print counterparts: pre-publication peer review conducted by scholars who have already established their reputations in the paper world; preservation carried out by academic libraries; monographs consisting of numbered pages and chapters arranged in a linear, sequential order and narrative, and so on. As Sigi Jöttkandt puts it with regard to the strategy of Open Humanities Press in this respect:

Thompson, *Books in the Digital Age*, pp. 93-94.

45. A list of publishers experimenting with business models for OA books is available at: http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Publishers_of_OA_books. See also Adema, *Open Access Business Models*.

46. See http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/mcpress/planned obsolescence; http://liquidbooks.pbwiki.com/; http://www.livingbooksaboutlife.org/; http://anthologize.org/.

47. See Peter Suber, SPARC OA newsletter, issue 155, March 2, 2011: http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/03-02-11.htm

48. For an overview of the development of these terms, see: http://www.arl.org/sparc/publications/articles/gratisandlibre.shtml

49. Stevan Harnad, *Open Access: Gratis and Libre*, Open Access Archivangelism, Thursday, May 3, 2012.

50. Sigi Jöttkandt, 'No-fee OA Journals in the Humanities, Three Case Studies: A Presentation by Open Humanities Press', presented at the Berlin 5 Open Access Conference, From Practice to Impact: Consequences of Knowledge Dissemination, Padua, 19 September 2007, http://openhumanities press.org/Jottkandt-Berlin5.pdf

51. Open Humanities Press (http://open humanitiespress.org/) and Media Commons Press (http://media commons.future ofthebook.org/mcpress/) remain the most notable exceptions on the formal side of the publishing scale, the majority of experiments with the form of the book taking place in the informal sphere (e.g. blogbooks self-published by Anthologize, and crowd-sourced, 'sprint' generated books such as Dan Cohen and Tom Scheinfeldt's *Hacking the Academy*: http://hackingtheacademy.org/).

52. See Peter Suber on the BBB definition here: http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/09-02-04.htm, where he also states that two of the three BBB component definitions (the Bethesda and Berlin statements) require removing barriers to derivative works.

We're intending OHP as a tangible demonstration to our still generally sceptical colleagues in the humanities that there is no reason why OA publishing cannot have the same professional standards as print. We aim to show that OA is not only academically credible but is in fact being actively advanced by leading figures in our fields, as evidenced by our editorial advisory board. Our hope is that OHP will contribute to OA rapidly becoming standard practice for scholarly publishing in the humanities.[50]

Relatively few open access publishers, however, have displayed much interest in combining such an emphasis on achieving universal, free, online access to research and/or the gaining of trust, with a rigorous critical exploration of the form of the book itself.[51] And this despite the fact that the ability to *re-use* material is actually an essential feature of what has become known as the Budapest-Bethesda-Berlin (BBB) definition of open access, which is one of the major agreements underlying the movement.[52] It therefore seems significant that, of the books presently available open access, only a minority have a license where *price and permission* barriers to research are removed, with the result that the research is available under both *Gratis* and *Libre* (re-use) conditions.[53]

REIMAGINING THE BOOK, OR RADICAL OPEN ACCESS

Admittedly, there are many in the open access community who regard the more radical experiments conducted with and on books as highly detrimental to the strategies of large-scale accessibility and trust respectively. From this perspective, efforts designed to make open access material available for others to (re)use, copy, reproduce and distribute in any medium, as well as make and distribute derivative works, coupled with experiments with the form of the book, are seen as being very much secondary objectives (and even by some as unnecessarily complicating and diluting open access's primary goal of making *all* of the research accessible online without a paywall).[54] And, indeed, although in many of the more formal open access definitions (including the important Bethesda and Berlin definitions of open access, which require removing barriers to derivative works), the right to re-use and re-appropriate a scholarly work is acknowledged and recommended, in both theory and practice a difference between 'author-side openness' and 'reader-side openness' tends to be upheld - leaving not much space for the 'readerly interventions' that were so important in opening up the kind of possibilities for 'reading against the grain' that the artist's book promoted, something we feel (open access) scholarly works should also strive to encourage and support.[55] This is especially the case with regard to the publication of books, where a more conservative vision frequently holds sway. For instance, it is intriguing that in an era in which online texts are generally connected to a network of other information, data and mobile media environments, the open access

book should for the most part still find itself presented as having definite limits and a clear, distinct materiality.

But if the ability to re-use material *is* an essential feature of open access - as, *let us repeat, it is according to the Budapest-Bethesda-Berlin and many of other influential definitions of the term* - then is working toward making all of the research *accessible* online on a *Gratis* basis and/or gaining the trust of the academic community the best way for the open access movement (including open access book publishing) to proceed, always and everywhere? If we do indeed wait until we have gained a critical mass of open access content before taking advantage of the *chance* the shift from analogue to digital creates, might it not by then be too late? Does this shift not offer us the opportunity, through its loosening of much of the stability, authority, and 'fixity' of texts, to rethink scholarly publishing, and in the process raise the kind of fundamental questions for our ideas of authorship, authority, legitimacy, originality, permanence, copyright, and with them the text and the book, that we really should have been raising all along? If we miss this opportunity, might we not find ourselves in a similar situation to that many book artists and publishers have been in since the 1970s, namely, that of merely reiterating and reinforcing established structures and practices?

Granted, following a *Libre* open access strategy may on occasion risk coming into conflict with those more commonly accepted and approved open access strategies (i.e. those concerned with achieving accessibility and the gaining of trust on a large-scale). Nevertheless, should open access advocates on occasion not be more open to adopting and promoting forms of open access that are designed to make material available for others to (re) use, copy, reproduce, distribute, transmit, translate, modify, remix and build upon? In particular, should they not be more open to doing so *right here, right now*, before things begin to settle down and solidify again and we arrive at a situation where we have succeeded merely in pushing the movement even further toward rather weak, watered-down and commercial versions of open access?

<center>***</center>

We began by looking at how, in an art world context, the idea and form of the book have been used to engage critically many of the established cultural institutions, along with some of the underlying philosophies that inform them. Of particular interest in this respect is the way in which, with the rise of offset printing and cheaper production methods and printing techniques in the 1960s, there was a corresponding increase in access to the means of production and distribution of books. This in turn led to the emergence of new possibilities and roles that the book could be put to in an art context, which included democratizing art and critiquing the status quo of the gallery system. But these changes to the materiality and distribution of the codex

53. An examination of the licenses used on two of the largest open access book publishing platforms or directories to date, the OAPEN (Open Access Publishing in Academic Networks) platform and the DOAB (Directory of Open Access Books), reveals that on the OAPEN platform (accessed May 6 2012) 2 of the 966 books are licensed with a CC-BY license, and 153 with a CC-BY-NC license (which still restricts commercial re-use). On the DOAB (accessed May 6 2012) 5 of the 778 books are licensed with a CC-BY license, 215 with CC-BY-NC.

54. See, for example, Stevan Harnad, *Open Access: Gratis and Libre*, Open Access Archivangelism, Thursday, May 3, 2012.

55. For more on author-side and reader-side openness respectively, see Peter Suber, SPARC OA newsletter: http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/newsletter/03-02-11.htm

56. That said, there is currently something of a revival of print, craft and artist's book publishing taking place in which the paperbound book is being re-imagined in offline environments. In this post-digital print culture, paper publishing is being used as a new form of avant-garde social networking that, thanks to its analog nature, is not so easily controlled by the digital data-gathering commercial hegemonies of Google, Amazon, Facebook et al. For more, see Alessandro Ludovico, 'Post-Digital Print - the Mutation of Publishing Since 1984', Onomatopee, 2012; and Florian Cramer, 'Post-Digital Writing', Electronic Book Review, December, 2012: http://electronicbookreview.com/thread/electropoetics/postal

57. For more details, see Wilhelm Peekhaus, 'The Enclosure and Alienation of Academic Publishing: Lessons for the Professoriate', *tripleC*, 10 (2), 2012: http://www.triple-c.at/index.php/tripleC/article/view/395

58. 'Accessibility, Sustainability, Excellence: How to Expand Access to Research Publications, Report of the Working Group on Expanding Access to Published Research Findings', June 18, 2012: http://www.

book in particular - as an artistic product as well as a medium - were integrally linked with questions concerning the nature of both art and the book as such. Book artists and theorists thus became more and more engaged in the conceptual and practical exploration of the materiality of the book. In the end, however, the promise of technological innovation which underpinned the changes with respect to the production and distribution of artists' books in the 1960s and 1970s was not enough to generate any kind of sustainable (albeit repeatedly reviewed, refashioned and renewed) challenge within the art world over the longer term.

The artist's book of the 1960s and 1970s therefore clearly had the potential to bring about a degree of transformation, yet it was unable to elude the cultural practices, institutions and the market mechanisms that enveloped it for long (including those developments in financialisation and the art market Solomon-Godeau connects to the shift to Reaganomics). Consequently, instead of criticising or subverting the established systems of publication and distribution, the artist's book ended up being largely integrated into them.[56] Throughout the course of this article we have argued that its conceptual and material promise notwithstanding, there is a danger of something similar happening to open access publishing today. Take the way open access has increasingly come to be adopted by commercial publishers. If one of the motivating factors behind at least some aspects of the open access movement - not just the aforementioned open access book publishers in the HSS, but the likes of PLoS, too - has been to stand up against, and even offer an alternative to, the large, profit-led firms that have come to dominate the field of academic publishing, recent years have seen many such commercial publishers experimenting with open access themselves, even if such experiments have so far been confined largely to journals.[57] Most commonly, this situation has resulted in the trialling of 'author-side' fees for the open access publishing of journals, a strategy seen as protecting the interests of the established publishers, and one which has recently found support in the Finch Report from a group of representatives of the research, library and publishing communities convened by David Willetts, the UK Science Minister.[58] But the idea that open access may represent a commercially viable publishing model has attracted a large amount of so-called predatory publishers, too,[59] who (like Finch and Willetts) have propagated a number of misleading and often quite mistaken accounts of open access.[60] The question is thus raised as to whether the desire to offer a counter-institutional alternative to the large, established, profit-led, commercial firms is likely to become somewhat marginalised and neutralised as a result of open access publishing being seen more and more by such commercial publishers as just another means of generating a profit. Will the economic as well as material practices transferred from the printing press continue to inform and shape our communication systems? As Nick Knouf argues, to raise this question, 'is not to damn open access publishing by any means; rather, it is to say that

open access publishing, without a concurrent interrogation of the economic underpinnings of the scholarly communication system, will only reform the situation rather than provide a radical alternative'.[61]

With this idea of providing a radical challenge to the current scholarly communication system in mind, and drawing once again on the brief history of artists' books as presented above, might it not be helpful to think of open access *less* as a project and model to be implemented, and *more* as a process of continuous struggle and critical resistance? Here an analogy can be drawn with the idea of *democracy as a process*. In 'Historical Dilemmas of Democracy and Their Contemporary Relevance for Citizenship', the political philosopher Etiènne Balibar develops an interesting analysis of democracy based on a concept of the 'democratisation of democracy' he derives from a reading of Hannah Arendt and Jacques Rancière. For Balibar, the problem with much of the discourse surrounding democracy is that it perceives the latter as a model that can be implemented in different contexts (in China or the Middle East, for instance). He sees discourses of this kind as running two risks in particular. First of all, in conceptualizing democracy as a model there is a danger of it becoming a *homogenizing force*, masking differences and inequalities. Second, when positioned as a model or a project, democracy also runs the risk of becoming a *dominating force* - yet another political regime that takes control and power. According to Balibar, a more interesting and radical notion of democracy involves focusing on the *process* of the democratisation of democracy itself, thus turning democracy into a form of continuous struggle (or struggles) - or, perhaps better, continuous critical self-reflection. Democracy here is not an established reality, then, nor is it a mere ideal; it is rather a permanent struggle for democratisation.[62]

Can open access be understood in similar terms: *less* as a homogeneous project striving to become a dominating model or force, and *more* as an ongoing critical struggle, or series of struggles? And can we perhaps locate what some perceive as the failure of artists' books to contribute significantly to such a critical struggle after the 1970s to the fact that ultimately they became (incorporated in) dominant institutional settings themselves - a state of affairs brought about in part by their inability to address issues of access, experimentation and self-reflexivity in an ongoing critical manner?

Certainly, one of the advantages of conceptualizing open access as a process of struggle rather than as a model to be implemented would be that doing so would create more space for radically different, conflicting, even incommensurable positions within the larger movement, including those that *are* concerned with experimenting critically with the *form of the book* and the way our system of scholarly communication currently operates. As we have shown, such radical differences are often played down in the interests of strategy. To be sure, open access can experience what Richard Poynder refers to as a 'bad tempered wrangles' over relatively 'minor issues' such as 'metadata, copyright, and distributed versus central archives'.[63] Still, much

researchinfonet. org/wp-content/ uploads/2012/06/ Finch-Group-report-FINAL-VERSION. pdf. For one overview of some of the problems that can be identified from an HSS perspective in the policy direction adopted by Finch and Willetts, see Lucinda Matthews-Jones, 'Open Access and the Future of Academic Journals', *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, November 21, 2012: http:// myblogs.informa. com/jvc/2012/11/21/ open-access-and-the-future-of-academic-journals/

59. For a list of predatory OA publishers see: http:// scholarlyoa.com/ publishers/ This list has increased from 23 predatory publishers in 2011, to 225 in 2012.

60. See the reference to the research of Peter Murray Rust in Sigi Jöttkandt, 'No-fee OA Journals in the Humanities', op. cit.

61. Nicholas Knouf, 'The JJPS Extension: Presenting Academic Performance Information', *Journal of Journal Performance Studies*, 1 (2010).

62. Etienne Balibar, 'Historical Dilemmas of Democracy and Their Contemporary Relevance for Citizenship', *Rethinking Marxism*, 20 (2008).

63. Richard Poynder, 'Time to Walk the Walk', *Open and*

Shut?, 17 March, 2005: http://poynder.blogspot.com/2005/03/time-to-walk-talk.html.

of the emphasis has been on the importance of trying to maintain a more or less unified front (within certain limits, of course) in the face of criticisms from publishers, governments, lobbyists and so forth, lest its opponents be provided with further ammunition with which to attack the open access movement, and dilute or misinterpret its message, or otherwise distract advocates from what they are all supposed to agree are the main tasks at hand (e.g. achieving universal, free, online access to research and/or the gaining of trust). Yet it is important not to see the presence of such differences and conflicts within the open access movement in purely negative terms - the way they are often perceived by those working in the liberal tradition, with its 'rationalist belief in the availability of a universal consensus based on reason'.[64]

64. Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, London, Routledge, 2005, p11.

(This emphasis on the 'universal' is also apparent in fantasies of having not just universal open access, but one single, fully integrated and indexed global archive.) In fact if, as we have seen, one of the impulses behind open access is to make knowledge and research - and with it society - more open and democratic, it can be argued that the existence of such dissensus will help achieve this ambition. After all, and as we know from another political philosopher, Chantal Mouffe, far from placing democracy at risk, a certain degree of conflict and antagonism actually constitutes the very possibility of democracy.[65] It seems to us that such a critical, self-reflexive, processual, non-goal oriented way of thinking about academic publishing shares *much* with the mode of working of the artist - which is why we have argued that open access today can draw productively on the kind of conceptual openness and political energy that characterised experimentation with the medium of the book in the art world of the 1960s and 1970s.

65. Ibid., p30.