

Of Supply Chains

BFAMFAPhD, 2016

Of Supply Chains is a free resource for educators that can be used in classroom, exhibition, and workshop contexts to analyse and reimagine power relationships in the arts. The text, workbook, and card game investigates support structures in the arts and prompts people to trace the lifecycle of their projects—the ways materials are sourced, how the labor for producing a project is organized, how tools are accessed, how an artwork is supported, copyrighted, narrated, encountered, acquired, and how it finally departs, ready for another life cycle. **Of Supply Chains** offers the vocabulary of supply chains to articulate the politics of production behind any project. When the whole supply chain is discussed, a wide range of choices for organizing work, compensating workers, and producing projects becomes visible and open to contestation. Additional texts, presentations, and syllabi are online at: <http://bfamfaphd.com>



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Cards, Website, Syllabi 2015-2016

Propositions

If to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and the relation is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies. ¹.

J. K. Gibson-Graham

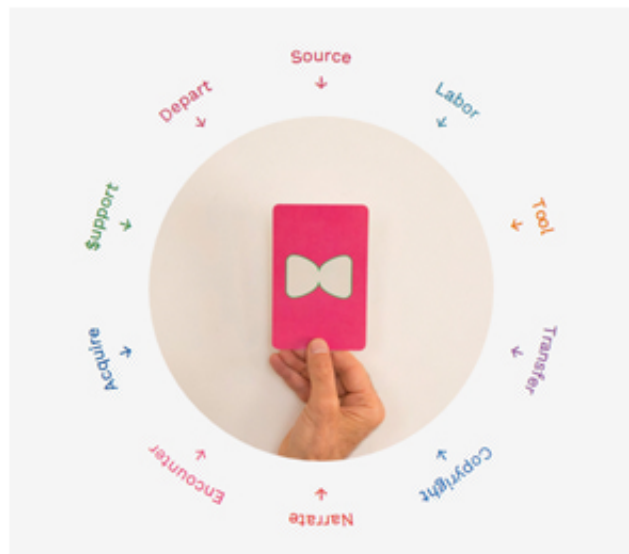
1. Every project has a story that circulates with it. This story is the one we read online and in books, the story we listen to in lecture halls and podcasts, and the story we retell in conversation. We call these “work stories.” ².
2. We hear work stories about projects that we have never experienced or encountered in person, and yet we feel that we know them. For this reason, we take work stories seriously.
3. The work stories that we read, hear, and tell about projects tend to focus on the final project and outcome rather than the entire lifecycle of the project.
4. We can choose to tell different work stories, ones that speak about the ways materials are sourced, how the labor for producing a project is organized, and how sites of encounter legitimize our projects. We can reveal how a project is copyrighted, narrated, acquired, and how it finally departs, ready for another lifecycle. We can make listeners and readers aware that throughout the project’s lifecycle multiple transfers occur.
5. In talking about the entire lifecycle of a project, a wide range of approaches to production become visible and open to contestation. We can then compare production practices, the power dynamics at play, and the social relationships that are cultivated.
6. Once we use the language of supply chains to talk about projects, we may change the way we work. For example, sourcing, accessing tools, laboring, licensing, or acquiring may become integral to the meaning of our projects — as important as the materials used, the name of the project, the duration, or the dimensions of the project.

¹. J. K. Gibson-Graham, **A Postcapitalist Politics**. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

². Magnus Bärtas, “You Told Me: Work Stories and Video Essays.” **Thesis for the degree of Doctor Of Philosophy in Fine Arts, University of Gothenburg, Art Monitor**, 2010. p 46
<http://konst.gu.se/english/ArtMonitor/dissertations/magnus-bartas>

Example Supply Chain Protocol

1. Read the Propositions at <http://bfamfaphd.com> and look at the supply chain diagram.
2. Online: Go the “project ideas” website at <http://cards.bfamfaphd.com>. In person: Place the cards in 10 stacks of 7 cards each, keeping the cards in their respective phases of the supply chain: source, labor, tool, transfer, copyright, narrate, encounter, acquire, support, and depart.



BFAMFAPhD, **Of Supply Chain Diagram**, 2016

3. Choose three cards, each card from a different stack.
4. Organize your three cards by referring to the order on the supply chain. For example if you draw copyright, source and labor, refer to the supply chain diagram and rearrange them so they read source, labor and copyright.
5. Proceed to imagine, sketch, and create a project based on your cards.
6. Discussion: What choices did you (have to) make for your project to be feasible? Do the cards you drew normally contribute to the meaning of your projects? Why or why not? What power dynamics and social relationships are reproduced in these phases of the supply chain? Could aligning the supply chain with your intentions as an artist allow you to knowingly perpetuate the art contexts that you want to see?