



Making Space for Art: A Spatial Perspective of Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work in Venezuela's Art World

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Making Space for Art: A Spatial Perspective of Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work in Venezuela's Art World

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MAKING SPACE FOR ART: A SPATIAL PERSPECTIVE OF DISRUPTIVE AND DEFENSIVE INSTITUTIONAL WORK IN VENEZUELA'S ART WORLD

ABSTRACT

The physical and material aspects of space, such as geographical distance or boundaries, have social and symbolic consequences that impact how people influence and are influenced by institutions. Social actors can however contest how space is conceived, perceived and lived, thus making space a crucial lever in the disruption and defense of institutions. However, we lack understanding of the spatial aspects of such institutional struggles. In exploring how space is leveraged in institutional work, our study foregrounds the socio-political nature of space, building on and expanding the theorization of Lefebvre. We draw on an in-depth longitudinal analysis of the material, social and symbolic aspects of the spatial dimensions of disruptive and defensive institutional work over the past twenty years in Venezuela's art world. Following the Bolivarian Revolution in the late 1990s, the incoming government transformed the organization of the national cultural landscape, resulting in a prolonged period of institutional disruption and defense. We demonstrate that actors use the material, social, and symbolic dimensions of space to challenge and maintain their key values and practices, and that those three dimensions are intertwined.

INTRODUCTION

The "spatial turn" in organization studies (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Elsbach & Pratt, 2007) is particularly relevant to understanding the dynamics of institutional work (Glückler et al., 2018), that is, how actors purposefully drag institutions in differing directions (Hempel, Lawrence & Tracey, 2015). Institutions are "enduring elements in social life" which "have a profound effect on the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of individual and collective actors" (Lawrence & Suddaby 2006: 216). Spatial aspects of institutions help enact or constrain said social interactions (Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Siebert, Wilson & Hamilton, 2017). We have some understanding of how the interplay between the disruption and defense of institutions can trigger boundary shifts, thereby determining actors' access to material and non-material resources (Gieryn, 1983; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010; Lamont & Molnár, 2002). More recently, material boundaries, particularly those isolating physical spaces or distributing actors' positions in space, have been central to studies on institutional work (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2018). Our research unpacks how space is leveraged in the disruption and defense of institutions. Specifically, we ask: What role does space play in this disruption and defense of

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3 institutions? And, how do dimensions of space interact in this disruption and defense of
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5 institutions?
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8 While places - specific locations - shape and are shaped by institutional work
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10 (Lawrence & Dover, 2015) and can support the maintenance of institutions by triggering
11
12 relevant emotions (Jones & Massa, 2013; Siebert et al., 2017), less attention has been given to
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14 the spatial aspects - using distance, isolation, and boundaries - of defensive and disruptive
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16 institutional work. This emerging research stream is yet to flesh out the role of materiality when
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18 institutions are in conflict (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015). The conceptualization of space by the
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20 philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre (1974/1991) lends itself particularly well to
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22 tackling this question. According to Lefebvre (1991), space is tightly woven with the political
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24 economy and mediating social relations, including conflicting relations. Building on
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26 Lefebvre's argument, we articulate material (positioning of actors in space), social (how actors
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28 plan space utilization and negotiate power relations) and symbolic (how space is perceived
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30 figuratively and discursively by actors) dimensions of space to demonstrate how space is used
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32 to challenge or preserve institutions.
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38 We adopt an in-depth longitudinal case study approach to examine the disruption (and
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40 subsequent defense) of the Venezuelan art scene following an extreme shift in national policy
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42 orientation during the Bolivarian Revolution. Our empirical material consists of semi-
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44 structured interviews with stakeholders in the Venezuelan art world between 2009-2012 and
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46 2016-2017; non-participant observational fieldwork in art galleries, art fairs, museums and
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48 exhibitions; and additional material, including government pamphlets, media interviews and
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50 excerpts. We observe how the Chávez administration reclaimed the official space for art,
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52 namely the country's museum framework, national galleries, and art salons, in an effort to
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54 reshape the Venezuelan art world and align it with their political ideology.
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3 In our study we empirically demonstrate how space is ‘representational’ (Lefebvre,
4 1991). Space evolves and is manipulated in line with socio-political shifts, so that actors
5 strategically use available space to enable or constrain social interactions and change
6 institutional perceptions. Specifically, we discern the fracturing of the Venezuelan art world
7 through spatial tactics to disrupt or defend institutional configurations. On the government side,
8 disrupting actors attempted to align the art world to the dominant political party-line. Defensive
9 actors, in the meantime were preserving field-specific values and practices. From this fracture,
10 there emerges a “socially negotiated consensus” (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002: 59),
11 which materializes in a secluded alternative physical space where defensive actors continued
12 to enact their previously institutionalized practices and beliefs. One participant poetically refers
13 to this alternative physical arena as a *bubble of freedom* - a space within which defensive actors’
14 institutional efforts remain shielded from disruptive pressures and a hostile macro-environment.
15 In particular, our research shows that the control of space where institutions are enacted, such
16 as museums, does not necessarily grant actors the ability to change institutions. We thus offer
17 future avenues of research around the divergence between spatial, physical and material aspects
18 of institutions.

39 THEORETICAL CONTEXT

40 Our study focuses on identifying how actors use space to disrupt and defend institutions.
41 In the following section, we elaborate on our conceptualization of space, so that it can frame
42 our data analysis. We combine recent discussions about the relationship between space and
43 organizations (cf. Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Dale & Burrell, 2008; Weinfurter & Seidl, 2018)
44 and space and institutions (Glückler et al., 2018) with the classical work of philosopher and
45 sociologist Henry Lefebvre (1947/1991).

55 **Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work**

56 Institutions can be considered enduring elements in social life (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006)
57 providing society with stability and meaning (Scott, 2013). They are however not static in
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3 nature (Dacin, Goodstein & Scott, 2002). Institutions rely on social agents to give value and
4 meaning to practices and activities in the field (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Institutions can thus
5 be strategically manipulated by individual actors (Oliver, 1991): individuals and organizations
6 can actively participate in and influence the wider institutional environment (Lawrence et al.,
7 2013; Wright & Zammuto, 2013; Hampel et al., 2015). Institutional work is understood as the
8 action of “influenc[ing] those higher-order ideas directly or through the institutionalization or
9 deinstitutionalization of local practices and discourse that represent and embody those higher-
10 order ideas” (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; 372; Micelotta & Washington, 2013).

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22 When institutions are disrupted, other actors may defend them, provoking a struggle
23 between those actors (Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Lefsrud & Meyer, 2012). Institutions can be
24 purposefully disrupted (Toubiana & Zietsma, 2016), with exogenous shocks potentially
25 instigated by outsiders (Clemente, Durand & Roulet, 2017). This disruption can be met with
26 defensive work aimed at protecting existing institutions (Lok & De Rond, 2013; Wright et al.,
27 2015), or efforts aimed at directly countering disruptive institutional work (Maguire & Hardy,
28 2009).

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Institutional work suggests a focus on the ‘how’ (Lawrence et al., 2009), and might
imply attempting to shift or amplify existing boundaries (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010), as set
boundaries demarcate “unequal access to unequal distribution of resources” (Lamont & Molnár,
2002: 168). Most research has concentrated on boundary maintenance (Suddaby & Viale,
2011), overlooking those mechanisms through which boundaries are reconstructed or
reconstituted after an exogenous shock (Suddaby et al., 2016). Material boundaries (Lawrence
et al., 2013; Jones & Massa, 2013), in particular, play a crucial role in understanding how
resources are mobilized for institutional work (Glückler et al., 2018). Those material
boundaries have however often been conceptualized in locational terms (Lawrence & Dover,
2015; Siebert et al., 2017) rather than in more abstract spatial terms (Weinfurter & Seidl,

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3 2018). Acknowledging the use of space in institutional work enables us to consider strategies
4 that more subtly affect the social, political and spatial nature of institutions and how those
5 dimensions are interlinked.
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9 10 **Space and Institutions**

11 Space has remained an undercurrent of institutional theorizing and our understanding of
12 organizations (Halford, 2004). In their study foregrounding place in institutional work,
13 Lawrence & Dover (2015) note the development of spatial consideration in organization
14 studies. The recognition of space in its geographical nature, and places as key locations, has
15 already informed institutional theory (Jones & Massa, 2013; Siebert et al., 2017). But beyond
16 this work, spatiality in institutions remains latent rather than manifest in much institutional
17 literature both theoretically and empirically (Glückler et al., 2018).
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28 Before unpacking the role of space in institutional theory, we first consider the
29 distinction between space and place within this field of study. Places and spaces have often
30 been used interchangeably (Gieryn, 2000), but they fundamentally differ, and this distinction
31 is key to understanding the role of spatiality in institutions (Lawrence & Dover, 2015). Some
32 existing work focuses on the role of places - defined locations, buildings, and set areas- in
33 shaping and being shaped by institutional work (Jones & Massa, 2013; Lawrence & Dover,
34 2015). While place is inevitably located in a fixed geography, space can incorporate dispersed
35 geographies otherwise interrelated (Massey, 2005). A spatial approach requires a more abstract
36 (Lawrence & Dover, 2015: 374) focus on boundaries, isolation, distance, movement and
37 geographical repartition (Weinfurtner & Seidl, 2018).
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51 In organization studies, within the school of socio-materiality of space (De Vaujany &
52 Vaast, 2014; Siebert et al., 2017), there is a broad acceptance that physical boundaries act as
53 objects that recursively feed and are being fed by social interactions (Dale & Burrell, 2008;
54 Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018). According to Weinfurtner & Seidl (2018) boundaries can
55 spatially demarcate actors, which conditions engagement with institutions. Thus, the
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3 institutionalization of practices relies heavily on the physical context in which they are enacted
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5 (de la Chaux, Haugh & Greenwood, 2018).
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8 Accounting for space in institutional work acknowledges the clout of social actors
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10 depending on their physical and geographical positions (Glückler et al., 2018). Previous
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12 research has shown how buildings carry symbolic value and thus can play an important role in
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14 maintaining institutional prescription by enacting relevant positive emotions (Siebert et al.,
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16 2017; Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018). Less attention, however, has been paid to the spatiality
17
18 of institutional work, and the role of space in defending and disrupting institutions. More work
19
20 is needed to understand how actors use space in its geographical sense to erect physical, social
21
22 and symbolic boundaries, specifically in contexts and situations in which institutions are in
23
24 tension (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015), and in which space is inevitably being shaped as a
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26 consequence of this tension (Massey, 2000).
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30 Space can enable or prevent social relationships (Elsbach & Pratt, 2007) depending on
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32 boundaries and intersection between other geographical arenas. Weinfurter & Seidl (2018)
33
34 illustrate how space can be distributed (expanding from the central axis), isolated (sheltering
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36 themselves from others), differentiated (physically or discursively) or intersected (offering an
37
38 ‘inbetweenness’), therefore acknowledging the dynamic nature of space. Siebert et al. (2017),
39
40 who explore the “material basis” of space, note how physical isolation can lead to a perceived
41
42 loss of power and feeling of disconnection. In contrast, Rao & Dutta (2012) argue that isolation,
43
44 rather than proximity, can foster a new ‘free’ space to emerge, through being purposefully
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46 isolated from a potentially hostile macroenvironment. In this sense, purposeful spatial isolation
47
48 can be a crucial lever for social actors to defend their own vision of institutions. Building on
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50 Evans’ (1979) work on social movement, Weinfurter & Seidl (2018: 14) argue that isolation
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52 provides “actors with a secure arena in which to interact and express their voice”. Similarly,
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54 Castilhos & Dolbec (2017) stress the emancipating power of space when it offers distance from
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3 other actors, and thus leeway for subversion, fostering societal critique from afar, reinforcing
4 collective identity and temporarily liberating actors from social order.
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8 Spatial manipulation can also impact how material and symbolic resources are
9 circumscribed and acquired to influence institutions (Jones & Massa, 2013; Siebert et al., 2017).
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11 Defensive agents may use space to isolate values and beliefs endangered by institutional
12 disruption. Inversely, the spatial configuration can be radically transformed to defend
13 alternative practices and beliefs, as agents use and manipulate positions in space to preserve a
14 particular institutional vision. Dale & Burrell (2008) conceptualize this use of space by
15 inhabitants as *enactment*. To further our understanding of a spatial conceptualization of
16 institutions, and how space has both instrumental and symbolic roles for inhabitants (Elsbach
17 & Pratt, 2007), we next turn to Lefebvre (1991) to unpack the socio-political ethos of space.
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28 **The Dimensions of Space and its Socio-Political Nature**

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30 The work on the conceptualization of space by the philosopher and sociologist Henry Lefebvre
31 (1991) has already strongly influenced organization studies (De Vaujany & Vaast, 2014; Dale,
32 Kingma, & Wasserman, 2018). Lefebvre's (1991) theory of 'the production of space'
33 foregrounds the socio-political nature of space and need for understanding the role of the
34 political in the use of space. Similarly, Rodman (2003) views space as underpinned by socio-
35 historical, cultural, and political meaning. Massey (2005) presents space as a product of
36 interrelations inadvertently exposed to politics. Thus, representations of space reveal "the
37 history of ideologies" (Lefebvre, 1991: 42), as plans for space change over time, dependent as
38 they are on a dominant logic. Soja (1989) notes the role of space in facilitating the production,
39 reinforcement and challenging of ideas. Power relations may be woven into broader spatial
40 scales (Spicer, 2006), so that institutional actors engage with stakeholders beyond their
41 immediate geographies.
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57 Malleable in nature, space can be dominated as it can be "closed, sterilized, emptied
58 out" (Lefebvre, 1991: 165). When appropriated, a space is modified to "serve the needs and
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3 possibilities of a group” (Lefebvre, 1991: 165), most likely the socio-politically dominant
4 group. De Vaujany & Vaast (2014) expand on this in that appropriation of space implies that
5 actors build on and manipulate spatial practices, whereas disappropriation suggests a
6 breakaway from legacies and subsequent realignment of space with changing claims.
7
8 Therefore, space – as socially constructed – is used to impose one’s own definition, meanings,
9 values and rules onto a situation. A spatial analysis can help locate and identify social and
10 knowledge interactions, capturing the locale where power discourses actively take shape
11 (Rabinow, 2003; Baldry, 1999). Conceptualizing space around power and relationships
12 foregrounds how social actors can shape spatial aspects to defend (or disrupt) a political or
13 institutional agenda.
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26 Understanding the role of the political in demonstrating the use of space has been key
27 to Lefebvre’s (1991) theorization of the production of space. Lefebvre (1991) presents three
28 interlinked dimensions, which he defines as conceived (*conçu*), perceived (*perçu*), and lived
29 (*vécu*) space. Firstly, representations of space relate to how space is *conceived* by planners and
30 these conceptions will subsequently impact the materialization of space and help reinforce
31 power relations (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Materialization of space in the form of physical
32 structures, distance and boundaries acts as a signifier to the wider public, communicating
33 hierarchies, and appropriate behavior (Siebert et al, 2018). Secondly, *perceived* space is
34 understood as how people imagine and experience space through discourse and symbolism
35 (Lefebvre, 1991; Schmid, 2008). The distribution of positions in space can be used as a
36 symbolic exercise of power to impose one’s own definition, meanings, values and rules onto a
37 situation (Weinfurter & Seidl, 2018). Lastly, *lived* space describes the spatial expression of
38 practices, i.e. the ways in which space is used by inhabitants through embodied behaviors.
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40 Therefore, lived space bridges the gap between the people’s perception of space and the
41 experiencing of space (Lefebvre, 1991). In our own analysis, we expand on Lefebvre’s (1991)
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3 dimensionality of space to help articulate the disruption and defense of institutions within our
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5 case study analysis of Venezuela's art world.
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8 Next we unpack the politics that have shaped and reshaped the local art scene in
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10 Venezuela before analyzing the spatial aspects of the disruption and defense the country's art
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12 world under Chávez.
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14 **EMPIRICAL CONTEXT**

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16 The art world – understood as the network of cooperating people who share an understanding
17
18 of how art should be produced, legitimized and consumed (Becker, 1982) – is an ideal context
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20 within which to study institutions (Ertug et al., 2016). Struggles around values and practices
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22 are common in a field characterized by subjectivity rather than objective universal standards
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24 (Khaire & Wadhvani, 2010). Stakeholders working within the confines of the 'art world'
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26 collectively award an object the status of art (Danto, 1964). This collective conferral of value
27
28 depends on the interconnectivity and interdependency of institutional actors as meaning makers
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30 (Becker, 1982) both locally and globally (Rodner & Thomson, 2013).
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35 Like other institutional realms, the art world has discernable boundaries, in particular
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37 material ones (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). A space designated for art, such as a museum or
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39 national gallery, demarcates what is and is not considered art, enabling space to be used for its
40
41 symbolic power. Firmly embedded into its institutional environment, an art space builds upon
42
43 persistent practices and shared rules to ensure its legitimacy and permanency. If we understand
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45 institutions as in flux (Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010), the role of this sense of legitimacy and
46
47 permanency of art venues as meaning makers may come into question. Museums are
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49 themselves contested venues, as they enable the promulgation and negotiation of dominant
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51 cultural discourses (Low & Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003).
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55 Control of space is crucial in establishing dominance in the arts (Ertug et al., 2016).
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57 Governments can be particularly influential as they reclaim and reimagine official spaces such
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59 as public museums and national galleries, particularly at key moments of political change
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3 (Bhabha, 1990). Incoming governments, as holders of systemic power (Lawrence & Buchanan,
4 2017), may impose new institutional prescriptions more ideologically aligned with their own
5 preoccupations (DiMaggio, 1988), especially in fields where they provide resources (Reay &
6 Hinings, 2005; 2009). Governments can thus replace recipients or those who manage resources
7 within organizations as a means of institutional control (Reay & Hinings, 2005). As major
8 resource providers, governments can shape institutions in this field due to the symbolic
9 resources they can derive from it (Bourdieu, 1993).

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19 In our study we reveal how the incoming government imposed a new vision for the arts
20 in the country that better harmonized with the overarching party line, whilst strategically
21 marginalizing existing actors from the space where institutional roles were carried out.

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26 **Art under Chávez: The impact of the Bolivarian Revolution on the Venezuelan art world**
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28 Venezuela's highly polarized art world lends itself well to understanding what role space plays
29 in disrupting and defending institutions and how dimensions of space interact in the disruption
30 and defense of institutions. To better understand the impact of a change of political direction
31 which resulted in significant disruption of the art field in Venezuela, it is important to locate
32 our study within the socio-historical context.

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39 From its colonial origins, the country's art world had mimicked a globally 'accepted'
40 Western model of art practice. From the mid-20th century onwards, oil became Venezuela's
41 "fundamental motor for the economy" (Barrera-Tyska, 2016:15), enabling the country to invest
42 in cultural institutions. Subsequently, the structure of Venezuela's art world - consisting of
43 state-run museums, art schools, salons, public collections, cultural foundations - became a
44 benchmark in Latin America. This infrastructure benefited from the emergence of specialist
45 actors (curators, critics, docents, researchers, managers, and art restorers), with the necessary
46 training and accreditation. It also relied on a strong commercial network to support the growing
47 arts market. Cultural production, dissemination, legitimation and consumption, however,
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3 remained in the hands of a cultural elite, and the country was still challenged by acute socio-
4 economic inequalities (Silva-Ferrer, 2014).
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8 By embracing a populist rhetoric, Hugo Chávez promised to solve the country's
9 concentration of power and share it equally among his people. This powerful discourse secured
10 his landslide election in 1998 (following his imprisonment for a failed coup d'état in 1992),
11 cementing his presidency until his untimely death in 2013. Chávez pioneered new socialist
12 ideals, adopting the role of a post-colonial Venezuelan revolutionary with his aptly named
13 Bolivarian Revolution¹. Well versed in the "language of class war" (Carroll, 2013: 60), Chávez
14 used rhetoric to support his Revolution (Silva-Ferrer, 2014). By doing so, he generated rife
15 ideological polarization between existing actors and the supporters of his political agenda. His
16 rhetoric supported the exclusion of art professionals from cultural institutions based on their
17 opposition to the dominant Bolivarian ideology.
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30 Art under Chávez was overhauled: management of cultural institutions was centralized,
31 new bureaucratic tiers were introduced, museum spaces were reclaimed, private and third
32 sector organizations were expropriated, curatorial programming was changed, new branding
33 initiatives were introduced, and most significantly, established institutional actors were
34 replaced with government officials (see **Figure 1** for a timeline). The now displaced
35 institutional actors tried to circumvent this disruption by creating a new space for legitimizing
36 and disseminating the arts, made up of private galleries and art centers, where they could
37 distance themselves materially, symbolically and socially from the government. This role of
38 space in the disruption and defense of institutions lies at the heart of our investigation.
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51 **METHODS**

52 **Data Collection**

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58 ¹ Chávez positioned himself as a modern revolutionary hero, equating his efforts to those of the War of
59 Independence hero - Simón Bolívar – who led and won many battles across Latin America against the Spanish
60 crown during the 19th century.

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3 We collected data between 2009-2012 and 2016-2017. The first data collection was timely as
4 we could observe the consequences of key policy changes to Venezuela's art world, introduced
5 in the first half of the 2000s by Chávez's government and his newly appointed Minister of
6 Culture, Francisco Sesto. Our second data collection allowed us to better capture the context
7 of government disruption, mapping out more clearly how the Venezuelan art world responded
8 to these shifts in policy.
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11 Our data consists of interviews, non-participant observation, and secondary material
12 (referred to as **SD** in our Findings²). Together, these rich data sources helped to capture the
13 material and physical aspects of space and the "lived experience" (Lefebvre, 1991). It also
14 helped empirically apprehend the symbolic power (Jones & Massa, 2013; Weinfurter & Seidl,
15 2018) that space has on institutions (see a summary of our data sources in **Table 1**). Secondary
16 data, in particular, helped us narrate the government's side of spatial change in the country's
17 art world. To further complement this material, visual data (approx. 200 photographs) were
18 also collected as a means of better understanding how space was used by warring actors in the
19 production and dissemination of the arts in the country.
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41 From these data, we could map out the significant changes to cultural policies
42 introduced by Chávez's government, and the reactions to these new policies by local art actors.
43 **Figure 1** captures in a visual timeline "who did what when" (Langley, 1999: 692) in
44 Venezuela's tumultuous art world.
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54 We conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with key players within the Venezuelan
55 art world, each lasting between forty minutes and two hours. We concluded interviewing once
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² For space limitations, our full reference list for secondary data materials is available upon request.

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3 theoretical saturation was reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The transcribed interview material
4 amounted to just over 800 pages of primary data, which we manually coded and translated
5 from our participants' native Spanish into English. Interview material, when not presented in
6 data tables, appears in our Findings section in italics to distinguish it from our secondary data
7 sources. Our sample included individuals with considerable art world experience, who continue
8 operating within the Venezuelan scene (and at times overseas) in both the public and private
9 sphere. As experts in their field, our research participants included museum and independent
10 curators, art critics and writers, art managers and cultural producers, docents and researchers,
11 visual artists, art restorers, art dealers, auction house specialists and galleristas.
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24 Like other scholars of Venezuela (Silva-Ferrer, 2014; Kozak Rovero, 2008) we
25 encountered a reluctance of government officials to speak openly in interviews. Furthermore,
26 as managerial and ministerial level actors tended to have limited tenure, they had little time to
27 experience the local art world and develop their field level skills at the time of our data
28 collection. Nevertheless, we were able to interview actors who had worked (or continue to
29 work) for government institutions including museums, the Ministry of Culture, state-run art
30 and cultural foundations, and in the education sector. We complemented our data with rich
31 secondary materials (as noted in **Table 1**) to capture the government's side of our spatial
32 change narrative. These sources include official material such as policy documents; interviews
33 with ministers and presidents of cultural foundations; a wide range of newspaper articles;
34 government web material; and Venezuela's new Constitution, amounting to just under 100
35 secondary sources.
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51 Through non-participant observation at various field settings, namely state museums
52 and private art venues, we were able to: apprehend government-driven changes that impacted
53 the space where art is produced and disseminated; gauge the socio-political polarization; and
54 further our understanding of the workings of the art world more generally. Given our research
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3 context, it was important to conduct most of the fieldwork in Venezuela (with some instances
4 of international data collection, see **Table 1**), to experience the realities of a country subjected
5 to an ideological shift. Thus, public murals, political propaganda, media coverage, and
6 Venezuelans day-to-day lived reality fed into our data collection and analysis.
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12 **Data Analysis**

14 Moving between our theoretical lens, our data and emergent themes (Gioia et al., 2013), it
15 became clear that both disruptive and defensive actors relied on *space* as a strategic lever.
16 Underpinned by an inductive ethos, our observation and analysis of the data resulted in
17 formulating our research questions: What role does space play in the disruption and defense of
18 institutions? And how do dimensions of space interact in this disruption and defense of
19 institutions?
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28 *Phase 1: Coding the use of space in institutional disruption and defense:* We systematically
29 coded our transcribed interview material, generating “informant-centric terms and codes”
30 (Gioia et al., 2013: 18). From this initial coding, we developed 1st order concepts from the
31 accounts of our participants. Considering our research questions, our analytical focus centered
32 around the notion of boundaries, distance and movement (Weinfurter & Seidl, 2018). We
33 identified a rift between the disruptive institutional work undertaken by government officials
34 and the defensive institutional work conducted by the now marginalized art world actors. This
35 rift is particularly apparent in how actors position themselves within, and perceived space, so
36 that our analysis led us to unpack the geographical distribution of actors and practices (Mengis,
37 Nicolini & Gorli, 2018). Our emergent codes reveal the government’s efforts to use space to
38 break from prevailing institutional norms to align the country’s art world with current political
39 ideology. Additionally, our codes captured how the country’s art professionals reacted to this
40 government-led shift in art practice, carrying out their own spatial effort to maintain the status
41 quo. Our visual material helped us contrast the two approaches to space and how they conveyed
42 disruption and defense of institutions. From this distinction of the contesting forms of
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3 institutional work, we moved to memo-writing, which helped us cut new analytical paths
4 through our findings (Charmaz, 2006), leading to our 2nd order themes. Finally, mapping the
5
6 different positions of actors in space (see **Figure 2**), helped us better understand the purposeful
7
8 effort of actors around distancing and demarcation in the geography of Caracas.
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13 Insert Figure 2 about here
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16 *Phase 2: Coding the dimensions of space:* We then raised the analysis from a dichotomous
17 account of government officials and art professionals to themes encapsulating the spatial
18 dimensions of the work undertaken by these institutional actors. We went back and forth
19 between the existing literature on space and our data to further sharpen the constructs and how
20 they were connected. Building on Lefebvre's (1991) model and work on space in organization
21 studies allowed us to foreground the socio-political ethos of space and how actors leverage
22 space to disrupt and defend the status quo. From our analysis, we highlighted three dimensions
23 of space, namely, the material, social and symbolic, which together enable (or constrain)
24 institutional work.
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36 The material use of space in institutional work, concerns the positioning of actors in the
37 art world and how they use distance or proximity to either isolate or connect themselves with
38 one another. This first theme, therefore, centers round the physical and material qualities of
39 space. Second, we elaborate on the social context of space, focusing on how actors plan the use
40 of space and negotiate power relations with stakeholders within space. We articulate the
41 'embodiment' of space, examining how actors inhabit and work within a given space; and the
42 'enactment' of space whereby space enables interactions between social actors. There is an
43 important difference between embodiment and enactment. Embodiment signals meaning-
44 making within the constrained boundary of a space usually relying on a link between an actor
45 and a space (actors represent the space and inversely). In contrast, enactment conveys the
46 ability given to actors *by* space and how space is mobilized and used. Finally, we assert that
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3 space plays a symbolic role because of how it is perceived visually and discursively by actors.
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5 The ‘expressiveness’ of space encapsulates incidents of when space is used to project and
6
7 disseminate discourses and symbolic meanings. Together, these themes demonstrate the role
8
9 space plays when institutional actors carry out disruptive or defensive work. To demonstrate
10
11 the rigor of our data analysis (Gioia et al., 2013) and bridge the gap between data and theory,
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13 in **Figure 3** we illustrate how our tangible codes led us to our emergent theory on the role of
14
15 space in the disruption and defense of institutions.
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21 Insert Figure 3 about here
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23 As well as presenting our data analysis visually, our Data Tables (**Table 2, 3 and 3**)
24
25 illustrate the changes that have impacted the Venezuelan art world and subsequent institutional
26
27 work undertaken by both sides. Our iterative approach of analyzing data and generating
28
29 theoretical constructs in line with existing conceptualizations of space helped us craft a
30
31 compelling story. Our rich empirical context on Venezuela’s contending institutional actors
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33 yields insight into how spatial dimensions interact in this disruption and defense of institutional
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35 work.
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38 **FINDINGS**

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40 Our findings elucidate three intertwined aspects of space in disruptive and defensive
41
42 institutional work: material, social and symbolic. We first empirically considered boundaries,
43
44 isolation, distance, movement and geographical repartition as social actors demarcate space as
45
46 a form of institutional work. We then go on to explore the social use of space through the
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48 embodiment of space, that is, how actors inhabit a spatial boundary; and the enactment of space,
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50 which refers to how space enables interactions between social actors. Finally, alongside the
51
52 material and social, we note how space has symbolic value in disrupting and defending
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54 institutions, in that space is expressive, and is used to project and diffuse discourses.
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58 **The Material Use of Space in Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work**

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3 In this first section, we show how our contentious actors utilized material resources in creating
4 new boundaries, therefore achieving proximity or distance as a means of disrupting and
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6 new boundaries, therefore achieving proximity or distance as a means of disrupting and
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8 defending institutions.
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11 Insert Table 2 about here
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13 *The demarcation work of disruptive actors*

14
15 Like other international cultural hubs, Venezuela had (during the mid-20th century) clustered
16
17 the country's major art venues - museums, galleries and educational institutions - at Museum
18
19 Plaza³ in downtown Caracas (see Caracas' Cultural Map in **Figure 2**). The positioning of this
20
21 cultural quarter is central to the disruption and defense of the institutions. Before the Bolivarian
22
23 Revolution, this quarter acted as a demarcated space for the arts, concentrating physical
24
25 buildings in close proximity and containing cultural capital necessary for legitimizing the local
26
27 art scene. Art curator and docent, Fermin, commented on the purposefulness of this cultural
28
29 clustering:
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33 *"Museums were concentrated in the capital...a very small and closed nucleus... within*
34 *500 meters you could find the National Gallery, the Fine Arts Museum, the Science*
35 *Museum, the Carlos Cruz Diez Print and Design Museum, the Contemporary Art*
36 *Museum, the Children's Museum... all of this is happening around Museum Plaza...*
37 *EVERYTHING was concentrated there"* (Fermin).
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42 The incoming government benefitted from this agglomeration of cultural institutions, as their
43
44 disruptive work could be concentrated in a defined, identifiable and highly visible space
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46 (Apóstol & González, 2013; **SD2**).
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48

49 The new government centralized control to underpin its disruptive work. Despite the
50
51 close physical proximity of these venues in Caracas' Museum Plaza, there had been an ethos
52
53 of autonomy in previous years, with museums being independently managed. Under Chávez,
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58 ³ Museum Plaza is still home to Venezuela's three major art institutions: the National Gallery (Galería de Arte
59 Nacional, GAN), the Fine Arts Museum (Museo de Bellas Artes, MBA), and the Contemporary Art Museum
60 (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, MAC), as well as non-art museums, theaters and the city's Athenaeum (a
privately-run, non-profit cultural association).

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3 sectoral restructuring saw the creation of the National Museum Foundation (*Fundación de*
4 *Museos Nacionales*) in 2005 which replaced the previous National Culture Council. With the
5 *Fundación de Museos Nacionales*, the government reclaimed this material space for art by
6 centralizing museum programming, budgeting, and management, so that museum profiles,
7 which had previously been materially bounded and curatorially distinct from one another,
8 would blend into one (**Table 2/ 1**). Our participants referred to the loss of identity of the
9 country's museums with their transferrable collections, exhibitions, programs, curatorial
10 profiles, and staff. The now displaced art actors objected to this loss of institutional identity,
11 highlighting key differences between the two concepts: "*an exhibition hall is not the same as*
12 *a museum: a museum has a permanent mission [statement] and an aim to research, disseminate*
13 *and share its collections*" (Fermin; see also **Table 2/ 2**).

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Alongside this homogenization of museums, we saw how the government imposed new
uses of existing venues whilst merging others. One such initiative was housing new museums
within already existing physical venues, for instance placing the new Museum for Popular Art
within the premises of the Contemporary Art Museum. The creation of such "parasite"
museums within established venues further blurred institutional profiles, creating physical and
financial burdens on existing museums. Other museums were transformed into venues for
alternative cultural activities, largely unrelated to museum work. For instance, the Jacobo
Borges Museum (or *MUJABO*) became a creative arts college; its permanent collection moved
to the National Gallery's (*GAN*) warehouse; and all curatorial and educational programming
was cancelled. Stripping *MUJABO* of its identity and permanent collection eroded the
museum's profile within the local art world. This disruptive work evinces how space can be
used to *blur* boundaries between individual places, erasing diversity in cultural production.

The centralization of museum operations through the creation of the *Fundación de*
Museos Nacionales constituted disruptive work in *demarcating* boundaries around official

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3 venues for art. This isolated the work of government-run spaces from the global art world,
4
5 allowing government officials now working within the museum framework to distance
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7 themselves (physically) from the previous generation of art world professionals. In parallel, the
8
9 international presence of the new government's actors in the art sector is mostly by official
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11 representation at international biennials, which are more symbolic in value. Art events - like
12
13 the renowned Venice Biennale - play a cultural role in positioning Venezuela internationally
14
15 (**Table 2/ 3**). As one of the few countries with a permanent national pavilion within the
16
17 renowned *Giardini* (gardens) of the Venice Biennale, Venezuela's participation at this
18
19 prestigious event is always secured.
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23 24 *On the positioning of defensive actors*

25 We found that Venezuela's now displaced art actors demarcated a new space for art by
26
27 amalgamating commercial galleries, art centers, temporary exhibition spaces, and privately-
28
29 run art foundations, in what local art curator Armando refers to as a "*bubble of freedom*".
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31 Aware of the benefits of working in close proximity, the art professionals behind these private-
32
33 run venues strategically clustered themselves in commercial and upmarket residential districts
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35 of Caracas. Some actors went further and bundled individual art venues together in a single
36
37 space, a prime example being the Galpones (or 'warehouses') Art Center, opened in 2005. The
38
39 Galpones offers visitors eighteen small venues in a tropical garden with bookshops, cafés,
40
41 eateries, and designer boutiques, alongside commercial galleries, artist-run venues, and
42
43 independently curated exhibition areas making this space more accessible and multifarious
44
45 than the typically intimidating, white-cube gallery setting located in uptown Caracas (see
46
47 **Image 1**). Attesting the perceived legitimacy of this new art space, and the benefits of art
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49 professionals working in close proximity, since our data collection, two privately-run galleries
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51 have migrated from independent venues to be included under the umbrella of Galpones.
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59 Insert Image 1 about here
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3 Although the new physical and geographic boundaries of this collective *bubble of freedom*
4 meant that these art venues were protected from government disruption, it also meant that they
5 were isolated from a broader public. Unlike the centrally located Museum Plaza, the
6 geographical positioning of privately-run venues is a disadvantage as they are relatively
7 inaccessible, elitist in nature, and physically intimidating to a wider audience (see the Cultural
8 Map in **Figure 2**). Independent curator and writer, Fernanda comments how people from lower
9 income households and peripheral communities would not visit private galleries in the city's
10 commercial or financial district, known as the "Opposition's Heartland" (Carroll, 2013) (**Table**
11 **2/ 4**). Although Museum Plaza was once "*a natural meeting place*" [Bianca, art critic] for art
12 professionals, students and enthusiasts, our informants noted it is now a no-go zone for many
13 middle- and upper-class people worried about personal safety. This concern comes from the
14 presence of a growing slum in the surrounding area, which continues to become more violent
15 as does the likelihood of being politically targeted (**Table 2/ 5**).

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33 Alongside the emergence of new art venues and the amalgamation of venues, such as
34 Galpones, some already established private galleries have refurbished their premises to mimic
35 the physical setting of a museum. Freites Gallery, for instance, houses five stories of exhibition
36 space, with a large atrium, ample halls, and a sculpture garden on the roof. Gallery manager,
37 Elizabeth, indicated that the gallery achieved museum-quality design (**Table 2/ 6**).
38 Nevertheless, art professionals acknowledge the lack of material resources for disseminating
39 artists' work and the limitations of the physical space itself. Museum curator turned gallery
40 manager, Leopoldo, argues how "*museums [not galleries] have the tools to pull off major*
41 *exhibits*", bemoaning the added challenges in this new curatorial role. Unable to amass large
42 art collections, venues within the *bubble of freedom* fail to replicate museums spatially. Co-
43 founder and manager of a new gallery space, Amapola notes how a gallery – no matter how
44 large its scope may be – never really substitutes for a museum: "*a museum has a collection, a*
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3 *defined profile and an array of qualities that galleries simply lack*". Now distanced from the
4 museum framework, the marginalized actors working in the *bubble of freedom* idealized the
5 space they once inhabited, particularly regarding available material resources they once had.
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10 Defensive actors use satellite galleries overseas as an effective way of inserting local
11 artists into the global art world. Transcending geographical boundaries, some Venezuelan
12 commercial galleries have opened permanent satellite galleries in the USA, Europe and other
13 countries in Latin America (like Panama, a financial and residential hub for many expatriated
14 Venezuelans). These international venues not only provide a space where institutional roles
15 can be played, in isolation from disruptive actors in Venezuela, but also help actors
16 circumnavigate economic challenges such as hyperinflation. However, having a second
17 permanent venue is costly, so many galleries opt to maintain global visibility through
18 participating in international art fairs (Table 2/ 7).
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31 ***Where disruptive and defensive work met: The fractured space of the Michelena Art***
32 ***Salon***
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34 The case of the locally recognized Michelena Art Salon vividly captures how a single space
35 for art can be the theater of an institutional struggle between disruptors and defenders of
36 institutions and end up fractured into two opposing views. Hosted in the Athenaeum in
37 Valencia (in Carabobo State) since 1943, the state-run Michelena Art Salon showcased, judged,
38 and awarded prizes to young contemporary artists. Based on the Parisian École des Beaux-
39 Arts, it was considered the place to be for upcoming artists. Regular judge at the event,
40 Rigoberto explained how artists valued the institutional clout of art salons - such as the
41 Michelena - for disseminating their work and gaining recognition (Table 2/ 8). Troubles at the
42 Michelena Art Salon started in 2005 when an artwork entitled "I signed" ("*Yo Firmé*") was
43 awarded a prize by the salon. Making a direct reference to a petition against President Chávez,
44 this award triggered criticism of the salon on behalf of government officials depicting it as a
45 politicized space. The state-run venue was subsequently closed for the 2007 edition of the event
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3 (Rodríguez, 2007; **SD2**). By 2008, two Michelena Art Salons had appeared on the scene: a
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5 government-run event that occupied the original building (the Athenaeum in Valencia) and an
6
7 alternative Michelena Salon run by members of the Michelena Foundation (i.e. the cultural
8
9 sector), which was dispersed across several venues in the same city. Although the event hosted
10
11 by the Michelena Foundation had the necessary social and symbolic resources, it clearly lacked
12
13 physical presence and legitimacy, spread out as it was across several venues. This fracturing
14
15 of the salon generated great confusion for visual artists and the general public: which space
16
17 was, in fact, institutionally legitimate, the “*chávista*”⁴ or “opposition” one? Not wishing to get
18
19 involved in a political battleground, some artists opted to boycott both spaces (**Table 2/ 9**).
20
21 Attesting to the precariousness of the situation, Fermin wondered; “*how long can an event of*
22
23 *this caliber operate in this fractured state, not being hosted at its official headquarters [i.e. the*
24
25 *Antheneum]?” This example of the Michelena Salon encapsulates how spaces may compete*
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27 *in their promotion of divergent visions of institutions, epitomizing the fragmentation which*
28
29 *took place in the Venezuelan art world post Chávez.*

35 **The Social Use of Space in Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work**

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37 We previously revealed how actors demarcated space as a form of disruptive or defensive
38
39 institutional work but such demarcation shapes and is shaped by social relations, and the
40
41 following sections will unpack the social nature of space as demonstrated by our analysis.
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45 Insert Table 3 about here
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47 ***The embodiment of space as disruptive and defensive work***

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49 Our data reveal that Chávez inherited a cultural and artistic sector consisting of highly skilled
50
51 museum curators, cultural managers, docents, researchers, and restoration specialists (Apóstol
52
53 & González, 2013; **SD2**). Contemporary artist, Jacobo, noted how museums had acted as
54
55 training centers for the country’s art professionals (**Table 3/ 10**). The embodiment of these
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60 ⁴ A term used to refer to supporters of the Chávez administration.

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3 actors within the country's museums, national galleries and education centers ensured the
4 legitimacy and art world relevance of this space. In reconfiguring the country's institutions, the
5 incoming-government purposefully pushed highly skilled actors out of this official space
6 through mass dismissals. One way of reconfiguring existing space was by breaking the patterns
7 of accepted behavior and institutional links between these actors operating within the official
8 space for the arts. After these mass-dismissals, the government populated museums with actors
9 whose activities better harmonized with the ethos of the Bolivarian Revolution (**Table 3/ 11**),
10 thereby reclaiming this space for the arts. The mass-dismissal of accredited institutional actors
11 from the public sphere, stripped this space from its social link to the international art world.
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24 As the new regime reclaimed this space, our participants reported that qualified
25 museum personnel (curators, educators, directors, and senior management) voluntarily left or
26 were forced to leave their posts within the museum field. A 2001 televised dismissal of cultural
27 institutional heavyweights was seen to symbolize the government's war on 'elitist' culture and
28 subsequent reclaiming of the cultural field (**Table 3/ 12, 13**).
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35 Meanwhile, displaced art professionals migrated to the private sector, creating and
36 expanding their operations by liaising with other key actors of the field using those venues as
37 platforms. With this displacement of professionals, there was a palpable migration of
38 institutional expertise and social connectivity needed to confer value on the arts. Venezuela's
39 art actors demarcated the boundaries of their art activities and conferred value onto their art
40 world within their new space, by continuing to engage in curatorship in the *bubble of freedom*.
41 Somewhat sheltered from the hostile macroenvironment, this new space for art embodied those
42 marginalized actors and gave them representation to connect with other key social actors. The
43 enabling role of the physical space within the new *bubble of freedom* coupled with the
44 embodied knowledge and connections of the inhabitants, allows contemporary artists to
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3 continue showcasing their work and accruing the necessary symbolic and economic value
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5 needed to ensure their presence on the local art scene.
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8 ***The enactment of space as disruptive and defensive work***

9 The enactment of space, understood as how inhabitants use and mobilize space, plays a crucial
10 role in the defense and disruption of institutions. The incoming government used the space
11 available to break with the prevailing institutional order and practices of the art world, while
12 actors working within the *bubble of freedom* collaborated to uphold previously legitimized art
13 practices.
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21 Alongside the mass dismissal of institutional actors from the museum framework, the
22 new regime brought a rejection of previous practices and values. Those values were presented
23 as elitist, bourgeois or simply foreign (Apóstol & González, 2013; Kozak Rovero, 2015; both
24 in **SD2**). The new actors appointed by the government focused on forging new institutional
25 partnerships, which harmonized better with the ideals of the Revolution. Artists and artisans
26 from like-minded nations (e.g. Cuba or Iran) were invited to showcase their work at
27 Venezuela's major museums, evincing the politicized purpose of this official space for the arts.
28 On this note, Fermin says that "*the arts are a diplomatic tool* for governments, so that the new
29 regime *sets new strategic priorities*". Curatorial partnerships with sympathizers of the
30 Revolution meant that new museum officials purposefully distanced themselves from
31 institutional actors working in epicenters of the art world, as well as distancing themselves
32 from the local private sphere for arts legitimization (**Table 3/ 14**).
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48 At the other end of the spectrum, we know how the defensive work of those operating
49 within the *bubble of freedom* focused on the maintenance, rather than reconfiguration, of art
50 world practices. Therefore, actors working within this new space aimed to reinforce rather than
51 break institutional ties with global art world players. Gallery manager Amanda underscores the
52 need to retain international visibility at art fairs, noting how her presence at renowned events
53 has brought her (and her featured artists) recognition: "*At ARCO [Madrid's premier art fair] I*
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3 *had people from the Reina Sofia Contemporary Art Museum, the Museo de Arte Vigo [Galicia]*
4 *and the MUSAC [Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Castilla y León, Spain] approach me about*
5 *my artists. Bringing our artists to these events is a big deal".* Gallery owner, Alejandro Freites
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10 cooperates with foreign museum professionals to arrange local shows (**Table 3/ 15**). These
11
12 actors use their space for art to insert themselves into the global playing field, mainly by
13
14 participating in international art fairs and events, forums, organizing exchanges, and inviting
15
16 international counterparts to Venezuela. Private venues enact the value conferring practices of
17
18 a museum onto artists whilst positioning them physically and socially within the contemporary
19
20 art scene.
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23 **The Symbolic Use of Space in Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work**

24
25 The contentious institutional actors of our case study present opposing images of the local art
26
27 world in the space they have inhabited, one tightly enmeshed with the political ideology of the
28
29 revolution, the other aligned to the global field of art. Whilst the government's appropriated
30
31 space focused on fostering inclusion in the production of art, art professionals used the space
32
33 they demarcated to advocate a distinction between art and non-art.
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38 Insert Table 4 about here
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41 ***Politicized curatorship as disruptive work***

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43 The symbolic appropriation of museums and public galleries was through reconfiguration of
44
45 curatorial programming. Our interviewees noted how over-inclusion rather than distinction
46
47 contradicts the norms of the prevailing institutional order of the art world. In practice, this
48
49 inclusion meant that major exhibitions within the country's art museums showcased artists with
50
51 non-artists without distinction, taking little consideration of artists' trajectories and artistic
52
53 narratives when positioning their work within this official space (**Table 4/ 16, 17**). This
54
55 inclusive initiative was most evident with the launch of mega-exhibitions at the start of the new
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57 millennium, a crucial moment of institutional change during Chávez's regime. The first edition
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3 of *Mega Exposición* (2002-2003) saw a massive amalgamation of artworks irrespective of
4 genre, technique or era, viewed by the established art elite as lacking curatorship (**Table 4/ 18**;
5
6 see also Rodner & Preece, 2016), which in turn symbolically altered the expressive nature of
7
8 the space. Our data reveal how the second (and final) edition of this event (2003-2004) made
9
10 an impact on the cultural panorama: *Mega Exposición II* was a mass call for professional and
11
12 amateur artists to settle in the museum and public art space and exhibit across the national
13
14 museum network. Officially, this artistic expression would offer everyone the “opportunity” to
15
16 take part in cultural production, according to the Minister of Culture, Francisco Sesto (**Table**
17
18 **4/ 19**). If a selection criterion is essentially ‘excluding’ some artists over others by prioritizing
19
20 certain artistic discourses, events such as *Mega Exposición* fully embraced a message of
21
22 equality, not in the consumption of art but rather in the production and dissemination of art,
23
24 explains local arts manager and independent curator, Paloma. This narrative of curatorial
25
26 inclusivity was spread across the country’s museum network. Although museums are
27
28 essentially open venues of art consumption, they are not necessarily spaces of open arts
29
30 production (**Table 4/ 20**), so that mega-exhibitions were favored by amateur artists and artisans,
31
32 but dismissed by the “*serious artist*”, who felt that association with a poorly curated event
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34 “*lowered the status and value of their work*” laments visual artist Isaac.
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42 Alongside this ethos of inclusivity, there were visible rebranding initiatives aimed at
43
44 symbolically repositioning the role of official spaces within the minds of the people. For
45
46 instance, the Contemporary Art Museum, previously named after its founder and head curator,
47
48 Sofía Imber, was rebranded in 2001, removing her name from the museum and symbolically
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50 demonstrating a clear breakaway from previous generations of art professionals. Rebranding
51
52 of art venues was instrumental for the new regime to project a new image for the nation. In
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54 2017, the Contemporary Art Museum was rebranded again, adopting the name of renowned
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56 local Modernist artist, Armando Reverón. Art professionals in Venezuela complained as the
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3 link between a Modernist artist like Armando Reverón and a contemporary art institution
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5 seemed incongruent and created confusion (Table 4/ 21). Such renaming initiatives further
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7
8 evince the blurred identities of museums under the Chávez administration.
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10 Under the new administration, museums focused on defending the incoming
11
12 government's vision for the nation (Khan, 2013; SD2). This was enabled due to the curatorial
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14 and administrative centralization of museum spaces, under the above-mentioned *Fundación de*
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16 *Museos Nacionales*. Despite having material and physical control of the country's official
17
18 space for art, the incoming government struggled to legitimize their new organizational praxis
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20 - an over-inclusive approach to art aligned with their political ideologies. Their curatorial
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22 activities and social networks were isolated from the overarching order of the global art world.
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24 By stripping Venezuela's museums of their symbolic credentials, the government made them
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26 empty "mausoleums" according to corporate arts curator Tamara.
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30 ***Preserving art world discourses and practices as defensive work***

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32 With the symbolic legitimacy of museums and public art galleries eroded due to the removal
33
34 of their skilled inhabitants, the *bubble of freedom* acted as the new legitimate arena for
35
36 institutional activities, namely the conferral of value onto art through curatorship. As well as
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38 weaving their artists into relevant curatorial narratives, actors working within the space of the
39
40 *bubble of freedom* symbolically projected a distinct image of the country's local art scene.
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44 Unlike the blurred lines of the museums, which became homogenous exhibition halls,
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46 the venues that make up the *bubble of freedom* established specific profiles for themselves.
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48 Collectively, they underscored the need to carve out distinct profiles for each venue which
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50 would consequently project a specific image for their featured artists. Local artist, Jacobo,
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52 comments on the backdrop that Amanda's gallery creates for its featured artists:
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55 *It's a gallery that is in a garage in a house – with a pretty austere structure and [the*
56 *gallery] has positioned itself at a high symbolic level, in the sense that ... they work*
57 *with artists with a good professional profile because this is what [the gallery owners]*
58 *see as truly 'decisive' for the success for the artist.*
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Careful curatorship means that art professionals working within this new space could confer value onto artists. Immersed in the prevailing practices and discourses of the global art world (as mentioned above), these defensive actors continued weaving Venezuelan artists into a relevant art narrative, so that through the symbolic use of space, these actors could distinguish art from non-art. As museums lose their symbolic position on the local cultural panorama, *bubble of freedom* aims to *cover the void that has been left*, explains museum director-turned-gallery manager Leopoldo, so that those working within this space for art try to “*fill the institutions’ shoes as best they can*”, according to art critic and scholar, Rigoberto (see also **Table 4/ 22**).

In response, actors working within the *bubble of freedom* venture into new territory. They focus their efforts on mobilizing their space to curate exhibits, engage in art criticism, liaise directly with other institutional actors, and produce in-house publications of gallery catalogues picturing their exhibition halls. They also organize artist residencies, workshops, charitable auctions, forums, and lecture series to discuss matters of art and culture. These activities are undertaken to distinguish the exhibition venues from purely mercantile roles (especially the commercial galleries), as this new space attempts to confer both symbolic and financial value onto visual artists, thereby becoming a new cultural hub (**Table 4/ 23, 24**). Despite these curatorial efforts, our participants note the symbolic presence of museums (lacking in private galleries): “*You can be any alternative space in the city... [have] any amount of [exhibition] spaces and it’s never the same as a museum that legitimizes a work of art, legitimizes an artist. And that has been lost*”, laments Mauricio. Others worry that an over dependency on the private sector to symbolically legitimize the arts has jeopardized the country’s overall artistic credibility. Nevertheless, where the *bubble of freedom* lacks the key material resources of the country’s museums, the space does retain the necessary symbolic resources to confer value onto and curate their local art scene. In their defensive work, the now

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2
3 marginalized actors who run this new space for art replicate – as best they can – the prevailing
4
5 institutional order of the global art world.
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8 Although some of our participants questioned the sustainability of the newly emerged
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10 *bubble of freedom* as alternative art venues with curatorial power, they remained determined
11
12 to continue connecting their local art world to the global contemporary narrative, wanting to
13
14 remain relevant on the global (art) panorama.
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16 17 **AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF SPACE IN DISRUPTIVE AND DEFENSIVE** 18 **INSTITUTIONAL WORK** 19

20 From our study, we have formulated a theoretical model (**Figure 4**) to articulate the role space
21
22 may play in the disruption and defense of institutions. In doing so, our model explains how the
23
24 dimensions of space - the material, social and symbolic – interact when mobilized for
25
26 institutional work. Understanding how those three dimensions enable and reinforce each other
27
28 is key to understanding the role of space in institutional theory.
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33 Insert Figure 4 about here
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36 Through our spatial approach, we have shown as a first step how actors use the material
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38 dimension of space to demarcate their institutional work. Demarcation involves distancing and
39
40 isolating themselves from other social actors who have conflicting views of institutions. This
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42 spatial “emancipating” (Castilho & Dolbec, 2017) involves a clustering (Taylor & Spicer,
43
44 2007) and in our case we see a clustering of art venues within a *bubble of freedom* far from
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46 Museum Plaza (**Figure 2**), the official space for art. With this clustering, we show how actors
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48 erect boundaries that create a “free space” (Rao & Dutta, 2012), so that they remain protected
49
50 from a hostile macro-environment such as that experienced in Venezuela under the Bolivarian
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52 Revolution. As a space, the *bubble of freedom* offers distance from disruptors who occupy the
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54 official space for art, whilst allowing subversive actors to exclude and isolate themselves from
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56 the political scene. This geographic positioning helps shield the activities of these actors from
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3 the incoming government's disruption of the local art world, so that the country's art
4 professionals can work towards the maintenance of their practices. But living in a bubble is a
5 double-edged sword as our findings reveal how these displaced art actors subsequently cut
6 themselves from wider art audiences. At the other end of the spectrum, our study reveals how
7 the incoming government appropriated existing space (namely museums and national galleries)
8 and that in their appropriation, these disruptive actors aimed to draw on the "spatial legacies"
9 (de Vaujany & Vaast, 2014) of these venues. The government's overreliance on the material,
10 that is, the physical appropriation of an official space for art, did not enable them to convince
11 all audiences to follow their ideological vision of these cultural institutions.
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24 Once the actors have demarcated - i.e. isolated from actors defending a different
25 institutional prescription - a space where they can pursue their aims, our research shows, that
26 space can (i) enable social interactions between actors within those new boundaries but also
27 with international counterparts, and (ii) symbolically project and support discourses supporting
28 or challenging existing norms, values and beliefs (center of **Figure 4**). For those defensive
29 actors, demarcating a space for art enable them to remain institutionally relevant and legitimate
30 (Weber, Davis & Lounsbury, 2009) particularly in relation to the wider, global field. They
31 reinforced their links with their global counterparts by using their spatial position as an anchor
32 and the space itself as an area of socialization to make themselves visible as prominent
33 institutional actors (Muzio, Brock & Suddaby, 2013) to key audiences beyond their local
34 counterparts (Zietsma et al., 2017). They instantiated the space – linking themselves with an
35 existing material form – to create visibility and meaning around their social role, and the space
36 also allowed them to engage in key social interactions.
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54 Using the symbolic ability to grant value onto art, the emerging cluster of private
55 galleries and art spaces, adopted the curatorial role that museums once played, aligning
56 curatorship with the practices of the global playing field. The curatorial activities of those
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3 working within the *bubble of freedom* enabled them to attract art audiences from museums and
4 public art galleries - which were now deemed culturally obsolete. Because of the shifts in
5 activities in Venezuela's museums, traditional museumgoers eventually de-populated the space
6 colonized by the government in the museum district, leaving it deserted. As a means of
7 remedying this lack of attendance, the government launched over-inclusive "mega exhibitions",
8 a key ephemeral spatial vehicle built on physical grandiosity and visibility, to promote their
9 values and practices in alignment with their political ideologies. However, their initiatives
10 failed to accrue symbolic resources (Lawrence & Dover, 2015) or carriers (Lepoutre & Valente,
11 2012) associated with the field of art.

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Those three dimensions of space interact with each other when space is used for institutional work. While the three dimensions of space can sustain themselves, the social and the symbolic use of space in institutional work mutually reinforce one another (right end side of **Figure 4**). When space is used by actors to develop and maintain their social network (e.g. in the case of displaced actors using their galleries to establish links with the global art world) it also reinforces its ability to grant symbolic value to art. In this sense, those who inhabit a space give it symbolic power. Inversely, space that can project symbolic discourses - such as museums in our study - can also draw crowds that will give them a social role. The social and symbolic role played by space as part of defensive and disruptive institutional work is however conditioned by the material and physical aspect of the space mobilized but the latter also conditioned the access to resources. The art galleries created by the displaced actors in Venezuela struggled for resources, their existence temporally bound by the amount of financial support those actors had been able to secure. Despite playing a crucial symbolic and social role, private art galleries struggle to establish a stable physical manifestation. In contrast, the museums and public galleries claimed by the government actors in downtown Caracas,

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3 continued as physical entities, potentially enabling the enactment of institutional practices and
4 values in the long-term (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2017).
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7 8 **DISCUSSION**

9 Drawing on a longitudinal study of the disruption of the Venezuelan art world with the arrival
10 of the Chávez administration, our findings establish how space is strategically used by actors
11 with opposing visions on what role art should play in the country. Our inductive model (**Figure**
12 **4**) shows how demarcating spaces by leveraging distance or proximity precludes the social and
13 symbolic use of those spaces for institutional work. The social and symbolic use of space
14 mutually reinforce each other to disrupt and defend institutions, as the relationships enacted in
15 space can strengthen the symbolic messages put forward. We demonstrate how the demarcation
16 and use of space can directly contribute to the disruption and defense of institutions, as
17 institutions are enacted within and supported by physical spaces (Gluckler et al., 2018). Once
18 actors have shaped space and settled in a position and configuration, their ability to impose
19 their own visions of institutional praxis will depend on their access to key resources –material
20 and symbolic (Dacin et al., 2010) but also social (Rabinow, 2003).
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37 In the following, we detail our contributions to the literature on space and institutional
38 theory, in particular by elaborating on the implications of considering space as a strategic lever
39 for institutional work. The study of space in institutional theory gives us an opportunity to
40 consider the crucial role of resources in disruptive and defensive work. Finally, we consider
41 the limitations of our work and the future research areas it opens. We encourage future work
42 to explore the interaction of time and space and the implications it can have for power
43 relationships in the context of institutional struggles.
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53 **Leveraging space as institutional work**

54 We inform the literature on institutional work and institutional change in a number of
55 ways. First, unlike previous studies on deinstitutionalization (Maguire & Hardy, 2009;
56 Clemente & Roulet, 2015) where one institution replaces another, our study highlights that two
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3 divergent institutional prescriptions can co-exist, here, in competing spaces, with differential
4 access to material and symbolic resources. Instead of radical institutional change, we show, in
5 our case study, a co-existence of contending actors (Van Wijk et al., 2013) with different views
6 on what the institution should be, and consequently leveraging space to best suit their
7 institutional needs. In doing so, we find that the examination of space at the level of material,
8 social and symbolic, allows us to understand the nuances of institutional change in such
9 contexts where divergent institutional prescriptions co-exist and compete.
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19 Second, this paper contributes to research on the material aspects of institutional theory
20 (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015; Jones & Massa, 2013). In particular, we focus on the role of space
21 in institutional work, complementing and building on the emerging literature on place and
22 institutional work (Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Siebert et al., 2017). Lawrence & Dover (2015)
23 showed how places shape and are shaped by institutional work and Siebert et al., (2017)
24 focused on the role of place in institutional maintenance. We elaborated on the abstract
25 dimensions of space - geographical boundaries, distance, and proximity (Weinfurter & Seidl,
26 2018) - by contrast with an analysis of places - defined locations and set areas (Lawrence &
27 Dover, 2015). We built on existing conceptualization of space in philosophy (Lefebvre, 1991),
28 anthropology (Rabinow, 2003), geography (Massey, 2005) and organization studies (Taylor &
29 Spicer, 2007; Weinfurter & Seidl, 2018). We acknowledge that the study of institutional work
30 invariably relies on a joint understanding of space and place, including buildings, monuments
31 and defined locations (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018). The control of space and places has
32 implications for access to material, social and symbolic resources and, thus, for the control of
33 institutions (Siebert et al., 2018). Yet controlling places that play an institutional role (such as
34 the museums in our case) does not equate to the control of institutions, something which the
35 Chávez government discovered when it struggled to reframe the values and beliefs of the sector.
36 Our study thus elaborates on the relationship between institutional work, space and the political
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3 macro-environment, by showing how a spatial analysis makes visible the power relationships
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5 at play in institutional struggles (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017).
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8 We stressed the role of space and contention around institutions, in other words when
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10 institutions are challenged and disputed, and thus in flux (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015). Our
11
12 contribution lies in proposing a comprehensive model that conceptualizes the material
13
14 demarcation of space and the use of space as a social and symbolic enabler for conflicting
15
16 forms of institutional work. We have established that demarcating spaces can be a form of
17
18 institutional work aimed at creating physical boundaries but also distance and isolation to
19
20 disrupt or defend institutions. Such boundaries create a space in which new or existing practices
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22 can be promoted (Cnossen & Bencherki, 2018), potentially shielding them from alternative
23
24 institutional prescription (Greenwood et al., 2002). Actors can use space as a resource to shield
25
26 and isolate themselves and their actions from events in the macro-environment, to defend
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28 institutions against more powerful actors. This is a form of “physical” boundary work (Zietsma
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30 & Lawrence, 2010) that preconditions potential work on the social and symbolic aspects of
31
32 institutions (Zilber, 2002; Zilber, 2006; Green et al., 2009). In fact, our model of the role of
33
34 space in institutional work provides avenues to better disentangle the different aspects of space
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36 and their interlinked influence on institutions, acknowledging the material, social and symbolic
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38 carriers of institutions (Lepoutre & Valente, 2012).
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44 **Bridging the gap between organizing in space, resources and institutions**

45 More broadly our work also contributes to theorizing the links between organizations, spatial
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47 resources, and institutions. The displaced actors who populated this new distant and isolated
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49 space in Venezuela started legitimizing different organizational forms in a similar way to what
50
51 DiMaggio (1991) describes, thus capturing new resources. The organization of those places
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53 and how they are interlinked are purposeful, since they are used and positioned in space to
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55 coordinate and obtain visibility and link up with different spatial levels or scales – the local,
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57 the national and the global institutional orders (Spicer, 2006). Even when relegated to the
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3 periphery, marginalized organizations can still play a crucial role in shaping institutions (Fan
4 & Zietsma, 2017). Previous research suggested that such “new space for economic enterprise
5 or social activity” (Suddaby & Viale, 2011: 428) can foster collective empowerment,
6 potentially challenging more resourceful actors (Rao & Dutta, 2012).
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12 Symbolic resources (Lepoutre & Valente, 2012; Maguire, Hardy & Lawrence, 2004)
13 and social interactions (Zilber, 2002; Green et al., 2009; Wright & Zammuto, 2013; Fan &
14 Zietsma, 2017) are necessary to support (de)institutionalization processes but such resources
15 are often made accessible by spatial position or because of spatial boundaries (Siebert et al.,
16 2017). Instead, a free space (Rao & Dutta, 2012), isolated from disruption, materializes where
17 defensive actors preserve their values and practices. Some institutional roles are traditionally
18 played in a dedicated space – in our case the museums, clustered in the center of Caracas. But
19 the control of such space does not guarantee the control of institutions. Inhabitants may struggle
20 for legitimacy (Scott, 2013; Suchman, 1995) even when the defined places themselves hold
21 symbolic value (Siebert et al., 2017). In fact, the marginalized actors of our story played an
22 institutional role from their isolated space – the *bubble of freedom* - as they continued
23 conferring value onto art. Those operating within the *bubble of freedom* retained the social and
24 symbolic resources (Dacin et al., 2010) aligned with the global art world. This ‘free space’
25 (Rao & Dutta, 2012) protected them from a hostile wider political macro-environment and
26 provided “actors with a secure arena in which to interact and express their voice” (Weinfurter
27 & Seidl, 2018: 14). The material isolation from the reconstituted official art world, resulting
28 from shifting the previous art professionals out of established art venues, resulted in a fractured
29 art space within Venezuela.
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53 **Limitations and Future Research**

54 The first limitation of our study is the scope of our case across time and space. Our theoretical
55 model does demonstrate the benefits of studying the spatial (Lawrence & Dover, 2015),
56 material (Monteiro & Nicolini, 2015), social (Zilber, 2002; Wright & Zammuto, 2013) and
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3 symbolic (Siebert et al., 2017) aspects of institutional work together. In fact, our study of the
4
5 disrupted Venezuelan art sector suggests that these aspects can hardly be disentangled. As the
6
7 interaction between space and time plays a crucial role in the necessary sedimentation of
8
9 practices (Oborn et al., 2019), institutional work needs to play out over a longer period of time
10
11 to efficiently affect institutions (Granqvist & Gustafsson, 2016). Even if temporal organizing
12
13 can play a role in challenging or supporting institutions, the way a space supports institutions
14
15 may develop over several decades (Delacour & Leca, 2011) or even centuries (Siebert et al.,
16
17 2018). Future work could look at the interaction of time and space over longer periods of time.
18
19 Such work could further our exploration of multimodal institutionalization and legitimation
20
21 mechanisms (Zilber, 2017; Jancsary, et al., 2017). Sensemaking and narratives around
22
23 institutions are not only discursive (Maguire & Hardy, 2009) but cannot, in fact, be
24
25 disentangled from their socio-material elements (Rantakari & Vaara, 2017). Therefore,
26
27 discourses underlying (de)institutionalization processes can also be enacted visually and in
28
29 space. Our spatial theorization of disruptive and defensive institutional work acknowledges the
30
31 visual construction of meaning, and how this material process is intertwined with social and
32
33 political aspects. “Strong” multimodal approaches (Zilber, 2017: 70) can avoid the pitfall of
34
35 “collaps[ing] the material into the discursive”. Here, we focused on how our spatial artefacts
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37 (e.g. galleries and museums, biennales and fairs) constrained and enabled meanings and actions.
38
39 Future studies making space a theater of meaning-making and source of multimodal artefacts
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41 (Colombero & Boxenbaum, 2018), could further the “practice approach” of multimodal inquiry
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43 (Höllerer et al., 2019: 62-71):
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52 Our boundary conditions relate to the characteristics of our disruptive and defensive
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54 actors. In our case, we observed actors being forcefully excluded from the space they inhabited
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56 as a result of disruptive institutional work. One condition for such an extreme form of
57
58 institutional pressures is the potential power imbalance between institutional actors (Furnari,
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3 2016; Roulet, 2019). As we have seen, governments are particularly powerful disruptive actors
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5 (Reay & Hinings, 2005), with the ability to withhold physical resources, which translates into
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7 controlling the management of publicly financed fields. Similar to Wright & Zammuto's
8
9 (2013) study of cricket, our findings apply mostly to mature fields where more established
10
11 actors have secured institutional influence (Fligstein, 1997). They can push for forceful
12
13 institutional disruption due to a power imbalance based on resource and control – in particular
14
15 the control of space (as a physical area in the geographical core of human activities) and places
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17 (buildings, monuments and defined enclosures). In our analysis we show that space is overtly
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19 political (Lefebvre, 1991) and that an institutional analysis that focuses on space reveals the
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21 underlying political relationships at play. Our spatial perspective makes visible the power
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23 relationships within institutions (Lawrence & Buchanan, 2017) and future research could
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25 further unveil the link between power, space and resources from an institutional perspective.
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31 Despite the power imbalance in our case, we do not observe radical moves, such as the
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33 destruction of places and space as a form of institutional work. As noted by Siebert et al. (2017)
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35 and Czarniawska (2009), depriving actors from a building can significantly modify their ability
36
37 to engage in the interactions that underlie institutions. However, we clearly establish that using
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39 space to enable social interactions may aid displaced actors in remaining institutionally
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41 legitimate even when spatially isolated and circumscribed. The destruction of places and
42
43 absence of space to support institutional practices (Giovannoni & Quattrone, 2018; Cnossen &
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45 Bencherki, 2018) offer fruitful opportunities to uncover how actors can undermine material,
46
47 social and symbolic “carriers” of institutions (Lepoutre & Valente, 2012: 285).
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51 CONCLUSION

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53 Our study of the disrupted Venezuelan art world reveals how space can be leveraged to disrupt
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55 and defend institutions. Once actors have demarcated space, playing on geographical proximity
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57 or distance and isolation, they can enable social interactions and project discourses to challenge
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59 or maintain key values and practices. The social and symbolic aspects of space mutually
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reinforce each other in contributing to the defense or disruption of institutions. In our case, the clustering of art venues in a metaphoric *bubble of freedom* allows actors to continue conferring value onto the art world in Venezuela and strategically position local artists on the global playing field, given that the societal function of museums has been temporarily challenged. Paradoxically, a nation that has undergone a thorough Socialist makeover in the last two decades, has seen its local art scene migrate almost entirely to the private sector. How these new art galleries, strategically positioned but spatially constrained, will stand the test of time remains to be seen, especially as they continue to struggle for material resources in a deeply impoverished and politically divided Venezuela.

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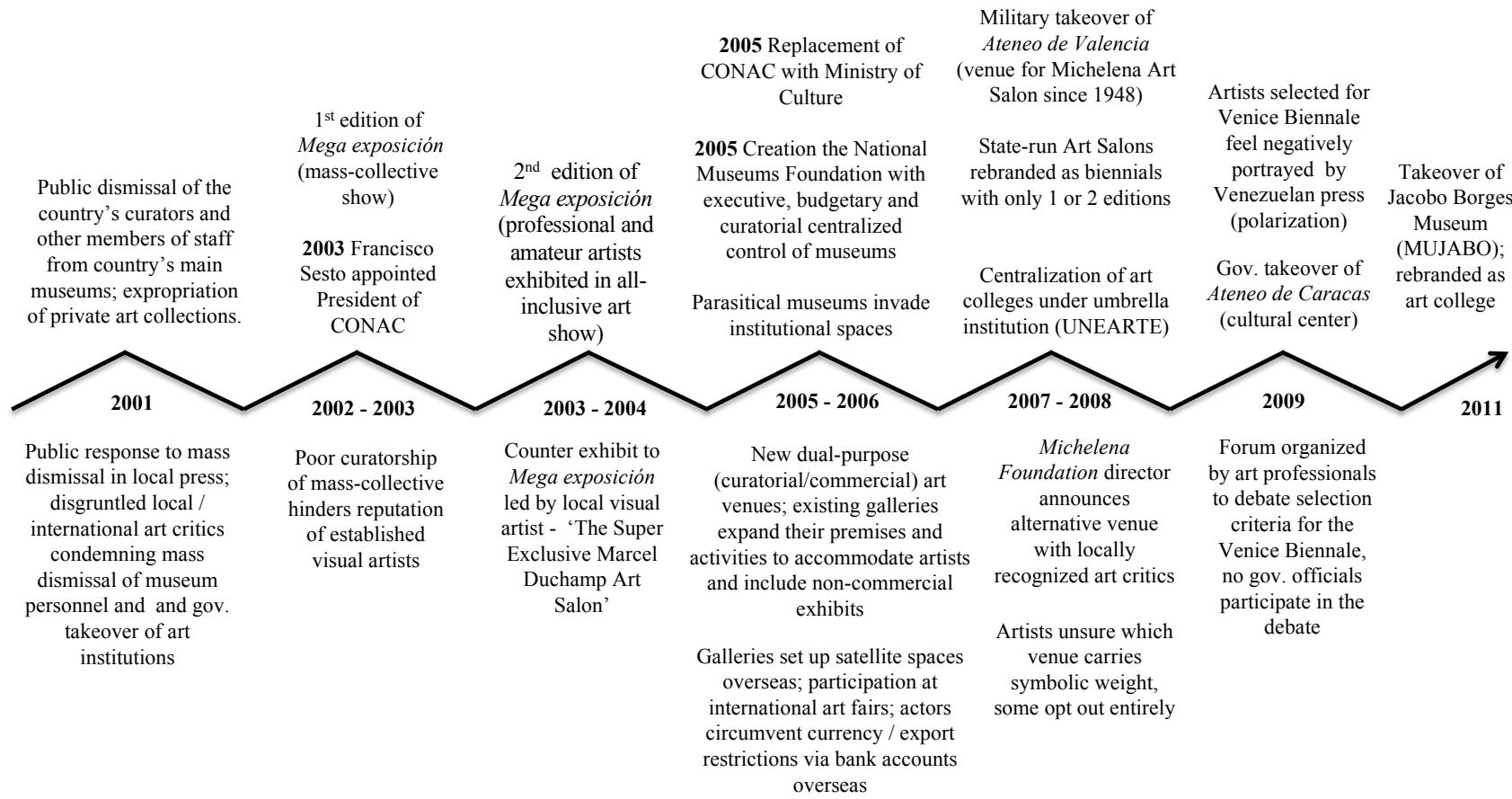
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TABLES & FIGURES

Figure 1. Timeline of changes that impacted the Venezuelan art world

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Government’s disruptive work



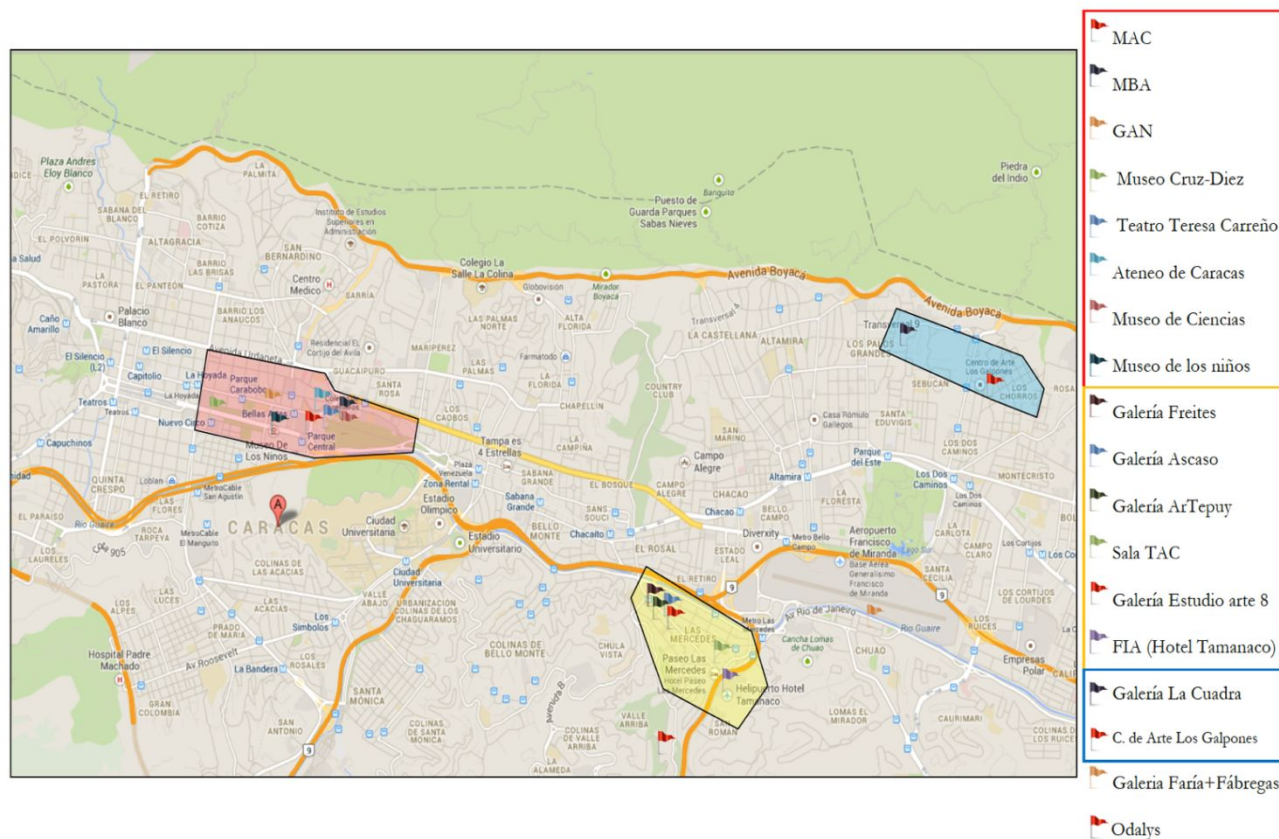
Displaced art actors’ defensive work

Table 1. Data Material Table

Source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
In-depth Interviews	First round 2009 – 2012	
	31x interviews with art professionals (museum directors, public and independent curators, art critics and historians, educators, galleristas, arts producers, foundation managers and artists) working in the Venezuelan art world. Interviews took place in Caracas (Venezuela), at the Venice Biennale, and in London and Paris at international art fairs and/or satellite galleries.	Gather data on the workings of Venezuela's local art and how artists are promoted/represented overseas (at official biennials, art fairs, satellite galleries); examine ideological and structural changes that occurred with the incoming government; explore the emergence of an alternative art space; map out the migration of institutional actors from the public sector; assess the dual roles of art professionals working in the private sector.
	Second round 2016-2017	
	9x Interviews (4 follow up interviews) with informants who worked or continue to work in state run institutions and the public sector for the arts; and with Latin American Studies scholars specializing in Venezuelan political discourses.	Gather further data from professionals working in the public sector; obtain insider/unbiased information on government-driven changes and motivations; balance empirical data with the government's side of the story; triangulate findings on socio-political polarization; create a timeline of events that have impacted the local art scene.
Secondary Data	SD1 - Publications on Venezuela under Hugo Chávez (Bruce, 2008; Jones, 2008; Carroll, 2013; Chávez and Guevara, 2006; Kobbé, Brown and Givern, 2016; Chávez, 2009; Brading, 2015; Cannon, 2009; Marcano & Barrera Tyszka, 2005)	Underpin ideological motivations of the Chávez administration; understand the goals of the 'revolution'; track structural changes to institutions; assess the language used by the incoming government to 'other' the opposition.
	SD2 - Local/international press, publications & media on changes to the cultural sector under Chávez (Apóstol & González, 2013; Esteva-Grillet, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Falcón, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Davila-Villa, 2008; Delgado-Aguirre, 2009; <i>El Universal</i> , 2017a, 2017b; <i>El País</i> , 2005, 2017; Sánchez Amaya, 2017; Kozak Rovero, 2006, 2015; Bermúdez & Sánchez, 2009; Khan, 2013; Ramos, 2012; <i>Propuesta-s dos</i> , 2009; Rodríguez, 2007; Zavarce, 2010)	Track structural changes to the country's cultural sector; set the context of the study and map out these government-driven changes to create a timeline of key events that have impacted cultural institutions and subsequently triggered the emergence of alternative art spaces; assess the motivations behind such changes; observe the reactions of professionals working within the cultural sector; observe how socio-political polarization directly affects the arts.
	SD3 - Government promotional material/publications (leaflets from Venice Biennale, material from museums in Caracas, web material from the Ministry of Culture, New Constitution; <i>Ley Orgánica de la Cultura</i> , 2005; Wisotzki, 2006 Interview with the Minister of Culture; government media sources).	Unpack and map out government-driven change; assess ideological motivations behind these changes; examine use of language as a means of 'othering' and delegitimizing previous institutional work whilst reinforcing new curatorial discourses and programming; access official side of the story.
	SD4 - Press coverage on Chávez's death [2013] (Barrera Tyszka & Marcano,	Unpack the way Chávez is perceived; examine government strategies to perpetuate political ideals

	2013; Carroll, 2013b; <i>Últimas Noticias</i> , 2013a, 2013b; <i>El Universal</i> , 2013; <i>El Nacional</i> , 2013).	through vice-president Maduro as ‘son’ of Chávez; assess the future without Chávez.
	SD5 - Publications on incidents of government censorship & expropriation (Almasy, 2017; Wyss, 2017; Vasquez, 2017; Barbarani, 2017; <i>El Pais</i> , 2007); government reaction to media coverage on censorship (<i>Radio Nacional de Venezuela</i> , 2016; <i>Republica Bolivariana de Venezuela</i> , 2017; Rosati, 2017).	Capture both sides of the story regarding incidents of censorship and expropriation in Venezuela; assess the language adopted by the government to defend their actions and target the opposition locally or foreign media; observe how the national and international press covers such events; set a backdrop of government-driven changes that have impacted the workings of the country; triangulate facts and observations on socio-political polarization in the country.
Non-participant observation	2009 - Venice Biennale Venezuelan pavilion, other national pavilions	Understand workings of art event; compare sponsorship of national pavilions (private/public) to Venezuela’s government-only support.
	2010 - Caracas, Venezuela Visiting national museums and galleries, established and new commercial galleries, alternative art venues, foundations and corporate collections.	Unpack the context of the local art scene; observe government-driven changes to art institutions; visit public and private art spaces; compare curatorship, audiences, dissemination of public/private art spaces; get a sense of socio-political polarization; observe political murals.
	London & Paris (2009-2012) Visits to art fairs, auctions, satellite galleries.	Assess how artists are disseminated on the international art scene via private sector art venues (including secondary market).

Figure 2. Mapping Caracas' art world.



The area highlighted in red represents Museum Plaza, the city's cultural quarter that was reclaimed by the Chávez administration. The areas in yellow and blue are the ones in which the displaced art actors established the "bubbles of freedom". The area highlighted in yellow is the commercial district of the city with a dense concentration of commercial galleries, privately-run art spaces, and where the local art fair FIA (Feria Iberoamericana de Arte) is hosted every year. Other nearby spaces include the Odalys Auction House and the Faria-Fabregas Gallery. In blue we find new art spaces including the Galpones Art Center and La Cuadra Gastronómica, both located in a high-class residential area.



Image 1. Individual venues clustered in a single art space at the Galpones Art Center

Figure 3. Data Structure

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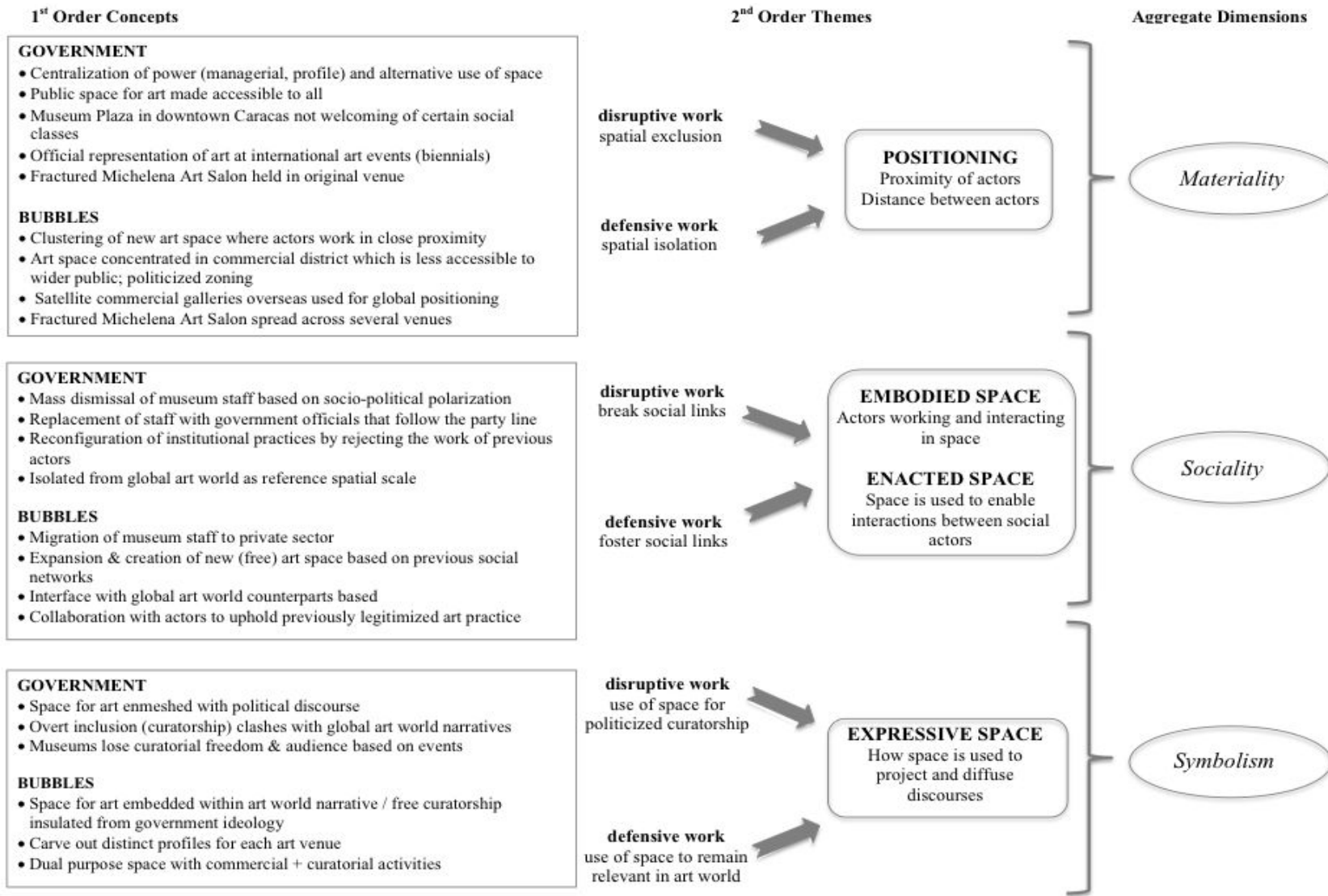


Table 2. Data Table – Material Use of Space

MATERIAL USE OF SPACE

Demarcation work of disruptive actors

1. Local curator, Federica Palomero, fears that the creation of *FMN* will add more layers of unnecessary bureaucracy to the museum framework: “It just multiplies bureaucracy [and] makes people feel even more distant from the decision-making process at the museums. Because there’s no one better than the museum staff itself, which knows the collection, the public, the [museum] profile, to decide what is best for the institution” (our translation, cited in Méndez, 2007; **SD2**; and in Rodner & Preece, 2016)

2. For art curator and promoter, Gerardo Zavarce, museums “represent much more than large, neutral and numbing white walls arranged to exhibit and display the whims and caprices of the bureaucracy, or elite in power. A museum, especially in the context of our latitudes, should be a critical project, whose premises should be restricted to the idea of a collection.” (our translation, Zavarce, 2010; **SD2**; and in Rodner & Preece, 2016)

3. Nelson, a local artists and arts producer who has collaborated on several biennial proposals notes how “*getting selected to go to Venice is a big deal ... it raises an artist’s profile... it puts them out there - on the global stage – where they might get noticed*”

Positioning of defensive actors

4. Given the geographic location and structure of some of the new art spaces, located in financial or residential districts of the city instead of downtown Caracas (like the state-run museums) the venues at bubble of freedom can be intimidating and inaccessible for many: *someone from Catia or Petare [Caracas’ largest slums] isn’t going to say ‘Hey, let’s go to Las Mercedes (high-end commercial district) comments curator and art writer Fernanda, well aware of the acute socio-economic inequalities in a country like Venezuela.*

5. Art manager Rocio feels that the country’s socio-political polarisation impedes her from visiting this public space for art since: *it’s an area where we are no longer welcomed, it’s a shame to say it, but perhaps because of my physical appearance or from what people can see, they quickly judge me and even attack me. Obviously, I cannot go somewhere where my personal safety and wellbeing is put at risk.*

6. *I tell people that I work in a little MoMA or a little Pompidou because I feel like this [new gallery space] went beyond the limits of what a private gallery should be... I feel that it [the space] is a work of art in itself. Just take a look at the natural light, with the glass pyramid and all the high quality materials... a beautiful floor that doesn’t compete with the works of art because it’s unpolished granite... it [the new gallery space] was purposely built to showcase ... to highlight the works of our featured and guest artists,* explains gallery manager Elizabeth.

7. On attending international art fairs, gallery manager Amanda explains how *a process of market consolidation starts to take place, because the artists are being seen by the most important collectors in the world, and [if works of art] are being bought by them – even better. Without a doubt [art fairs] act as a legitimizing force for artists.*

The fractured space of the Michelena Art Salon

8. Art salons acted as talent scouts for visual artists, explains former curator and art scholar, Felipe: *They award a young artist and that sets him apart from the rest, from the bunch... if in another 2 or 3 salones, his work is recognized – he wins another award, then he reaches a certain status [within the art field]... third place, second place, first place at Salón Michelena and whathaveyou, and ‘vroooooom’ he becomes a recognised young artist.*

 9. *The last time I participated, there was only 1 [salón] Michelena, because two years later it turned into 2 [salones] Michelenas – The [salón] Chavista Michelena and the [salón] Escualido [term used by Chávez to refer to middle-class, Opposition supporters] - so, I said no, I won’t take part in either of them. I don’t want to support any of that ... get into that,* laments visual artist and restorer Carmelo.
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Table 3. Data Table – Social Use of Space**SOCIAL USE OF SPACE***Embodiment of space*

10. *There is a whole generation - our cultural field is dominated by the generation that trained in the museums [...] everyone I have mentioned from a science of art point of view... ALL ALL ALL of them worked in the museums. In other words, the museums were like their schools where they learned the trade according to visual artists Jacobo.*
11. “Cultural policies are elitist policies, made by and for the elite. And in previous governments, [those cultural policies] made sense... Culture for the elite and cheap entertainment for the people... We cannot claim that the management of culture in the past was bad, no, it was perverse... We inherited a public institutionalism designed to satisfy the demands of a few families ... most of which were concentrated in Caracas... the vast majority [of the population] was being neglected by the public management of culture.” (our translation, Francisco Sesto cited in Wisotzki, 2006: 6; **SD3**)
12. President Chávez announced over his live televised talk show ‘Aló Presidente’ the dismissal of the country’s main museum curators, including founding director Sofía Imber from the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), Maria Elena Ramos from the Fine Arts Museum (MBA) and Clementina Vaamonde from the National Gallery (GAN): “The time has come to propel the creative and liberating cultural revolution [...] but it is hard in the world of culture [because it] has been made elite [...] princes, kings, heirs, families have taken over state institutions [believing that] they are autonomous.” (our translation, President Hugo Chávez, *Aló Presidente*, No. 59, 21.01.2001; **SD3**)
13. “[By] replacing all of the most powerful people in the Venezuelan cultural sector ... Chávez displayed his own position as the ultimate authority in the new Venezuela, while simultaneously ensuring that those who would take over control of state cultural institutions would be loyal to his new regime and would manage the cultural sector following the Bolivarian tenets of popular participation and instilling socialist values.” (Brown, 2016: 45; **SD2**)

Enactment of space

14. *There used to be a solid fusion of public and private support for the arts, but now as soon as the private sector peeks its head out, it must quickly pull back because of economic recession is severe and they are afraid of being expropriated or shut down.... It is really hard* explains corporate art curator, Tamara.
15. “We invited two very important museum directors: Gloria Zea, from the Museum of Modern Art in Bogotá (MAMBo) and Consuelo Ciscar, head of the Instituto Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM). Thanks to these meetings, two exhibitions took shape – a Jacobo Borges show at the MAMBo, and we are setting up a Baltasar Lobo show for IVAM [...] that was the same as what he had on display here” (our translation, Alejandro Freites cited in Falcón, 2011c; **SD2**).

Table 4. Data Table – Symbolic Use of Space

SYMBOLIC USE OF SPACE

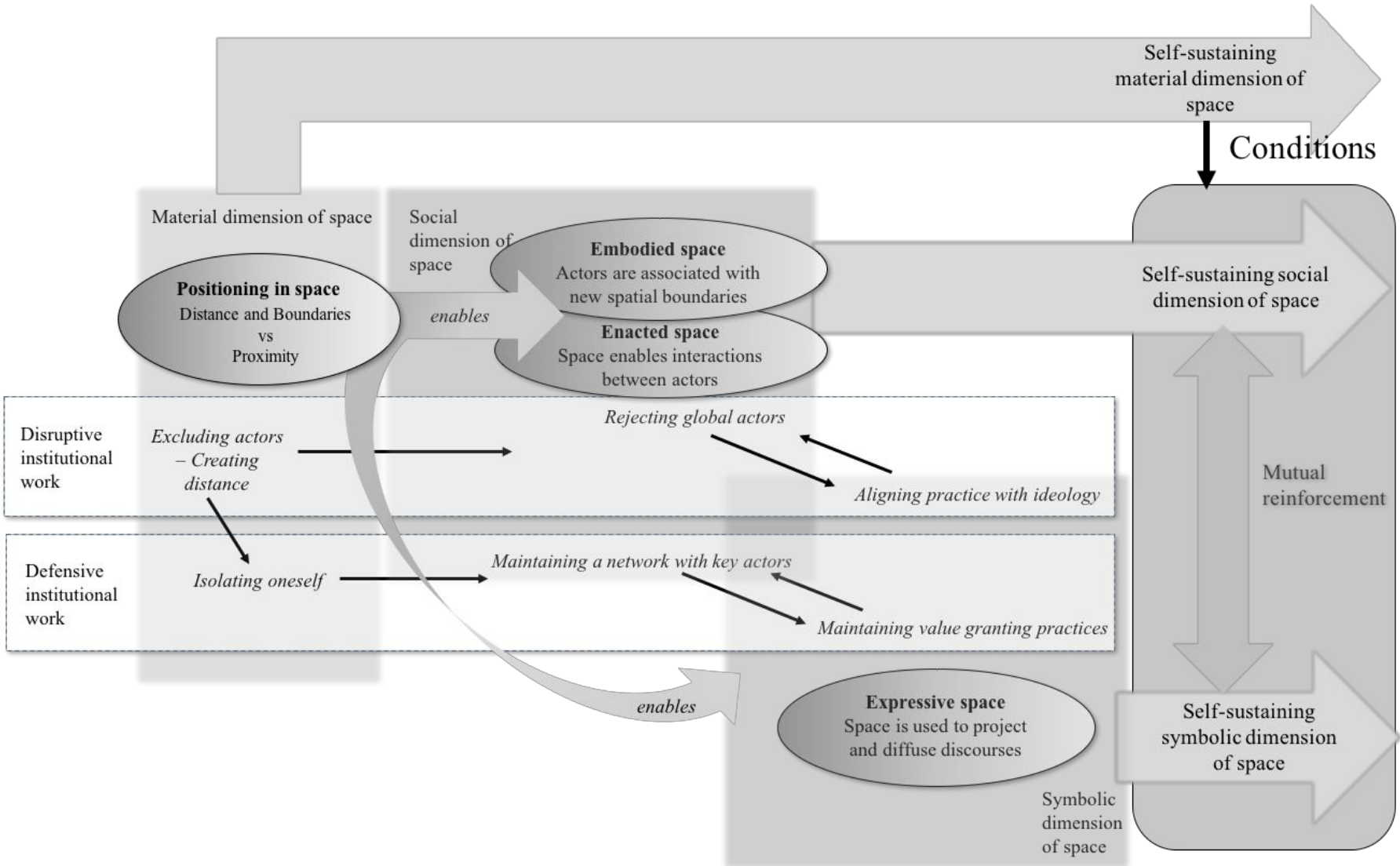
Politicized curatorship

16. Collective shows hosted at the country's major art museums feel like, according to gallery and art fair manager, Nicolas, *a sell-out of the museum network where they used Caracas' museums to showcase the work of anyone that wanted to take part, without any kind of quality control or consideration of artistic career.*
17. *Thanks to new socio-political directives... the country's museums only focus on mass-collective shows according to art writer and curator Fernanda.*
18. *They mixed (art) movements and genres, or they mixed people that did very basic, naïve work, or people that were artisans with artists with a certain career and reputation... creating a feeling of uneasiness ... It was a big mishmash, comments visual artist Isaac*
19. "Culture is not made by governments nor by the states nor by institutions. Culture is made by the people [whereby] all, absolutely all of us have the capacity to be creative. It is part of our human condition... We decree the time of inclusion, to include all of us. We are all in [...] without distinction" (our translation, Francisco Sesto in Wisotki, 2006: 22 - 24; **SD3**)
20. "Inclusion does not mean that any artist, artisan or art enthusiast can exhibit at museum level, it is a trick for these people from usually a humbler background, who are lacking the intellectual tools to notice that they are being manipulated in a Populist and demagogic manner. Not everyone can exhibit at the museum. Art is in itself, an elitist production. There are few artists that have the gift, the talent, [...] we are not all artists" (our translation, Federica Palomero cited in Méndez, 2007; **SD2**)
21. "It's nonsense. Reverón has nothing to do with contemporaneity, but rather modernity. But the issue goes well beyond the name change. It shows once again that the museums are disjointed with the country itself. They are no longer a legitimizing institution," lamented local gallery owner and art fair organizer, Nicomende Febres (our translation, cited in Sánchez Amaya, 2017; **SD2**).

Preserving art world discourses and practices

22. *For us as a gallery it has been a challenge and a great responsibility - the work that we are doing. It's a risk, a challenge and an incredible responsibility because in some way we have positioned ourselves as THE gallery that promotes... that showcases contemporary Venezuelan art. We are the reference for [the local] contemporaneity at an international level... because no other [local] gallery is doing it explains gallery manager Amanda*
23. "[...] they are making a real valiant effort to create new spaces so that those [contemporary] artists do not become orphans... a space to showcase the artwork and so that the artwork continues to progress, develop, and so that the spectator continues to have a place to experience the artwork ... so that critics continue to have a place to see and assess the artwork... and so that artists continue to have a place to display it" (our translation, Rafael Rangel in *Propuesta-s dos*, 2009 DVD; **SD2**)
24. "There is a very interesting movement in Caracas, very dynamic and which shows us that there *is* a public and that there *are* artists. People have been moving from the public to the private [sector] and from the museum zone which is now deteriorated from an urban point of view to the eastern areas that are much more agreeable [...] Beyond the commercial aspect, which is legitimate, the galleries have been taking over spaces. But it is not enough because museums house collections and operate at another level" (our translation, Federica Palomero cited in Méndez, 2007; **SD2**).

Figure 4. An Integrated Model of Space in Disruptive and Defensive Institutional Work



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32 Theory" (2018, Palgrave).
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