

DIY

www.diyartexhibition.blogspot.com

MISSION STATEMENT

“Do-It-Yourself” as an activity and as a concept has been fueling individual and collaborative creativity for centuries, not just within the US, where it became part of the social fabric under the umbrella of “yankee ingenuity”, but in a multitude of other political and cultural environments as well.

One can easily trace, throughout the history of humanity, a continuous desire to adapt and improve existing conventions, tools and practices, so that they may better fit each individual’s purposes. As humans, we share not only the need to learn from others’ experiences but also the desire to hand down instruction sets to others, so that they in turn may use and alter them in their own unique and creative ways.

Politically subversive in its inherent rejection of pre-formulated consumer culture, DIY philosophy has taken roots within many aspects of social and personal relationships, within the visual and applied arts, the sciences and within innumerable technological developments of the last decades. Many historically significant art movements such as Russian Futurism, Dada, Situationism, Fluxus, and Beuys’ vision of the social sculpture embody DIY characteristics and have led to contemporary manifestations in the works of Temporary Services, the Center for Applied Autonomy, or Critical Art Ensemble.

This exhibition will focus on the different aspects inherent in most successful DIY projects, be they of historical, political, or artistic importance. We will examine the remarkable breadth of DIY in today’s culture and cover such diverse areas of activity as self-publishing, personal journalism, podcasting, amateur science, architecture and design, and independent filmmaking. The show aims at leading visitors into active exploration of, and participation in, a variety of DIY projects that we found to be exemplary and empowering, and will discuss work that readily gives up any claim of proprietary and lasting authorship. In association with the physical installation this event will include a web project, accompanying documentation, as well as lectures and workshops within the gallery space.

STEP ONE:

The guiding principle for the past three months was to disseminate an invitation for people to comment, critique, and suggest areas that they consider falls under the expansive umbrella of Do-It-Yourself culture. We sent out the original PDF (outlining the goals of the exhibition along with an ever-growing map of websites containing examples of DIY activity) in order to spark a dialog. The real goal was to gather, glean, and anticipate a shape from which the exhibition might emerge. We did find that the areas of interest had a great deal of overlap and with a lot of editing we could narrow down the concepts and create a more concentrated instruction set for what the show will be.

The following document is therefore a more concentrated road map of where the show is going. The most recent version is therefore a condensed and necessary prelude to inviting participants into an emerging exhibition that will find its final shape as each each one of them adds their contribution.

This show will hopefully emerge as an interactive happening that will take place over time and last long beyond the exhibition dates. We want it to continuously spark conversation about DIY as a cultural phenomenon and how it can continue to flourish. The following revised map is to help focus and shape the final exhibition and set of activities; it remains open for anyone who has already contributed thoughts to continue to add to them.

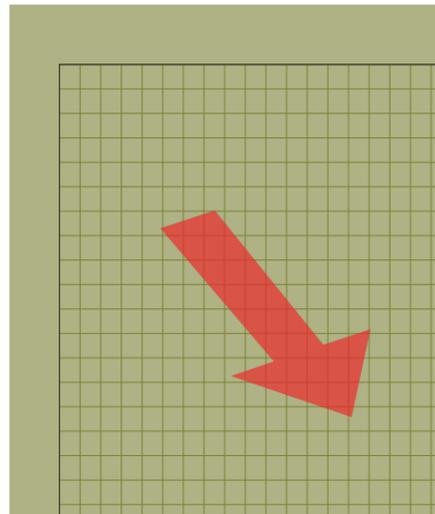
STEP TWO:

THREE SIMPLE IDEAS:

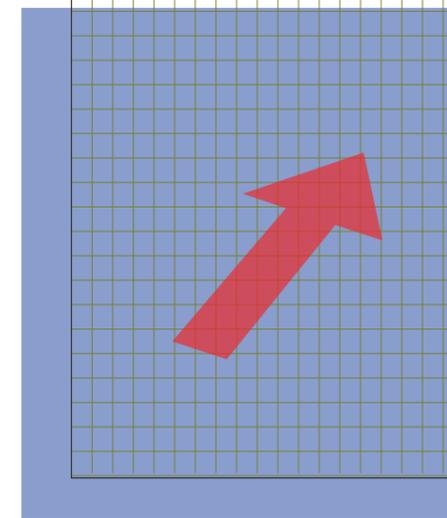
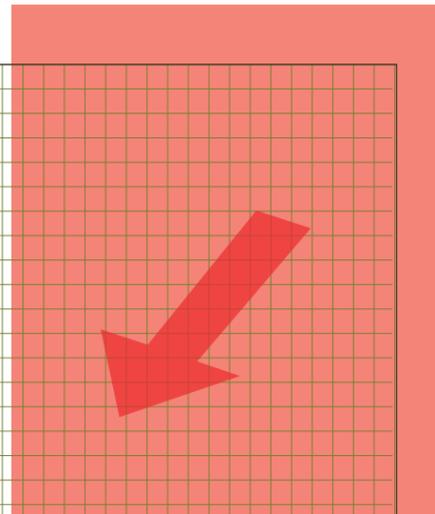
1. The instruction set forms the core of D.I.Y. activity. Through the instruction set information is passed on, shared, and expanded/improved. The best instruction sets are clear flexible tools that inspire by example. There is no set format for an instruction set- its effectiveness is proven in its ability to inspire change and repetition.
2. The distinction between amateur and professional is very porous and worth exploiting from both directions. Professionals often give away knowledge so others can gain insights and amateurs often excel at what they do because they are passionate and hardworking and often challenge professionals. The opposition between amateur and professional is often times arbitrary and established as a method of exclusion rather than inclusion.
3. D.I.Y. activity at its best should foment change and clear space for alternative ways of looking and doing. It also returns us to less consumption-driven individuals and inspires us to actively involve ourselves more directly in daily living.

MAPPING PROCESS

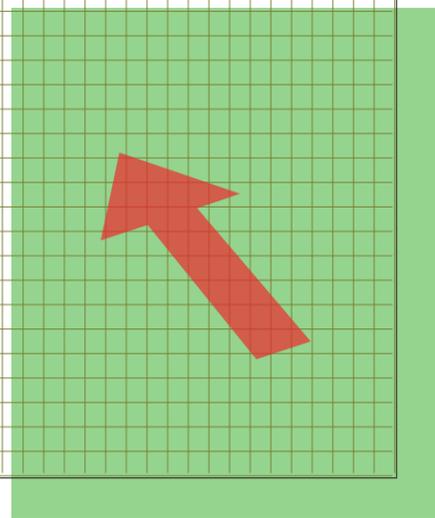
ECONOMIC SPHERE



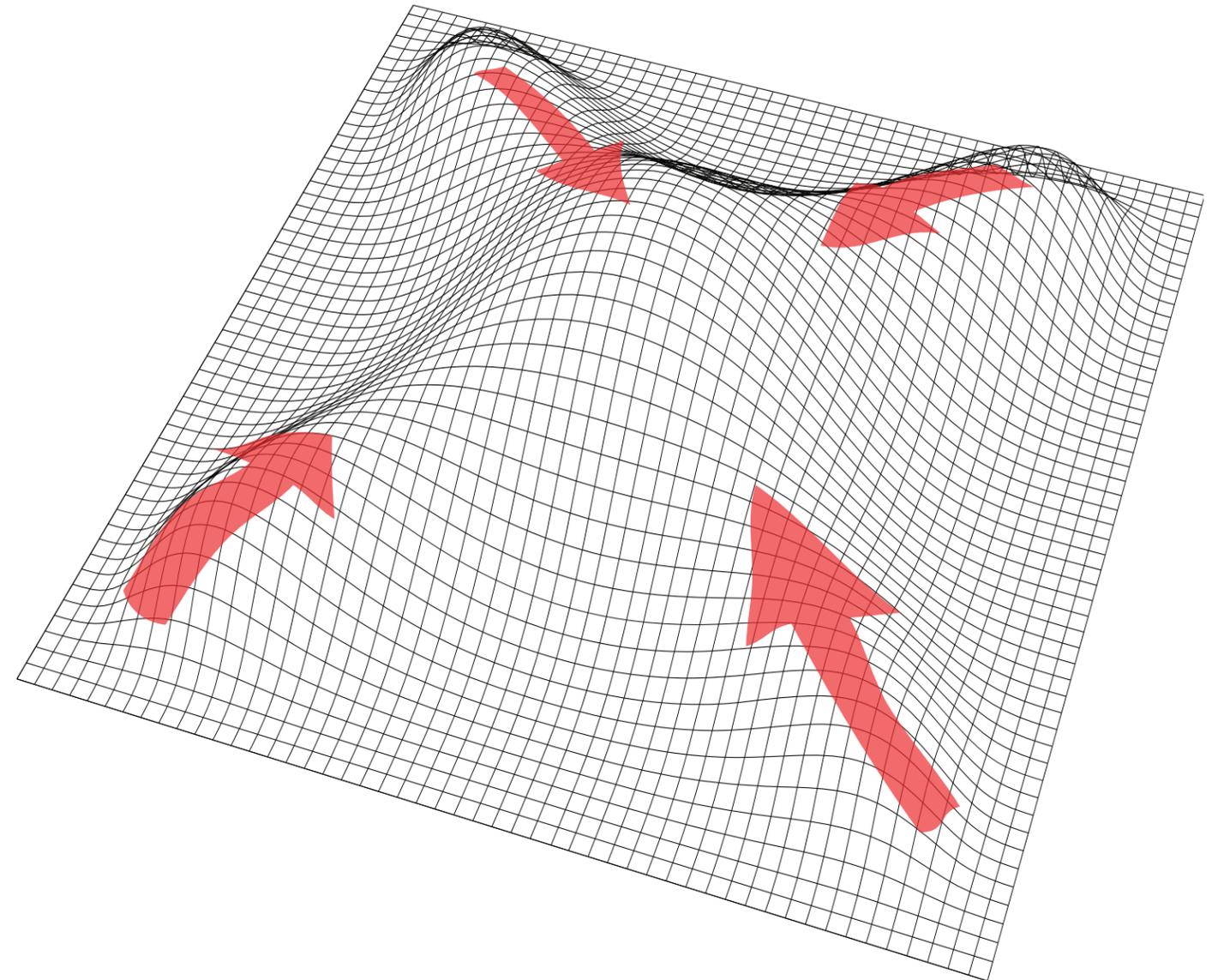
TECHNOLOGICAL SPHERE



POLITICAL SPHERE



SOCIAL/CULTURAL SPHERE



A simple matrix was established from all the comments we collected and arrayed on a square grid. A computer model was generated using a simple X form with a raised center to represent convergence or overlap. This area of convergence has become the most critical area of investigation. The resulting 3-D Cartesian map will continue to go through more permutations until it represents the most realistic representation of the forces impacting DIY.

THE DIY LANDSCAPE

ECONOMIC SPHERE

blogosphere
day trading
on-line bartering
self publishing/distribution
crowdsourcing
entrepreneurism
natural capitalism
gift economy
disintermediation

Punk
grassroots organizing
Open Source
self publishing
women's groups
Podcasting
citizen journalism
blogosphere
collaborative journalism
Artist Collectives
zines

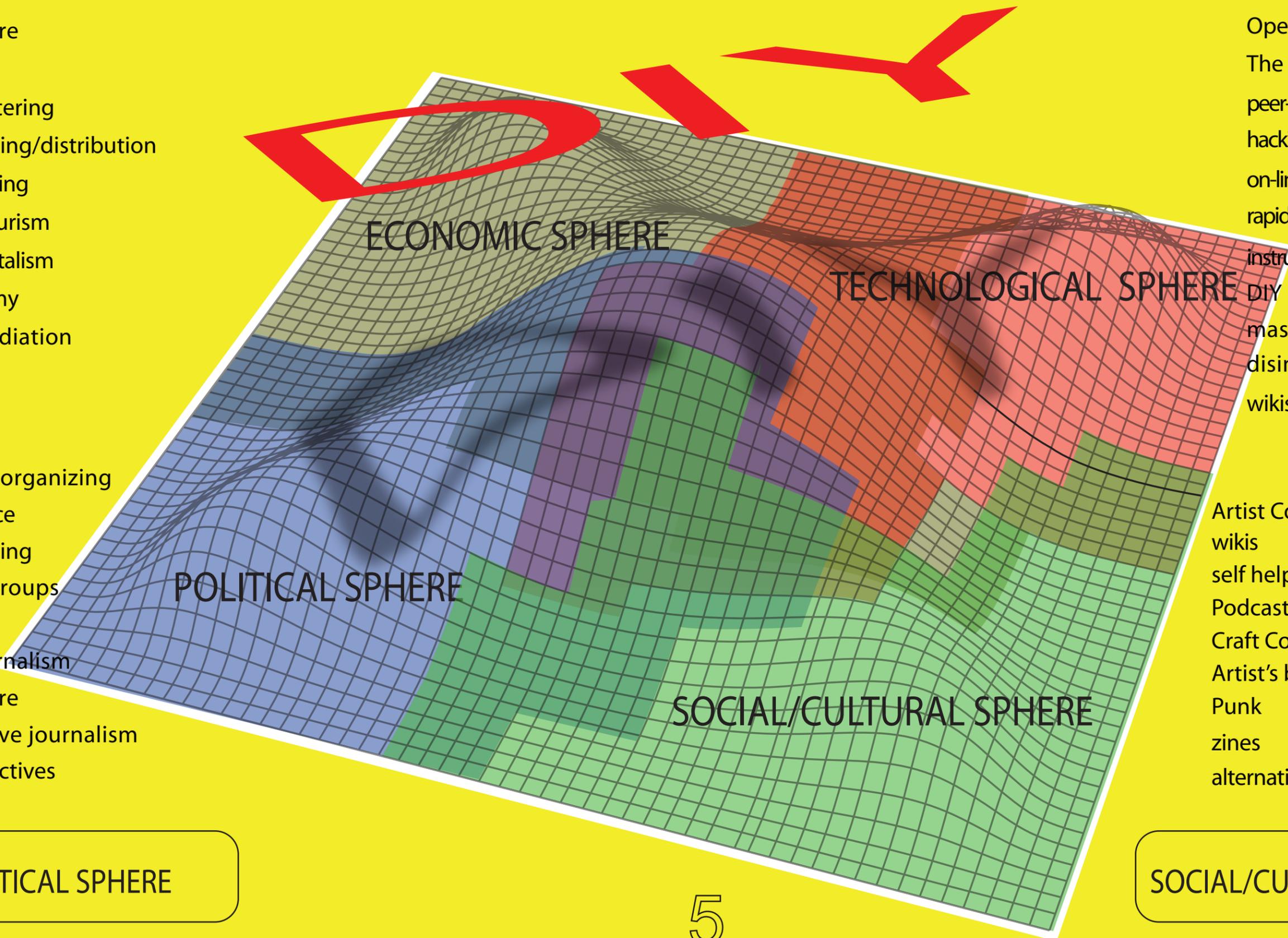
POLITICAL SPHERE

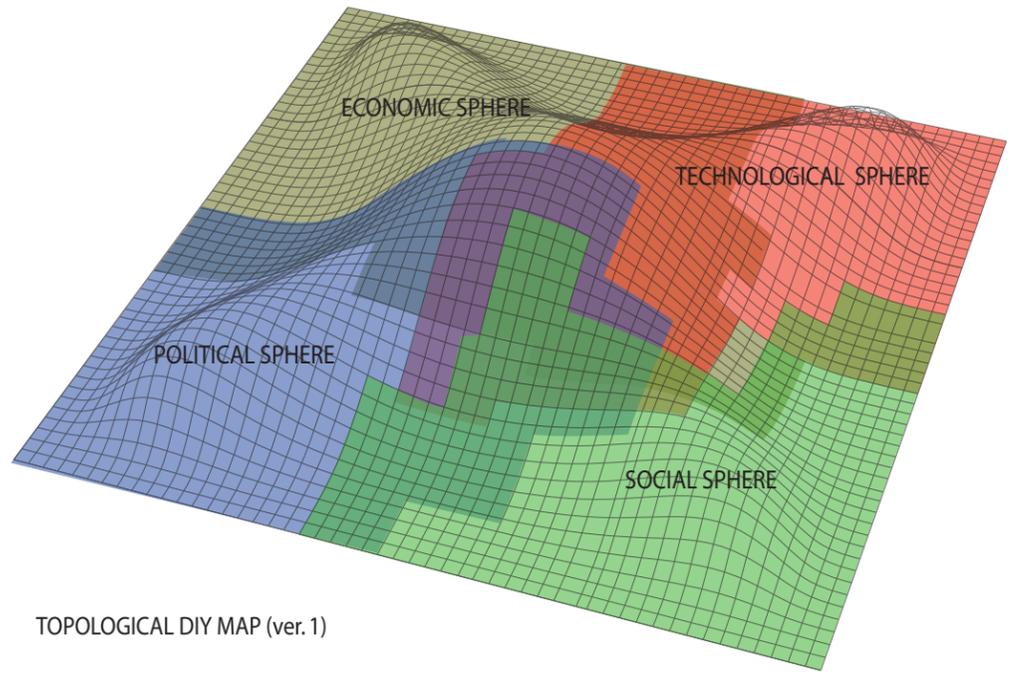
TECHNOLOGICAL SPHERE

Open Source
The long tail phenomenon
peer-to-peer
hacking
on-line communities
rapid prototyping
instructables
DIY science
mass customization
disintermediation
wikis

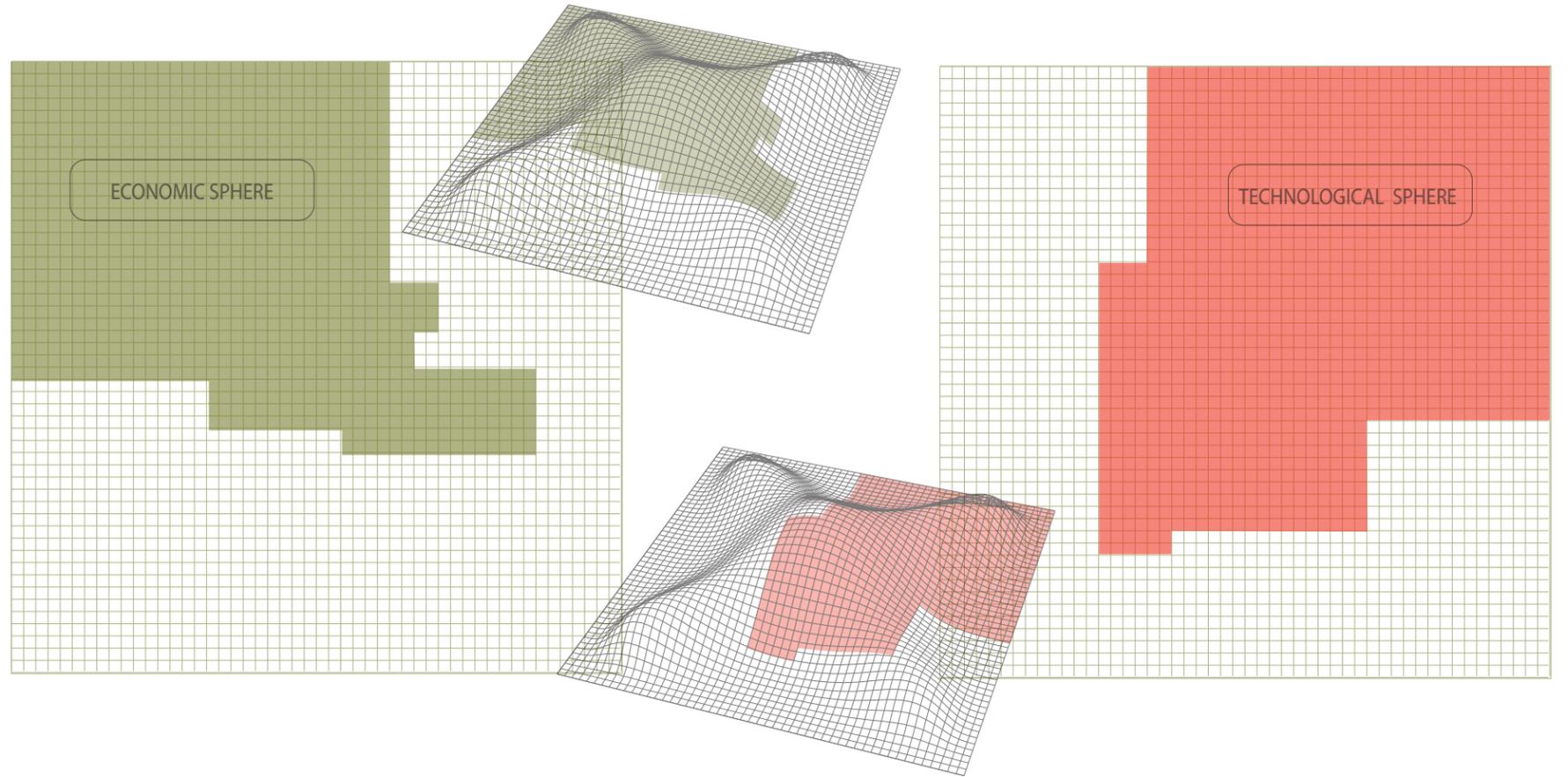
Artist Collectives
wikis
self help
Podcasting
Craft Collectives
Artist's books
Punk
zines
alternative medicine

SOCIAL/CULTURAL SPHERE

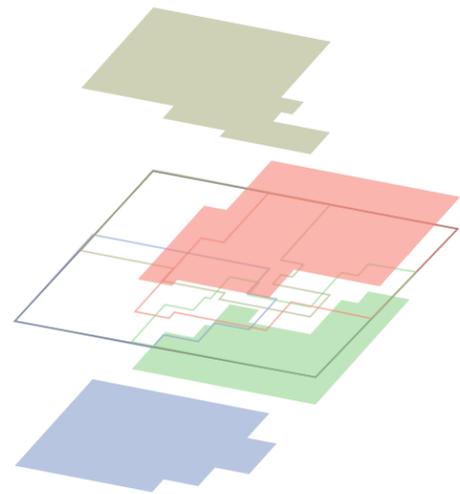




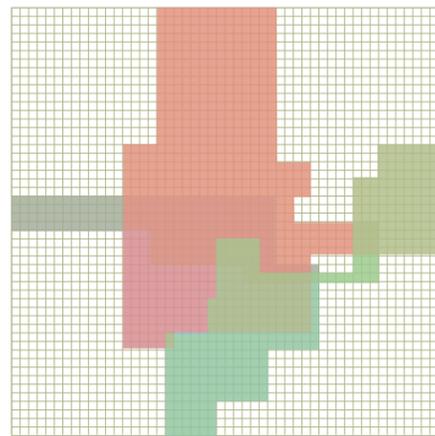
TOPOLOGICAL DIY MAP (ver. 1)



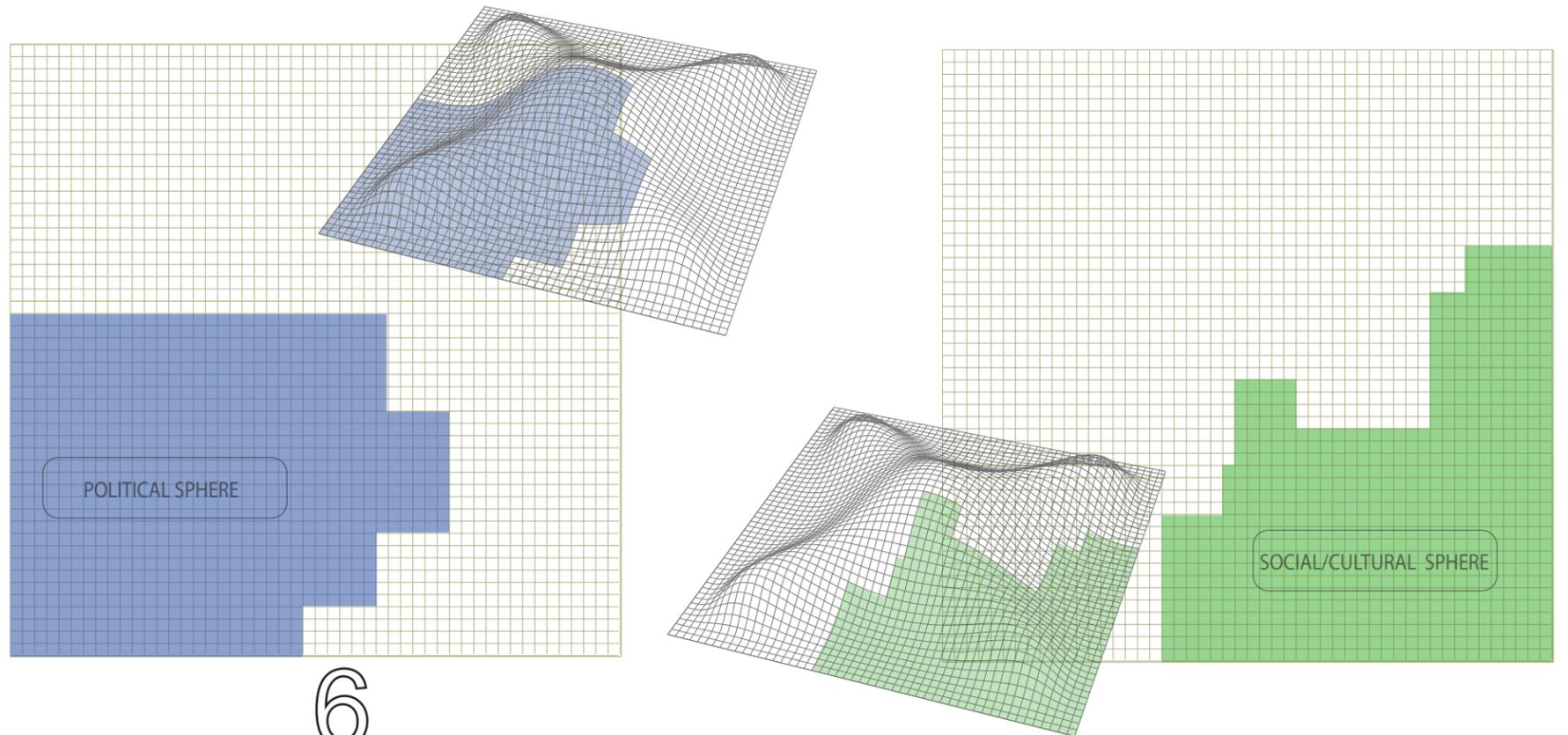
THE **DIY** LANDSCAPE

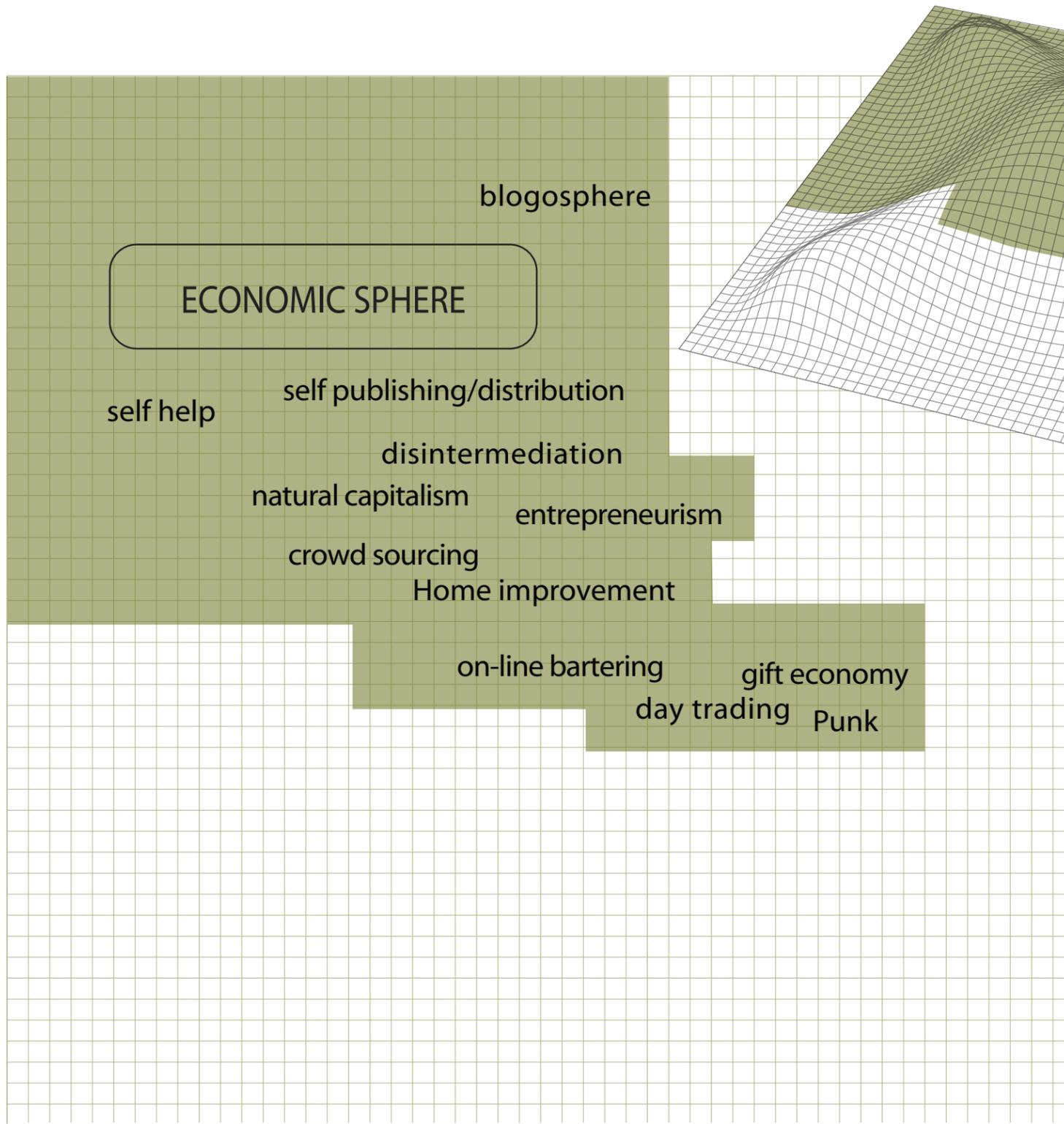


EXPLODED VIEW



INTERSECTION (COLOR)





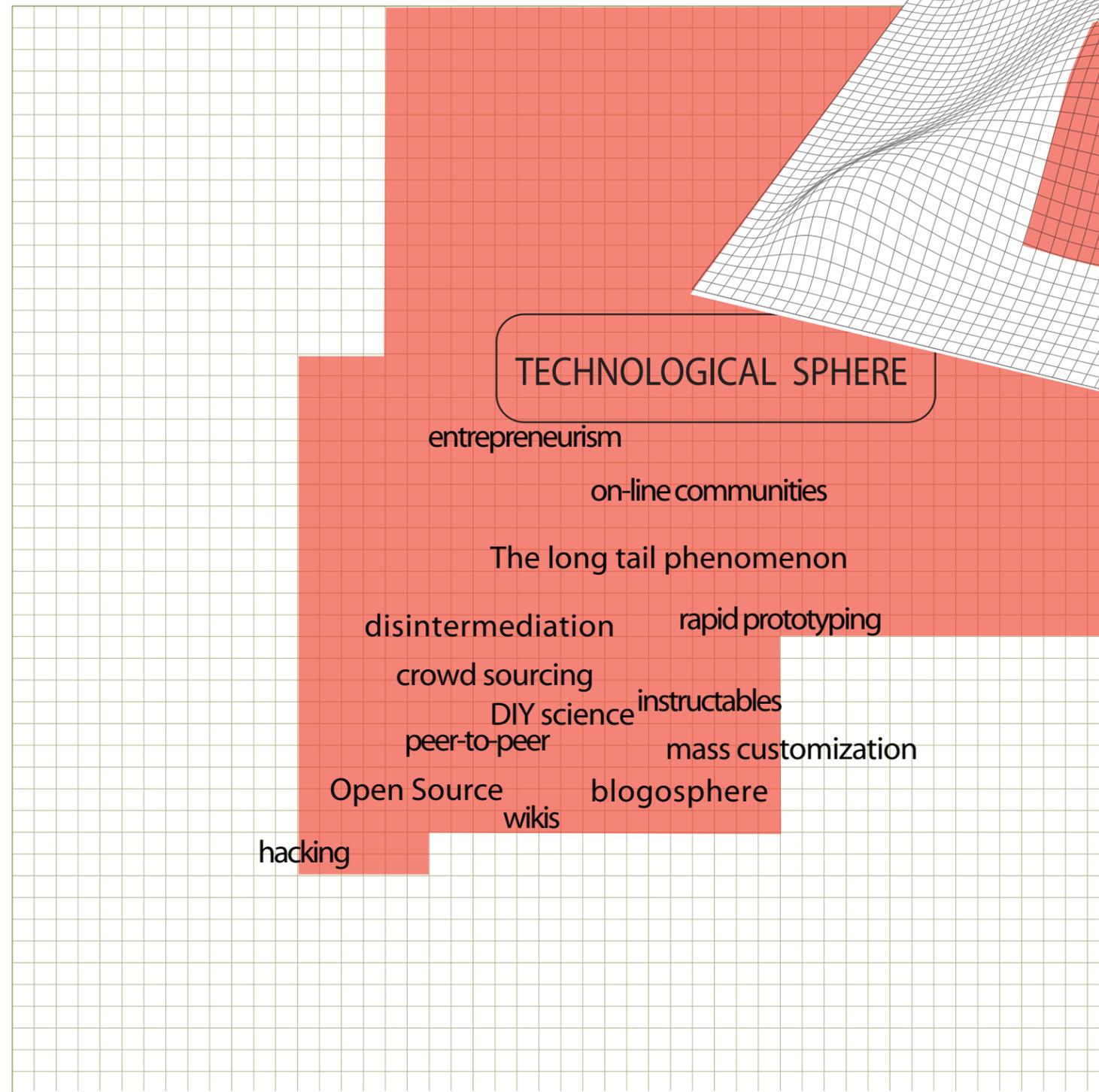
The economic aspects of DIY are far-reaching and complex. When DIY home construction projects became a mass cultural phenomenon in the US and Britain in the 1950s it was primarily a response to economic and labor-market conditions of the immediate postwar era. Taking on DIY was a way for new homeowners to conserve money and assert their self-reliance. Yet the popularity of the DIY movement remained long after the wartime economic burdens were lifted.

Today, Do-it-Yourself continues to symbolize personal responsibility and financial independence from the corporate world. (Though this is often more of a moral stance than a true economic need.) The concept of 'Yankee Ingenuity' and personal entrepreneurship still has a very sacred spot in the American mythos. The 'garage workshop' holds a special place in capitalist society as the site where many enterprises begin off-the-beaten track and outside the normal route of business. Technology and economics overlap regularly: within the past decade many new companies have sprung up that capitalize on creative products by DIY practitioners. For example, the internet offers many new way to distribute, market and sell independent music or personal publishing. DIY is not inherently capitalist or anti-capitalist. It can run the gamut from the punk DIY ethic of creative commons, disavowing corporate culture to the DIY entrepreneur's dream of creating the invention that will strike it rich.

Innovators like Paul Hawken figured out how to re-work capitalism to include environmentalism while Shawn Fanning figured out peer-to peer technology for sharing music and spawning a revolution in Napster. The 'gift economy' continues to have a profound impact on culture and economics even as more and more of it is commercialized.

Disintermediation has come as a result of technology (cutting out intermediaries in the supply chain.)

THE ECONOMIC SPHERE



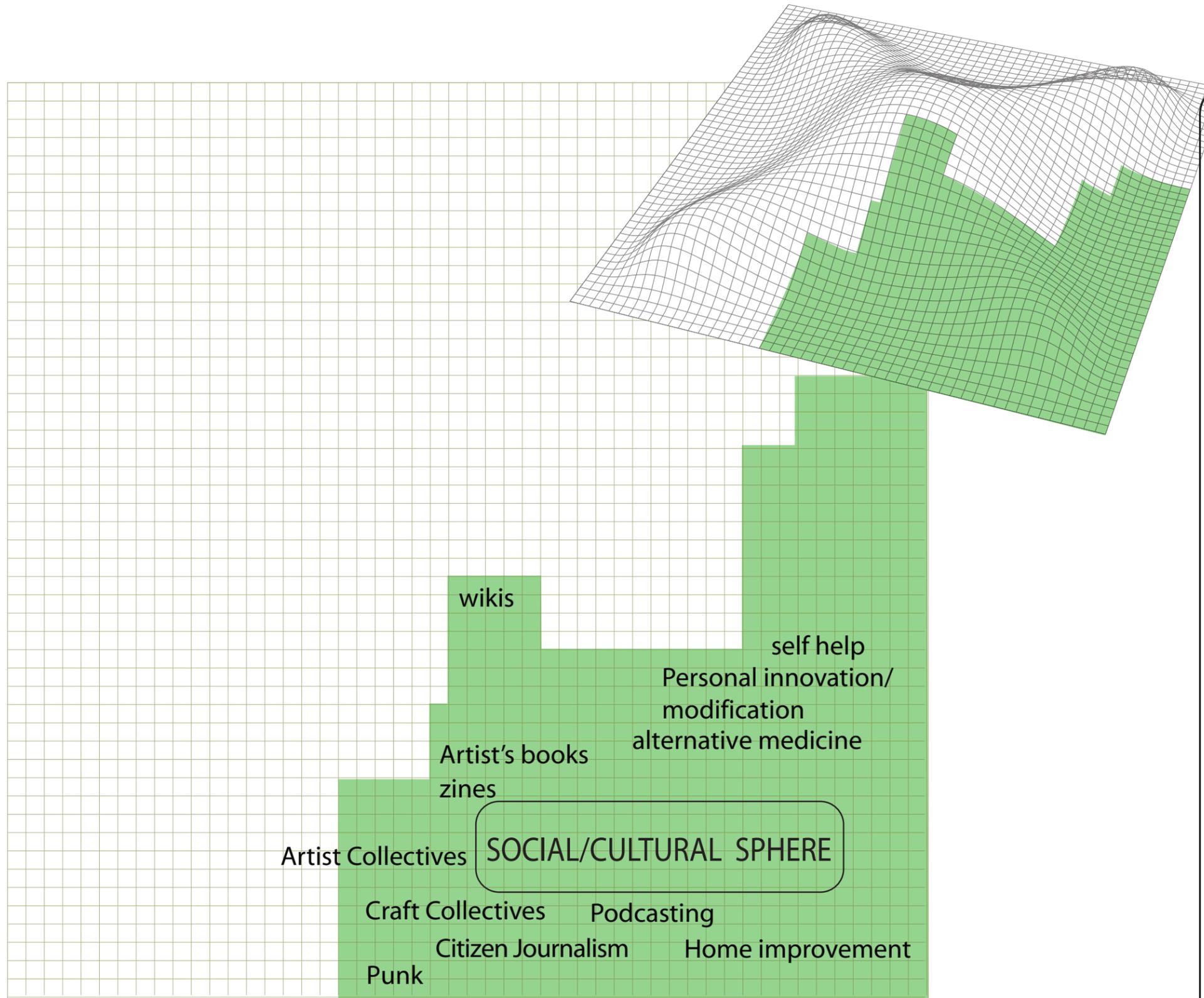
Some aspects of DIY are based on technological needs and the frustration that arises when problems are not satisfied by existing products or services. One could equally well argue that the purity of scientific or technological curiosity has created a natural DIY inclination. For decades, magazines such as Popular Mechanics, Mechanix Illustrated, and The Family Handyman offered a way to keep current on DIY technology information.

Dissemination of DIY instructions on the Internet and the growing comfort most of us experience with digital technology has kept DIY a viable practice and philosophy in the 21st century. Resourceful hackers and tinkerers look to technology for challenge and the reward of invention. DIY technology is tied very closely to the Open Source movement, which promotes access to a software's code to promote experimentation and improvement. Open Source is a paradigm with its origins in computer programming but has come to be used as a philosophy for any kind of open method of authorship, spawning such projects as the Wikipedia and Life Hack.

A second aspect driving DIY culture is the fact that science and technology have become increasingly complicated. DIYers have begun to question the cult of the 'expert'; finding personal validity in doing their own technological repairs, or claiming the power to make their own medical assessments. Some corporations have seen this as a viable business model challenging their own R&D departments which have grown moribund and insular. Many Fortune 500 companies now post technical problems on their websites with large awards for anyone who can solve them a concept called crowd sourcing.

Technology's biggest impact has been in the digital realm providing a new set of tools to do nearly everything- including democratize technology itself. Digitalization has spawned new information channels which have allowed for an explosion of new information feeding ever more DIY endeavors.

THE TECHNOLOGICAL SPHERE



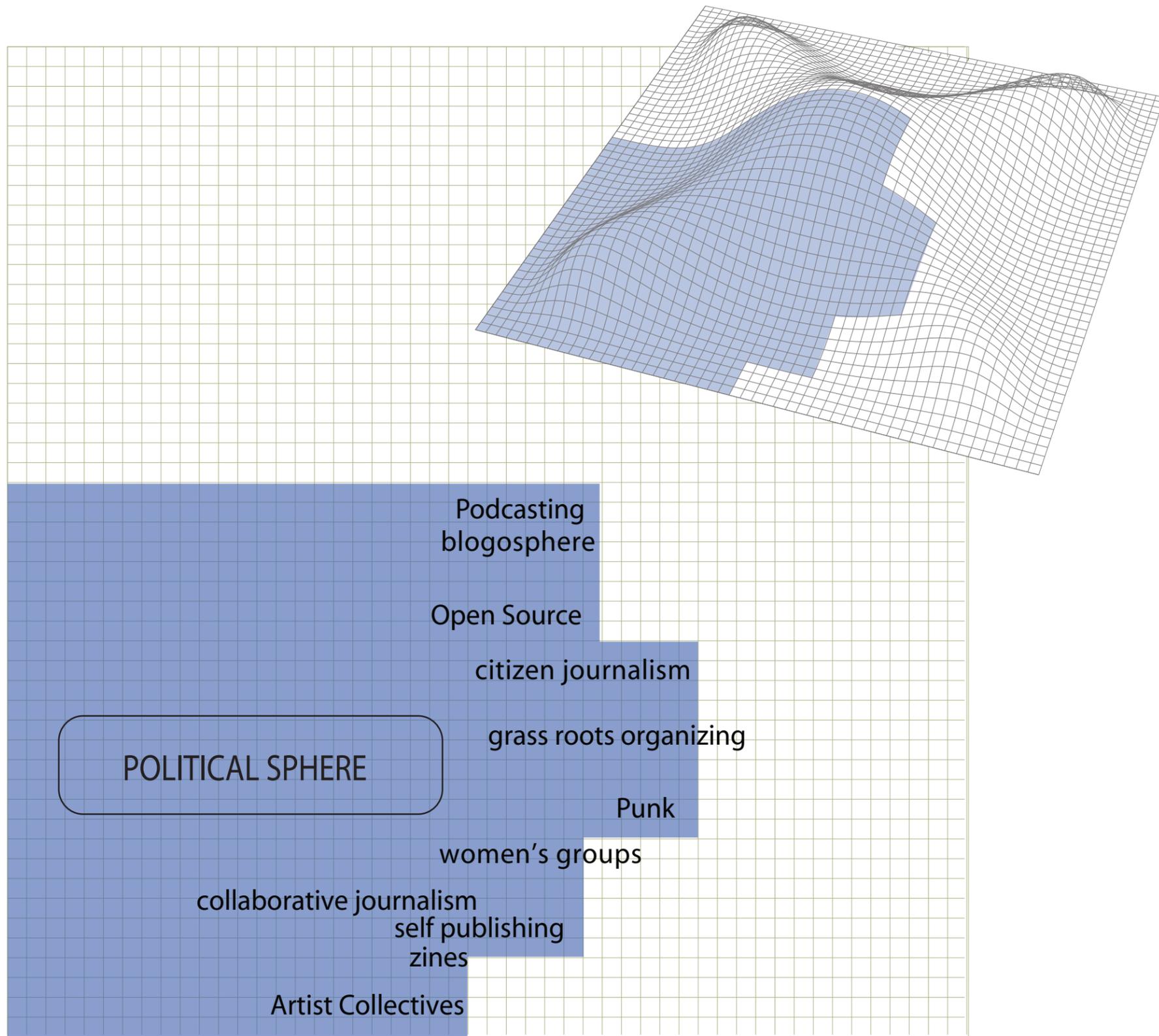
The social/cultural aspects of DIY are a complexly woven map with little discernable separation between the cultural and the social realms. DIY is a social construct as it relies on the sharing of instructions. In current DIY efforts one finds less separation between those who draft instructions and those who follow them. DIY often seems to support group structures in which each member shares the methods they have uncovered for various projects so that each member benefits from the instructions of the others.

In our society DIY is often the only pathway for those looking to succeed in the arts: writing, visual art or music. The most popular form of DIY arts in America is the crafts movement; encompassing everything from scrapbooking, to knitting circles, to home repair. These areas of production come directly out of a social need to gather and also to share ideas, support one another, and participate in a creative community.

Traditional folk music has always had an underlying aspect of DIY: one musician teaching another a new tune through playing and listening. That same process now applies to all arts, as creative works are more easily shared, altered, and disseminated over the Internet. Podcasting, for example, in many ways extends the folk and oral traditions of passing on music, commentary, and stories. The internet offers new ways for cultural producers to distribute their work without going through professional channels and surrendering their DIY status.

Many significant historical art movements took the concept of an artist as a DIY figure who should strive to alter the social and political world around them. Groups like Fluxus, Situationists, or Dada encouraged social interaction as a cultural production. Today's DIY philosophy retains this sense of creativity through exploration in society and the desire to alter the everyday objects and experiences around us.

THE SOCIAL/CULTURAL SPHERE



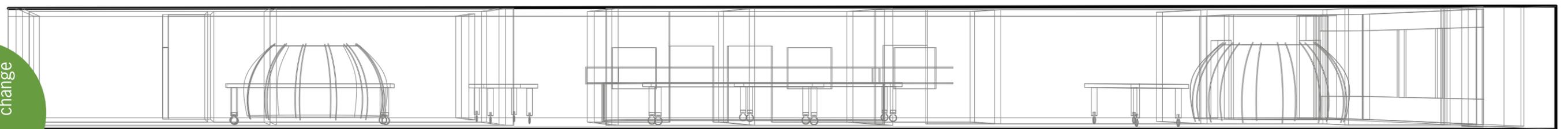
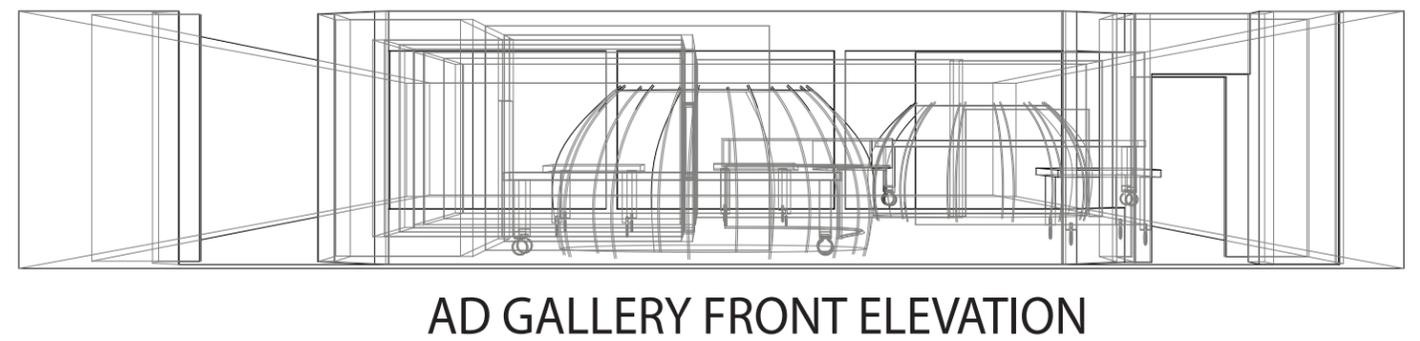
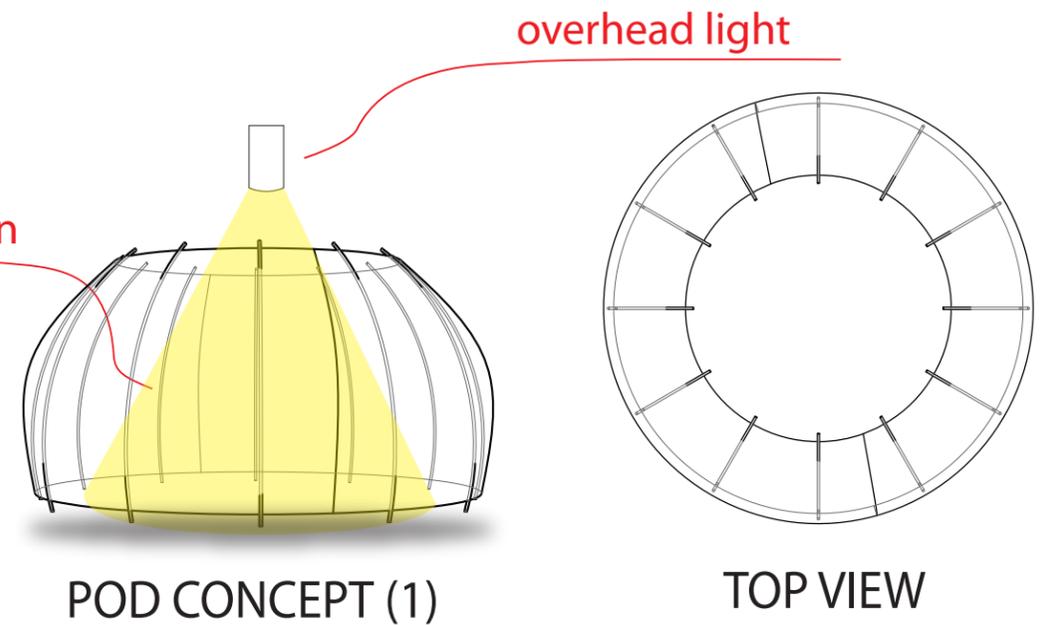
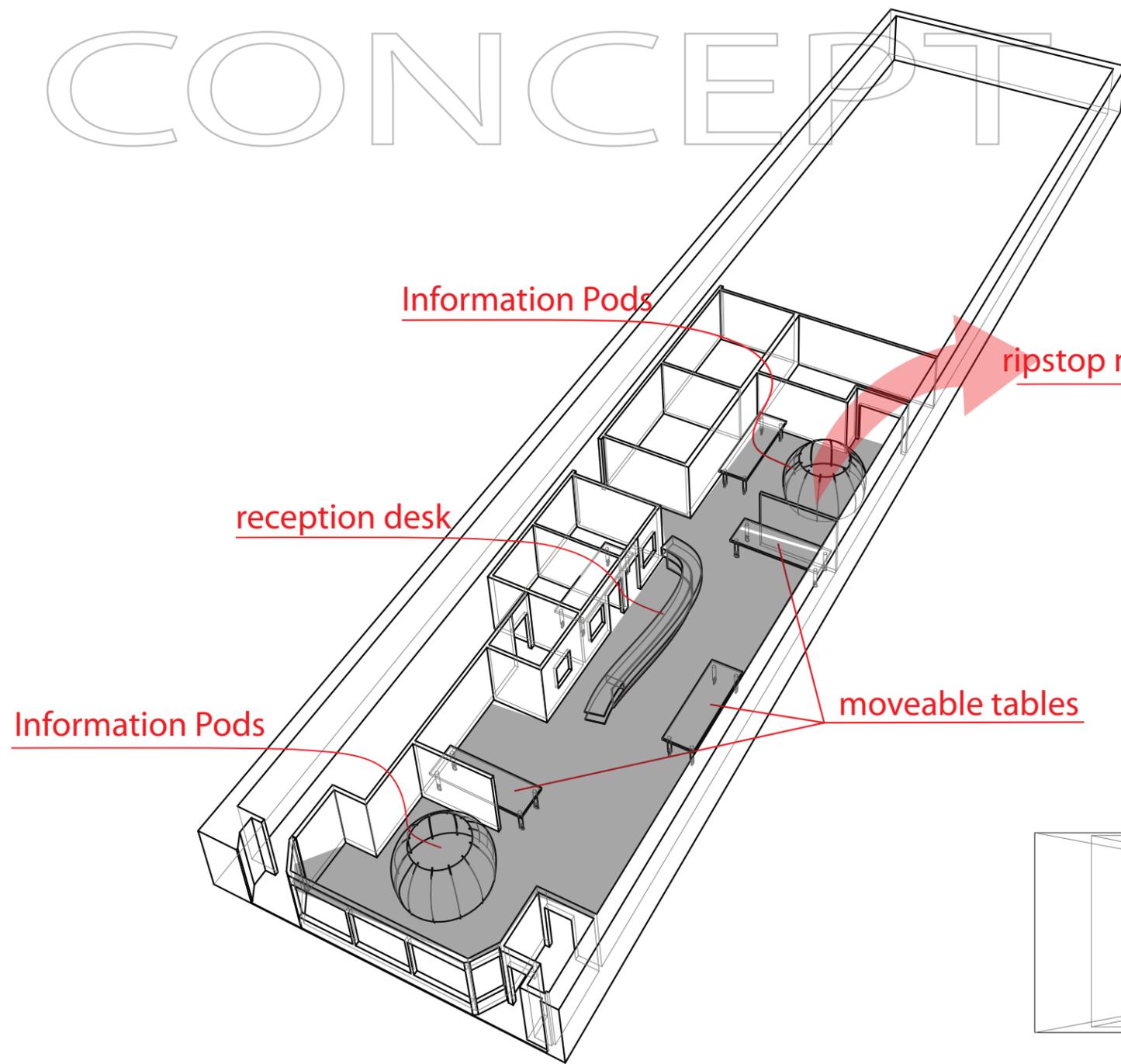
Whereas the origin of the term DIY once just referred to amateur repair and craft projects the term has evolved to encompass ethical and political meaning. DIY politics questions the uniqueness and sole authority of the expert's voice, and promotes the ability of the ordinary person to learn and expand their skill sets. The DIY ethic can also extend to how any group or individual applies DIY political stances to daily life—especially how they avoid contributing to institutions they see as exploitative. These efforts include alternative energy—for example converting cars to run on vegetable oil, or learning bicycle repair, sewing/fixing/modifying clothing, starting gardens, dumpster diving, etc.

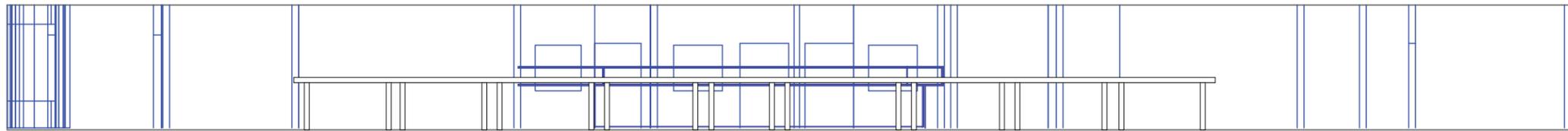
To a certain extent, DIY is simply a way of finding ad hoc solutions to problems that are otherwise usually solved with government, corporate or wealthy benefactor support. Within electoral politics there is often a very strong DIY impetus around grass roots organizations (Do-It-Ourselves might be a better acronym). Often such groups form to focus on single issue movements they feel are underserved in mainstream political channels; areas such as civil rights, health advocacy, women's issues, environmental, or gay rights.

Technology has accelerated the ability to get political messages out faster and farther through alternative channels of communication. Citizen journalism, including political blogs and podcasts, contributed to the last presidential election. Such journalism rejects the one directional flow of information, and is shaped by greater participation and open feedback by its audience. Inevitably, however, effective new strategies in politics pioneered by DIY grassroots activists ended up being copied by mainstream lobbyists and politicians. While this poses real threats to the original innovators it also represents the lifeblood of the DIY spirit— a restlessness to reinvent

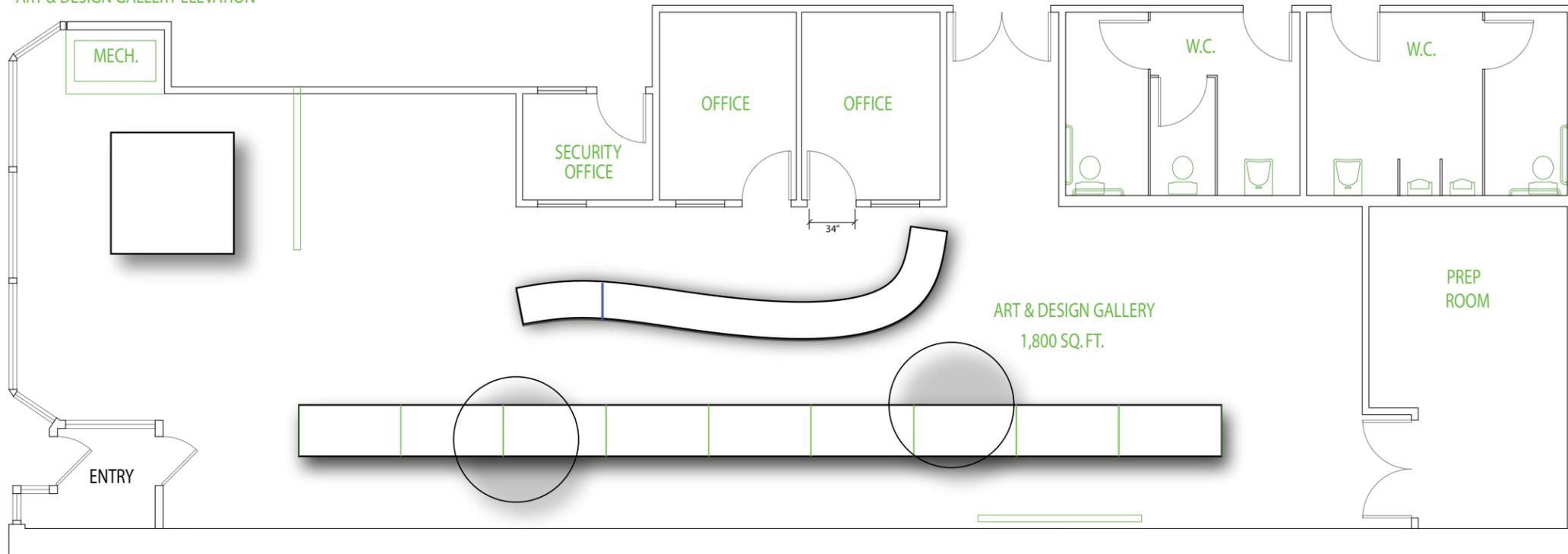
THE POLITICAL SPHERE

CONCEPT ONE

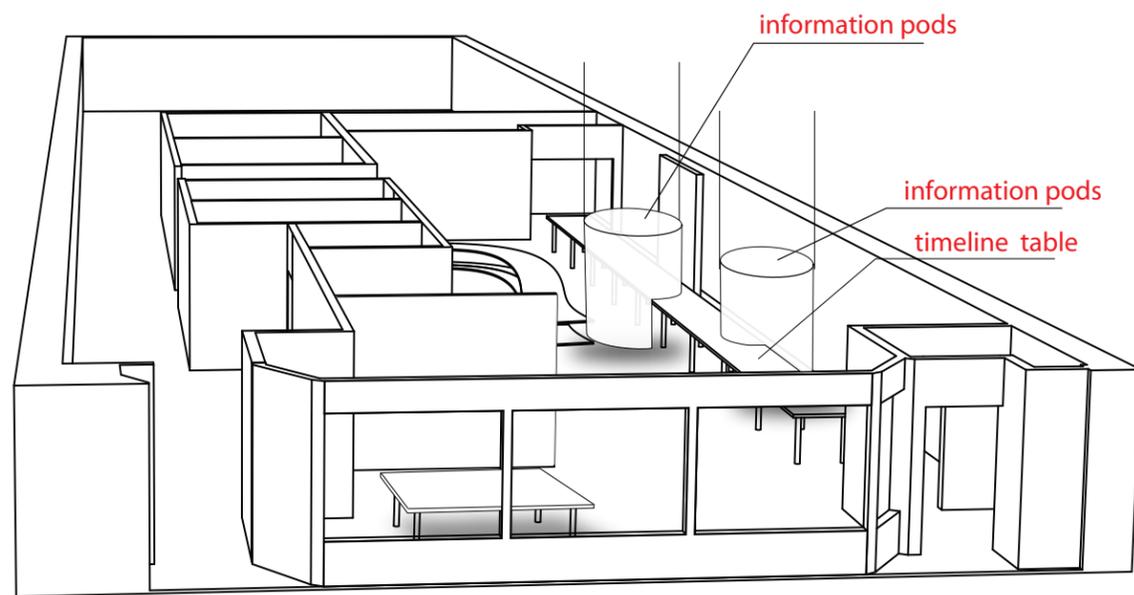




ART & DESIGN GALLERY ELEVATION



ART & DESIGN GALLERY FLOOR PLAN



Concept with long table and pods

