Open Institutions

Institutional Imagination and Cultural Public Sphere

Publication in your hands documents a process that was aimed at exploring the potential for transforming the cultural systems throughout the former Yugoslavia by means of innovative institutional and organization models. Regardless of particularities and differences between them, in all of them it is public institutions that hold a dominant position. And while the last two decades have seen our societies undergo radical transformations and painful turmoils, cultural institutions in their dominant position have remained closed off to new cultural and artistic practices, progressive social movements and the public at large. Meanwhile the potentials for development within the cultural system have either withered away or migrated to its margin, reserved for civil society initiatives and organizations.

Essays, proceedings and practices collected in this publication reflect the discussions held within the project *Open Institutions – New Meeting Points of Culture and Citizens*, organized by Association Operation City from Zagreb in partnership with Asociacija from Ljubljana and Kontrpunkt form Skopje, and implemented in collaboration with POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth. By holding a conference in Zagreb on *Open Institutions – Institutional Imagination and Cultural Public Sphere* (Jan 20-23, 2011) and subsequent discussions in Ljubljana (Feb 15, 2011) and Skopje (May 5-6, 2011) it was precisely the civil society margin of the cultural system – what we have come to know as independent culture – that wanted to revisit the questions of new institutional imagination and opening of institutions. Opening in its twofold meaning: as opening of new forms of institutions and opening up of old institutions towards their respective art fields and the public sphere.
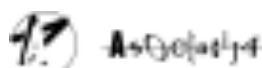
This demand emerged from a particular experience of Zagreb's independent cultural actors, who after a long period of political antagonism have succeeded in convincing the local public authorities to work together on opening a hybrid public-civil society institution that would be founded on ideas of sharing of resources and improvement of working conditions for the independent culture. This hybrid institution is the POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth.

The demand for and experiences of institutional innovation open a number questions that this volume tries to tackle: What role do we envision for culture, cultural institutions and cultural organizations in the public sphere? What can we imagine as their social agency and criticial potential? What are the ways to reduce disparities between institutional culture, noninstutional actors and artists? What would it take for institutions to become inclusive and their resources common?

Tomislav Medak

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The cultural public sphere *contra* econo-mistic cultural policy

Introduction

An alternative perspective to economistic cultural policy is framed by public sphere theory. The concept of the public sphere derives from liberal-democratic thought. However, it is important to distinguish a liberal-democratic concept like the public sphere from, say, the mere naming of a political party such as the Liberal Democrats in Britain, at present a junior partner in the British Conservative government that calls itself a 'coalition'. The political philosophy of the public sphere is quite different from and, moreover, critical of this and similar currents of neoliberal politics that are devoted to the theology of market forces and are hell-bent on destroying the final vestiges of what Pierre Bourdieu called 'the social state'.

Neoliberalism is not just a current in politics. It is the dominant ideological formation in the world today. The Anglo-Saxon – or, rather, Atlanticist – formation in global political economy has led the way in establishing the hegemony of neoliberalism nearly everywhere over the past thirty years. And, even in countries that have had what has been thought of as a welfare-state tradition of cultural policy, the cultural-policy framework has become predominantly neoliberal, whereby economic considerations always trump cultural considerations.

There is something especially ironic and indeed paradoxical about neoliberalism's application to cultural policy. Urban regeneration through cultural leverage, most notably, is supposed to make up for the devastation wrought by neoliberal economic forces and policies on local and regional economies. Neoliberal cultural policy is characterised, on the one hand, by cultural reductionism in that too much is expected of culture. And, on the other hand, the driving force behind this overloading of hopes and expectations onto culture is, in reality, economic reductionism.

The intellectual determination of such policy is, in André Gorz's phrase, economic reason and, in consequence, the policy goals are primarily economic. That is how public expenditure on culture is justified predominantly now. In effect, then, cultural policy is reduced to economic policy, often in a quite ludicrous manner.

Because cultural policy should be about culture first and foremost as a public good, it is reasonable and also necessary to be critical of crudely economistic cultural policy. The perspective of the cultural public sphere, in contrast, takes culture seriously and does not reduce it to economic instrumentalism. Incidentally, the problems of neoliberal cultural policy are exemplified and substantiated in the phenomenon of the regenerative festival in de-industrialised cities that I have studied.

Economistic Cultural Policy

Scholars and practitioners have argued over the rationale for cultural policy for many years, especially justifications for public subsidy to the arts, media, and sport. In the post-Second World War period, the main reason given for such state intervention in the cultural field was 'market failure', the assumption being that there are cultural forms that are in some sense socially valuable though they may not be commercially viable.

While, of course, there remains a considerable residue for that rationalisation – to preserve and develop, say, national heritage or to enable experimentation and popular participation – there is a curious sense in which the old rationale has been reversed.

The idea that public subsidy for culture produces an economic pay-off has been around for some time, in the sense of creating jobs, contributing to income tax revenue, attracting tourist revenue, and so forth. Since the 1980s, this has been a defensively Keynesian argument for sustaining public cultural investment – that it is not so much a cost to the public as, in fact, a benefit – and. in spite of the economic realism,

usually made for cultural reasons. The economic argument in support of public cultural investment has, however, transmogrified in recent years to become its primary justification – and for *economic* reasons, not cultural reasons.

That shift is manifested very clearly in the EU's annual European City – now Capital – of Culture programme. It was launched in 1985 when Melina Mercouri acquired the first designation for Athens. Whatever the decision-making process, nobody would deny Athens's qualifications for receiving the accolade – nor Florence in 1986, Amsterdam in 1987, (West) Berlin in 1988, Paris in 1989. But, in 1990, Glasgow?

There have been some other surprising designations since Glasgow during the past twenty years. In 2009, for instance, the accolade was shared by Hitler's home town of Linz, which he himself had intended to regenerate as a citadel of the Third Reich. In fact, Hitler spent much of his time bunkered under Berlin in April 1945 poring over a model of the regenerated Linz.

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The designation of Glasgow signalled a shift from a sign of universally acknowledged cultural eminence to an exercise in urban regeneration, in effect, civic boosterism, city branding and the like.

Still, the debate rumbles on concerning the 'legacy' of Glasgow 1990 twenty years later. Glasgow is now said to be very good for shopping – it has some not inconsiderable art and art galleries as well that are worth visiting. Claims are made that Glasgow – a once derelict, de-industrialised city - now has 58,000 jobs in tourism – a very broad category indeed covering quite a range of 'service' occupations. Even at the height of shipbuilding on the Clyde, there were only 38,000 actually employed to build ships.

Glasgow is undoubtedly a site, in Schumpeter's term, of 'creative destruction'. Whether the creativity has made up for the destruction is debatable. But, what is not debatable, in the case of Glasgow, is the conclusion that cultural policy is no substitute for social policy. Glasgow at present still has the three poorest constituencies in Britain and life expectancy in the city is ten years below the national average.

More broadly, we can argue about the extent to which the promotion of 'culture' and its cousin 'creative industries' is a satisfactory solution to the economic devastation caused by neoliberal transformation over the past thirty years, a notable feature of which has been to destroy manufacturing capacity in comparatively high-waged economies of the global West and transfer it to low-waged labour markets in the East.

What I am calling into question, then, are the claims made for economic revival and urban regeneration achieved by cultural leverage – and many more examples other than Glasgow can be given for calling these claims into question. It might even be asked: is the kind of policy regime exemplified by the European Capital of Culture programme merely neoliberal sticking plaster for the wounds inflicted by neoliberal economic transformation?

Cultural Public Sphere

In liberal-democratic thought, the public sphere is supposed to be the arena of rational-critical disputation, free and open debate on issues of interest to citizens, the deliberations deriving from which should have consequence for policy. It is this democratic aspect of liberalism that is currently undermined by economic liberalism or, rather, neoliberalism.

Fifty years ago, in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas told a pessimistic story of the decline of the public sphere from the European Enlightenment of the 18th century through the 19th century and into the late 20th century with the rise of heavily commercialised media and public relations, widespread political boredom, and the distractions of consumer culture.

However, in his later work, *Between Facts and Norms*, Habermas told a rather more optimistic story concerning the 'sluice-gate' model of the late-20th century public sphere whereby social movements and campaigning groups force critical issues onto the mainstream agenda. The most notable example in recent years would be global warming, though unfortunately it has been somewhat eclipsed in the past couple of years by the global financial crisis.

Of course, the very notion of the public sphere is both an ideal typification in the Weberian sense and an idealisation in the philosophical sense. My colleagues Peter Golding and Graham Murdock have described the public-sphere idealisation of politically democratic communications as a critical measure by which to assess what actually goes on in the politics of information and news.

The public sphere concept, then, is a vital analytical and critical tool, especially in light of what the journalist Nick Davies has called 'flat earth news'. According to Davies, falsehood and distortion are replete in a journalistic environmental that is now driven increasingly by commercial imperatives that starve actual newsgathering of the resources needed to properly investigate what is going on. So, much news today is merely the regurgitation of press re-

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leases and the voicing of authoritative opinion.

Critics of the news media like the ones I have just mentioned are concerned with what might be called *cognitive communications*. As someone interested in the arts, I am concerned equally with *affective communications*, aesthetics and emotion.

Habermas himself, fifty years ago, distinguished between the *political public sphere* and the *literary public sphere.* The 18th-century literary public sphere was not so much about transient news topics as complex reflection on problems of life, meaning and representation, the problems of art. So, the literary public sphere functioned on a different time scale to the political public sphere and its rapid turn-over of newsworthy topics.

A favourite example of mine to illustrate what is meant by the literary public sphere in the 18th century is the function of a text like Voltaire's picaresque novella *Candide* (1759), occasioned, it must be said, by a topical event, the Lisbon tsunami where over 20,000 people died. That event was news indeed, the object of what we would call today 'disaster management'. Voltaire, however, was interested in deeper issues than those normally treated in a here-today-gone-tomorrow news story, to wit, how to explain the significance of such an event in a priest-ridden culture. In effect, *Candide* was an attack on both religious mystification and uncritical rationalism; and it struck at the heart of modern disquisition on the meaning of life in an entertainingly novelistic manner.

The novel hardly performs such a function today even for a reading and (literary) festival-going public. Literature is simply not as important a medium in conditions of late modernity as it was during the formation of modernity hundreds of years ago.

Since then we have seen the proliferation of media and changes in literacy that would now have to include media literacy, which typically involves competence in visuality as well as words. That is one reason why an updated theory requires the conception of a *cultural* public sphere.

Furthermore, critical perspectives on the public sphere have focused much more on cognitive communications than on affective communications and are, therefore, limited in their approach. The accuracy of information and conditions favourable to dialogic reason are normative requirements of genuine democracy. Yet, an exclusive attention to cognition is seriously flawed should we wish to understand popular engagement with lifeworld issues.

While active citizenship addressed to the 'big issues' of politics is desirable, the subject matter of, say, serious news may be apprehended by many people as irrelevant to their everyday lives. Popular lack of interest in official politics is also understandable when people ordinarily have so little power over what happens at the level of the system. It may seem entirely remote from the lived or imagined relationships and identifications of mundane existence. However, aesthetic and emotional engagement with lifeworld issues might be felt passionately and experienced as especially meaningful. Hence, the need for a conception of the public sphere that accounts for affectivity as well as cognition.

In liberal-democratic thought, the public sphere is supposed to be the arena of rational-critical disputation, free and open debate on issues of interest to citizens, the deliberations deriving from which should have consequence for policy. It is this democratic aspect of liberalism that is currently undermined by economic liberalism or, rather, neoliberalism.

The cultural public sphere of late modernity operates through various channels and circuits of mass-popular culture and entertainment as well as art, facilitated routinely by mediated aesthetic and emotional reflections on how we live and imagine the good life. The concept of a *cultural public sphere* refers to the *articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective – aesthetic and emotional – modes of communication*.

The cultural public sphere features pleasures and pains that are experienced vicariously through willing suspensions of disbelief. In a mass-popular medium like television, the cultural public sphere is most evident in forms of fiction and entertainment where representation may not be policed so closely as in news and current affairs.

In British television, for instance, there are long traditions of political drama and satirical comedy that are notable for articulating issues that are otherwise marginalised in what I am calling specifically cognitive communications. Of course, not all drama and comedy can be judged positively in this respect. The fact that something engages popular attention does not in itself qualify it as the site of critical disquisition.

Public Festivals

One of the greatest ironies of neoliberal cultural policy is that it often seems to require huge amounts of public subsidy. This runs counter to the neoliberal claim that free markets are to be trusted whereas state intervention and governmental interference are not.

Take, for instance, Britain's New Millennium Experience Festival in 2000, the centrepiece of which was the Millennium Dome exposition on a southern peninsula of the Thames in East London. This rather disastrous undertaking cost over a billion pounds in public money, derived from both the National Lottery and tax revenue. It received probably less than £150 million in corporate sponsorship, much of it 'in kind'. And yet the Millennium expo turned out to be little more than a trade show for corporation business, much of it American corporate business. It is reasonable to conclude that the whole 'amazing thing' was a means of reassuring international capital that the New Labour government was not socialist.

Let us consider a particular example from the New Millennium Experience, the Mind Zone, which was dedicated ostensibly to celebrating the networking principle of digital communications and promoting high-tech engineering. It was designed by the deconstructionist architect, Zaha Hadid, and was generally considered the most cerebral of the zones in the Dome. The Mind Zone was sponsored to the tune of just £12 million by BAE Systems/Marconi, Britain's biggest armaments manufacturer and one of the very largest in the world. The armaments industry is a fairly isolated remnant of manufacturing in a country that was once styled 'the workshop of the world' but now likes to think of itself as a 'knowledge society' or an 'information economy'.

The New Labour government had come into power in 1997 promising to pursue an 'ethical foreign policy'. This policy was soon quietly dropped with the government issuing export licenses and guarantees to the likes of BAE Systems for selling armaments to, for instance, the genocidal Suharto regime in Indonesia.

From a public-sphere perspective and according to discourse ethics, dialogical criticism of an ideological artefact like the Mind Zone is obliged to at least imagine an alternative. For example, there could have been, instead, a War Zone that looked critically at modern warfare, at what used to be called 'the permanent arms economy' and its relation to carnage throughout the world.

In the recent period, Britain has been involved in a succession of wars as the USA's closest ally, sometimes deeply questionable wars like the one in Iraq where hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens have died in the interests of Western oil consumption and corporate profit.

After all, the Millennium Dome and its euphemistic Mind Zone were mainly funded by the public and only marginally sponsored by private business. So, why not address critical issues that are relevant to the public?

Incidentally, after the exposition closed, the New Labour government did not want to lose face by knocking the Dome down so they gave it away to the American Anschutz Corporation. It is now the O^2 Arena, an exclusively commercial entertainment venue.

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I should like to give another brief example from the British experience – Liverpool 2008. Liverpool was an ideal candidate for the European Capital of Culture accolade. It had been one of the greatest ports in the world but by the 1980s, like Glasgow, it was in a parlous state. Also, like Glasgow, it had an embarrassing left-wing history as well as considerable cultural riches. Since the Second World War, the population has dropped from 850,000 to 415,000. Many have gone far afield looking for jobs. And quite a few have been moved out to culturally bereft satellite towns. If anything, the greatest success of public expenditure on Liverpool 2008 has been to wipe out some further tracts of the once proud working-class Merseyside.

The biggest legacy of Liverpool 2008 is the Duke of Westminster's Paradise Street shopping centre in the middle of the city. In fact, there has been a good deal of property development in the centre of Liverpool, including luxury apartment buildings. There is also the Albert Dock complex of galleries, museums, and shops, which was actually redeveloped long before the Capital of Culture year. More recently, much of the inner-city working-class housing has been boarded up awaiting demolition.

In fact, what has happened to Liverpool fits neatly into Richard Florida's recommendations for attracting the so-called 'creative class' to regenerating cities. Of course, Florida's creative class thesis is exaggerated and actually his creative class is nothing new. It merely consists of our old friends the professional-managerial class, for many of whom it is an over-statement to call them 'creative'.

Florida, however, is right to observe that the traditional industrial working class has declined in number, down to a little over 25 per cent of the US labour force. Yet, the really significant growth in numbers is in what Florida calls 'the service class', now nearly 45 per cent of the US labour force. This service class, to quote Florida, consists of 'workers in low-wage, low-autonomy, service occupations such as health care, food preparation, personal care, clerical work and other low-end office work' – he might have added cleaning. In Britain, we would be inclined to call these people 'working class'.

In spite of the American habit of calling working-class people 'middle class', if Florida were to do the same as the British, then, that would give an estimate of 70 per cent of the US labour force as 'working class', not unlike Britain and a great many other places.

As it happens, I agree with Florida's position on these matters to the extent that Liverpool's culture-led regeneration is a confirming example. It has indeed been good news for what Florida calls the 'creative class' but which I prefer to call the 'professional-managerial class' – yet probably for nobody else. In this sense, neoliberal cultural policy is quite evidently a class-based policy.

Interview by:
Antonija Letinić and **Tomislav Medak**

INTERVIEW
Jim McGuigan
Neoliberalism is Economically and Culturally Reductive

■ **In your talk you pit the cultural public sphere against economistic cultural policy. Can you please elaborate this conceptual binary and its historic genealogy?**

The cultural public sphere idea is an adaptation of Habermas's original argument about the literary public sphere. It brings together the notion of public debate, democratic representation in terms of politics and policy, with aesthetics and emotion, that is, affective matters. The political public sphere tends to be about cognition more or less exclusively, news and information, not affectivity. The concept of the cultural public sphere, on the other hand, refers to issues that get articulated affectively - to do with, say, the conduct of everyday life - through the arts. That's an argument about the way the arts relate to the wider society, citizenship, democracy and so on and it is also an argument about the role of art and culture. What I was saying in my talk was about the reduction of cultural policy to economic reason, a kind of economic reductionism, so that cultural policy ceases to be pursued and developed for cultural reasons and the rationale for it turns out to be for economic reasons alone. I think it started back in the 1980s when people began to argue that if you spend public money on art and culture that produces wealth in the sense that it employs people who pay taxes, etc, etc. Even though you spend public money it earns money, so it's not a loss for the public. It was a kind of Keynesian argument, which justified the economic value of public cultural expenditure, but it was made defensively in order to defend public expenditure on culture when that was being called into question.

■ **And what happened since the 80s?**

What has happened since then - particularly promoted by New Labour government in Britain from 1997 to 2010 - was that culture became thought about as the beating heart of a post-industrial economy, the engine of economic growth itself. Britain has been deindustrialised in the sense that it doesn't make so many things today - although we do make a lot of armaments, for instance. We certainly don't have as big a manufacturing and raw materials sector as we once did. We closed our mines, we don't have much in the way of steel making, we don't make a great deal of commodities these days, but we do have a substantial financial sector and a great deal of cultural activity, as well as armaments and pharmaceuticals. So, the New Labour government started arguing that's okay because the arts and culture are a major and growing part of the economy, and maybe the driving force of the economy because, most notably, design matters so much in all economic activity today. In 1998 they came out with this *Creative Industries Mapping Document*, which appeared to justify the argument. There were various other arguments as well, saying that it's worth spending public money on culture because it promotes Britain in the world and is a regenerative force. This kind of argument has been particularly focused around cities that have suffered from deindustrialisation. I don't know if this is so in Croatia, but Richard Florida with his *Rise of the Creative Class* thesis has become a very influential thinker in this respect. Talking about the USA, Florida argues that there's been a major decline in the industrial working class, but there's been a huge growth of what he calls 'the

creative class', and he says this constitutes around about one third of the labour force. When he breaks the creative class down into its component parts the thesis becomes much less impressive than it might appear at first sight. The so-called creative class includes all kind of professional and informational work that you might not necessarily think of as creative at all. It includes people selling clothes in shops, lawyers and librarians as well as artists and designers. The sort of people we would really think about as creative and cultural workers are maybe no more than ten percent of the American labour force. Florida says the creative class is the vanguard class these days. When you look around you see that places where there is a concentration of the creative class are also successful economically, he argues. The creative class are talented people. His definition of talent is very limited. He says if you have a bachelor's degree that makes you a talented person. Well, I know a great many people who have a degree that are not particularly talented. Anyway, that's his definition of talent. These people are also tolerant, not homophobic, for instance, they are multicultural, technologically savvy, and a lot of them would work in information technology. So, his advice to cities is to attract members of the creative class if you want to develop your economy. Several city governments around the world have asked Florida to give them advice, using him as a consultant - like Wellington in New Zealand and Dublin - lots of cities. All this feeds into arguments about city festivals, like the European Capital of Culture.

We've seen it recently in Britain with Liverpool, which was European Capital of Culture in 2008. Liverpool is a city that has obviously suffered immensely through deindustrialisation and what we could generally describe as neoliberalisation. Formerly one of the major docks in the world, Liverpool has lost a great deal of industry. The population of Liverpool has halved since the Second World War. It became very decrepit, very run down. The European Capital of Culture designation was actually quite justifiable for Liverpool on cultural grounds. Liverpool was the main place for the arrival of Black American music into Europe historically. Sailors brought early Black American records to the city. You have an incredible development of popular music and culture generally in Liverpool, obviously the Beatles are the most famous example. Liverpool has produced a fantastic number of comedians; drama and all the rest of it. Liverpool has immense popular cultural traditions. It was also very, very wealthy in the nineteen century, so it's got great art galleries, collections of art. Liverpool is a good place to have been European Capital of Culture on cultural grounds but that wasn't the main reason. The idea was that cultural leverage would reboot Liverpool's economy. The city has been reconstructed with really cool spaces in the centre, a huge shopping complex owned by the Duke of Westminster, who also owns Oxford Street and Regent Street in London. They knocked down working-class housing to open the space up for an incoming professional-managerial class. There has been a long process of moving the working class out of Liverpool to satellite towns. It's all about making Liverpool an attractive proposition for members of the professional- managerial class, Florida's 'creative class'. 'Come to Liverpool, it's a really a cool city,' is the message. This fits in with Florida's thesis about wealth creators. I don't think that the European Capital of Culture has done very much for the vast majority of the population in Liverpool. It seems to me that this sort of economistic cultural policy loses the point of culture from a public sphere point of view, from the point of view of artistically creative development, and justifies itself entirely on economic grounds. Evidence for the successfulness of such a strategy is not very clear at all. Moreover, economistic cultural policy is class-biased in favour of professional-managerial groups.

■ Behind Richard Florida's argument you're discerning class politics?

It is class politics. It benefits the professional-managerial class first and foremost. It has turned Liverpool into quiet a nice city for the professional-managerial class to live in. It doesn't do much for people whom I would call 'working class' and Florida would call 'service workers'. The vast majority of people in Liverpool are working class people. And whatever happened in Liverpool in recent years hasn't done much for them. I don't have figures for jobs been created, but they'll be pretty low-level jobs.

■ In fact, it seems often to be the case that in this kind of regeneration schemes the public investment boosts private interests?

There's a fantastic irony here. Economistic cultural policy, and I call it neoliberal cultural policy, like neoliberalism in general, it reduces everything to economics, to the market, to money. It is the bottom line that matters – it's what neoliberalism always tells us. Also, neoliberalism wants to get rid of government, to deregulate, free-up enterprise. So, it reduces everything to economics, it wants the government off the back of the people. But, it wants public investment to bring this about, as in the case of Liverpool, or in the Millennium Dome. Alongside being economically reductionist, it is also culturally reductionist. It thinks if you promote the cultural sector it will dramatically change everything else and it will bring economic growth. So, it is simultaneously economically reductionist and culturally reductionist.

■ In your book, *Rethinking Cultural Policy*, you explain that there was a trajectory of legitimation of public culture that started with the idea of social control; then was transformed into policies of access and national prestige; and then finally into the value for money argument, or as you call it 'neoliberal cultural policy'. Could you sketch out in more detail that trajectory of political legitimation of public culture in the Britain?

This is a fairly well established history of the formation of the public cultural policy. It starts with things like libraries and public education in the nineteenth century to educate working people and also to civilise them. Obviously this was partly an exercise of social control, but it was progressive in many ways for people to get literacy, access to libraries, facilities of parks and all sorts of things that started to develop from the nineteenth century. Another dimension for nation-states in terms of cultural policy is always the aggrandisement of the nation, the self-aggrandizing effect. 'Look, Britain is great, it has all this culture and art, royalty, pomp and ceremony…', all that kind of stuff. So, nation-states present themselves to the world in a self- aggrandising manner through culture. And there's obviously the payoff in tourism. What you get from the Second World War onwards in both previously communist countries like Croatia/Yugoslavia I and liberal democracies like Britain, where social democracy played a huge part, is that egalitarian social access is important. We had a Labour government from 1945 to the early-fifties, again in the sixties, again in the seventies. In that time there was a developing argument on cultural policy not just being about preserving the great national heritage, nor just about presenting traditional culture for consumption largely by well-educated, middle-class people, but that cultural policy should be universally relevant and should provide access to the culture for everyone. Initially that was thought about in consumption terms, attempting to enculture the whole population, encourage them to go to art galleries, appreciate classical music or whatever. But then you get a productionist kind of flip-over, which argues: no, actually, you can't just disseminate the prevailing culture to the masses, what you need is to create the opportunity for ordinary people to participate in the production of culture. So, the access argument flips over from consumption to production. That was the argument developed through social democracy and obviously further to the Left of that in political theatre, community arts

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and the rest of it, independent film-making and all the kinds of experimental, alternative and oppositional arts. So, social democracy opened up these possibilities in a country like mine. There was always a tension, of course, between the people in the power centres who were thinking that this was going too far, too much left-wing art and subversion. There were always quarrels about that. And, then, thirty years ago we got Thatcherism, which was our vanguard version of neoliberalisation, to cut back on the public sector, to reduce funding for the arts, to encourage commercial media and commercial art and culture, to privatise wherever possible. Then, you get this Keynesian response that public expenditure on arts isn't a waste of public money because it makes money, which then moves, in a later period - certainly during the recent New Labour government - to a wholesale justification for cultural policy as being economic.

■ Your diagnosis is that the Thatcher government didn't so much succeed in cutting down public spending on culture, but rather that it's true success was that it the installed 'the new public management', operating according to private business principles, throughout the public sector from healthcare to education and the arts.

Britain works habitually in a gradualist manner. As new things develop, old things don't go away. You get layer upon layer. It is a mix of elements, layer upon layer upon layer. Thatcherism could only go so far. It didn't really go as far as it wanted. But one of the things it did develop, as well as privatising a great deal of industry, cutting back on public expenditure and all sorts, was to insert business thinking, like the new public management, into public institutions. So, publicly funded bodies like the Health Service, education and so on should function more like private businesses, should operate in markets. Schools, for instance, should be competing with one another in a marketplace. That's illogical and absurd. If you look at a town that has three schools and they are all competing with one another, what was the idea? Are they going to put one school out of business? Well that doesn't actually happen, that's not a real market. But the market ideology got inscribed within the public sector so that people in public services would talk and behave as if they were running private business. That's an ideological process that saw to it that anything vaguely socialistic or whatever gets wiped out and the mindset gets capitalistic. I think Thatcherism certainly established that.

■ And that carried over into the New Labour?

I think Blair was Thatcher mark II. The last thing the Tories did in the 1990s was to privatise the rail-

nership business, where the state rents properties from private business and pays for it over years and years. So it actually puts the state in debt to the private businesses for a very long time. It produced more money that way in the short term but it also produced a long-term debt. Much of this improvement of public facilities in the long run will cost more than if it was purely done with public money.

■ **What have been the effects of encouraging the private sector to fund cultural and artistic practices? How does this affect cultural production?**

Publicly funded arts bodies have been encouraged to seek a lot more sponsorship, which has an effect on the programmes. Sponsors start to have a quiet word about what they like and don't like. They'll be more prepared to sponsor certain things and not others, that's an obvious one. Generally, it was kind of socio-psychological process with younger people as well, of thinking in a more enterprising, business-minded way. I find young students now have a very capitalistic attitude. They don't expect very much from the public sector. They have rather an individualistic and ultra-competitive attitude. This present government is using the deficit as an alibi for dismantling the welfare state and the public sector in general. One thing that it is doing is cutting back on public investment in film-making. In Britain we've always had problem with film-making because we share a language with the USA, so there's always a danger that we will wind up making no films at all because English people just watch American films. Part of the problem with public investment in film-making over the last twenty years has been that many British films do not get screened in the British cinemas. The distributers and cinema chains are American owned so it is quiet hard to get a British film shown in a British cinema. There are all sorts of contradictions and occasional exceptions. *The Full Monty*, which got an American distributer, was shown. But, we don't have sufficient public exhibition of British films and funding for production is being cut back.

■ **You point out that the idea of cultural industries as it was envisaged by the Greater London Council in the 80s had a social-democratic underpinning, of re-socialising the market. And, you argue that British cinema and television have been maybe the most salient sites for critical reflection on developments in British society. How did this idea of re-socialising the market play out?**

The Greater London Council in the early eighties wanted to support smaller organisations that were making alternative films, black arts, feminist film-making and so on, reaching those audiences that

ways. Labour in opposition said they'd bring the railways back into the public ownership, but they didn't do it. They went on to part-privatise the London Underground system. Labour did things that Thatcher never had the nerve to do. If we are talking about universities, Thatcher did want to bring in fee-paying to universities, but didn't have the nerve to do it. New Labour did it, they introduced fee-paying for students in the university. And, now you have Thatcherism mark III with this so-called 'Coalition' government, which is largely a Conservative government, tripling the fees for university students. I don't think we see any breaks. New Labour was a softer form of Thatcherism. It did increase public expenditure in all sorts of ways. Quite a lot of money did get spent on health and education, and some people working in health and education will tell you that the New Labour government did a good job. But it certainly didn't eliminate the capitalistic business mentality in the public sphere. If anything, it developed it further. They did spend more money on schools and hospitals, but they also engaged in this private-public part-

didn't go to the galleries and that sort of thing, and trying to put them on a viable economic basis. There was some economic realism definitely in it and there's nothing necessarily wrong with that. It was in order to facilitate alternative and oppositional practice in culture but, of course, Thatcher abolished the GLC. The idea of cultural industries in that respect was okay because there's always been a Left critique

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that the publicly subsidised sector appealed to highly educated, largely well-off people and these newly developing cultural industries had a more populist appeal. There was a kind of economic realism and populism about it and it was specifically within the context of London. And, then, during the whole period of Thatcher government, you had Labour councils around the country doing something. A good example would be Sheffield in the North of England, which developed local film-making and a cultural industries quarter.

That was much more of a political-cultural sort of moment. You know, Channel Four started in 1982 as a publishing channel which showed programmes made by small independent outfits. In the early days this was progressive. The trouble is that it turned into a means of reducing wages and conditions in the TV industry and what seemed like a progressive development turned around and in many respects added to the problem.

■ **In the cultural public sphere, where do you see critical elements opposing the prevailing managerial ideology? Where do you see tangible elements of a critical position?**

Well, I see very little at present in my country. The argument about the cultural public sphere is a broad theoretical argument. It isn't immediately reducible to the empirical conditions of a particular time. There is a very simple example I give, however. If you watch television, the news tells a particular set of stories. They are pretty limited. Sometimes, though, in drama you get different representations that are more critical, more questioning. That's been true also in certain strands of comedy. We have a very strong alternative comedy circuit and quite a lot of satirical television programming and stuff like that. For example, during the invasion of Iraq in 2003, there was a news-based satire programme, *Bremner, Bird and Fortune*, that analysed what was really going on. This was more critical and questioning than anything you would have seen anywhere else on British television at the time. Perhaps it was allowed because comedy isn't considered 'serious'. These people come out of

a long tradition of satire. Bird and Fortune, who are in their seventies now, come from the satire movement of the early-sixties. They have kept going all these years. There are people, within television, who are doing different stuff, usually under the radar. But, I'm pretty pessimistic. I despise the whole Young British Art movement. In my recent book, *Cool Capitalism,* I analyse it. I see Young British Art movement as a particular form of cool capitalism. I don't think there is anything particularly critical there, anything particularly challenging. It seems to me to be a fusion of art with business. In fact, I'm writing about the ~~Saatchi phenomenon~~, with the erasure line through it for a book collection on museum theory right now. And, at the moment, my own personal interest has been in satire and various forms of satire historically in Britain and in cartooning. I'm a big admirer of Steve Bell, in the *Guardian*, with his political cartoons. That's a particular interest of mine, that's where I have focused much of my attention in recent years. I call it, 'funny politics'. Right now, I can't see much of an alternative to satire in intellectual and cultural practice. But, perhaps the world is satirical enough already without satirists adding ridicule to it

■ **It seems that the old media are going through a deep crisis. The media landscape is fragmenting and the shared horizon of public affairs is disappearing, partly due to technological developments. Also public service is in some places increasingly turning to market-oriented content with greater entertainment value. Where do you see the role of public media to critically report and reflect in the future?**

This may seem rather conservative but I believe in defending the public sector and the public service ethic strenuously. It is in severe danger of being blown away entirely. The institution of public services broadcasting is basically a good thing, in my opinion. Forty years ago, probably everybody would be watching the same programme. I always use the *Cathy Come Home* example here. It's a BBC film made by Tony Garnett and Ken Loach in 1966, a documentary drama about homelessness. It's a great classic. Half of the nation watched that when it was on television. A comparable show today would be fortunate to get a tenth of the population watching. It is absolutely true that you will never have that agglomeration of everybody participating. You only get it maybe if England ever made it into a World Cup final again. Otherwise, it's just big talent shows. You might get big audiences on occasion, but you're not going to get big audiences for critical culture. Still it doesn't mean we shouldn't preserve the space for critical culture, although only a minority is watching it. It needs to be defended and preserved. I think that old media do matter. There's a

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relation between the official public sphere in mainstream and old media and other kinds of public sphere. You have all the stuff going on through the Internet - that is absolutely important. But, really big issues have to break into the centre of attention at some point. For example, the Zapatista movement in Mexico, they started to communicate their claims and to represent their plight through the Internet. They gained support initially that way, but they went mega when their story was picked up by the TV channels and publics all around the world became aware of the Zapatista situation and what was going on. It's not an either/or. I think it's an interrelation and that the sluice-gate model of the public sphere is about campaign organisations, NGOs and all the rest of it, where creativity, innovation comes from, breaking into the centre of attention and making issues more widely known or more publicly relevant. The great example of it in recent years is the global warming issue. The Green campaign about this was going on for decades and few were paying attention. Three years ago, it suddenly burst into mainstream public attention and everybody was concerned about it and calling for action. Unfortunately, it's been sidelined by the economic crisis since then. That's a wonderful example of the sluice-gate model of the public sphere – the global warming issue. I wouldn't give up on communicating at the centre of public culture, but you don't get much room for manoeuvre.

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■ **Where do you see the manoeuvring space for advocating critical reporting and investigative journalism? The capacity for investigative journalism in the media is disappearing. Will we have to start advocating a public service model of a kind for critical and investigative journalism?**

In journalistic education, these ethical and political questions should be at the heart of the curriculum. I must be honest I'm very pessimistic at present. But, we have the Wikileaks case at the moment, and all sorts of opinion about that and clearly there's an attempt to stamp it out.

I'm actually quite impressed by the Deleuze and Guattari notion of the rhizome for understanding eruptions of protest, resistance and opposition that pop up all over the place, sometimes even in quite unexpected places. You cut it down here and it pops out there. You've seen that in South America recently - the left-wing movements have popped up into government recently across South America even from

the military with Chavez in Venezuela. So, I can be quite optimistic as well. But, when I look at institutional process at the moment, I think we are in a really severe time of neoliberal dominance.

■ **There's maybe a danger in capillarism if it gets collapsed with the pluralism of consumer choice and consumer sovereignty. We can observe the fragmentation that consumer choice created with the rise of commercial media... Will it counteract the capacity for collective action?**

The question of choice. Obviously you have a proliferation of channels, but some people just watch soap opera all day. With this proliferation you can watch soap opera all day, or you can watch sport all day. You concentrate on a particular segment that you like and just watch it over and over and over. With the old mixed programme channels you might watch entertainment one minute and then a documentary might come. You're absolutely right that multiple channels and platforms fragment audiences. People become so narrowly focused in their interests. It's very difficult. I'm not sure I know the answer.

■ **You've criticised cultural studies, especially the Birmingham cultural studies school, for concentrating on the consumer and in a way becoming, through its various iterations, complicit with the idea of consumer sovereignty.**

The Birmingham School is long dead. They closed the department at least twice, sacked people and the rest of it. Stuart Hall left Birmingham in 1979. The Birmingham School is way back then. Today, cultural studies is much more widespread. My argument has always been that if you want to understand the ontological complexity of cultural process you have to look it in the round, not one-dimensionally. You have to look the at production, distribution, consumption, the sign systems, the regulatory regimes, the policy issues surrounding it and so forth. Exclusive emphasis on consumer sovereignty is a one-dimensional position and a hopelessly partial means of understanding cultural process. It is not that it isn't worth looking at consumption, but if you only look at consumption you get a very narrow picture. Over the years I've been saying that we are not studying cultural production enough. There are good reasons why people don't study cultural production and that's because it is very difficult to do it. It is much easier to go around somebody's house and ask them what they watch on television or how they use the Internet and their mobile phone than it is to get into the communication companies and see what they are up to from inside.

I'm really interested at the moment in cultural work and the conditions of cultural work, and certainly as a social scientist I've been going around and saying we ought to be studying what's going on in the labour process of the creative and cultural industries - the contractual arrangements, the precariousness of work, the nature of careers, the wastage and the false expectations that young people have or how glamorous and wonderful it would be to work in the media. You only discover how difficult life is in cultural production when you are inside there. Just as a recommendation for research, I'd like much more done on the conditions of cultural work.

■ **In your book *Rethinking Cultural Policy* you've tried to outline a critical perspective on the field of cultural policy studies and what research and practical engagement might be.**

I've been lucky, to tell you the truth, in my career. I've gotten away with murder. For one reason or another I have managed to study what I like. I realise I've been very lucky because most of the time in cultural policy studies you're trying to get the money to do the research, you're training people to get the jobs and the rest of it. And me, I just research, write and teach about critical issues. I'm saying that research should be critical, it should be reflexive, interrogating the assumptions of the practice, uncovering the interests involved, finding out whodunit?, exposing their intrigues, a bit like an investigative journalism really. I suppose, as an academic, I'm an investigative journalist *manque*. I realise that this is a very luxurious place to be. Most peoples' working lives are not as fortunate as mine has been. I attack the economistic argument on cultural policy and I realise there's a bit of a problem here in terms of practice. We had a reasonably half-way decent minister of culture in the first phase of the Blair government, from 1997 to 2001. The British secretary of state for culture then was a man called Chris Smith. He was one of the better of these people. He spent the whole time saying we must spend more money on culture because culture is really good for solving social problems and boosting economic growth. He went on for four years saying this. And, when he got sacked in 2001, he said that he never believed any of it. He just had to say it when he was in the cabinet in order to make the case for cultural expenditure when other departments' claims on finance were possibly much stronger. So, if he told them that cultural expenditure would help economic growth, he would be more likely to get the money. He admitted afterwards that what he was actually doing was lying.

■ **From a theoretical point of view on cultural policy studies, you have formulated a coun-**

ter-proposal that balances a critical and oppositional perspective with practical engagement in the cultural system, a Habermasian perspective striking a balance between Gramscian and Foucauldian positions...

Well, yes, there are two points to make here. If you are looking at the trajectory of cultural studies, and the position that is best represented by John Hartley now in Australia, what you've got there is a sort of confluence of cultural studies and business studies, which is very consistent with the New Labour kind of economistic cultural policy - that's one strand. If you have a look at the last chapter in *Cultural Analysis* I cite that confluence. I say let's focus on important public issues instead rather than get caught up in the managerial cultural studies that Tony Bennett really started and Hartley has taken further. As academics and as intellectuals we have responsibility to bear witness and to raise critical questions about the major public issues of today. It is very difficult. The institutional conditions for doing that have constantly been undercut. I see it in universities every day. I don't know what the situation in Croatia is like, but in Britain the opportunity to be critical in the public interest is very limited now, very, very limited indeed. But, I see it as a kind of moral obligation and we have to do it.

■ **First do ideology critique and then do the advocacy in terms of cultural policy?**

Why not both simultaneously? However, my latest book, *Cool Capitalism*, concentrates entirely on ideology critique. I have a simple definition of 'cool capitalism' - it is the incorporation of disaffection in capitalism itself. It is the way in which themes of resistance, rebellion etc. become absorbed into commercial culture, into advertisements, every day speech and rhetoric generally. It is actually disabling. Possibly the most overused word in the world today is 'cool' - cool seems to be used all over the world, everything is bloody cool. If you look at the actual history in black culture, 'cool' meant a certain kind of resistance with a critical edge in jazz and so forth. It has now transmogrified into a commercial rhetoric, a sign of compliance. It is also there in the art world, as an uncritical and compliant discourse too. There is a chapter in the book that is called 'The Great Refusal'. It traces the tradition of the artistic refusal that has been thoroughly inverted in Young British Art. There's also a chapter on work. I'm particularly interested in the individualisation thesis about work and the erosion of collective worker sentiment and solidarity. So, I treat cool capitalism as the cultural face and everyday front region for masking out the exploitative processes of neoliberalism; in effect, cooling out disgruntlement at the dirty back region of neoliberal capitalism.

**Simon
Sheikh**

Instituting the Institution

1. Cornelius Cas-
   toriadis, *Fig-
   ures of the
   Thinkable*,
   Stanford, CA:
   Stanford Uni-
   versity Press,
   2007, pp. 71-90.

2. Cornelius Cas-
   toriadis, *World
   in Fragments*,
   Stanford, CA:
   Stanford Uni-
   versity Press,
   1997, p. 6.

Toward the end of his life, the French-Greek philosopher Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997) wrote a very pessimistic text called 'Imaginary and Imagination at the Crossroads', where he claimed that we were in a state of crisis that had to do with both the singular human imagination and the instituting social imaginary.[1] We were witnessing the end of a great period of creation and innovation, which effected – equally – four designated areas of the imaginary: politics, philosophy, science, and, singled out as privileged, artistic and cultural production. Art is here seen as the vector for measuring both social and singular imagination and institution. Castoriadis dated this demise back to the 1950s, and saw the subsequent period as one of growing conformism and preservation as opposed to invention and revolution, and he meticulously goes through each of these four categories searching for evidence. Now, it would be easy to dismiss this as a typical lament for historical modernism, and indeed the text has its fair share of cultural pessimism and bitterness, and can even be said to contradict his own theories of the imaginary and of the instituting of society as an everlasting process, which would mean that imagination could not really be measured as high or low at any given period.

Cornelius Castoriadis' theory is, of course, that of society as an imaginary institution. For Castoriadis, society is an imaginary ensemble of institutions, practices, beliefs and truths that we all subscribe to and thus constantly (re)produce. Society and its institutions are as much fictional as functional. Institutions are part of symbolic networks and, as such, they are not fixed or stable but constantly articulated through projection and praxis. Any society must be instituted as symbolic constructions, held together by specific social imaginaries and institutions, that solidify imaginary signification into what he termed 'instituted social imaginary'. But, by focusing on its imaginary character, he obviously also suggests that other social organizations and interactions can be imagined. Societies are not created through a natural rationalism or through historical progressive determinism but are instituted through creation, through imagination(s):

That which holds society together is, of course, its institution, the whole complex of its particular in-

stitutions, what I call 'the institution of a society as a whole' – the word 'institution' being taken here in the broadest and most radical sense: norms, values, language, tools, procedures and methods of dealing with things and doing things, and, of course, the individual itself both in general and in the particular type and form (and their differentiations: e.g. man/woman) given to it by the society considered.[2]

These institutions and ways of instituting (meaning, subjectivity, legality, and so on) appear as a more or less coherent whole, as a unity, but appear so only through praxis and belief. But as an ontological proposition it means that a society must always be instituted through creation, and that there cannot be more or less creativity. If a particular social imaginary comes be viewed as inaccurate or obsolete, false even, it will mean the collapse of that given society, the way that historical empires have crumbled and fallen, only to be replaced, in turn, by another imaginary order of society. Perhaps this is what Castoriadis meant when he spoke of the decline of Western civilization, of standing at a particular crossroads? Social imaginaries can thus be actively redefined through other instituent practices, and existing ones collapsed when no longer viewed as adequate, just, or true. Social change thus occurs through discontinuity rather than continuity, either in the form of radical innovation and creativity (such as Newtonian physics) or in the shape of symbolic and political revolutions (such as France 1789) that can never be predicted or understood in terms of determinate causes and effects or an inevitable historical sequence of events in the way, say, that most liberalist commentators view the fall of communism as brought about by some natural law of economics. Change emerges, then, through the establishment of other imaginaries without predeterminations, through praxis and will that establishes another way of instituting. This requires a radical break with the past in terms of language and symbolization, and thus of ways of doing.

In effect, it is about creating a new language with which to say things, not just saying the same things with new words. *Autonomy* and striving for autonomy is therefore the crucial theme in Castoriadis' political thinking. He defines autonomous societies in contrast to heteronomous ones; while all societies make their own imaginaries – institutions, laws, traditions,

beliefs, behaviors, and so on – autonomous societies are those whose members are aware of this fact and explicitly *self-institute*. In contrast, the members of heteronomous societies attribute their imaginary order to something outside, to some extra-social authority, such as God, tradition, progress, or historical necessity, or also, we could argue today, democracy as a fundamental and historically inevitable category. Which would be another way of understanding the crossroads, as well as our world-making through institutionalization that we are gathered here to discuss and assess.

First, standing at the crossroads – and I promise to return more precisely to this metaphor in Castoriadis as well its possible actualization, so bear with me a minute – can then be said to be between the route of autonomy or the ways of heteronomy. Now, remember that autonomy meant self-institutionalization, not anti-institutionalization, but what would heteronomy mean today in institutionalized democracy that does not refer to any order outside its own system of electability and accountability? Here the distinction between instituted social imaginaries and the singular human imagination comes into play, since the individual imagination is always circumscribed by the socialization of society's institutions and ways of instituting, so even when a society might not be heteronomous as such, the individual might still very much be so, since he or she is making their decisions and judgments based on social criteria rather than their own mind or will, and, as Castoriadis points out, "enormous amounts of people in our societies are in fact heteronomous" since they "judge on the basis of 'conventions' and 'public opinion'" (p. 75). And, as for our society, can the blind faith in the market and global capital not be said to be of a heteronomous nature, even if it disorders rather than orders society?

This distinction between autonomy and heteronomy also has bearings on the makings and workings of cultural institutions, whether state institutions or non-governmental organizations. Does an institution adhere to the logics and demands of the state and governmentality or does it seek another path? Obviously this has not only to do with funding structures but also with articulation of one's perceived public role. An institution institutes through more than its programming, but does so also in its spatial production, social relations within the workplace, production of subjectivity as spectatorship, and so, in general, in its instituted social imaginaries. Does the institution simply say the same things with new words

Society and its institutions are as much fictional as functional. Institutions are part of symbolic networks and, as such, they are not fixed or stable but constantly articulated through projection and praxis.

or invent a new language? Here Gerald Raunig's notion of instituent practice is useful. He describes it as follows:

...*in*stituent practices thwart the logics of institutionalization; they invent new forms of instituting and continuously link these instituting events. Against this background, the concept of 'instituent practices' marks the site of a productive tension between a new articulation of critique and the attempt to arrive at a notion of 'instituting' after traditional understandings of institutions have begun to break down and mutate. When we speak of an 'instituent practice', this actualization of the future in a present becoming is not the opposite of institution in the way that utopia, for instance, is the opposite of bad reality. [...] Rather, 'instituent practice' as a process and concatenation of instituent events means an absolute concept exceeding mere opposition to institutions: it does not oppose the institution, but it does flee from institutionalization and structuralization.[3]

Stiil, one of the problems of any revolutionary project is exactly this: how to implement a radical change not just in the significations and sedimentations of institutions but in the very way they institute; that is, how they produce social relations anew. Let me illustrate this with an example of how an institution is caught between its perceived artistic autonomy and radical thinking on the one hand and the heteronomy of the state and its neoliberal demands on the other, namely the now-defunct Nordic Institute for Contemporary Art, with which I was once affiliated. This organization was based in Helsinki, but was responsible for creating projects in the whole of the Nordic region, as well as administering an extensive residency program in the region and beyond. It was funded, and politically monitored, by another organization, the Nordic Council of Ministers, comprised of the five nation-states Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, with the aim of enhancing Nordic cultural collaborations. While this single example cannot constitute any hard, factual evidence, it is nonetheless a fairly typical example of a certain type of international and regional cultural institution and inherent ideology. And, since I was involved with this institution directly, I can at least act as a native informant on this case.

Now, among the programs initiated during my tenure there, was a residency program in the Balkans, where Nordic artists would be awarded a stay and artists from the chosen Balkan countries would go to the Nordic region. However, this program was not started by NIFCA itself, but designed by someone with the Council of Ministers and imposed on the institution by political decree, and, one must presume, following specific political interests. Certainly no particular rationale was ever offered, and the time

3. Gene Ray & Gerald Raunig (Eds.), *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, London: Mayfly, 2009, p. xvii.

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in which to begin and execute this program was exceptionally short, just a few months. Even so, the program can probably be described as fairly typical in its genesis and reasoning, and perhaps as fairly benign. What was noticeable, though, was the selection of countries from the Balkans and their regional designation: the west Balkans, which was, at least to me, a new concept. Where, then, were these west Balkans, and which countries and territories did they consist of? As it turned out, the west Balkans were shorthand for a number of specific places, or even nations, namely the republics of the former Yugoslavia, although without Slovenia, but with the addition of Albania. This led to some consternation among NIFCA's staffers, obviously, not only over the ethical aspects but also over what to actually call it: should one, as a cultural worker, accept such new and apparently random designations such as a 'west' Balkans, this new geography being solely the invention of bureaucrats to fulfill political and trade interests? Or could it be negotiated and engaged with critically and productively in its implementation, that is, its choice of collaborative partners in the respective countries and the selection of artists participating? Certainly this is what the institution, like most institutions, and indeed most of us as circulating cultural producers, *did* attempt. Still, this left the question of naming, and since no other name was forthcoming, no geo-political nor metaphorical title was invented, I suggested calling it simply the *Ex-Yugoslavia Minus Slovenia Plus Albania Residency Program*, which was, needless to say, uniformly rejected by my colleagues. But why couldn't one use such a name? Would it make fewer artists apply? Would it make artists apply differently? Would it produce difference? Would it make a difference? Perhaps such questions are the ones we should ask ourselves in this context, rather than the usual generic ones about numbers, effectiveness, and usefulness of residency programs?

Grants and residencies are, then, not so much a case of money following artists – as they are mostly portrayed by benevolent funding bodies and patrons – since, rather, they force the artists to follow the money. It is not a matter of controlling what an artist makes per se; that would be official art, or even worse, censorship. Rather, it is a case of controlling the field indirectly by setting up residencies for certain people and places, always specified, and by transforming more and more state grants from direct production grants into thematic areas and aims. It is control over, if not the products, then certainly the

Any institution and its ways of institution should not be seen as unitary but as dispersed – its modes of address need not be uniform, but different in scale, grammar, and reach.

flow of products and subjects, which returns to the dual sense of the word "subject" mentioned earlier, subjects as persons and subjects as topics. The definitions of both are the means through which the global flow in cultural production, specifically the exhibitions and programs of the artworld, are controlled and measured.

Which brings us back to the question of contemporary cultural production and the imaginary. Which new languages are being created, which new imaginaries are being produced, and which old things are being said with new words? Or, what can be imagined, and what cannot be? Which modes of critique are affirmative and which are transformative? And which artistic creations are illustrative, and sometimes even celebratory, of the "new" immaterial phase of global capital? An aesthetic gesture, like a political one, thus consists in the creation of a new ensemble of things, in a (re)staging of the (perceived) real. This also means that one cannot distinguish between political and nonpolitical works of art (or, in a broader sense, representations), but rather that there lies – in the very imaginings of each specific mode of address – what Jacques Rancière has in a wholly other context called "the politics of aesthetics". The politics of aesthetic practices lie in how they partake in the partition and distribution of the sensible; that is, of what can be seen and sensed, what can be said and not said. Or, what can be imagined and what cannot be. Whereas the political in works of art is usually described either in terms of a) a sense of use value, or even propaganda, or b) the so-called politics of representation – that is, how and who the artwork represents – we can expand on this notion and analyze artworks through their imaginary character; what kind of horizon they set up, set themselves up against, or are limited or framed by, without these aspects necessarily standing in opposition to each other.

The politics of artworks lie, then, not so much in the intentionality of the artists, nor in the reception of the spectator only, i.e. the politics of reading, nor exclusively within the so-called politics of representation, i.e. *how* things are shown, who are represented, and who are excluded, but rather in how they imagine we can represent or depresent, think or not think, include or exclude, amaze or shock, entertain or lecture, and so on. And the same goes for the institutionalization and socialization of institutions, whose work can indeed be seen as new modes of instituting, producing, and projecting other worlds and the possibility of self-transformation of the world; as an institutionalization that is produced through subjectivity rather than (only) producing subjectivity. It can, obviously, offer a place from which to *see* (and to see differently, to see other imaginaries) as much as offer-

ing objects to look at. We must therefore rephrase our notions of critical and affirmative artworks in terms of how they attempt to institute their particular imagining of the world and, indeed, of the phantasmagoric. It is primarily in the imaginations (or lack thereof) of the particular cultural production and instituting, and not the intentions of the producer, that the politics of aesthetics are located.

However, at stake is what imagination of future as well as past, or, to put it in Benjaminian terms, *past-as-future*, is proposed: how the work produces other imaginaries of the world and its institutions rather than merely reiterating already existing ones, even if in so-called critical terms (or what can be termed affirmative critique). It becomes, then, a matter of what horizon can be imagined as well as how to institute it. Taking our cue from Castoriadis and his analysis of society as self-created, as existing through institutions, we can present it as a question of imagining *another* world, not just another way of describing this one in the phantasmagoric imagination, and thus of instituting other ways of being instituted and imagin-

Do we suffer from a lack of alternative visions, of unclear or even non-existent horizons? An institution or institutional production must imagine a public in order to produce it, and to produce a world around it, a horizon.

ing. To say that other worlds are indeed possible, to offer other imaginaries, ways of seeing and thus changing the world. Here, the notion of self-institutionalization appears as crucial, not only as an organization of collective experience, as evident in certain artist groups and platforms, but also in the very mode of address in works that politicize aesthetics rather than the other way around. Any "political" aesthetic is not just a representational act that supports politics but is also the mode of address that politicizes aesthetics. One must reconfigure the very mode of address itself and, in turn, its imagined subjects (as audiences, constituencies, communities and/or adversaries): a reconfiguration of both the mental and material conditions of the work *itself*. Let's once more turn to Cornelius Castoriadis, who wrote:

[The] supersession [of present society] – which we are aiming at *because we will it* and because we know that others will it as well, not because such are the laws of history, the interests of the proletariat or the destiny of being – the bringing about of a history in which society not only knows itself, but *makes itself* as explicitly self-instituting, implies a radical destruction of the known institution of society, in its most unsuspected nooks and crannies, which can exist only as positing/creating not only new institutions, but a new *mode* of instituting and a new relation of society and of individuals to the institution.[4]

It is thus not only a question of changing institutions, but of changing how we *institute*; how subjectivity and imagination can be instituted in a different way. This can be done by altering the existing formats and narratives, as in the queering of space and the (re)writing of histories – that is, through deconstructive as well as reconstructive projects, and by constructing new formats, by rethinking the structures and implementations of the exhibition altogether. Secondly, any institution and its ways of institution should not be seen as unitary but as dispersed – its modes of address need not be uniform, but different in scale, grammar, and reach. The late Danish writer Dan Turèll had the principle of dividing his works into 'overground' and 'underground' publications, not only to indicate the difference between self-published manuscripts and more widely-distributed books from publishing houses but also to point to different formats of experimentation and articulation. Perhaps such a distinction within institutional production may be more productive to imagine than the traditional distinctions between mainstream and alternative, between culture and counter-culture (not to mention over- and under-the-counter culture)? Rather than thinking in terms of public and non-public, formatting should concern itself with specificity, suggesting different moves of visibility and expectability, but not commitment or importance, even when this implies and demands differences in terms of scale, language, and budget.

In other words, institution-making should be described in terms of its outlook, its scope – its horizon. Here, we can return to the notion of 'the crossroads' invoked in the title, which becomes primary in Castoriadis' critique of his contemporaneity as not only conformist in its lack of imagination but also relapsing into heteronomy in the acceptance of the status quo, whether this be the racing techno-science, neoliberal economic policies, or the state of the arts. But this is only one possible path at the crossroads, albeit one clearly marked, and one which, he claims, will only lead to loss of meaning, economic disaster, and an overall crisis in societal imaginary significations and institutions. But there is also another path, one which "has not been marked out at all", and which would be needed to be opened up by the imagination, by the creative imaginary.

This essay was written almost 15 years ago, but today we would seem to find ourselves at a similar crossroads, and have if anything proceeded further down the first path marked out, despite such disastrous events as 9/11 and the current credit crisis, which have so far only been answered by, in the first case, undemocratic policies of security and growing xenophobia and, in the case of the latter, more of the same farcical economic policies that led to the crisis

in the first place. Is there really no alternative, and how did capitalism and consumerism become so naturalized? We believe this to be a question of horizons – of the construction of a particular horizon of possibility and impossibility as hegemonic, as well as the perceived lack of other horizons.

In other words, if the horizon is that which establishes a world-view, this is always a specific one that makes others not only invisible but even impossible. Having inherited the apparent endgame of liberal democracy and its adjacent politics of administration, it is an urgent task to attempt to go beyond resignation or empty critique and to insist that it is still possible to imagine another world. If another world is possible, how is it visible, not only in terms of realism but also the imaginary, and how can it be constituted as a horizon? That is, is change, revolutionary or otherwise, an approaching or receding horizon in our actuality? Do we suffer from a lack of alternative visions, of unclear or even non-existent horizons? An institution or institutional production must imagine a public in order to produce it, and to produce a world around it, a horizon. So, if we are satisfied with the world we have now, we should continue to make exhibitions and works as always, and repeat the formats and circulations. If, on the other hand, we are not happy with the world we are in, both in terms of the art world and in a broader geopolitical sense, we will have to produce other exhibitions: other subjectivities and other imaginaries. And we have to be not only resistant or insurgent, but also instituent.

Interview by:
Tihana Bertek and **Ana Kovačić**

INTERVIEW Miško Šuvaković

We talked with Miško Šuvaković, former conceptual artist and nowadays theoretician, editor and university professor, during the *Open Institutions* conference which took place in POGON Jedinstvo in January of this year. Šuvaković's conference lecture, under the title *Statuses and Priorities of Art's Institutional Critique*, at moments sounded like an introductory lecture in art theory, but the questions that he posed were only seemingly simple and trivial (despite his Žižek-like stand-up performance). To questions what institutions actually are and how they influence the definition of what we call art, Šuvaković answered that institutions are in fact organized human relations through which power is produced. According to him, art is not a decision, statement or display of convictions. Artwork is a *status*, the result of an agreement among members of the network of cultural, political and economic institutions, and therefore the recognition of an artwork as such is primarily an institutional and social act that is not based on esthetic or metaphysical values. He closed his lecture by stating that art is not innocent, but a place of class struggle. In order to explore further this statement in the case of our art scene, we decided to talk with Šuvaković about his perspective on the changes that the art in the region had undergone in the past 30 years. The position of art in transitional and post-transitional societies is an insufficiently examined subject that we wanted to tackle in this interview along with the question of the role of progressive cultural institutions, which instead of keeping in touch with novel cultural tendencies returned to obsolete ways of managing cultural policy.

■ **Your approach is multidisciplinary. But the interesting thing is that, along with Ješa Degeneri and Darko Šimičić, you still remain a dominant figure in the region of former Yugoslavia. Do you have a feeling that younger generations of critics and theoreticians have not been able to establish their own direction and presence, and if you do, why is that so?**

Eastern European States Resemble Three-Headed Dragons

I think that every period has its own discourse, mode of behavior and practice. In these times of transition and globalization, the dominant discourse is the curator's discourse. This practice is not strictly connected to theoretical mediation, translation and interpretation of art. Curatorial practice certainly bears reference to theoretizations of art and culture, but these are embedded into strategies and tactics of implementing micro- or macro-cultural policy. The emphasis is on presentation and exhibiting, not on critical theoretization. That's why there is an illusion that in the former or post-Yugoslav region there aren't younger authors. They do exist and they are active but their modalities are different from the modalities of art critique and theory.

■ **Your professional beginnings are connected to the Belgrade SKC (Student Cultural Centre). The third edition of April Encounters was one of the most significant art events at the time. Do you remember how the original idea came about and in what way you were influenced by meetings with some of the most important proponents of conceptual practices?**
The Belgrade SKC was an exceptional place during the 1970s. Its extraordinariness was in the opening up of the local, Belgrade, Serbian and Yugoslav art and critic scene to international artistic, critical, theoretical or activist practices. The problem with SKC was the fact that it was a preserve within the field of socialist modernism and its bureaucratic exhibition of art world, i.e. the problem was that it was a surveilled and controlled space where you were free to do anything, but under the condition of remaining in that space. For me the important thing was to meet and confront international art critics of the period, or to put it differently, to confront the ambivalence of the conversation between the West, the intermediary position of Yugoslavia and the East.

I certainly remember Beuys's theoretical performance from 1974. I thought it was important that I was confronted with the potentiality of analytical, critical and projective discourse in the "mute" field of visual arts.

■ **You have extensively dealt with the Croatian art in the 1970s. Where do you see the biggest impact of the Group of Six Authors (Grupa Šestorice) and other representatives of New Art Practice?**
If I try to sum up my critical interests I would say that I spent most time dealing with interpretations of American, Slovenian, Croatian, Vojvodina and Serbian, i.e. Belgrade art. I made an effort to follow Croatian art. Through numerous discussions which I had for years, maybe even decades, with Julije Knifer in the 1980s, with Mladen Stilinović, Branko Stipančić, Vlado Martek, Darko Šimičić, Vlasta Delimar, and today with Nika Radić or the ABS group. I have had a great opportunity to follow many things that have been going on in the contemporary Croatian culture, much of that thanks to conversations and exchange of information with Darko Šimičić, who, on several occasions, fundamentally influenced my interests and directions of action. I have been interested in dialectic tensions between the mainstream, alternative practices that often had an anti-art character, and the logic of institutionalization of artistic practice in the Croatian modern, post-modern and contemporary art. It is the phenomenon of anti-image, anti-film, anti-photography, anti-prose etc. that for decades has excited me the most, in a metaphysical sense, in the Croatian art.

The Group of Six Authors was always challenging for me, maybe because of generational closeness, but more probably due to their radically sceptical and post-media work. If we are talking about influences of conceptual artists or the new art practice on contemporary art I wouldn't mention individual influences on this or that artist, but rather that analytical, performative, sceptically critical and new media novel artistic practice of the 1970s anticipated the epochal change of the status of art which is now dominant: art after disciplines and after traditional media. This was, long time ago, given a precise definition by Mladen Stilinović when he talked about the difference between a painter and an artist. This is the time of artists or authors, more than media workers (painters, sculptors, filmmakers, photographers). The Group of Six Authors definitely influenced this great change.

■ **In the 1990s Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA) were being established across Eastern Europe with the aim of balancing common program, promoting art, providing financial support to artists, theoreticians and associations as well as encouraging local and international collaborations. One of the most important functions was supporting critically inclined art but also creating archives and libraries. What was the situation with the Belgrade SCCA?**
The policy of the Soros program was an important project of liberal, democratic practice and aspiration to "open society" that came at the end of the cold war and the beginning of the transition in Eastern Europe in the 1990s. Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA) had a prominent promotional, archival and thus significant curatorial role in restructuring

Art work is a _status_, the result of an agreement among members of the network of cultural, political and economic institutions, and therefore the recognition of an art work as such is primarily an institutional and social act which is not based on esthetic or metaphysical values.

late socialist art scenes in the new times and new circumstances. Without their archives, curatorial workshops and curatorial presentations of local art on the international scene much of that would never have happen. I collaborated for years, for example, with the Ljubljana SCCA on post-pedagogical workshops on curatorial practices and critical writing.

On the other hand, on several occasions I criticized, for example, the work of the Belgrade SCCA. Why? Apart from many important contributions to the emancipation of contemporary art in Serbia, this center, i.e. its actors, curators and managers, was striving to establish a centralized articulation of artistic scene and to block potential plural positions. It was a typical neoliberal demonstration of alienated power which was opposite to any idea of "open society". Another reason for the critique was that Soros Centres, particularly at the end of the 1990s, developed a critical leftist jargon in their interpretations of artistic and cultural scene, while simultaneously implementing neoliberal policy, which meant that they controlled and monitored and formed artistic practices economically. These were important contradictions which were there to be interpreted and understood.

- **You used the concept "Soros Realism" for the first time in 2002 in the text *Ideology of an Exhibition: On Ideologies of Manifesta*. Can you explain the controversies, and political and media campaign against Soros in Croatia?**

I wrote that text on commission from the Ljubljana Center (SCCA) for their magazine. My logic was the following: At the beginning of 1990s, at one point in time, one very *specific point in the European history* – after the fall of real socialism (the Eastern Block) – the function of art was reconstituted and the criterion of "validity" was reinstated under the premise of "political correctness" in the post-block world. Art again became the "matter of culture" while performing in certain ways the function of mediating positive *social interest* in the sense of public or general politics and ethics. The new art in 1990s *gained social functions* (the function of culture and practical politics) of mediating between *possible worlds* (the center, differentiating margins, transitional formations, focal points of crisis) and of creating the atmosphere of *expected political correctnes*s in a Europe free of totalitarian divisions. *Formulations of painting and sculpture* were being replaced by *formulations of open information work* (video, installa-

The Soros Realism is a *soft* and *subtle* uniforming and standardization of postmodern pluralism and multiculturalism as a criterion of enlightened political liberalism which was to be realized by the European societies at the turn of the century.

tion, photography, linguistic-visual intertext). *Open information work* represents *erased traces of culture* of a specific place (region, city, street, flat, human body or geographic macro-space). A work of art is an *inscription* of layered and selected *traces of culture* abstracted "from" a specific, localized place and situation. Ontology and morphology of these "contemporary" works is not an *autonomous esthetic form* and *phenomenon* but is conditioned by instable and adjustable:

(a) phenomenology of *information*,
(b) structural functionality of *context*, and
(c) logic of *narration*

in the conceptual order of articulation of meaning (attitude, perspective and social value). That is art made "from" narrative, exhibited and displaced *traces* and *effects* of a concrete culture. In other words:

(i) while traditional painting realisms of the 19th or social realism of the 20th century aspired to truthful or optimal representation of the world outside of art,
(ii) while anti- or post-painting "realisms" of the avant-garde and neo-avant-garde (concretism, new realism, neo-dada, pop art, arte povera) aspired to literal post-Duchamp displacement of objects from the world outside art into the exceptional and critical world of art,
(iii) realism (*Soros Realism*, *multicultural realism*) at the end of 1990s was created as a mediatized representation of real or fictional information and its erased and displaced traces as they appeared in the relation between image and word in the process of constitution of social ideology of globalization, that is *post-conflicting* Europe.

In other words, the expression "Soros Realism" points to a very specific demand from contemporary art to deal by means of new post-media (video, photography, performance) with local social and cultural conflicts. That's why, on one occasion, I used the expression S*oros Realism*, completely devoid of irony, for art productions supported by SCCAs. This expression literally points toward art:

1. that has a function (see i-iv),
2. that has relates as demonstration and representation to the concrete reality of a society and culture (see formula /a/ + /b/ = /c/), and
3. that has "optimal projection", this means positive social project of change (emancipation, education) represented "through" a work of art.

Soros Realism is not realism in the sense of the return to painting realism of a paranoid nationalistic type that emerged in the most post-socialist societies in the 1980s and 1990s, and it's not a brutal variant of social realism which set canons of expression in 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and 1960s in the East; on the contrary, it is a *soft* and *subtle* uniforming and standardization of postmodern pluralism and multicultur-

alism as a criterion of enlightened political liberalism which was to be realized by the European societies at the turn of the century. The direct benefit of this approach was the move away from the "limited" (completely elitist) emancipation borne by high art and alternative art to a general social emancipation in the context of a local culture. For example, theories of post-structuralism and values of liberalism, which can be characterized as "academic" and "museal", but most certainly of "minoritarian intellectual" discourse, can now "through" art become the discourse, taste and value of "normal" culture of the emerging middle intellectual class of bourgeoisie and its popular opinion (*doxa*). The direct drawback of this approach in art is the establishment of "average perspective" which realizes artistic and esthetic objectives as culturally determined effects. In other words, the art of the young, the marginal and *those in transition* gets "its own" *mobile preserve* of promised potentials for survival and realizations.

> **Instead of vector relation of the center and the margin, now exist margins even within former hegemonic centers and they network on different levels – artistic projects, curators projects, biennial projects, museum projects, activist projects etc.**

Such art, that is such cultural policy was strongly criticized on the part of ruling national bureaucracies and nationalist cultural policies in new and old-new national states emerging through transition from socialism in the Eastern Europe. It is understandable: national and nationalistic cultural projects have always been against "policy of openness" and "emancipation".

■ **In what way have changes in national and local context from the 1990s until now influenced artisic production? Where, in the past 20 years, were being created preserves of progressive art practices in the region?**

The times after "communism" proved to be paradoxical and antagonistic. At the end of the period of real socialism and self-managed socialism, there was a political dream of civil society. Instead of creating a civil society, there was a restoration of strong and homogeneous nation-states, not only in the territory of former Yugoslavia, but across the entire Eastern Europe. These states nowadays paradoxically have triple identity – they almost resemble three-headed dragons – they have the identity of a homogeneous state/culture, then of centralized and monopolistic tycoon economy which dictates the politics ranging from economy to art, and finally of superficial neoliberal decoration revealing a corrupt democracy. It is a depressive image!

There was no preserve as such. There were initiatives, primarily working within independent scenes or in independent intellectual productions, but their influence on nation-states was not big. Rather, those were symbolic efforts.

■ **In what way have the war and transition influenced the art flows in the region over the past 20 years? How would you assess the "exchange" between contemporary artists among the countries of former Yugoslavia today?**

At the beginning of the new century, art has changed globally and this global change has affected the context of art practice on local levels, the creation of infrastructure for art, that is the implementation of cultural policies. In the times of modernism, even of eclectic postmodernism, it was necessary to keep the pace with international developments in art – to come closer from the periphery to what was going on in New York or Berlin. Today things are different – there is no significant difference among the cultural organization of art scenes – most of all independent scenes – in Tashkent, Alma Ata, Yerevan, Singapore, Ankara, Melbourne, Huston, London or Belgrade. Modalities of art practice have changed. Instead of vectorial relation of the center and the margin, now we have margins even within former hegemonic centers and they network on different levels – through artistic projects, curatorial projects, biennial projects, museal projects, activist projects etc. Roughly, the network replaced the vector. Another important change over the last decade is the emergence of authorial identity of curator who has taken over many functions from theoreticians, critics, managers but also artists.

Exchanges in the territory of former Yugoslavia are present at state, independent and personal level. But, is a "post-Yugoslav relation" possible as a significant cultural phenomenon in the end of the first decade of the 21st century? I think it is possible, but it's a hard work.

■ **Several months ago the book *Design and Independent Culture* was published and recently a book on Kontejner for its 10th anniversary. How would you explain the fact that these are rare, if not only, examples of systematic insight into the independent culture in Croatia, and do you think there is a need for such kind of mapping?**

Yes, such mappings are necessary. Indexing and mapping is an important endeavor of critical reflection.

■ **How would you compare the relation of institutional and independent culture in the 1970s and today, and in which art practices from the past (1970s ad 1980s) can you discern**

predecessors of the present field of practices called the "independent culture"?

Things are incomparable because the environment is different, models of financing are different, just like the situationsare different where this self-organizing, micro-self-management, opposition to mainstream or search for territories of independent action emerge. In the 1970s and 1980s there were more illusions about the world that needs to be fixed. Today there is more cynicism about the world which cannot be fixed, but rather should be used.

What could be common to "independent practice" then and now is an aspiration to emancipation. In the 1970s the word "emancipation" was the official party and state word, but nobody believed in it. That's why independent practice aspired to emancipation which was to be a real social, cultural and artistic practice/action and not a bureaucratic lie. Today no one at official levels talks about emancipation, but about political or cultural pragmatism, economic and political interest, return to tradition or order; that's why a critical, subversive, even revolutionary emancipation is necessary. But, definitely the word emancipation in the 1970s and today means something different, and this difference is what should be sought.

■ **Croatian cultural policy supports public cultural institutions, so the greater part of cultural infrastructure in the country is subsidized and in such a manner the dominant institutional culture controls potential places of subversion and critique. Do you envision a possibility of a reform of this model of cultural policy?**

We will see where the global economic crisis will lead "us". Authority, power, control and surveillance should be problematized - and it doesn't happen without a change of the economic structure. Today, societies of Eastern Europe still exist on old models of "centralized powers" – there should be an attempt to change that.

■ **Recently we have witnessed the opening of the new building of MSU (Museum of Contemporary Art) which initiated numerous debates on contemporary institutional practices. What change did really occur, since this institution neither did revalorize the contemporary art nor it supprts the latest production?**

I will answer in short and in contradiction: every time I come to Zagreb I like to go to the new MSU. It contains, for this part of the world, an exceptional collection of late modernism. Museums are not exhibiting galleries, they have their own function. On the other hand, should the museum be exposed to criticism and confronted by projects on independent

scenes – most definitely! This confrontation can give rise to a new situation.

■ **In Croatia we hear a lot about the problem of centralization with respect to artistic production (with the notable exceptions of Split and Rijeka). Is there a similar problem in Serbia? What could you say about artistic production outside of the two strong centers such as Belgrade and Novi Sad?**

The question of cultural decentralization was a dramatic problem of the second Yugoslavia. Today, it is the problem of new states. Yes, I think it is necessary to decentralize cultural centers, i.e. to confront the capital with other centers by plural cultural policies. This is the burning question of macro-cultural policy in Serbia and, I think, in other countries of the region. However, the process of decentralization and the development of autonomies of life and culture will take place very slowly because it opposes the homogenizing national policies and the slow change will be justified – as always – by pseudo-rational reasons i.e. economic austerity and global crisis.

■ **What role can today have the collections, particularly corporate (for instance, the collection of Erste bank) and what is their impact on the market? Also, how do you comment the fact that works of art in these collections mostly come from East European countries and that they are mostly conceptual?**

Today, infrastructural context of art – global and local – is divided among three sectors: state sector, corporate and private sector, and independent scenes of various political and cultural orientations. This infrastructural context should be carefully critically mapped out and its limits and potentialities displayed.

Why contemporary corporate collections – Erste etc. – collect East European neo-avant-garde and conceptual art? It is certainly a cultural policy which recognizes the importance of "marginal" and "alternative" for East European cultural identity which is nowadays in various manners being introduced in the European or global order of symbolic capital. On the other hand, the art of that period is in its essence connected to neo-avant-garde and conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s rather than to modernist mainstream (e.g. modernism in painting) of the time. Thirdly, local museums were not interested in this kind of art for decades, and for the national cultural policy as represented by local ministries of culture this art was not significant. Hence, this is a kind of strategy of opening in opposition to local canons. Last but not least, it is not expensive to collect such art. As you may see, contradiction after contradiction. What then remains is the acribic analysis and critique.

Tomislav Medak

Open Institutions and Reform of the Cultural System

In these years when decisions in public financing of culture in Croatia regularly remind us that that which is the first to suffer cuts in financing and which is, accordingly, redundant in our cultural system is that part of culture that has over the last decade proven to be the source of its vitality and development – i.e. non-institutional, independent culture and cultural programs –, there's no need to reiterate that cultural system is dominated by institutions. However, even though the unassailable position of ossified institutions, which are taken for granted regardless of their program and its quality, might seem as an unsurpassable horizon of our cultural policy, we should bear in mind that the role of cultural institutions has been dramatically changing over the course of our recent history. The institutional landscape in socialism achieved a relative internal differentiation among institutions with regards to their approaches to artistic and cultural production, their positions vis-a-vis the political system and their organizational forms. Cultural system included also institutional models such as student cultural centers, youth centers and municipals cultural centers where different forms of alternative, subcultural or social engaged forms of cultural activity could take place. However, in the beginning of 90s, with the onset of nationalist cultural policy, the cultural system was practically reduced to the representative pillars of national culture, while the professional competence was replaced by political conformism and allegiance.

It is in part these concerns that have pushed the initiatives of independent culture and other civil society sectors to start advocating new forms of public-civil partnerships and collaborations that could lead to new public institutions and new institutional forms, and that could produce synergies needed in the artistic and cultural production between the stable institutional conditions and the dynamism of production.

It is from the opposition to that political project, which aimed to construct a new national identity and put the public culture to the task of fulfilling that goal, that new social movements, new artistic and cultural practices emerged. However, once that political project had collapsed, together with the legitimation it sought in culture, institutions of the system didn't find in their work and functioning a way to approach these new social, cultural and artistic tendencies. Over recent years the changes and developments within the cultural system were not happening in its center. But rather on its margins, driven by civil society initiatives and organizations, which only rarely found acknowledgement and support in instruments of official cultural policy.

Although the wholesale reform of the cultural system is not likely, if and once the reform does happen it will have to start from the institutions – transforming existing institutions and constructing new institutional forms. In this process, however, the scleroticism of institutions cannot become a pretext to start dimantling public institutions or privatizing the cultural system. If institutions would disappear, the cultural facilities would go too, jobs would be lost, public culture would be shut down, independent culture would go under, potential for progressive cultural action would be foreclosed. It is in part these concerns that have pushed the initiatives of independent culture and other civil society sectors to start advocating new forms of civil-public partnerships and collaborations that could lead to new public institutions and new institutional forms, and that could produce synergies needed in the artistic and cultural production between the stable institutional conditions and the dynamism of production.

Just such an advocacy process, a process which didn't go down without confrontations with local authorities, resulted in the founding of POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth. POGON is a hybrid institution established jointly by the

Tomislav Medak

Vesna Čopič

An Attempt to Conceptualize the Modernization of the Public Sector in Culture*

city of Zagreb and an association of independent cultural organizations, where the public partner provides spatial facilities and the civil society partner provides programming and coordination. The institutional model here is based on principles of sharing resources and improvement of conditions of production for the weakest actors in the cultural system. However, POGON addresses particular needs of Zagreb's independent cultural scene. Other models for new institutions or opening up of old institutions will need to reflect needs of their own context, what is needed there in order to secure the sustainability of larger artistic and cultural field, to open up resources to other actors and engage in progressive social developments.

Again, the reform of the cultural system, particularly in the context of economic crisis and lasting domination of old institutional pillars of national culture over the cultural policy, remains unlikely. Therefore, efforts to introduce innovations into the cultural system will need to continue intervene tactically with punctual innovations, never losing from sight what ultimately should always remain the social purpose of open institutions: preservation of common resources, promotion of inclusiveness and social equality, sustainability of artistic and cultural production.

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* Summary of a lecture held at the Open Institution conference

During the last 20 years, we have witnessed a proliferation of regulatory and strategic documents, which have proved to be paper tigers. At the same time, reality has shown a quite different picture. In the cultural public sector, no transition that would result in a shift from *paternalistic institutions* to *open modern organizations* has actually occurred. Instead, we have a frozen situation, with a radical gap between public cultural institutions and NGOs. While the institutions are perceived as a legal obligation of the state, NGOs remain outside the traditional cultural policy model as something optional. The result of such a system is that there have been no major shifts in the allocation of public funds and NGOs remain a foreign element.

Modernization

The term "modernization" is an empty one and needs to be filled with meaning. There are three important aspects of modernization. Cultural policy as part of governmental policy depends on *political preferences*. However, political decisions require professional backing, therefore some *theoretical concepts*. And yet, to produce any results, the *feasibility and acceptability* of each decision is funda-

On the *level of organizational processes*, a shift from an institutional to a post-institutional paradigm requires (a) organizational heterogeneity instead of organizations having the universal status of public establishments, (b) negotiation instead regulation, (c) the diversification of working status instead of a centralized system of public servants, and (d) lump-sum funding instead of item line budgeting.

mental. Therefore, without taking into consideration the interests of those who are at the center of the modernization, i.e. of the cultural sector itself, the process cannot be successfully implemented.

There are different theoretical concepts dealing with public sector reform. The prevailing one is known by the label New Public Management, a model based on market philosophy where funding follows targets/outputs, relationships are regulated through contracts, customers are at the heart of the operation, there is a change of legal status towards greater autonomy, and the competition principle is applied through tendering and bidding. The introduction of such concepts must be taken with great caution. Namely, the withdrawal of the state potentially has many negative consequences in terms of equity, quality, and standards. Furthermore, the managerial paradigm threatens to become a tool to raise managers above all other professions and to subordinate core professional commitments to retrenchment in public spending. Therefore, we must identify two preconditions for making managerialism culturally sustainable: the *reaffirmation of the public value of culture* and a *post-managerial paradigm*.

If modernization is all about devaluing culture as a public good in order to reduce public funding, then it is an unacceptable move. It must be clarified in advance that the modernization of the public sector in culture is motivated by a *cultural, not an economic, rationale*. Modernization is acceptable if it is based on the reaffirmation of the public value of culture and if it means pursuing the better organization of culture as a public good.

If the cultural mission used to be threatened by subordination to political ideologies, now it is subordinated to managers. While managers aim for financial stability, artists and other professionals aim for artistic enrichment. Managerial techniques, skills, and methods *should not be considered the substance but only in service of the substance*. Modernization should therefore reflect a post-managerial paradigm.

Institutional paradigm

In the cultural sector there are four fundamental **principles of institutional organization** that, on one hand, suffocate managerial discretion and, on the other, enable the perception of public institutions

as a legal obligation of the state in contrast to NGOs with no structural funding. First is the *principle of hierarchy*, where the public authorities are in the role of principal and the cultural institution in the role of agent. This is not a relationship between two equal contracting parties, because public authorities have founders' rights and therefore power over the institution. The second is the *rule of law*. Discretion is reduced to a minimum, replaced by the paraphernalia of laws and instructions, budgetary appropriations, and regulations. The third is the *principle of political neutrality*. Bureaucratic ethics are based on the belief that public servants follow the public interest. There is a presumption that selfish opportunistic behavior or political partiality will be excluded and that the guarantee of political neutrality lies within a centralized system of public servants. Last one is the *principle of accountability*, within which a public institution is treated as a so-called indirect spending unit in the public budget. The essence of traditional budgeting, i.e. a line item budgeting that is input-oriented, is control if the funds are spent as planned, while the evaluation of accomplishments is neglected.

From institutional to post-institutional paradigm

The main question concerning reform of the cultural sector is how to increase managerial discretion and authority without losing sight of the cultural mission. Four fundamental measures should be introduced. First, instead of the existing universal mode of public organization (that is, the public institution), the mode of organization should adjust to the nature of the activities. The level of autonomy defines the organizational mode and vice versa. There is no one-size-fits-all solution but a case–by-case transformation. Therefore, *organizational heterogeneity* is unavoidable. Furthermore, instead of regulating cultural organizations' internal affairs by law, that is by one-sided decrees, a negotiation process that defines objectives, deliverables, and incentives could bring a new dynamism to cultural services provision. For such a purpose, *deregulation* is necessary to create space for such interaction. As a third measure, instead of giving organizations' workers the uniform status of public servants, a combination of public servants, privately-contracted employees and part time jobs could bring a flexibility that would allow the *subordination of the workforce to the working process*. It si not about spreading of precariat but opposite, bridging the current gap with long life employment on one hand and subcontracted personnel without any social rights on the other. Finally, without *financial autonomy* there is no autonomy in program-

ming. The focus on formulating requests for proposals or competitive bids, the description and measurement of deliverables, and the development of incentives and functions confronts the public authority and the organization with completely new tasks. Funding by objectives could be a tool of policy analysis, could provide a means of improving government performance, and could secure a framework enabling government to plan ahead and set spending options.

Shift on all levels

To sum up, on the *level of organizational processes*, a shift from an institutional to a post-institutional paradigm requires (a) organizational heterogeneity instead of organizations having the universal status of public establishments, (b) negotiation instead regulation, (c) the diversification of working status instead of a centralized system of public servants, and (d) lump-sum funding instead of item line budgeting.

However, this shift would require serious and deep conceptual changes on the *level of the political system*, in order to provide capacities to negotiate. According to the modernist notion of culture, culture is an autonomous system. If only insiders have the legitimacy to make decisions about the system of which they are part, cultural policy becomes "a closed conversation among experts" (John Holden) and as such disappears from political focus. Today, culture is marginalized and it has lost its political relevance. Furthermore, it has become dislodged from

the EU agenda (the only culture that matters to the EU agenda is agriculture). Finally, cultural policy is a para-political realm. It is autopoietic, self-referential, and emergetic. Therefore, culture and the relations within it must be re-politicized. In addition, cultural administration must be professionalized (instead of the existing division between administrative and professional tasks and instead of political voluntarism based on loyalty instead of professional excellence), the capacity to negotiate about cultural operation must be developed and cultural policy-making must be deliberative, based on dialogue.

Finally, this shift must be made on the *level of stakeholders*. The state should take on a strategic role instead of directly intervening on a daily basis (formally or informally). Managerial freedom must be based on professional responsibility instead of bureaucratic rules. Professionals should be paid by results instead of at fixed rates. Instead of having the right to have representatives in the governing structure, users should be the prime concern of the governing structure. The process of restructuring should create adequate free space for alternative delivery models aiming at inclusion of NGOs in cultural services provision (moving independent production from the margin to the centre).

Possibility of changes in reality

Resistance towards change is always present and a risk-averse attitude is normal. Therefore, modernization requires financial injections and modernization driven by financial crisis is not the best option. As long as public management reform in the field of culture is accompanied by a governmental willingness to invest, there is still enough space for both managers aiming for financial stability and artists and other professionals aiming for artistic enrichment. The danger that private interests may squeeze out public benefit becomes more relevant in a time of financial crisis when substantial budget cuts are looming or in poorer places where culture is first to be restricted as a luxurious good.

Modernization formula

This culturally-sustainable modernization formula is based on three elements: (1) the duality of a strong state and a strong civil society, (2) the reaffirmation of the public value of arts and culture, and (3) a post-managerial paradigm that subordinates managers to the cultural mission instead of raising them above other professions. Its result should produce a *hybrid between the cultural institution and the cultural NGO* and consequently should incorporate NGOs into the regular cultural policy system.

**Jurij
Krpan**

The Long-Expected Withering Away of Public Institutions

1   The project European Cultural Month – Ljubljana 97, along with its problematics as well as the authors and main actors who contributed to its creation, is clearly described in the special thematic section entitled "Jara Gospoda" [The Upstarts] published in *Časopis za kritiko znanosti (Journal for the Critique of Science)*, Vol. XXV, 1997, no. 184.

2   Or, as written by Marina Gržinić in the Introduction to the thematic section "Jara Gospoda" [The Upstarts]: "V medijih se tudi zdaj pojavljajo zapisi o teh dogodkih (Mag, Ljubljana – glasilo MOL), ki pred predstavitvijo sedanjega projekta EMK – Ljubljana 97 orisujejo njegovo zgodovino na način: Uspelo nam

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The key period for understanding the formation of the opposition between the non-governmental sector, public institutions and representatives of authority with regard to the allocation of public resources seems to be the period following Slovenian independence, i.e. between the years 1990–1997. The period in which the national identity crisis reached dimensions of excess up to then unknown – with the division of powers, depredation of strategic state resources and vulgar privatizations that sapped everything that even smacked of socialist paradigms – represented for the Slovenian official cultural sector a period of lull. In the meanwhile, public institutions, by way of minimal systemic corrections, consolidated themselves, and have remained more or less unchanged to this day. The new official cultural policy was unable to recognize the changes that were also announcing themselves throughout the 1980s in the field of art and culture, thus creating conditions for a conflict that manifested itself in all its polar extremes during the preparation and realization of the *European Cultural Month – Ljubljana 1997* project (ECM 97). This project was the result of the initiative of actors[1] in the field of art who, in the 1980s and early 1990s, represented the alternative and subcultural scene. The Program Council of ECM 97 nominated by project holders numbered almost 70 members and mapped all subjects who were engaged in and contributed significantly to the vibrant artistic production of the art scene that was forming in the stirring 1980s. For the first time in history, representatives of public institutions and independent, autonomous and freelance artists and producers were brought togehter around the same table to draw up the program for the European Cultural Month. However, the constitutive move that sewed the button on the initiative of the representatives of civil society in art and culture was not the successful realization of the project, but the brutal dissolution of the administrative board and working committees by the then mayor of Ljubljana Dimitrij Rupel. During the

preparation and planning phase, communication between the Program Council and the municipality officers responsible for the content part was successful; but as soon as the budget of the Cultural Month started to take shape on the basis of financial evaluation of the program's content, the then mayor entered the scene. Under the guise of being a trustee for the existing producers of cultural programs that were considered underrepresented in the program scheme, he dissolved the Program Council and appointed a new one. The majority of the public went along with the media in welcoming the mayor's intervention,[2] and soon forgot about the European Cultural Month. This last was thus reduced to a mere source of financing of the existing programs within different public institutions, helping them to recover financially.[3] We believe it is important to point out this detail that sheds light on the attempts by civil society to define its position within the new production models – which were new not only for the post-socialist reality but for the European reality in general as well – trying to find a balance against the trend of aggressive neoliberal production.

In the false conflict of interests constructed by the then mayor of Ljubljana with the help of influential directors of public institutions, the civil initiative that up to that moment had been busy with preparing the Cultural Month program was claiming its legitimacy as professionals, which had been established within the artistic-cultural production of that time for at least fifteen years. At that time, the notion 'non-governmental organization' (NGO) was not yet in use and the public advocates of civil society resorted to the term 'independent culture' as a substitute for subculture and alternative (which were considered obsolete terms), denoting a set of activities betting mostly on competence, contemporariness and a feeling for the kind of art that keeps pace with global changes. With their claim for independence, they were already then pointing to their difference with respect to public institutions, in which directors and control bodies (i.e. the management structure) were

je rešiti projekt pred alternativci, ki so ga hoteli umestiti zgolj na področje alternative in ga povezati z narkomani, hippiji, socialno obremenjenimi marginalci – kakor se še danes označuje Metelkova oz. pred leti začeti projekt Mreže za Metelkovo. Nekateri tedniki in mediji pa so povsem ignorirali dogajanje v zvezi s projektom EMK – Ljubljana 97 in se v nasprotju s svojo novinarsko-raziskovalno dejavnostjo prav simptomatično umaknili iz celotne zadeve." ["The media are still reporting now and then about these events (Mag, Ljubljana – gazette of the Ljubljana Municipality), outlining, before presenting the current ECM – Ljubljana 97 project, its history in the following manner: We have managed to save the project from the alternative scene that wanted to place it only in the field of the alternative, connecting it with drug addicts, hippies, social marginal groups – that are still today synonymous with Metelkova City or the Metelkova Net-

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appointed by the city or state, which were also the founders of those same institutions. The term 'independent' was mocked on several occasions (in the media and at public meetings with the representatives of authority) on the grounds that autonomy could not exist as such since all activities were mostly being financed from public resources allocated by officers responsible for the selection of program and project proposals!

In that very period, the Slovenian Radio Student[4] hosted a series of meetings and debates in which the then relevant actors in the artistic and cultural field thematized new models of artistic production. Transcripts and abstracts were published in the journal *Maska* in the special thematic section "The Art of Conducting Art".[5] For the first time, the term *asociacija* [association] started to appear, calling for political engagement of the participants in the art scene, within which the belief was beginning to ripen that cultural policy should undertake systematic changes in order to prevent the non-governmental sector from being placed automatically in opposition to the public one, and to ensure equal access of different audiences to artistic and cultural contents. At the end of the '90s, the stakeholders of the Slovenian artistic scene merged, on a informal basis, into the Asociacija Association. This last performed sporadic actions that accompanied in particular the attempts of the city and state powers that be to beat the independent scene out of the financing for its vibrant artistic production, to the benefit of public cultural institutions, for which they were responsible as their founders. The Asociacija Association is based on a representative system where members nominate their representatives who then advocate for the interests of self-employed artists and producers engaged in the field of fine arts, performing arts, music and inter-

The other front led by Asociacija Association in partnership with other stakeholders on the non-governmental scene is the initiative for the recognition of professional non-governmental art producers as legitimate and relevant forms of production that differs from the free-time activities of lovers of culture as well as from the arbitrariness of recreational involvement in cultural and artistic activities.

media arts. However, problems with the interpretation of the non-governmental scene still persist. Even cultural workers employed in public institution administrations and agencies fail to understand the specific nature of the non-governmental sector, and behave with hostility against non-governmentals. They perceive us apriori as a threat to their financial security, rejecting every claim for strict adherence to the umbrella act on culture (Act Regulating the Realization of the Public Interest in Culture) in which it is stated that a comparable financing should be provided for comparable contents or public programs. Such claims are considered an attempt to usurp the autonomy of art and the possibility for the proper realization of the public interest.

Instead of pausing to reflect on the rather turbulent period ranging from the end of the 1990s up to 2009, during which the Ministry of Culture and the City Cultural Department established, on the initiative of Asociacija Association, two working groups responsible for a permanent dialogue aimed at improving the conditions of the non-governmental sector, we will rather present some initiatives that are directly connected with public institutions and their reform, which the current political decision-makers have had to roll up their sleeves and start dealing with. The reforming of public institutions in the cultural sector, which does not yet have its final shape, is mostly aimed at promoting program and structural flexibility that would help public institutions avoid inertia and monolithic-ness as well as the poor use of resources at their disposal. On the other side, the proposals of the non-governmental sector, which sees an opportunity in the announced changes, are oriented mainly towards the recognition of the legitimacy of their production model and towards seeking for compatibility with public institutions that could with their infrastructural capacities enable synergies with the various levels of the artistic production of non-governmentals and individual artists.

Most attempts at collaboration of non-governmental actors and individual artists with public institutions have to date been limited to outsourcing venues and technical equipment that the latter can hire out during vacant slots. Great success was already achieved when the non-governmental sector managed to include non-governmental projects within the financial scheme of the Ljubljana Municipality and the Ministry of Culture, in which they were ex-

work initiative launched a few years ago. However, some weekly papers and some media have totally ignored the events connected to the ECM – Ljubljana 97 project and in contrast to their journalistic and re-

search activity symptomatically withdrew from the whole matter."], Ibid.

3 See the "Poročilo o porabi sredstev za Evropski mesec culture Ljubljana 1997 [Report on the Revision of the Use of Resources for the European Cultural

Month Ljubljana 1997]" prepared by the Court of Auditors of the Republic of Slovenia on the basis of Article 24 paragraph 2 of the Court of Auditors Act (OG RS, no. 48/94) and Articles 24 and 25 of the Rules of the Court of Auditors of the Republic of

empted from having to pay rent to institutions founded by the Ministry or Municipalities. Non-governmental actors must thus pay only for additional real costs arising from the use of public institution venues. However, despite the apparently logical regulation, experiences in practice are such that non-governmentals are paying incomprehensibly large amounts of money for additional real costs that are determined on the basis of the costs of the whole building and obviously also on a commercial basis. Experiences show that public institutions are not driven by the urge to collaborate with non-governmentals, for they see the presence of these last within their own institutions as more of a kind of social mission within the framework of which they are generously offering some of their precious space. Most of the attempts to make public institutions integrate collaboration with non-governmentals into their agenda has not been successful because program editors and directors who demanded program autonomy found support not only from their respective public institutions but also from their founders. Everybody takes it for granted that the programs of public institutions have to be coherent and artistically relevant, which automatically results in a situation of priorities. This means that any eventual initiative of non-governmentals can only count on random vacancies or spare time slots, thus preventing any serious production. Content autonomy is a beatific mantra for non-governmentals and individual artists as well, since nobody wants to be told what kind of art to produce. As a result, we are often faced with an apparent stalemate position where standing in opposite positions are an artist (or art director) employed in a public institution and another outside artist who would like to do something in that institution and their devotion to artistic autonomy is disabling both of them. However, it is our conviction that it is this precise point, where the artists usually end up coming to a deadlock, that is the very place where the relation between the program autonomy of a public institution and the pressures from the outside has to be radicalized. Public institutions are by definition service-oriented and, pressured by public interest, committed to cultural products with a predefined set of quality, quantity and content criteria. This prevents them from being development-oriented and from investing in the research in the field of art that would exceed the legal and regulatory genre frameworks. As a result, we are dealing with the perpetuation of

the same ritualistic and decorative social protocol that is losing touch with the artistic production (and at times even with social reality) that is undergoing constant development and change.

The anecdotal meeting with the program editor of serious music at Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana is the best, though tragicomical, example of an institution snatched from artistic reality. At a special meeting, we talked about the lack of presentation of contemporary serious music in the Parthenon of Slovenian culture. The program editor was vexed with the dissatisfaction that has been growing in recent years because of the contemporary music being included in the subscription program of events that are only sold thanks to concerts from the classic musical repertory. She was ascertaining aloud that her audience is too old and that in ten to fifteen years time it will pass away, which means that there will be no audience for these kind of concerts. We reached a common conclusion that Cankarjev Dom was not investing into the rejuvenation of its audience living in a contemporary urban reality and expecting an adequate music program. Systematic presentation of serious contemporary acoustic music and sound research would provide a comprehensive music education for the audience, connecting it with the classical artistic achievements. Our efforts towards formalizing collaboration of the research music-sound production that is going on exclusively within non-governmental frameworks, however, have not been successful. This is due to the fact that Cankarjev Dom failed to earmark the special production resources that were, much to the music program director's surprise, almost as high as those dedicated to the existing production.

A marked underestimation of the scope of contemporary artistic productions can be traced at all levels of the implementation of artistic programs, which not only receive too little financial support, but

are faced as well with the lack of time and space resources. However, some cultured program editors from public institutions do tend to invite some initiatives, which are then, at best, formalized in the form of a co-production. There are, however, even fewer editors who include joint projects within their regular activities or subscription programs or seasons. Disproportion of investment into co-productions creates an impression of charity and superiority of public institutions, while their arrogant self-sufficiency is made possible by their secured public finances. Therefore, Asociacija shall endeavor for the time being, while the legislation has not yet been changed to the point of guaranteeing the comparability of production resources, to achieve intermediary solutions. These solutions include the possibility for non-governmentals or individual artists to use free facilities in public institutions, thus reducing expenditures for renting those same venues on the free market. The possibility to use different workshops, photo studios, music and recording studios, technical equipment and experts who would be willing to offer their expert knowledge to support the realization of artistic projects outside their institutions of origin would be most welcome.

The other front led by Asociacija Association in partnership with other stakeholders on the non-governmental scene is the initiative for the recognition of professional non-governmental art producers as legitimate and relevant forms of production that differs from the free-time activities of lovers of culture as well as from the arbitrariness of recreational involvement in cultural and artistic activities. In the first place, we endeavour to introduce financing of structures (i.e., overhead costs) and not just programs or projects (i.e., costs related to the implementation and production of artistic projects and programs). On this front, Asociacija Association approves of the language of politics and law, while still maintaining as its priority the recognition – after more than twenty years – of a different model of artistic production within the Slovenian cultural system. The model that has for more than twenty years been successfully creating the Slovenian artistic production at the local and international level. Our aim is to provide a legal frame for the production model that is, in terms of the effects it produces, completely comparable with the achievements of public institutions, thus widening the whole field of artistic production in which working within the framework of a public institution represents but one of the possible forms of professional activity.

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POST-YUGOSLAV SITUATIONS
parallel perspectives from Croatia,
Macedonia and Slovenia

Katarina Pejović

Tools for Change: Cultural NGOs and Public Institutions

When it comes to the status of cultural NGOs and their relation towards public institutions in Slovenia, it seems that the present situation is highly promising. This optimistic statement might sound far-fetched or even utterly unrealistic, just as a similar statement on the global economic crisis might sound – and these two are connected in ways that one might also find improbable.

Just a brief overview of the NGO-public institution relation confutes the bright perspective: despite certain changes that have happened over the past 10 years, which have mostly to do with programme financing, NGOs are still prevalently in a pariah position vis-à-vis public institutions in culture. This inequality spreads across all levels: from financing – where public institutions devour the majority of the financial cake and NGOs are allocated a small portion – to production facilities – where NGOs most of the time depend on cooperation with public institutions under unfavourable conditions – to sustainability – where public institutions are provided continuous structural financing by the state while NGOs are deprived of this support. I am talking about the practice, since on the level of legislation (more precisely, in the Law on Implementation of Public Interest in Culture – ZUJIK), the state of Slovenia acknowledges cultural NGOs as carriers of programmes of public interest and prescribes for them the same conditions

as those provided for public institutions. This means that the exercising of public cultural policy is no longer only in the hands of the state but is also allocated to the civil sector. But in reality, this legislation is not implemented and the inequality is prevalent.

I should point out that the emphasis is not on "inequality" because NGOs are not and should not be equal to public institutions (although again, the practice shows that they too can develop rigid management models similar to institutions, depending on the profile of the NGO's leader[1]). The fluidity and flexibility – which does not refer to the precarious working conditions as one of the deep problems pestering the existence of NGOs – as well as the autonomy of NGOs on the level of management, should be maintained, even if public institutions should – as it is claimed nowadays even on the highest levels of the public authorities – become more fluid themselves. It is the NGOs competences that should be increased

[A major factor here] is the motivation of the NGO leaders to enter into a joint venture and persist in acting as a platform for as long as it takes until they are perceived by the authorities as a viable interlocutor and partner.

and favoured when entering a production relation with institutions rather than being restricted by it.

Now, the list of unequal features in the NGO-public institution constellation can go on, but this text has no pretence of going into a deeper analysis of the issue; it is rather a brief overview and an appeal. The fact of the matter is that, for a more serious analysis, it would be difficult to corroborate the claims without proper statistics and/or a detailed evaluation. Public institutions do keep a precise record of their budgetary spending, but what they lack are various modes of evaluation of the strategies and effects of their budgeting policies. On the other hand, Asociacija, the Slovenian platform of cultural NGOs, conducted, in 2010, an involved research project that strove to present both on quantitative and qualitative levels the state of affairs of NGO artistic and cultural production. Unfortunately, out of the 100 NGO representatives that were invited, only 35 took part in this research project. This lack of readiness to work on fundamental matters of joint interest is a feature that is prominent among cultural NGO leaders in Slovenia and I will come back to it as one of the key issues for understanding the problems of NGO-public institution relations.

Hence, amid the announced reforms of the public sector in culture and the ongoing debates on their shape and on how radical they should be, one of the essential prerequisites is to engage or create an agency that would provide expert support for civil society (one such proposal was made by Vesna Čopič and Asociacija). This agency could also make the facts & figures analysis of all key issues concerning public institutions as well as NGOs and propose the most feasible strategies for change and development. Without such an analysis and strategic planning, it is impossible to make any realistic assessment and to undertake any serious systemic changes.

Obviously, public institutions will not do this job for NGOs (as they are not doing it for themselves either), but NGOs might do the job for both. This is how Croatian NGOs, organised in different platforms, acted towards their government, this being just one of many steps they undertook in the process of establishing cultural NGOs as equal partners in the dialogue with the Ministry of Culture and City Municipalities.

The example and experience of the years-long systematic work of the Croatian cultural NGO scene on it's positioning towards public authorities could prove to be extremely useful and constructive for the Slovenian NGO scene. But in spite of the fact that Društvo Asociacija has existed informally for as long as 19 years and has been active for almost five years as the NGO platform and agent instigating strategic long-term thinking, planning and the establishment of a sound dialogue with public authorities, the impression is that there is a major factor lacking in order for this entire range of activities to bring about a palpable change: this factor is motivation. In this case, it is the motivation of the NGO leaders to enter into a joint venture and persist in acting as a platform for as long as it takes until they are perceived by the

1   This was pointed out also by Dragan Klaic in his interview for the BIFC Hub: "The big change is the emergence of the NGO scene everywhere. This is, again, a positive trend occurring in all post-communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe — a rich re-constitution of a civil society with a great many cultural NGOs that have become the most active, propulsive, innovative and critical players in national, regional and municipal cultural constellations, and also the most connected with the rest of Europe. While the established cultural institutions find it very difficult to maneuver in the European cultural space, these NGOs have emerged thanks to their capacity to engage with their counterparts across Europe, to enter international networks, acquire new practices, get aid, and obtain grants. So, this is the common positive aspect.
Of course, the NGO scene has its own problems: not all of these organisations are of the same integrity — one might distinguish in matters of quality, but quality is not a factor of importance. There is some kind of built-in opportunism in the world of NGOs that comes from their own fragility and limitations of functioning in their own context. And there is a great deal of dependence on a very small number of steady and reoccurring funders. That is why cultural NGOs are often acting as clients rather than as autonomous protagonists or cultural players. Within many of these NGOs, their own governance issues have not been articulated. Also, many of them have been created by strong individuals who continue to run them, making them more of a private turf than a civic factor." For the entire interview, go to: http://www.bifc-hub.eu/interview/intervju-1

authorities as a viable interlocutor and partner. Needless to say, that would merely be the first step, which should lead to the beginning of the real work: influencing the decision making on culture at both the state and local levels. Perhaps one reason for the lack of motivation is because it is clear that this process is long and often unrewarding and the leaders of cultural and artistic NGOs are in most cases the artists themselves, who want primarily to focus on their artistic production. Yet, by now, it should be clear that the cultural NGO scene can survive if and only if it unites in joint interest – and this interest is simply the best possible existence and production conditions for the scene.[2] I purposefully boil down the entire mesh of intricate dynamics, relations and tendencies of the cultural NGO scene in Slovenia to this quasi-psychological factor because I believe that the fundamental problems in this case lies in the human factor. As I already mentioned, the legal perspective is quite clear and offers a good base for the NGOs on which to organize themselves and demand "consequent implementation of the law" (ZUJIK). The scene has been proving for decades now that it is able to produce high-quality programmes in different spheres and media and it has contributed to making Slovenia visible and even outstanding on the world cultural map. Yet its relation with the authorities is on almost infantile level: that of a child heavily depending on its parent.[3] The exception here is a few strong players who have successfully fought for positioning their own productions. But in spite of their individual strength, they are still part of the entire scene – because this is their wider context – and as such, they are much weaker than by being alone, again because of the lack of motivation to work for the joint cause. It is a clear example of the non-synergy that is constantly undermining the vitality of the scene. And no one can be spared from it unless they separate entirely from this context – which in turn makes them no longer a non-institutional cultural NGO.

What the Croatian cultural NGOs realised was that there was this joint interest that was beyond their individual differences and animosities, be they

aesthetic, political or social. The last 7 or 8 years were full of hard-learned lessons for the scene, but the results are visible everywhere: the NGO cultural scene has thus far influenced the functioning and the level of activities in the Ministry of Culture as well as in the City Municipalities, having their say in the decision-making processes, programming and strategic planning (A similar initiative was launched in Slovenia, reaching its peak in 2009, again through the efforts of Asociacija, but what was lacking again was the consolidated foundation for a more continuous advocating effort). Representatives of this scene have introduced new standards of professionalism and cultural policy making, which the authorities began to acknowledge and even implement. New venues are being allocated to NGOs, slowly and painstakingly, but surely. Just some weeks ago, a major process came to its realisation: the launching of the new foundation Kultura Nova, which is going to provide for the sustainability and development of cultur-

2 (In a recent interview in *Mladina*, experimental economist Aljaž Ule stated: "It seems that we are dealing here with the collective past trauma. Whereas in socialism people were accustomed to everything being organised by the state, which allegedly took care of the people, the times have changed now and people in ex-socialist countries often do not understand that their freedom has its price, which means that they have their rights, but that they also have responsibility, and especially the responsibility to fight for the social organisation in which they want to live." Cf. Aljaž Ule interview in *Mladina*, May 30, 2011. For the entire interview in Slovene, go to:

http://www.mladina.si/tednik/201120/trenutno_se_vedemo_kot_razocarani_otroci)

3 Aljaž Ule also states in the previously mentioned interview in *Mladina*: "In Slovenia, but also in other countries in transition perhaps, we have never actually had developed norms of cooperation and collective work for the benefit of the system. Today's society has developed in an environment where, as a rule, it has always been someone else making the decisions and bearing the responsibility for them. In the former system, for instance, an individual had neither the right nor the responsibility for the entire society. It

was the system that emphasised the collective effort by organising collective actions, albeit for very specific occasions. Perhaps the only time in which there existed in society some idea of collective progress was right after World War II, which was a time when, without cooperation, it was impossible to survive. Deprived of the horrible experience of World War II, latter generations have forgotten about this. In my opinion, what we did not quite understand when making the transition to a new system was that the society, state and collective well-being would be the responsibility of ourselves, the individuals."

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al NGOs. Now, in a significant addition to the already existing National Foundation for the Development of Civil Society, which was up to now the sole provider of structural financing for NGOs (but where the cultural NGOs were just a part of the collective civil NGOs), this will be the first foundation that addresses exclusively the structural needs of cultural NGOs.

But the bright reports from Croatia take place amid the deep economic crisis, whose proportions are yet to be determined. Much like Slovenian society, Croatian society is heavily burdened with obsolete models of institutions focused on practising social rather than cultural policy. So all the victories won along the way are subject to serious tests and their future is not ensured. It is the entire system of cultural policy and production that requires a radical change – reforms that would bring about new concepts of institutional functioning and open new positioning possibilities for the NGO scene. In Slovenia, the talk on reforms is going on and the proposals from the NGO camp exist, but once again the lack of cooperative spirit among NGO leaders is prevailing and stalling the process of change.

I see the promising potential precisely in the fact that the situation is so serious and difficult on so many planes and most importantly on the economic plane. The existential fear that has been permeating all strata of society in the last couple of years is dramatically felt both in Croatia and Slovenia and the authorities are not immune to it – on the contrary. Fear and anxiety, however, stimulate alertness and agility in launching actions. My bright point lies exactly in this awakened alertness and agility, which are the prerequisites for change. When will the cultural NGO representatives be "infected" with fear and anxiety to the point that their survival instincts make them cooperate among themselves? Find motivation? Make an in-depth evaluation and assessment of their own production work as well as the work of public authorities? Work on short- and long-term planning and strategies that should be recommended to the authorities?

What the Croatian cultural NGOs realised was that there was this joint interest that was beyond their individual differences and animosities, be they aesthetic, political or social. The last 7 or 8 years were full of hard-learned lessons for the scene, but the results are visible everywhere: the NGO cultural scene has thus far influenced the functioning and the level of activities in the Ministry of Culture as well as in the City Municipalities, having their say in the decision-making processes, programming and strategic planning.

But as this is always a two-way street, public authorities should also act in their own right. It is high time for their representatives to give up on full control and the restrictive policy in regards to both public institutions and the NGO sector and allow for a more flexible and fluid programming and functioning system to come to life. In order to understand the level of urgency of change, one should **just envision what** further **implementation** of the obsolete system **(which** has been in practice for decades **now) would accomplish** and realise **just** how grave the **outcome** would be. On the one hand, the full-control principle increasingly saps the vitality of public institutions by perpetuating their bureaucratic overburdening, administrative inefficiency and production ineptitude. On the other hand, it restricts NGOs in terms of programming ambitiousness, structural development and overall contribution to the production of relevant arts & culture content. Full control from a centralised source, in the long run (and we are now, hopefully, in the final chapters of this long run), is exhausting and cannot provide solid sustainability. The lack of autonomy of public institutions prevents the fluctuation of new ideas on managing and production. It also prevents the creation of more dynamic and productive cooperation with NGOs. In other words, what is badly needed is the introduction of a delegating principle. This is the genuine way to enable the vitality of cultural production. As delegating means shared rights and responsibilities, the keyword in this practice is trust – as improbable as it may seem. The trust I have in mind is operational and instrumentalised rather than human and emotional. It is the trust born out of the necessity to create more functional and efficient models of cultural policy and production. Much like the motivation of NGOs to mobilise joint forces, it should be born out of the reality of jeopardised existence. And the promising perspective begins to shape itself into a path of change when these two tools – motivation and trust – are used to forge it. At present, however, those who don't lack either of these two tools, yet do lack support in greater numbers, should avail themselves of two other tools if they intend to carry out the process of reforms and changes in cultural policy: hope and perseverance.

Violeta Kachakova

Towards the prospective practices of open institutions in Macedonia

Problems and Potential in the Collaboration Between the Independent Cultural Actors and the Public Institutions

This text gives a short overview of the current state of cultural policy in Macedonia in regards to the position of the independent cultural actors and their relation to the public institutions. Since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991, the changes in the political system have influenced the public policies related to culture and, through them, the forms of cultural production and the imbalanced treatment of the institutionalised sector *vis-à-vis* the independent cultural sector. In this context, the collaboration between the independent cultural actors and the public institutions can be regarded on two levels. The first level is the relation between the independent cultural actors and the decision makers – the institutions of the central and local governments, the Ministry of Culture and the municipal departments for culture and collaboration with NGOs. The second level is the relation between the independent cultural actors and the policy implementers – the public cultural institutions. Different types of relations have been established at both levels, yet the following shared characteristics can be indicated: the inconsistency in the collaboration, the inexistence of a structured dialogue, and positive practices derived from ad hoc relations with individuals working within these institutions. Therefore, no form of hybrid institution has yet been developed in Macedonia; nevertheless, there is a potential for the development of a more structured public-civil partnership between existing public cultural institutions and independent cultural actors. For that reason, regional projects such as "Open Institutions: New Meeting Points of Culture and Citizens" are important because they: enable exchange of information and positive practises about the already established forms of public-civil collaboration in the region, create a regional network of cultural workers and decision makers, advocate for the needs of the independent cultural actors in each local context, and in the long term, improve the models of cultural production and create the foundations for more structured and sustainable local and regional cultural development.

The panel discussion organised in Skopje on May 5, 2011, by Kontrapunk, brought together at the same table representatives of public cultural and educational institutions and NGOs, as well as freelance artists, producers and cultural workers from Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. The panel started with the presentation by Vesna Čopič, who provided an excellent overview of the actual cultural policies at the EU level versus those at the Balkan level and the treatment of the NGO sector working in culture within them. Following that, Emina Višnić presented PO-GON, from Zagreb, as a good example of a hybrid cultural institution that is based on a new model of public-civil partnership. The invited guests speakers from Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia shared their working experiences in relation to collaborations established between NGOs and public institutions. The main focus was put on the current situation in Macedonia, the cultural policy, the work of public cultural institutions and that of the civil sector, the different ad hoc forms of public-civil collaboration and the problems, potential and needs for their further development, etc.

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What differentiates the Macedonian in relation to the other involved countries' cultural contexts (especially Slovenian and Croatian) is the inexistence of an equal level of awareness of the need for joint action of all representatives of the independent cultural sector. Not having a communal visible and organised (even

informal) structure with shared interests and needs produces a situation in which the work of independent actors is dispersed, isolated and less visible to the audience and the institutions. Consequently, it doesn't provide any structural or political relevance for the negotiation of the needs of this sector to decision makers. Therefore, in order to discuss the issue of open institutions and search for functional models that can be developed in the Macedonian context, the independent cultural sector primarily needs to be consolidated under a single, joint umbrella in order to be seen, heard and acknowledged as a relevant cultural creator and partner to the institutions in programming and policy making.

This is of crucial importance in a context of dominant power structures led by the Ministry of Culture, which controls the system of financial support and distribution of assets. In this system, the independent cultural actors can obtain financial support once a year through an open call and only for project-based activities. No structural support for the NGOs working in culture has yet been developed. The criteria for the evaluation of projects and the distribution of assets are not clearly defined. Applying to the same open call are public institutions, NGOs, freelance artists, folklore organisations, etc. The percentage of the budget for culture that should be redistributed to the independent cultural sector on a yearly basis is not defined. The results of the completed call are not transparent since they do not provide the amount of support distributed to each cultural actor. The percentage of co-financing of EU funding programmes (such as Culture 2007–2013) is different each year, etc.

Consequently, attempts at the mobilisation and joining of the independent cultural actors (NGOs, informal groups and associations and freelance artists and cultural workers) under a common platform for advocating their needs have been initiated throughout the years. These initiatives were raised by a certain number of NGOs working in the area of the city of Skopje. However, most of these initiatives had a very short lifespan due to the disagreements, mistrust, different interests and lack of initiative among the actors. Reasons for this can be found in the differing organisational, more sustainable forms of existence of some of these actors, especially among the NGOs. Very few of them (in the last 10–15 years) managed to survive through the period of their establishment and to offer a continual and diverse cultural and artistic programme as well as to maintain their financial (by using diverse, almost totally programme-based funds, mostly coming from foreign donors) and programme independence. Some of them were developed as spin-off projects of the Open Society Institute, which supported their structural and programme existence. Some of them were closed, not having the human and structural capacities to continue working, especially

after the withdrawal of the foreign cultural funds from the country (for example, Prohelvetia) and the change in the policy of the Open Society Institute, which decreased the amount and diversity of its support that it had previously given through different programme lines in the 1990s. Also, in recent years, some new cultural NGOs have been established as arm's-length structures of the national and local governments, proclaiming themselves as independent, and their activities have been, in a significant amount, funded by the national and local cultural funds. Then again, there are individuals who had, in the 1990s, launched the first generation of cultural NGOs, and who nowadays are working in various governmental, cultural or educational institutions and proclaiming the idea that the NGO sector should stay out of the institutions and away from structural funding in order to maintain its dynamic of action and innovative and contemporary cultural production. And finally, to make the situation more complex, there is a new younger generation of cultural actors and artists that sees the NGO sector as a new form of closed and at times "elitist" institution. Therefore, in a situation like this, it is hard to find a common denominator for any joint platform.

Nevertheless, there is a positive example of joint action that started in 2009: the creation of Independent Cultural Scene (https://sites.google.com/site/nksics/), an informal self-organised association of ten cultural NGOs from Skopje that are actively working in the field of culture. Now, in 2011, due to the need for the more intense collaboration between the independent cultural actors that will increase their visibility, a new, larger network has been initiated aimed at growing into a state-level platform going by the same name, Independent Cultural Scene.

One of the important results of the work of Independent Cultural Scene was the amendment to the "Draft Law amending the Law on Culture" for the inclusion of the independent cultural sector in the creation of the cultural policies at the different state levels. On March 24, 2011, Mr. Vasko Shutarov, the Chairman of the Committee on Culture, proposed the amendment to the Parliamentary Committee, and the Minister of Culture accepted the amendment. According to the amendment, the four main pillars that have legal provisions to participate in the creation of the National Strategy for Culture are: the public cultural institutions, the higher educational and scientific institutions, NGOs working in the field of culture and the representatives of Independent Cultural Scene. With this act, for the first time, the representatives of the NGOs working in the field of culture and the representatives of Independent Cultural Scene were recognised as a relevant political factor, whose professional experience and expertise will be taken into consideration in the creation of the cultural policies at different state levels. This act is as equally important

for the representatives of the public cultural institutions and the higher educational and scientific institutions since previously they were only implementers of the central government policies and, from now on, they have the right to participate in their creation.

Representatives of Independent Cultural Scene and all of the other independent cultural actors mentioned above were panelists in the discussion. Different arguments and counter points were presented and discussed in regards to the legitimacy of Independent Cultural Scene to represent and advocate the needs of the overall independent cultural sector and in regards to the models of open institutions. The criticism regarding Independent Cultural Scene was the unclear definition of what it is and who it represents. It is true that Independent Cultural Scene should work more on structuring its mission, goals and working procedures, as well on creating better visibility through different public actions and joint artistic and cultural projects. Yet, it is also true that there are some key moments in the system of politics that open a small channel through which the structures of power can be influenced. The amendment opened this channel, through which legitimacy to participate in policy creation was given to the representatives of Independent Cultural Scene as well as to all the other NGOs working in the field of culture. Then again, distinguishing representatives of Independent Cultural Scene from the other NGOs working in the field of culture (even though it is the same sector) can create problems in the decision-making process. Accordingly, some of the NGOs' representatives who do not see themselves as part of Independent Cultural Scene can act as an opponent to Independent Cultural Scene and vice versa. This way, the independent cultural actors can all be caught in the same, common trap, not seeing that only unity and common goals can change the power structures and create better conditions for them all. This opposition was visible on the panel. It was clear that there are persons coming from the independent cultural sector that are not ready to share and become part of an open, democratic, self-organised platform that will advocate the communal interests. Most of them lack initiative and a proactive attitude and some of them prefer other methods of individual promotion and benefit by using, and through that, supporting, the established structures of power.

The positions were also divided in regards to the possible models of public-civil partnership. Some of the panelists were against working with public institutions at all and for creating a single multifunctional joint space that could accept all active independent actors working in the Skopje area and their programme content. This is an understandable attitude since more then 80 percent of all artistic and cultural content created by the independent actors is being presented in the public cultural institutions, for which the institutions obtain production and programme credits and in some cases financial compensation for the use of their space and/or technical personnel. Moreover, the state/local public support for the realisation of the works of independent actors is small and insignificant in relation to the funds acquired by other regional and international funds. Sometimes this public support is spent completely on the services provided by the public institutions. Another issue in this context is the working space used by independent cultural actors, which is mostly private, rented at commercial prices by the NGOs. Most of the freelance artists and small NGOs are working from their homes. The independent cultural actors are completely left on their own to manage the working and exhibiting infrastructure since no state structural funds exist for this category of cultural workers. Even if there were a space that could be provided for the independent cultural actors' use, public support would still have to be provided for its basic infrastructural (rent and running) costs, since, under the current structure, NGOs and freelance artists wouldn't have the financial capacity to cover the overall costs (infrastructure, equipment, activities, honorariums, etc). Therefore, the problem of space for independent cultural actors is one of the most important issues, which must be referred to structurally and can be solved by the introduction of an adequate model of public-civil partnership.

As already mentioned, the relation among the independent cultural actors and the public cultural institutions is based on using the space of the institution for exhibiting the content created by the independent cultural actors. The modalities in this relation differ from case to case, mostly depending on the actual director of the institution and his/her openness to collaboration. Among the positive examples of public-civil collaboration, also presented at the panel discussion was the work of the local cultural institution, the Youth Cultural Centre. The current director Zlatko Stefkovski, appointed a year ago, significantly changed the work of this institution by opening its space to various programme contents and forms of collaboration with independent actors, which increased the numbers of the audience, especially from among the younger generation. Besides providing space and technical facilities for different non-profit art and cultural programmes, he also reinforced the working team by hiring several freelance cultural pro-

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ducers and programmers, who gave a new quality to the programme content, offered by the institution and increased the quality of the overall work. In addition, he provided working space for two NGOs. The profile and number of personnel is a general problem common to all public institutions. There are quite a number of employees who are not bringing any kind of technical, managerial or programme content to the institution they work at and yet who cannot be dismissed since they are protected by the collective working agreements. Among other problems that public cultural institutions are facing are: the insufficient financial assets for running costs and for the realisation of the yearly planned programme activities; almost total financial dependence on the state budget; unused space capacities; old and outdated technical equipment; inherited and unrevised personnel policy; undeveloped professional capacities for advocacy, project management, strategic planning, etc.; the directors of the institutions are implementers of the policies created at the central level and don't have any possibility to participate in the decision-making process themselves; the non-existence of inter-sector collaboration with other institutions, etc.

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If structurally approached on the level of policy, many of the mentioned problems that public cultural institutions and the independent cultural sector are facing could be overcome through public-civil partnerships.

Public cultural institutions have a better position in relation to the independent cultural sector because their working structure (space) and their programme activities are, so far, to a significant extent, financed by the Ministry of Culture. Nevertheless, due to the problems mentioned above, public institutions cannot fully use the potentials of the existing capacities and develop better managing and programme structures within them. Therefore, they need to open up towards the independent sector and develop suitable models of partnership. For example, the working efficiency and programming quality within the institutions could increase by creating legal provisions for outsourcing services and professional capacities from the independent sector. By sharing working and exhibiting space, the independent sector would significantly decrease its fixed running costs and the part of its activities' costs connected with the renting of space and equipment. The money saved could be redistributed to other programme activities or to increase the number of employed and socially secure independent cultural actors, since most of them work on an honorarium basis. The capacities of the independent sector in project management, strategic planning, etc. could be used for improvement of the overall managing structure in the institution and better redistribu-

tion of the human, financial and technical resources. By using the experience of the independent cultural actors in project management and fundraising, additional financial assets from different EU and foreign funds could be obtained through joint projects. These funds could merge with the yearly support obtained from the Ministry of Culture and improve the programme, technical and space structures within the institutions. To sum up, partnership between public cultural institutions and the independent sector indicates a synergy of action for mutual benefit regarding communal goals, creation of art and culture that can reflect contemporary forms and models of production, that can respond to the needs of contemporary artists, that can easily connect with other disciplines, especially with education, that can act as a factor for social and economic development, that can be sustainable, and that can have a higher visibility to audiences as well as greater interaction with them.

In the relation with the decision makers – the institutions of the central and local governments – different models of collaboration can be developed there as well. The amended Law on Culture opens up possibilities for the participation of the independent sector in policy creation. However, the procedures of implementation of the provisions provided for in the amendment and the models of communication and collaboration between the Ministry of Culture and the independent sector are not yet defined. If democratic principals are respected, the representatives of the independent sector should be included in the Commissions for Culture on the central and local levels and in the process of evaluation of the projects submitted by NGOs and freelance artists for state/local support. The Ministry of Culture can create a separate department for the independent cultural actors, which should be managed by a team of professionals from both sectors. This department should have a defined yearly budget for different types of support to the independent cultural actors. The redistribution of this budget should be arranged according to clearly defined criteria. In this context, a structural support to the independent cultural actors ought to be introduced, as well as multi-year financial support. Also, shared funds can be introduced for the stimulation of public-civil partnerships, intended for projects led by public cultural institutions in partnership with NGOs.

To conclude, there is the potential in Macedonia for the development of different models of public-civil partnership. Primarily, an open, structured and continual communication between both sectors must be established. This should lead to the creation of new policy measures, criteria and mechanisms through which the forms of partnership and collaboration will be defined and implemented. In the long term, these partnerships will enhance good and democratic governance and improve the quality of cultural and civil life.

3.1

CHANGING CULTURAL SYSTEM IS NECESSARY. WHAT TO CHANGE? HOW TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE? cultural policy debates within Open Institutions project

Conference: *Open Institutions - Institutional Imagination and Cultural Public Sphere*, Zagreb: Final Debate - Summary with Excerpts

SUMMARY

The last session of the conference was structured as an open debate, where the present participants were invited to propose any of the issues they considered most relevant. It opened up more concrete questions on how to open public institutions and tackled more structural issues relevant to the cultural sector in particular and the public sphere in general. As noted at the beginning, the participants of the session were mainly from South East European countries, proving these practitioners' need and interest for more detailed discussions on open institutions and the potential changes they can bring to cultural systems in their respective countries. The participants in general agreed that fundamental changes within the cultural sector must be made. Several directions and focal points emerged during the discussion and could be subsumed into two general questions: **What is the change we need?** and **How to bring about that change?**

Change is necessary

Participants, both from independent associations and public institutions, agreed that organizational and structural changes within institutions and reforms in the overall cultural system must be introduced. Moreover, they agreed that this should be a process based on partnership between both sectors and that representatives of public institutions should be as visible, responding to that demand, as the independent sector.

What to change?

Cooperation between the sectors on the level of programming is welcomed, but only in such a manner preventing the bigger players from solely abusing NGOs' programs. The cooperation should be based on equal partnership and should be stimulated on a structural level. Participants suggested that criteria should be introduced for labeling a particular institution as open. Moreover, the lack of resources for producing and presenting NGOs' programs cannot be solved on that level alone. New structures should therefore be established, such as: hybrid institutions that directly include NGOs in decision-making, production centers with a clear mission to support independent production, and service centers for presentation of their programs. Participants reminded the conference that several such examples had been presented in the Exploring Openness sessions, such as POGON, Factory of Art, and Art Center BUDA.

The main challenges in the management of public institutions were recognized as employment inflexibility and the low level of governance autonomy. Participants suggested that changes must tend towards organizational redesigns that would give more responsibility to everyone involved in public sector management (directors, employees and public administration), altering relationships within the system. When arguing for changes in the cultural system, we should be aware that arguments based on efficiency, flexibility and excellence could be used for the marketization of the entire sector. On the other hand, economic arguments and non-profit-oriented efficiency criteria could be used in a way that would not feed that neoliberal ideology.

Participants noted that public institutions' role is not only to produce their program but to look after their entire respective artistic field. However, this requires further discussion taking into account that artistic fields have expanded and overlapped in recent decades, mostly thanks to the activities of independent actors.

When it came to the overall cultural system and cultural policy, participants remarked that expertise, production and artistic / cultural content should be re-introduced into evaluation and decision-making. At the same time, current policies were criticized for their strong orientation towards visibility and hyper-production, accompanied by a lack of quality assessment. Clientelism was recognized to be a fundamental, overall problem of the system and of the sector and, alongside self-interest, is exactly what weakens the sector as it attempts to fight for changes. These are also the main reasons for the failure of certain projects connected to venues that had been conceived as resources for independent actors (particular examples of this in Croatia and Slovenia were discussed). The problem with those examples did not lie in intentions, which were generally good, but in how the process was run and to whom the venues were given. Firstly, the processes were not transparent and therefore positioned the operators of these new venues closer to politics and farther from the scene itself. Secondly, these venues are run by organizations with particular interests in the field for which they should be providing services, putting them in a direct conflict of interest. Participants suggested making a recommendation against clientelism within the scene. Furthermore, they claimed that a hybrid institutional type where many different actors are involved in governance and control is a solid way to ward off clientelism at a structural level. POGON, an institution responsible both to local government and to many different NGOs assembled in the network, was presented as an example of good practice.

How to bring about change?

The demand for changes in cultural sector must be political, that is, it needs to gain political importance. Some participants still think that this could be done in a polite manner, acting only within the cultural sector, otherwise nothing else remains but revolution. Others disagreed, saying that demands and methods could be radical but not revolutionary. They claimed that culture as such, and especially the independent sector, are of very low political relevance. Participants repeated many times that the cultural sector needs to get out of the practice of complaining and fighting only for its own interests. Instead, it should be engaged in a wider political and civil struggle for the common good aimed at re-claiming the public sphere as such. This should be done in partnership with others involved in the same struggle, such as environmental organizations, unions, student initiatives, those trying to protect the public media sphere or health system, and the like. Participants also stressed that it is a mistake to perceive the political system as a static, solid, rational and unbreakable structure. On the contrary, this system is in a constant dynamics of change, full of ruptures and accidental situations that should be used for interaction and intervention. Repeating the same things over the years has not produced any effect. On the contrary, struggles must be based on discontinuity and a strategy of surprise (coming from the back).

Pursuing this debate further, some participants claimed that the system as such is constructed to be powerless. Others disagreed, claiming that this discourse is used by power structures to prevent social and political activity and that on the level of the sys-

Dubravka Vrgoč, Gordana Vnuk

tem nothing that prevents any of us, including representatives of public institutions, reacting to certain important issues in society. As the political system is not totally fixed, Zagreb's (or any other) independent scene, perceived by many people from other countries in the region as strong and united, is not stable as such. It depends on particular activities and a particular degree of involvement by people.

Participants frequently stressed that clientelism within the scene is the main obstacle to going any further with the political struggle necessary for introducing any political change. This clientelism should be publicly discussed – as the prevailing mode of interaction both within the system and within the scene. Participants stressed that a clash or struggle should be provoked not only with decision-makers but also within the scene itself.

Most of the participants agreed that it is naïve to expect essential changes in the overall cultural system to be made just because the independents have good rational arguments. Firstly, measures that will empower that sector should be realized: measures made to bridge the gap between the public and civil sector, such as production and service centers, special funding schemes, and bodies to work on strengthening the independent scene. Only then, when the scene has basic means of stability, will it be feasible to pose demands for core changes in the system. This struggle, participants concluded, must be seen in a long-term perspective.

Further steps

The representatives of the project partners, Katja Praznik (Asocijacija, Ljubljana) and Iskra Geshoska (Kontrapunkt, Skopje), announced further project activities: workshops and public debates in their cities that should result in more detailed conclusions on particular issues. The project will produce a printed publication and a website presenting these results.

Participants expressed confidence in an international, regional forum dealing with these issues and felt a need to continue similar debates in the future. At the same time, they stressed that action on a local level is fundamental.

Some participants suggested that conclusions should be sent to decision-makers, while others preferred to wait until the conclusions were firmer and clearer. Participants also stressed that the aim of the conference was not to find immediate solutions (achieving this will require further analysis and debates on a local level), but to start asking questions and to begin the process.

EXCERPTS

We all want change

The most important aspect of the discussion was that it brought up a clear demand for change from the institutional as well as the independent sector. **Dubravka Vrgoč** put it succinctly: "I don't think I'm the only person from the institutions who thinks the institutions should be changed. And we need to do it together, both we from the institutions and the independent organizations. We need to **struggle together** to involve people who make decisions, to let them know that there are people in institutions who also want the change. Because there is the opinion that only the independents and artists want some change but that is not true." To which **Emina Višnić**, the moderator of the session, added "the independent scene has for years now been visible with that demand, but people from the institutions haven't."

Vida Knežević, Iskra Geshoska, Davor Mišković

Being abused by a stronger player

Katja Praznik proposed thinking about "how we could **connect programs of institutions and NGOs.** For instance, the market of cultural services, how can it become more flexible, so that institutions could be more flexible and leave a part of the program to be done by NGOs."

Iskra Geshoska warned against falling into the trap of offering programming and nothing more to public institutions, "because they are abusing that kind of collaboration and they announce themselves as open ones if they use the program from us", and suggested change on a structural level. **Vida Knežević** from Kontekst Gallery in Belgrade agreed with this opinion and gave the example of a political party that had attempted to instrumentalize the gallery.

Flexibility, efficiency, dynamism ... the trap of neoliberal discourse?

Dubravka Vrgoč was quite open when it comes to structural change: "Considering the change in the institutions, I think there are two levels of change. One is really the big one, on **structural level** which depends on political will. And it means that they have to change the law and have to decide what to do with hundreds of **employees** in the theater whom, I can honestly say, we don't need. And there is something that we can do by ourselves. The **relationship between the institutions and the independents must be equal**."

Katja Praznik pointed out the issue of law "which makes all the people employed in institutions public servants", making institutions **inflexible.** In response to this, **Petar Milat** posed the question: "How to think change differently? Is it possible to think change differently, **out of neoliberal discourse** of dynamism, excellence and efficiency? Then for most of intellectuals like us, or for artists, the discourse is revolution. But what does it mean? Can we think change differently, in a way that doesn't invoke these neoliberal things?"

In this vein, **Davor Mišković** talked about two levels on which institutions might be changed: organizational and institutional, the **institutional** being stabilization of a certain artistic practice. "From organizational level we should find out the model. We are all aware that institutions need organizational redesign, but from which perspective we will redesign it? If it's going to be efficiency or anything related to flexibility I'm not sure it's the right direction. When we are talking about **organizational or system redesign**, it could be done by giving **responsibilities**. And this is the biggest issue in our case, to give responsibility to directors and employees and to cultural administrators. Organizational redesign, **that doesn't mean to change the people, it means to change the relationships**."

Tomislav Medak presented a less rigid approach to the matter of discourse: "I don't think that every kind of economic argument is a neoliberal argument and that every kind of argument about rationality and utility is a neoliberal argument. Every kind of argument about reform in culture is ultimately an argument about utility or maximizing utility. I think we should be careful what kind of political legitimation we provide, but **we shouldn't castigate ourselves every time we mention economic arguments** that we are feeding into neoliberal tendencies."

Snježana Abramović Milković stressed that "to be efficient doesn't mean to make entertainment program but also to valorize aesthetic work and not only how big audience will come. To set **other efficiency criteria** and not only those profit-based."

Petar Milat, Emina Višnić

What changes to introduce?

Tomislav Medak stressed the importance of **assessment of expertise and production**. "The assessment of quality is out of the system. It has been eviscerated by the politics. And it should be brought back into the game." He also came up with concrete suggestions as to what shape that change might take: "Maybe we should start engaging public institutions instead of talking among ourselves and try to think of **criteria that will allow us to judge the openness** of a particular institution, and enable us to pin the label and produce public pressure around it. Criteria such as: mandatory time slots in venues, access to production resources, etc." The **other important issues** that Medak addressed were: decentralization and access to culture in non-central neighborhoods, establishing servicing infrastructure such as POGON, special incentives to support collaboration between institutions and independents, special funds for new and emerging initiatives, etc.

Snježana Abramović said: "It's a pity that in the 21st century we didn't open any **production center** which doesn't need a lot of employees and that could serve independent companies, independent artists for production." She added that cultural policies push nothing except visibility (new production and presentations), and that this results in **hyper-production**, in both theater and dance. "So it's difficult for them who have certain obligations to the City Art Council to open institutions to independent companies because they need to have one hundred performances of their own."

Davor Mišković said that he saw the "role of institutions as not only something which is producing its own program, but which is **taking care for the field** of practice in which they are working. If it's a theater then it's not thinking only of its own program and production but also of its broader responsibility of theat-

er as such. And that has a lot of very practical consequences. That means that they will enter co-productions, they will produce discourse about what is going on, they will act actively and be subject in the public discussion on culture in that specific field of art."

Tomislav Medak did not agree: "If we think about thirty years ago then the artistic field around institutions was very small. But now this is not the case. If you take a look at the Museum of Contemporary Art they are much less involved in the contemporary production, but there are also other different galleries or curatorial collectives etc. The **field has enormously expanded** and it will expand even more because there is more and more people studying in the arts and the field will also expand in the terms of labor. This is a general transformation that is going on which public institutions might need to deal with."

Emina Višnić pointed out that directors and boards of public institution have a very **limited space of governance** since in practice they are able to manage only a small part of the total budget. This is because policies on salaries and other related matters do not fall within the domain of decision-making within the institution but within the domain of political decisions.

How to bring about change? How to make it political?

Dejan Ubović shared his experience of a process initiated by 80 independent organizations from Serbia, which resulted in the signing of a protocol with the national Ministry of Culture defining 15 points of vital interest for the independent scene. Drawing from this experience, he stressed that we should first define what we want from open institutions and then enter the process of negotiating. He added that "this **crisis is a perfect time to rethink and reform** and start with those changes. But first of all it has to be

Teodor Celakoski

seen as a political change because public cultural institutions in all these countries, and it's been like that since socialist times, are only comfortable chairs for political parties."

When discussing how to bring change about, Emina Višnić asked: "**Is it enough to do advocacy only in the cultural field** to bring the change within the cultural system?" Katja Praznik said that "if we discuss the problems within the sector **only among us**, **we lose the power to act.**"

Teodor Celakoski warned about the predominant **discourse of complaint** when the cultural sector discusses structural change. Remembering certain past examples, he warned participants to "be aware that our argumentation could be very well used in the transformation of the cultural sector that in the end weakens not only public institutions but independent sector too. This is really a threat. We have to figure out in marketing terms what is the added value of the independent voice in the overall social process and if we don't find it we will not succeed. When they will want to change the sector they will not do this because of us or because there are many of those who are weak who should be improved. **No one will give you the power if you don't produce this power for yourself**." He suggested "that we have to see other options of involving in the process of change of the framework. I am asking what are the **other fields** where our knowledge, our capacity of organizing things, our understanding of wider social interactions, where these fields of interventions exist to enter the public arena and to really **influence the real core of political business**. Otherwise our complaints will be, within the political type of dynamics, the argument for neoliberalization of the whole cultural sector."

Attention-seeking or entering the public / political arena

Snježana Abramović talked about her discouraging experience with the national and local authorities during an attempt to improve the position of the dance scene in Croatia, saying: "They don't answer papers. They don't want any change." She asked, "What will be the instrument **to make them hear us**?"

Teodor Celakoski offered a possible answer: "We should **avoid this static understanding of the system** with public institutions, the independents and political parties as the third party. We have to see the possibilities within the contingency and accidental situations. That means that we have to understand overall political and social process in terms of **finding the chances to interact and intervene**." Celakoski remembered that when the Zagreb scene was running a campaign to establish hybrid institution (now POGON), decision-makers' initial reaction had been that they could not understand, then that it was not possible. "But when we entered the real field of their core business dealing with resources worth millions of euros then they decided to understand. So understanding is connected to power and to interest. We have to **find these ruptures and possibilities** within this contingent system. We shouldn't understand this system as a huge unbreakable machine. **Struggles should be based on discontinuity**. If you put pressure for ten years, even more and more pressure, this doesn't mean that you will succeed. But at some point you will succeed if you go other way around. If you come from their back". And, answering Abramović's question, he said, "We should avoid clientelistic **relationships** with any type of government. This is the first step to avoid this type of their discourse of handling the situation. The other thing is really to find these fields because there is not a sector in the society that will target a wider social base beside their im-

Birgita Englin, Dejan Ubović

mediate interests of the specific group. So we as the independent scene and those who are interested in the public institutions could make alliances with those other active groups or actors in the domain **dealing with public, with common goods.** If we go there I'm sure we will challenge not one percent of their budget, we will challenge the whole budget. We will delegitimize the logic of governing the whole process of the whole society and all the resources. We have to go to unions, to students and make these **alliances** because we have capacities of organizing stuff that they don't have. We have understanding of excellence that could be recognized by the media, we could provide logic of cooperation that is behind the immediate interest of specific groups. We have to make these alliances on certain occasions that we recognize as the breaking point to enter the system. We have to make **a break through into real social environment** because we're not part of it." He cited one such possibility of which the cultural sector had not taken advantage: the amendment of the law on public television and negative changes in its programming and scheduling. "We could be all standing up to this. But nobody reacted except for those directly interested." Emina Višnić followed this up, pointing out: "it's the problem within cultural sector to be so **self-concentrated** and so governed by its own interest and of course it's not politically interesting."

Deconstructing myths of systematic powerlessness and stability of the Zagreb scene

Davor Mišković said that the "**system** in Croatia, and maybe in other countries, is **set up to be powerless**. The power is negatively defined: how not to achieve something, how not to do something, what is restricted. This is kind of a normal set-up and in it we have normal institutions or normal organizations that are powerless and they are not doing much. But we can find out organizations or institutions that are working exceptionally. But this is not normal situation. Those who are working exceptionally are exceptions." Meta Štular confirmed that the situation in Slovenia was similar. "I think that not taking responsibility for what you do is just everywhere. Due to this kind of mentality, we come to where I can't do everything because I'm powerless, but who can do it then? In this sense I would come to Teo's proposal that we should not focus on changing the whole system but to see where the opportunities are, the people that are structurally different that are not those afraid of responsibility and to work with these elements."

Branka Čurčić said that the Zagreb independent scene is strong and united when compared to the independents in Novi Sad who have divided interests, resulting in everything being left to the level of the individual.

However, Teodor Celakoski disagreed, saying that both theses, that of the system of powerlessness and that of the strong independent scene in Zagreb, were myths. "Things are **accidental** and **individual**. The **myth is that cultural sector is structured so that everybody is weak**. We buy this. People sell this because this is their core business, because they don't do anything with the future. People from institutions are saying we are powerless. This is totally untrue. There are a lot of constraints and barriers to do certain things, but who makes you not to do anything about, for example, national television? We don't have critical public intellectuals. That's the problem. And this is an opportunity to enter the public sphere with our campaigns. The **myth is that in Croatia there is a kind of static, strong independent scene**. This is not true. There are a lot of activities, but stability of this sector in two years will not be here anymore because maybe if we don't proceed with certain activities everything could fall apart."

How to make a political impact?

Snježana Abramović insisted that she "still believes that we can influence in a **polite and efficient way** with papers, suggestions, ideas and we should make dialogue with those people, otherwise we will have revolution." Emina Višnić replied that polite and structured dialogue in Croatia and in many other countries simply does not work. "Let's face it, culture and art is not politically important. You can't change it by just saying it is."

Teodor Celakoski reacted by saying, "It's **radical and not revolutionary**. That is not getting rid of the whole system in the sense of revolution. This participatory bottom-up approach in cultural policy is something I agree is necessary, but I was just saying that it will not be influential if there will not be other doors to enter the political and social arena." He added that "the dynamic between the political powers is such that it could be influenced. We have to provide **platforms** so that they will understand all of us as responsible and relevant **public actors**."

Vida Knežević stressed the importance of going public while explaining the struggle for their space, "What is important is that some cultural workers were really supportive. I think that some kind of solidarity was made. What is also important is that people understood that what's going on with the space was not only our problem."

Clientelism and conflict of interest within the sector

Emina Višnić pointed out the widespread problem of clientelism and said, "**If you do things under the table then you end up being even weaker**."

The discussion then turned to three cases in Zagreb: Dance Center, Kino Europa, and Histrionski dom. Snježana Abramović explained that **Zagreb Dance Center** is wrongly organized: "one artistic organization got to run center without any transparent competition (open call). So it was just given and it's almost private. It means that the city doesn't have to pay running costs which is very funny."

Tomislav Medak said "that there is a clear problem in all of those three cases and that's that servicing **infrastructure was given to organizations that are doing program themselves**. So they have split interest or rather they have their own interest that is the first they will advocate in any case. Some of these people were saying when the scene was rising against the city government: 'well, we had our struggles before, we are not participating'. So it's clear that they are in a special position in comparison to those who are users of the given infrastructure."

Teodor Celakoski added, "These three institutions are really an example of local government's interest in going in development of **service-based institutions**. But they are an example of how clientelistic personal relations really function, and still every-

thing is argued with the interest of the scene. This process is totally obscure. Because there is no support from the scene, this kind of actors couldn't fight for the better position of these venues because they are in clientelistic connection. So they can't fight when they don't have enough money for heating because they are partners to the side against which they should stand. Even though there was a good intention and investment, they have totally ruined the possibility of having the scene around these spaces. So **clientelism is the core of the business** in culture environment that we have. And that is the real problem of the scene because people and organizations that run these venues are dependent on the government and they can't provide enough pressure to have better situation. The scene is also in a kind of clientelistic position because these actors can't make a lot of noise because they have to use these spaces. This is a total disaster of new open infrastructure for the independents."

Katja Praznik confirmed that the Slovenian cultural sector faces the same problem. She stressed that people from the sector are afraid to speak about these issues publicly and commented: "If you make a special deal with the authority then you lose all your colleagues who fight for the same thing. And you are in this **weird checkmate position** when you can't do anything. You have to have the infrastructure, you don't have the money, all your colleagues envy you but on the other hand they are happy because you don't have money to pay the costs and it's a vicious circle. I'm wondering if we could make recommendations on the clientelism on the scene. What would be a good strategy? How to raise awareness that this is really not good?"

Emina Višnić answered from POGON's perspective: "As long as the best successful model in our countries will be corruption and clientelism, it will be hard to do it. One way to do it, of course, is to talk about it publicly and be brave about it, at least a part of the scene. Furthermore, governance and management of the venue must be **organized differently**, as we did with this space here. We have problems with sustainability, money, technical equipment, but we don't have a general problem with our scene which sees this infrastructure as built for the scene. It sees it now as **its own**. In the formal structure of the institution we are responsible both to the City of Zagreb and to the associations. There's no way that only politicians will decide who will be the director, for instance. From this kind of institutional relation you also build all the other relations. For instance, Sergej Pristaš said in one of the debates that we had recently that this is the only place where they as BADco. are seen as an investment into the institution and not as mere additional expense. I think the only way is t**o be critical and go into the open fight** not only with politicians but also with those who are running particular institutions. Maybe this kind of a **clash on the scene** could also be productive."

Demanding change – step by step

Teodor Celakoski concluded, "I think a real change could appear if **influence** can be made. This change won't happen in a manner of changing the overall framework. The **first step** that we have to demand is producing **new institutions** as well as **changing already existing service based centers**. So to organize on the hybrid level or independent level to support and to establish stronger position of these actors. We have to find a way how to make hybrid institutions, how to make production centers, service centers, how to establish good grounds for the **next step**. This demand is to **change overall cultural system**."

Celakoski gave an example of a gap-bridging solution where the financing of culture is concerned: "For instance, for the last few years there has been at Ministry of Culture a proposal to establish a **foundation for independent culture**. There is even a special law prepared and it should be passed in a month or two." He explained that the main purpose of the foundation is to secure "added value" for the independent sector by providing support for operational costs and special schemes for collaboration programs and platforms. He stressed it should be an addition to existing public funding schemes, not a replacement for them. "Within this foundation, if it will happen, we have to develop also a think tank that will measure, propose and elaborate, when the scene will be stronger, the need for overall change. And when we will get this independent and partly hybrid scene settled, well, **then we could demand changing of the overall cultural framework**."

Emina Višnić said "that **dialogue and fights with decision-makers are needed** because without it no change will happen," and pointed out: "But before that, the scene needs to be established firmly, and not only in the sense of position and visibility in society and ability to affect but also from inside." She warned that complicity in clientelism on the part of particular actors on the scene is the biggest threat that could cause the scene to fall apart. She also pointed out that "the matter of content, art or cultural content, the matter of what you produce in the society is absolutely not the subject with decision-makers. For us to be able to introduce all these new criteria, the shift, we need to turn again on the production." She argued that there should be parallel processes: the establishment of new, hybrid institutions alongside the introduction of incentives that will cause a shift away from "this status quo situation of how money is distributed." She added "What I want to stress most is: it's really not the time frame of one or two years, it's the time frame of five, ten, fifteen years."

Further steps

Katja Praznik from Asociacija, Ljubljana, and Iskra Geshoska from Kontrapunkt, Skopje, two partner organizations on the project, informed the participants of further activities following on from the conference, namely workshops and debates in Ljubljana (February 2011) and Skopje (April 2011). These activities are aimed at bringing together representatives of culture ministries, local authorities, experts, public institutions, and NGOs from Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia to further develop firm steps and measures based on the conference's conclusions.

Meta Štular said, "I find this kind of gathering that we have now useful also because when we are in our own countries this question of clientelism or other slippery questions are never addressed because they are small societies and you are afraid that somebody will then be offended. I think it's very good that we can use these similar situations in this region because when I say something in Croatia I am not afraid that something will fall on my head. I go into **discussion with much less inhibition**. I was just thinking that maybe we should already think of the time after this project also, because I don't believe that with this project we will really change institutions. However, we could establish a tool to slowly introduce some changes, an **international tool** made of participants that are gathered in this conference." Emina Višnić agreed, but also warned, "No international platforms would work if there won't be some **basic force and group of people and organizations locally**. There were on European level such tools, but if you don't have capacity or will and braveness locally to address this question, then nothing will happen just out of this."

Snježana Abramović suggested that **conclusions should be written and sent to decision-makers.** Dejan Ubović pointed out that "the most important is to clarify the objectives of the open institution. Why are we doing this? For more partnership between NGOs and institutions, for a larger audience, more activism or whatever? When those aims will be clear then it should be put on the paper." Emina Višnić explained, "From the beginning the intention of the conference wasn't to have strict conclusions, recommendations, because I think it would be manipulation to say that the issue we are touching here will be solved with one conference conclusions. And then we will write down conclusions and send them to decision makers but this doesn't work even in Brussels so why would it work here? However, I agree definitely with the direction that dialogue and more fights with decision-makers are needed because without it no change will happen."

3.2

CHANGING CULTURAL SYSTEM IS NECESSARY. WHAT TO CHANGE? HOW TO BRING ABOUT CHANGE? cultural policy debates within Open Institutions project

Katja Praznik

Report from the Public Discussion: *Open institutions: in Search for New Models of Collaboration between NGOs and Public Institutions in Culture*

On Tuesday, February 15, 2011, the public discussion *Open Institutions: In Search of New Models of Collaboration Between NGOs and Public Institutions* took place in the conference hall at the City Museum of Ljubljana in which representatives of NGOs and public institutions, cultural policy experts and government representatives engaged in a constructive dialogue. The panel was part of the wider European project *Open Institutions: New Meeting Points of Culture and Citizens*, jointly conceived by three non-governmental organisations: Savez Operacija grad (Croatia), Asociacija Association (Slovenia) and Kontrapunkt (Macedonia).

The guests of the panel, moderated by **Katarina Pejović**, were: Bogdan Benigar, director of the Jazz and World Music program at Cankarjev Dom and director of the Druga Godba Institute; Ivan Dodovski, professor **at the University American College in Sko**pje; Iva Hraste Sočo, head of the Department of Dramatic Arts at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia; Jurij Krpan, president of Asociacija Association and art director of the Kapelica Gallery; Stojan Pelko, state secretary at the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia; and Emina Višnić, director of POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth.

The dynamic discussion among the partners in dialogue, who were joined by members of the audience, presented their points of view, planned strategies and recommendations regarding the connection of public cultural institutions with the non-governmental sector in culture. The panel was based on the findings and conclusions of the workshop of the same name that took place on the day before and in which representatives of public institutions, NGOs and the authorities and experts tried to identify, on the basis of the examples of three practices of collaboration, the positive effects of collaboration between NGOs and public institutions, the key problems that emerge from such collaborations and the possibilities for systemic changes that such collaborations between NGOs and public institutions open up.

In the introduction, **Katja Praznik**, vice president of Asociacija Association, presented the basic findings of the workshop. The *positive effects* of collaboration are manifested in the fact that, in the cases of good practice, projects become a common investment of an NGO and a public institution and are based on equal partnership. In addition, such collaborations contribute to a greater visibility, creating new audiences.

The *key problem issues* regarding collaborations are the non-transparent use of public resources and the difficulties faced by NGOs in accessing public institutions since the conditions of collaboration are clear neither at the level of content nor at the material level. In addition, institutions are limited in that, at the level of programming, they cannot engage in outsourcing. Furthermore, another problem with collaboration emerges out of the lack of motivation for collaboration and the lack of trust on both sides, as well as out of the lack of autonomy of the institutions. The lack of autonomy is also related to the fact that employment relationships are regulated by a unified system of salaries for all civil and public servants (all artists and other professionals employed in institu-

tions are public servants) as well as by the Collective Agreement for Cultural Activities.[1] At the same time, the key issue and risk when introducing the reform of the public sector in culture (which would have to deal with the employment policies for the cultural sector) is also that it could introduce precarious working conditions for the cultural sector and the employees of public institutions. The precarious working conditions are now symptomatic of the non-governmental sector in particular.

In order *to improve collaboration* and establish new models, infrastructure for civil participation should be established, which would provide a legal framework for the defining of both the role of NGOs in realising the public interest as well as the responsibility of the state towards NGOs, thereby providing legal protection for NGOs. Moreover, the scope and function of public institutions should be re-defined and qualitative programs should be set as the main criteria.

Iva Hraste Sočo, head of the Department of Dramatic Arts from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia proposes the stabilisation of activities of the non-governmental sector, in particular through a more regulated financing. In Croatia, this idea has been integrated into the cultural strategy for the period 2011–2013. Croatia is thus in the process of preparing new legislation and of founding Kultura Nova, a foundation born out of the initiative of non-governmental organisations. The funds for the foundation will be provided for out of the lottery, and its primary scope will be to promote sustainability and development of civil society organisations active in the field of culture. Iva Hraste Sočo emphasised that the Croatian Ministry of Culture supports programs of independent culture mostly through calls for proposals and that, in principle, it supports collaboration of public institutions and non-governmental organisations.

To the question as to how the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia intends to integrate the non-governmental sector or independent culture in the reform of the public sector in culture, State Secretary of the Ministry of Culture **Dr. Stojan Pelko** answered that the relationship between institutions and NGOs is not a relationship between a system and the street, but that what is involved are two separate systems that can exchange their budget funds and practices. Such exchange can be based on three paradigmatic models. The classical pyramid model, where a pyramid is formed whose base is a multitude of civil social initiatives that are then filtered upward through national institutions to a summit, Pelko deems unacceptable. The second model is monolithic, with two monoliths building up their institutions and then deciding what will be the points of conflict. The third paradigm is a dialogue between two fluid structures. Pelko considers particularly important the conclusions of the Zagreb conference "Open Institutions", according to which the political system cannot be seen as a static, unbreakable and rational structure but, on the contrary, as a system subject to a constant dynamic of change. The paradigm that the Ministry of Culture would like to introduce is the one of dialogue between a highly fluid non-governmental structure that is being deliberately systematised out of necessity and a structure of public institutions that also has some fluid practices. The key points, therefore, are opening up the gap and searching for connections between both structures – NGOs and public institutions. Experiences over the last twenty years show that Ministry of Culture has been more successful in tackling concrete, practical issues than in providing legal solutions. In the framework of the debate about the integration of NGOs into the reform of the public sector in culture, the changes of the *Act on Enforcing Public Interest in the Field of Culture* (ZUJIK) that are being prepared by

the Ministry of Culture can be summed up in three points: (1) definition of public interest, (2) circulation of employees and other human resources, i.e., the question of human resources and (3) the processes of decision making.

Ivan Dodovski had already emphasised at the previous day's workshop that, in Macedonia, the cultural policy is very centralised, not only in geographical terms but also in terms of finances. The state in Macedonia performs the role of the main architect of cultural production instead of being a facilitator. He compared the situation with the paradigms Stojan Pelko mentioned in his address and finds the pyramid paradigm as being a very accurate description of the state of affairs in Macedonia. In fact, Macedonia is a state and has an official policy and if one analyzes it, one will see the state acting as an architect rather than a facilitator of cultural production in a very literal sense. Namely, the state claims in whatever they do that they are compensating for what has been denied to the national self identity in the past due to foreign domination or occupations or, in recent decades, due to the transition from communist to capitalist ideology. So now, to foster this grand national narrative of liberation and final triumph of the nation, the state holds firm to a heavily centralised model of culture and almost all of the resources are controlled and spent by the government, whereby the public institutions and sometimes the Ministry of Culture itself are turned into instruments of this policy. They simply execute what has already been decided by the tiny political elite of the ruling parties. Dodovski gave a few examples of this policy to distinguish between the situations in Slovenia and Croatia and the Macedonian case. The government launched a project aimed at translating 500 titles of world literary classics into Macedonian. They commissioned it, they paid for it, they decided on the content, they decided about everything, while the publishers and

the translators were only selected to do the job. Or, they launched a project to translate 150 volumes of Macedonian literature into English, but they did it in the same manner as they did the first project. Or, they commissioned more than 40 statues to be erected in Skopje and elsewhere. In all of these endeavors, the Ministry of Culture, and especially the local authorities and institutions, as well as private companies, are simply sort of contractors, who deliver what has been decided at the top of the pyramid. It is extremely difficult for the NGOs to find their role in society – cultural NGOs that want to operate and offer something to the society in this particular model of operation of culture in Macedonia. The good news perhaps is that there will be early elections in Macedonia this year. From this perspective, Dodovski suggested what could be done, how NGOs might raise these issues and perhaps see them reflected in the programs of the parties that will run for election. Firstly, Macedonia needs fiscal and functional decentralisation, not just geographical. Macedonia needs to limit the absolute power of the government, oftentimes impersonated in the Ministry of Culture, that decides on anything and everything. And then, decentralised bodies need to be established that will then, in a different, more democratic manner, decide how to distribute the resources in order to meet the needs of the society. Secondly, structural funds for cultural NGOs are needed, which Dodovski refers to as a portion of the budget that will be distributed for space, salaries and running costs for the NGOs – that is, those who deliver cultural production yet who are currently denied support for their obvious needs and expenditures in producing that product. And this hasn't been done so far. And finally, an evaluation of results needs to take place that focuses on the output delivered for the society itself and doesn't just traditionally and stubbornly follow the old criteria of that if one is an institution, one gets funding and no

one questions the results achieved. No matter how idealistic these suggestions may seem, Dodovski hopes that the NGO sector will find its way to raising these issues, perhaps this year in direct communication with the political actors themselves, so that Macedonia might see some of these changes eventually delivered after the elections.

Jurij Krpan, art director of the Kapelica Gallery, sees no possibility for direct transfers of practices of the Kapelica Gallery into the system of public institutions since the gallery deals with research-based art and therefore lacks any appropriate partner for dialogue as regards to public institutions. Collaboration between public institutions and NGOs has always ended when program autonomy became involved. The debate at the workshop touched upon an interesting issue regarding the autonomy of institutions, where the autonomy of institutions, to a certain extent, often means the perpetuation of one and the same program. Krpan notices that public institutions and NGOs are not only different in terms of structure, but also in terms of program. This gap is constantly widening because institutions address a larger mainstream audience, while it is assumed that NGOs, being smaller, address a narrower, niche audience. And although this may be true to some extent, it also results in the contra-implication that the innovations and new trends, which the more development-oriented NGOs are following, are being set aside, away from the mainstream public, in a ghetto so to speak. This is exactly where he sees the as yet untapped potential – that is, the sphere of thinking about development of art as such. In this sense, connecting public institutions and those NGOs in culture that are faithful to a vibrant artistic production would lead to the latter gaining an equal degree of attention as being an establishment that would, by way of the connections, offer the audience an insight into the current and developmental perspectives of art, thus

preparing the audience for the contemporary artistic trends. If we start to question the understanding of the autonomy of institutions, we could start thinking of ways in which to connect public institutions and NGOs so that they may find a common interest in the development of art and culture and in the education of the audience.

Bogdan Benigar stressed the necessity of considering the issue of collaboration between public institutions and NGOs in two respects: at the level of content and at the material level. At the level of content, the issues involve the problem of autonomy of institutions that had been already exposed by Krpan. Any kind of standardisation of the collaboration between the public and the non-governmental sector means to intervene into the autonomy of the program of institutions. However, standardisation of collaboration can be done at the level of the strategic planning of public institutions. A founder could force the institution to include NGO programs in its program and strategic decisions that would provide grounds for public institutions to collaborate with NGOs in the execution of those programs. In contrast to other fields, collaboration between public institutions and NGOs in the field of music and film has increased, in particular at the level of establishing connections and collaboration in program preparations, which have contributed to the acquisitions of new infrastructure for the two artistic fields. The majority of NGOs in the field of music implement only their own programs in collaboration with public institutions, where we can hardly speak of standards due to different conditions of collaboration. On the second, material aspect of collaboration, it is not completely clear what kind of collaboration between a particular NGO and a public institution can be established. Every public institution hires its venues to NGOs according to its own criteria. The collaboration at this level calls for a more clear specification. At present,

the *Act on Enforcing Public Interest in the Field of Culture* (ZUIJK) contains an article on hiring public cultural infrastructure on the basis of the calculation of additional real costs; however, nobody, including directors of public institutions, knows exactly what these additional real costs for a public institution actually are. Program collaboration between public institutions and NGOs could be possible in particular in those public institutions that deal with service activities and don't have their own program. If any such institution existed in Slovenia (in Zagreb, an example of such an institution is POGON), clear rules of collaboration with NGOs could be established at the level of the program and content. However, collaboration between public institutions and NGOs don't go in only one direction, from NGOs to public institutions, but also vice versa, meaning that public institutions collaborate in the programs of NGOs as well (an example is the collaboration between Big Band from RTV Slovenija and the Cerkno Jazz Festival).

Emina Višnić stressed that, in Croatia, they are dealing with a heavily institutionalised system based on social, not cultural, policy (which is very similar to Slovenia). The problem is that decisions are made not at the level of cultural policy (institutions, independent actors, administration), but at the political level, mostly locally (negotiations between city mayors and unions). The problem for the independent sector within this system is that the independent sector doesn't have an equal starting position, and that, within institutions, there is an obsolete, rigid and firm organisational structure that wants to be fed, and that decision making on financing is not based on clear priorities or criteria, which in turn gives rise to clientelism as the main mechanism of relations in the cultural field as well as cultural policy – that includes all sectors. In order to change this situation, two steps should be taken. In the long term, an overall reform of the sector is necessary in order to assure the re-distribution of resources within the cultural sector. In the short term, measures should be taken (a) to bridge the gap between the public and civil sectors, and (b) to downsize clientelism. Višnić proposed several measures and recommendations. Firstly, on the level of financing: (a) public calls with diverse program schemes, and several grant levels, all with clear priorities, criteria and decision-making responsibility; (b) long-term (three-year at least) financing cycles; (c) operational grants for NGOs. Secondly, on the level of the state, culture should be mainstreamed into other policies. For example: development of the cultural & creative industries sector should not be implemented within cultural policy, but within policies of economic development. Thirdly, public institutions should open up and intersectorial collaboration should be implemented. The state should establish special incentives and funds for co-operative projects (equality of partners) and co-productions. The institutions have to be obliged to share their resources with other players in the field (providing space, technical equipment, etc.) The independent sector (NGOs, artists, art associations) should be included into the core decision-making bodies of public institutions (governing boards). Last but not least, new institutional models for the independent scene should be developed**.** For instance, hybrid institutions should be established based on civil-public partnership (POGON, for example). These kinds of hybrid institutions could be: (a) service-providing centers or (b) production centers. The state should establish operational and grant-giving public foundations (arm's-length bodies) for development of the sector (operational grants, cooperation grants, think tanks, research, education, matching funds for EU-funded projects, etc.) – for example, KULTURA NOVA. In general, cultural policy must be shifted from administration, bureaucracy and securing social peace towards content, production and artistic and social relevance of programming. It must shift from keeping the status quo towards making policy that is proactive in the development of the society by not staying closed in an autistic perspective of the arts and culture, and by using cracks in the political system; by establishing connections with other sectors that are close to culture, such as education and media, and with those who are in the struggle against the decline of public domain as such; and by keeping in mind that this is a long-term struggle.

During the discussion, it was also stressed that when we talk about resolving the question of the legal status of NGOs, this doesn't mean NGOs becoming the same as public institutions, but how to provide stable financing and accessibility of resources and how to avoid precarious working conditions. The integration of the NGOs in culture into the cultural system doesn't mean that the NGOs would become public institutions; it rather means the operationalisation and stabilisation of the NGO sector in culture, because NGOs in culture are not marginal amateur organisations but a serious professional sector that provides public programs.

The financing of culture must be based on the improvement of working conditions and programming, just as the system of financing itself must provide the possibility of growth and advancement.

What others have said about POGON – the first cultural institution in the region founded on a civil-public partnership

Ana Žuvela

A public-civil partnership can be defined as nothing less than a groundbreaking endeavor for bridging the wide gaps between public institutions and civil society organizations, particularly in Croatia where the cultural sector is heavily institutionalized. In contrast to the increasingly popular and controversial public-private partnerships, in which a share of public responsibilities is placed in the hands of volatile market demands, a civil-public partnership enables the much-needed maintenance and improvement of a public/social role and the purpose and meaning of culture and arts in a context of consumer abundance and political pressures. The need for a new generation of cross-institutions is a high priority for present and future policy development perspectives. In that sense, POGON is an experiment that should become a standard.

Vesna Čopič

I f criticism of traditional bureaucratic organisation regards the reproaches of being too centralised, too rigid, too hierarchal and not democratic having in mind instead more open, flexible, driven by objectives and deliberative organisation we can use the same criteria when we are looking for alternative delivery models.   Testing POGON by these criteria we can state that

1. self-organising significant for POGON gives freedom to avoid the statutary mandate that would be imposed if its founding would be left to its funders;
2. Alliance Operation City, initiator of POGON, underlining public civil partnership (as an re-invention of civil society in public cultural services provision) in distinction to public private partnership (with businesses motivated by profits) brings a new perspective in understanding NGOs not as a niche but as an alternative to public sector:
3. division of infrastructure from program gives premises to those who would be otherwise the hostages of high rents or rigid procedures of institutional space
4. organisational flexibility as one of the leading principles of POGON should enable flowability that would prevent gradual institutionalisation
5. operational funding based on programme should give to the public funders enough assurance in terms of "value for money"
6. democratic decision making as a distinctive future can easily lead to the weak artistic profile and devaluation of this delivery model.

However, without adequate structural funding that would bring urgent stability this alternative model of delivery is, potentially, not sustainable enough.

Branko Banković, Studio for Contemporary Dance

W e have used POGON for a performance of our show 'Povijest gledanja' (A History of Viewing) and for working with the youth section of the Studio. The program at POGON is different from all other venues in Zagreb, which is what attracted us to it: a simple procedure for making agreements, the friendliness and dedication of people working there, the diversity of its programming, its openness towards everyone, and all of that means it strengthens the independent scene which has been systematically neglected by institutions, and it attracts a younger audi-

ence... We hope that the authorities will recognize how important POGON is and provide funds to refurbish it, invest in technical equipment and sort out the HEATING!

Ivan Kralj, Mala performerska scena

POGON is important because it is a spatial resource that – and this is so atypical – unites flexibility and clear rules. That seems like a paradox, but it is actually a real need in a city where usually the cultural institutions neither have clear rules nor make existence easy through a flexible model. The transparency of using POGON, but also the fact that using its existing resources is free, is actually a response to the essential needs of the independent cultural scene, which has neither the money nor the knowledge to break into the obscure and, as a principle, closed-off world of city institutions. These, according to certain beautiful and unwritten rules, are supposed to serve culture in all its forms. POGON has that specificity which is in fact recognized, so any individual can bet that s/he and anybody else surveyed about the significance of POGON will answer – exactly the same thing.

However, POGON also differs from other public institutions in that it has neither heating nor soundproofing, its access road is not even surfaced, and it is practically of no account to the city's cultural development strategies. This only goes to show that its progressiveness has been recognized, considering that from that point of view POGON shares the destiny of all the actors on the scene whose programs it helps to implement. And within a certain cultural policy this cannot be a coincidence.

POGON has been the fuel for the creativity of Mala performerska scena, facilitating the implementation of complex performance, workshop, and seminar programmes that we have realized at POGON. Thanks to POGON for doing its job.

Ana Kutleša, [blok]

What I see as the two biggest plus points of POGON are the way in which it is open to the public/to its users and the fact that industrial architecture has finally been repurposed for cultural ends, successfully and for the long term. The first plus point refers to a transparent, user-friendly use-of-the-venue procedure that democratically admits everyone who satisfies the public-

ly-announced criteria, and the open, public, and clear – in a word, the transparent – organization of its own operations and financing. The other plus point is particularly important in light of the other examples of unused or sold-off industrial architecture which have been taken away from the public, but also in light of the grandiose plans for privatizing the banks of the Sava with corporate and elite residential architecture. Working at POGON was pleasant and successful, both in Jedinstvo and in Mislavova, and I see POGON as a tool which will allow the independent scene (especially younger actors) to finally make a break with the forced privatization of their public work, accommodating it in the (semi-)open private premises of their own flats and city cafés.

Goran Sergej Pristaš, BADco.

The difference POGON makes in relation to the rest of the scene is double-edged: in terms of programming, its (cultural-)political position gains its own esthetic dimension in projects which recognize and rearticulate it, and in an organizational sense POGON is an institution that regards partners not only as users but also as investors. In POGON, BADco. is not only real-

izing its needs but also has the chance to shape its own relationship towards the entire scene.

Sunčica Ostoić, KONTEJNER

The collaboration between KONTEJNER and the POGON center has so far proved to be exceptionally successful, productive, and inspirational. POGON is a unique organization in Croatia which offers infrastructure, coordination and technical support for the programs of organizations on the independent scene, which often do not even have basic infrastructural resources at their disposal. Having used the premises of POGON JEDINSTVO and POGON MISLAVOVA, we have had many occasions to be convinced of the Center's significance for the contemporary cultural and artistic scene. This has not just been through its help ensuring adequate venues for specific events (such as KONTEJNER's last festival Extravagant Bodies – Extravagant Minds 2010) but also through its constant encouragement of a creative exchange of opinions, experiences, and mutual support in planning and implementing various ideas aimed at developing a unique independent cultural platform.

POGON is hugely significant in the implementation of progressive ideas connected with models of collaboration between subjects in association, as well as in the very possibility of presenting critical and subversive projects and programs. The strategic approach and cultural policy of POGON, and its advocacy for improving the position of the entire independent scene, is leading ultimately towards putting the independents in an equal position to the dominant institutional culture.

Nikola Buković, Croatian Youth Network

Ever since it opened its doors, POGON has been instrumental in implementing numerous Croatian Youth Network activities and programs. Its conference facility in the town centre has been used more than once for organizing conferences, workshops, and team and board meetings. POGON's greatest advantage is that it is truly an open institution: as a beneficiary, you can design your activities with complete autonomy, supported by all the technical and other preconditions for carrying them out. Another two key advantages are its simple and non-bureaucratized management procedure and the flexibility of its staff, who

are well trained and experienced about the regular needs of NGOs. The only minus we can think of when talking about POGON is that obviously demand strongly exceeds supply: it is getting more and more difficult to find an opening in its ever more crowded schedule. Although this is clear testimony to the quality of its work, it goes to show that, in order to truly fulfill its mission, POGON needs more support from the local authorities.

Filip Eterović, Confusion

In the last couple of years, the Jedinstvo venue has offered us a harbor for all our larger projects, such as the Illectricity Festival, the anniversary of our association – Illectric Funk – and the closing party for last year's Jewish Film Festival. Its ideal position, its perfect space with fantastic acoustics, its quality equipment and its friendly coordinators made it easy to realize our audio-visual projects. In Zagreb there is one venue and one only with such wonderful features and terms of use, and that venue is POGON Jedinstvo.

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bottom-up
cultural
policy

Antonija Letinić, Kurziv

With POGON's support, Kurziv: the Platform for Questions of Culture, Media and Society has realized two programming cycles of the Kulturpunkt Journalism School project, an informal education program for young people youth and those interested in journalism focused on contemporary, independent, progressive, and critical cultural and artistic practices.

The conference room in POGON Mislavova, where the program took place, proved ideal for carrying out the program in terms of its size, equipment, and accessibility. Without POGON's support, we would have been unable to realize this program because our modest funds – and this is characteristic for most of our activities – would not allow us to rent premises. Therefore, POGON's infrastructural support is necessary for us to realize individual programs.

We welcome the use-of-space model that has been established because the principle of registering for available slots seems the fairest possible solution for all interested users, and the house rules for the space itself make you feel a part of it and responsible for it. The models and house rules instituted by the cent-

er are the factors that make it open and accessible and, in our context, unique.

We hope that POGON will be able to keep on making its resources available to users and to keep on developing and extending its activities, in terms of both infrastructure and programming.

Andrea Zlatar Violić, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb

The complete separation of cultural NGOs from the work of public institutions, whose founders are the state or local municipalities, is the basic reason why it is impossible to change and develop the existing cultural scene, that is, why the system is petrified. Therefore, the example of the "hybrid organization" POGON in Zagreb is a partnership model that opens up possibilities to develop the entire cultural "plant", because it is extracting its basic fuel – creative energy and new ideas. What I find particularly important is the idea of operational mobility in the field (in this case a middle-sized city), which creates organizational bases for programming activity. Not to invest in new organizational models in long term exhausts any creative artistic and cultural space.

POGON – Zagreb Center for Independent Culture and Youth

POGON (which means both "drive" and "production plant" in English) is a hybrid cultural institution, based on a new model of public-civil partnership, established and managed jointly by Alliance Operation City (local network of youth and cultural associations / NGOs) and the City of Zagreb (municipality). This hybrid model provides long-term sustainability as the result of a balance between public financing and supervision on one hand and independent programming and participatory decision-making on the other. The main purpose of POGON is to provide basic services and manage the infrastructure for cultural and youth programs (contemporary arts and culture; related social, theoretical, and policy activities; various youth activities). Its venues, equipment, and temporary office may be used free of charge for all nonprofit activities. At the same time, POGON is also developing its own activities, currently focusing on international cooperation.

FACTORY OF ART

In 2006, two NGOs – Łódź Art Center and the CHOREA Theater Association – and the City Office of Łódź created the Factory of Art. The Factory of Art is a cultural institution whose actions are education-oriented and focus on Theater and modern art. CHOREA is responsible for the Factory of Art's theater and performance activities. CHOREA organizes concerts, plays, and Theater actions in city space, carries out research into the origins of theater, dance, and music,

and shares the results through a cycle of workshops, which from the Factory's very beginning have taken the form of '"Tuesdays in the Factory" of Art'. Łódź Art Center is responsible for the visual arts program. Among other activities, Łódź Art Center is the main organizer of two international festivals – PhotoFestival and the Łódź Design Festival.

CUMA Contemporary Utopia Management

CUMA is a nonprofit contemporary art organization, aiming to activate urban and rural communities by creating contemporary art projects and acting as a mentor for art organizations and initiatives. CUMA is based in Istanbul, Turkey.

In order to fulfill its goal, CUMA also aspires to form creative bridges between thought and reality for organizations and initiatives with creative ideas to make possible international and local collaborative utopias. For its wide spectrum of collaborators, CUMA acts as a mediator, creating dynamic networks and gathering places.

International collaboration was the driving force that initiated CUMA. All its projects have been realized with international institutions and artists.

CUMA was established in 2008 by Ece Pazarbasi and Esra A. Aysun (professional cultural managers), co-directors of CUMA.

DEPO

DEPO is a space for critical debate and cultural exchange in the city center of Istanbul and the first initiative in Turkey to focus on regional col-

laborations among Turkey, the Caucasus, and Middle Eastern and Balkan countries. Besides an artistic program (exhibitions, documentary screenings, discussions), DEPO addresses the socio-political implications of socially engaged art practices across the whole region, organizes conferences, workshops, lectures and panel discussions, and publishes an e-journal. DEPO is a hub for initiating and realizing regional projects. All DEPO's activities, including the e-journal project, provide artists, cultural operators, academicians and intellectuals the opportunity to engage with each other, to exchange ideas and experiences, and to develop collaborative projects. DEPO also functions as an open space for other institutions' activities.

REX Cultural Center

The REX Cultural Center is dedicated to producing and presenting contemporary, socially engaged artistic projects as well as to promoting and maintaining critical and analytical cultural practices. The center's traditional role is to host a variety of initiatives, groups, and organizational and individual projects related to the alternative scene and the NGO sector. With the programs and projects that are initiated and developed in the center, we tend to educate and empower individuals and groups to articulate and implement their own ideas, to develop an understanding of social relations, and to use their knowledge and skills to deal with their own political and social surroundings. REX intensively and permanently collaborates with organizations and individuals throughout Serbia, as well as with cultural centers, NGOs,

and individuals from the region and Europe. The REX Cultural Center was founded in 1994 by what was, at that time, the independent radio station B92. Since 2004, it has functioned within the legal framework of Fund B92, an umbrella NGO for all nonprofit activities organized and produced so far by Radio B92.

WUK Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus

The autonomous cultural center WUK (short for Werkstätten- und Kulturhaus) in Vienna with its 12.000 m2 is considered one of the biggest complexes of its kind in Europe. It is rooted in the ideas and demands of the 1970s for spaces to enable contemporary cultural activities. Active participation, self-management, and grassroots democracy form the basic philosophy of WUK. The WUK association was founded in 1979. The building complex, a former locomotive factory, was squatted in 1981, and official recognition was followed by the first subsidy from the City of Vienna. WUK provides a venue as well as organizational support to those interested in art, politics, and social engagement. The WUK is based on three organizational mainstays: the venue (WUK Cultural productions, consisting of WUK Theater, WUK Culture for Kids, WUK Music, and visual art in the Kunsthalle Exnergasse), its job training and counseling projects (WUK Education and Counseling), and the 130 autonomous groups (WUK Autonomy) working in the house.

Autonomous Cultural Center ATTACK! & AKC MEDIKA

Attack! is a non-governmental, nonprofit, volunteer organization that creates, shares, and supports political and cultural alternatives as well as an alternative economy, giving physi-

cal and public space to all who wish to express themselves creatively and working on a local level that leads toward a free society. Aims: protecting human rights and the development of human freedom; gender politics; protecting the environment; protecting animal rights; supporting citizens' initiatives and citizens' rights to self-organising in the development of an autonomous civil society; rejecting violence and developing non-violent methods; connecting and cooperating with similar civic, cultural, and art organizations in Croatia and all around the world Attack! coordinates AKC Medika which aims to revive a policy common in most European cities, that is: recycling old and abandoned spaces, having them revitalized by different art and cultural collectives, producing important programs and actions for independent culture and civil society; creating a meeting place for cooperating and sharing ideas and exchanging projects.

Alliance ROJC

Alliance Rojc is a network of NGOs located in the Rojc Social Center which gathers and represents them, stands for their interests, fosters mutual cooperation, and actively works in the community. Its goals are to build a distinctive network based on collaboration and joint programs; to improve the management of the Rojc Social Center based on participative public-civic joint management; to contribute and work in the community and actively promote the need for collaboration, principles of solidarity, and respect for diversity.

Youth Center & Multimedia Cultural Center Split

The Multimedia Cultural Center Split (MKC Split) is an institution founded by the City of Split in 1997. Its activities – as stated in the Articles of

Statute – to organize, produce and promote cultural programs in the fields of visual arts, music and performing arts, film and video, literary creation, entertainment, and recreational activities. MKC's role is also to cooperate with other organizations, associations, and creative individuals in co-organizing cultural, art, and interdisciplinary programs, aimed primarily at the younger population, and to be a platform for supporting non-institutional culture. When selecting programs, apart from being guided by program quality, programs promoting urban culture and youth culture have an advantage regardless of whether they are musical, staged, visual art, lectures, forums, or workshops. Currently, the Multimedia Cultural Center Split is extremely concerned to regenerate the unfinished building of the Youth Center (Dom mladih) and to include as many citizens as possible, particularly young people, in its programs.

PEKARNA magdalenske mreže

A former military bakery, Pekarna was squatted by artists and activists in 1994. At 6,000 m2, Pekarna has become the largest independent cultural center in northwest Slovenia. The center represents ideas of alternative culture, free society, and a peaceful future and hosts public performances, workshops, studios, youth projects, and international exchange. Pekarna is currently negotiating with the city authorities for the future of the center, including its refurbishment.

OKC Abrašević

OKC Abrašević is a youth cultural center. Its main activities are organizing cultural events such as concerts, exhibitions, theater, and literary evenings. Abrašević has also estab-

lished the AbrasMedia center and AbArt production. Its media center promotes new media with an Internet radio station, an independent new portal and newly-established video production. AbArt deals with contemporary art, its most important project being Art In Divided Cities.

Cultural Front & European Center for Culture and Debate GRAD

The European Center for Culture and Debate, GRAD, is a venue established as an initiative by the NGO Cultural Front in April 2009 in an old storage building in the former center of Belgrade. Technically, GRAD operates as a gallery, concert place, conference and debate hall, small cinema, design shop, library, and bar – in one word, a meeting point. GRAD's mission is to redefine the concept of the cultural center as an institution active on a local, national, and international level, open to citizens and financially independent from political and ideological structures.

Drugo more & MOLEKULA

The Other Sea / Drugo more is a nonprofit organization that works in the field of culture. Most of our programs are thematic and we try to explore certain topics of social interest, producing an artistic and theoretical program that gives further insight in the topic. Also, we are continually facilitating an exchange of information between local and international artists, experts, students, and audiences. In reality, that means our main activities are visual and performing arts production, promotion, implementing research in the field of culture, and organizing participatory and educational events such as conferences and seminars. Molekula is the name of the venue but also of the association of six

nonprofit organizations that share the space of approximately 550 m2. That space contains our offices, gallery, library, and dance studio.

Artcentre BUDA

Artcentre BUDA is a workspace for artists, a festival organizer and an art cinema. Workspace. Artcentre BUDA welcomes about 150 artists on an annual basis who come to live and work temporarily in Kortrijk. They have at their disposal five studios, two technically equipped theater halls, a team of technicians, and two boarding houses for overnight accommodation. Festival organizer. Artists-in-residence present their work to an audience during five festivals throughout the season: 3 x Fresh (spring), Kortrijk Congé (mid-July), and the international art festival NEXT organized for the Eurometropolis (Lille (France), Kortrijk (Belgium), Tournai (Belgium)). Art cinema. Artcentre BUDA presents at least three films a day in Budascoop. We also regularly organize film projects that reflect the topic of a live work or that are specifically aimed at children, teenagers, senior citizens, and so on. Artcentre BUDA is a private nonprofit organization financed by, among others, the Flemish Government, the Province of West Flanders, the City of Kortrijk, and the European Union.

<rotor> accosiation for contemporary art

<rotor> is an association for contemporary art based in Graz, Austria, and was founded in 1999. Contemporary visual art is always the starting point of its programs, with an emphasis on artistic production that explicitly deals with the social, political, economic, and ecological issues of our time. A strong focus on cooperation has always been an es-

sential element of the < rotor > philosophy, as has acting in networks. Moreover, public space is a highly significant site for < rotor >, where it can leave behind the confines of the art space and actively engage people with art and extend its audience. Since the mid-1990s, < rotor > has established a dense network of links to organizations and artists from many European countries – with a particularly strong connection to the Southeast European area.

New Media Center_kuda. org & Youth Center CK13

New Media Center_kuda.org is an independent cultural organization, which since 2001 has been bringing together artists, theoreticians, media activists, researchers, and the wider public in researching new media technologies, cultural relations, contemporary artistic practice, and youth and cultural policies. So far, it has organized more than 100 public events, including lectures and presentations by visiting artists and theorists; workshops; publishing projects; exhibitions and conferences. Center_kuda.org actively participates in several regional and international networks and collaborative projects, one being a local network of cultural practitioners called "For Culture Policies – Politics of Culture". For the last two years, Centre_kuda.org has taken an active part in several artist-in-residency programs, and it also collaborates with several public cultural institutions in Serbia. Together with several local independent youth and culture organizations, kuda.org established the CK13 Youth Center in Novi Sad in 2007. CK13 is an alternative and educative space dedicated to encouraging and developing social engagement and activism. Its establishment was supported by the German foundation Schüler Helfen Leben. Today CK13 and the organizations gathered

around it conduct various cultural and social events, such as workshops, concerts, film screenings, and intercultural evenings.

Shedhalle

Shedhalle is an institution of contemporary art, in its structure comparable to an association. Shedhalle defines itself as a place where new forms of artistic and cultural practices – especially with regard to sociopolitical topics – can be tried out, produced, and presented within the framework of alternate thematic exhibitions. Shedhalle might be considered as having constituted and become, amidst other institutions, a niche allowing for multifaceted exhibitions. Shedhalle is also a cultural think tank permanently developing new and self-reflexive approaches to the production and representation of art. Shedhalle is a forum for artists, activists, curators, scientists, theoreticians, and students that permits and enables them to elucidate diverse topics in varying constellations. The present curators, Anke Hoffmann and Yvonne Volkart, mainly focus on group exhibitions and discussions, seeking new forms of politically-engaged aesthetics.

TICA - Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art & TICAB Tirana International Contermporary Art Bienniale

TICA – the Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art – is the first center for contemporary art in Tirana. It offers a much-needed permanent platform for Albanian and international contemporary art in Albania. In recent years, the Albanian scene has thrived, with various events of different size and quality. The Tirana Biennale has been Albania's most ambitious art event, yet a biennale only takes place every second year, leading to a serious dis-

continuity in the art scene, which also suffers from extremely limited institutional and private support. TICA has thus been an important complement that supports a vital art scene on a more continuous basis. Its diverse program is backed up by a light and flexible organizational structure that has allowed exhibitions, film screenings, and performance events to take place and has created a forum for discussions and debates about art, politics, and power. TICAB – the Tirana International Contemporary Art Biennial – is Albania's largest international art event, working with contemporary art as a tool to analyze our contemporary condition and as a critical voice in social discourse. Since 2006, TICAB has been organized and managed by TICA, the Tirana Institute of Contemporary Art.

Museum of Contemporary Art

The mission of the Museum is to collect, conserve, and research, present, and mediate contemporary visual art. The Museum's aim is to work as a multi-program institution primarily as a proactive laboratory of social development (B. Holmes). In this way, the presentation of the Museum collection, temporary exhibitions, art performances, theater, dance, and music performances, lectures, seminars, workshops, a residency program, and education programs are all an integral part of a multi-program institution.

Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art

Since its very beginning, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art has built up a reputation as one of the most prestigious visual arts institutions in Croatia. Its programs have included events such as the first group exhibitions of contempo-

rary art in former Yugoslavia, which were held under the title of "Rijeka Salon" from 1954 to 1963; the Biennial of Young Yugoslav Artists 1960-1991; the Biennial of Young Mediterranean Artists 1993-1997; a tripartite research and exhibition project entitled "Architecture of Modernism, Secession and Historicism in Rijeka", realized between 1996 and 2003; the International Drawings Exhibition, organized regularly from 1968 to the present; and, since 2005, the Biennial of the Quadrilateral. Due to its high standards, MMSU has been entrusted with presenting Croatian art and artists at prestigious international art events such as: Venice Biennial 1962, 1997, 2007; Sao Paolo Biennial 1967, 2004; etc. Since 1990, MMSU has also been responsible for presenting Croatian artists at the Biennial of Young Mediterranean Artists. MMSU is also a permanent partner site for residential exchange programs such as EERE, NIFCA and PS1, exercising a key position in disseminating information about contemporary Croatian art on an international level. MMSU collection encompasses over 5,000 works, covering periods from the end of the 19th century to the present day. These should be housed in the new Museum.

Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana

The institution of the Museum and Galleries of Ljubljana has unified two previously separate institutions: the City Museum of Ljubljana and the Ljubljana City Gallery. With the Museum's collection, preservation, documentation, research, and presentation of the cultural heritage of Ljubljana and the lives of its people over several thousand years of history, we provide our visitors with the opportunity for a personal yet active experience of collective memory. The City Museum of Ljubljana is the

leading institution in the field of preventive conservation and museum informatization in Slovenia. The museum cooperates with other museums and cultural or artistic institutions to stage temporary exhibitions or other events, thus enriching the museum as a place for creative socializing and offering a wide range of cultural events. The Ljubljana City Gallery (Mestna galerija Ljubljana) provides a public service with exhibitions of modern and contemporary visual art in Slovenia and abroad and consequently has the status of a national regional museum of fine arts. The gallery's activities comprise its own and traveling exhibitions, both solo and group, retrospectives and studies, featuring Slovenian and foreign artists from all over the world. The Ljubljana City Gallery promotes the visual arts by producing publications and prints, including books, magazines and periodicals, brochures, leaflets, and – first and foremost – exhibition catalogues. It also organizes seminars, lectures, art workshops, fair shows, and cultural events compatible with its main activities.

Riksteatren

Riksteatern, the National Touring Theater, was established 78 years ago as a cultural forum that enabled people to enjoy and take part in theater, regardless of their geographical location or socioeconomic status. Our mission today is to create mental juxtapositions in many languages, in order to set thoughts and feelings in motion. As a movement with over 40,000 members, we have a particular responsibility to develop new democratic methods and structures in order to safeguard a citizen perspective in our productions and processes. Within Riksteatern, there operate Silent Theater, Sweden's only Theater for and by the deaf, and the internationally-renowned Cullbergballet.

Art Workshop Lazareti

The mission of Art Workshop Lazareti is to improve cultural, artistic, and social aspects of life in Dubrovnik by creating, supporting, and developing high-quality artistic, cultural, educational, and social programs and projects; as well as by contributing to the development of an active and participatory civil society in Dubrovnik and Croatia.

Zagreb Dance Company & Art Center Svetvinčenat

Zagreb Dance Company (ZPA) is one of the two oldest contemporary dance ensembles in Croatia and teaches, produces, and presents dance to audiences inside and outside Croatia. The Company's mission is to provide new generations of dance professionals with a comprehensive artistic education that fosters excellence in technical performance, freedom in artistic creation, a greater awareness of dance as a form of expression, and a deeper understanding of the cultural impact of arts. The goal is to develop dancers who possess technical proficiency, creative liberty, a perspective on aesthetics, critical thinking, and an appreciation of the artistic self. Furthermore, it is the organization's desire to educate and redefine the prospects of young artists in society and to facilitate the trans-national mobility of artists and artistic works through cooperation with foreign artists, particularly through organizing the Dance and Non-Verbal Theater Festival San Vincenti and residencies in the newly-renovated Art Center where the future Mediterranean Dance Center is planned to open.

Bunker & Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana

Bunker produces and presents contemporary theater and dance performances, organizes educational programs, carries out various research methods in the field of culture, and brings together one of the most noted international festivals, the Mladi levi festival. Bunker's aim is to refresh and invigorate the Slovene cultural space with innovative approaches. We encourage the mobility of artists and their works both in Slovenia and abroad and promote the intertwining of different art disciplines. We create a space which allows the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and interests among artists and various audiences. Bunker tries to stimulate discussions regarding various artistic practices and subjects; and to create artistic programs and events that reflect upon topical social, ecological, political, and cultural issues. From 2004 Bunker has been managing the Stara mestna elektrarna – Elektro Ljubljana in Ljubljana, an old power station converted into a venue for performing arts.

Student Center in Zagreb, University of Zagreb – Cultural Department / Culture of Change

As Zagreb University's center for arts, the Student Center is committed to being a progressive and creative meeting point of the University, the city, and the international arts and academic scene. To fulfill this mission, it strives to promote, develop, and improve civil society values with a special emphasis on stimulating artistic creation and creating new forms of interdisciplinary collaborations, initiating new cultural practices and policies, and organizing practical educational programs which are

missing from the general academic curriculum. The Center advocates the idea that its program has to be accessible to the widest public, especially students. Since 2004, the program of the Center has been nominally and conceptually defined as Culture of Change, following the Center's very essence, as being a cultural, social, and international meeting point for students and young artists which is characterized by a generational shift. Each generation has its own interests and needs and must have the possibility to realize them. The Culture of Change strives to establish new aesthetics of artistic creation and contemporary production models; networks with international institutions, associations, and individuals from the fields of culture, science, civil society, education, technology, creating new models of co-production; produces artistic and interdisciplinary projects; encourages the exchange of cultural workers and cultural products and organizes artistic residencies; encourages the development of young and not yet affirmed artists; stimulates interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary artistic creation; organizes non-academic educational programs in the fields of culture, arts, and science; promotes and develops new media practices; strengthens the independent cultural scene and participates in creating cultural policy; works on developing civil society and on the sustainable development of the cultural nonprofit sector.

brut – Koproduktionshaus Wien

brut is a Vienna based co-producing institution focusing on experimental and innovative performing arts. Within its two venues, brut im Künstlerhaus and brut im Konzerthaus, brut hosts and supports local as well as international artists and companies elaborating new positions on theater, contemporary dance, and performance. Furthermore, brut's comprehensive program contains lectures, readings, and what are perhaps some of the most entertaining parties and pop concerts in town.

KAMPNAGEL

Kampnagel is one of the largest centers for performing arts in Europe. This "Kulturfabrik" (culture factory) was established in a former crane factory thirty years ago. Today its 12,000 m2 site contains six stages with capacities of between 100 and 850 seats, a dance center with studios, a cinema, rehearsal spaces, and a restaurant. Since its inception, Kampnagel's mandate has been continually expanding. Under the artistic direction of Gordana Vnuk (2001-2007), Kampnagel presented a diverse program of international artists, the summer festival "LAOKOON", several thematic seasons, Hamburg-based artists and companies, youth theater, platforms for new theater generations, club programs (Kampnagel Music Hall), etc. The concept behind the program, through in-depth and responsible research, intended to facilitate contexts that would show the rationales and purpose of an artistic work as well as its position within theater history and within current developments in performing arts. At that time, Kampnagel expressed its clear positioning against the market system's established aesthetic norms and in favor of promoting artists who were willing to take risks and who articulated their own language beyond the mainstream.

Zagreb Youth Theater

ZeKaeM has written its name into Croatian theater history throughout its 60 years of existence. During its enviable half-century, the Zagreb Youth Theater has undergone diverse artistic and organizational modifications and changed its names and locations, but has always remained a theatrical focal point that brings together younger generations as well as audiences inclined towards daring explorations on stage. It is a Theater open to various aesthetic approaches with the goal of talking about the real dramas happening here and now. Exceptional plays, famous directors, an always carefully- and contemporarily-curated program, and numerous initiatives in European and world co-productions that have greatly enriched the cultural content Zagreb has to offer, are just some of the reasons why the Zagreb Youth Theater constantly attracts and thrills audiences of all generations. During the last four years, the Zagreb Youth Theater has received 50 awards at national and international theater festivals and presented performances at festivals in Brussels, Berlin, New York, Freiburg, Nitra, Moscow, Heidelberg, Wiesbaden, Plzen, Varna, Helsinki, Vienna, Belgrade, Skopje, Ljubljana…