A Paradigm
Shift from
Objects to Subjects

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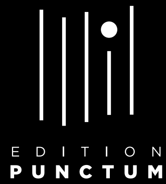
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Suzana Milevska

Participatory Art:
A Paradigm Shift from
Objects to Subjects

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Participatory Art:

A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects

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Participatory Art:
A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects

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IV. Reversed recuperation and accessibility

IV.1. *From Institutional Parasitism to Reverse Recuperation, Agency and Solidarity - The Art of Tadej Pogačar.* Berlin: Archive Books, 2014.

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INTRODUCTION

Motivation and Genealogy of the Ideas and Terms

Participatory Art: A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects gathers a selection of fifteen essays about participatory art. I wrote and published these texts in English, in different publications over a period of more than fifteen years. For the first time these essays are published together in this collection starting with the first essay I wrote on this topic in 2006.

I have been preoccupied with attempts to understand and interpret various aspects of participatory art even before 2006 via curating participatory art projects (e.g. Little Big Stories, Stockholm, 1998, Capital and Gender, Skopje 2001, Workers' Club, 2005, The Renaming Machine, 2009-2011), but it wasn't before the text "Participatory Art: The Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects" - the first essay republished here – that I began the critical exploration of the still relevant debate surrounding this contemporary art phenomenon.

The essays included in the book map different, but intersected ideas, events, and contexts that were instrumental for the participatory paradigm shift. Ever since I published my first attempt to critically reflect on various historical and socio-political circumstances that surrounded the emergence of this genre, and to unravel the unique and significant artistic and aesthetical role of participatory art practices in contemporary arts, I was also invested in consideration of the potentialities of such art for institutional critique and eventually social change.

The shift from exhibiting art objects towards understanding art as a process of creating equal relations between participants in the context of art exhibitions and institutions has been already discussed and exemplified in theoretical texts. However, the awareness of the urgency and relevance to discussing the potentialities

of participatory art for more general societal transformation, e.g. for systemic and structural improvements of various humanist aspects, as well as of the urgency to look at the contradictions between the newly developed socio-political and cultural conditions and such humanist aspirations, was not so well elaborated. These issues grew on me with time as most relevant, and I inevitably continued to pursue them throughout my curatorial, educational, and writing practice.

My interest in participatory art has never faded and this ultimately has led to this collection of essays. I continued to follow the ongoing debates surrounding the developments of this specific genre in parallel with writing about other theoretical texts and curating projects that I conceptualised on other topics: a postcolonial critique of hegemonic regimes of representation, the gender difference in the Balkans, intersectional feminist critique, anti-Romaism and art by Roma artists, ecofeminist art, etc. Therefore this book is also a kind of roadmap to how my writing changed and developed with time, and to how various academic research methods and scholarships enthused me into looking at the intersection between different contemporary art phenomena and socio-political issues such are gender, ethnic identity, class, race, LGBTQI+.

Needless to stress is the relevance of the socio-political and economic context of my upbringing - my socialist and working-class background - and the postsocial-

ist reality, as well as my interests and aspirations towards participatory and deliberative democracy: they heavily influenced the selected and applied theoretical methodology and research methods. The authors that inspired me to think and rethink the relevance of participatory art in different periods and cultural milieus, and to write the essays that ultimately ended gathered within this volume include but are not limited to philosophers, cultural theorists, or curators such are Giorgio Agamben, John L. Austin, Nicolas Bourriaud, Guy Debord, Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, John Dewey, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jacques Rancière, Gilbert Simondon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Claire Bishop, Boris Groys, Maria Lind, Jean-Paul Martinon, Irit Rogoff, Gerald Raunig, Gregory Sholette, to mention only a few.

Last, but not least pertinent to this publication is that it also provides insight into different art projects, art-related events, and artistic research methods that informed and stimulated my empirical research and theoretical writing. For example, the participatory London Biennale and its founder David Medalla, Tanja Ostojić, Tadej Pogačar, Tal Adler, Azra Akšamija, Luchezar Boyadjiev, Martin Krenn/Aisling O'Beirn, Sasha Huber, Dan Perjovschi, Merete Røstad, Alfred Ullrich, and other artists whose artistic practices are dedicated to various methods, strategies, and formats of participation have significantly inspired and influenced the

speculations and conclusions extrapolated in these essays.

Even though my texts were published in different periods, contexts, and publications – hence the discrepancies in editing, reference styles, and proof-reading - the intersections between the concepts and sources that are cited and the concepts that I developed stem out and are results exactly of these initial inspirations and challenges that I pursued for years, as well as the complex and contradictory circumstances I faced on the way. The linguistic differences between my language and English sometimes add to certain inevitable contradictions in the translated versions, for example, due to the lack of nuances in Macedonian between the meaning of 'participative' and 'participatory'.

The book is divided into four chapters: History and Theory of Participatory Art as a Means for Democratisation and Social Change; Representation, Participation, Solidarity; Feminist Research, Performativity, and Transindividuality in Participatory Art; Reversible Recuperation and Accessibility. The chapters point to the relevance of participatory art in the context of other ongoing discussions, for example about the implications of participatory art in different societal and cultural processes, the relation between the institutional critique and participatory art, the representation of disenfranchised communities in the arts, feminist art,

decolonisation of art institutions, redistribution of cultural wealth, and other activist movements in the art context.

The book concludes with my 2020 essay "The Return to Kalokagathia: Curating as Leverage in the Ongoing Dialogues between Aesthetics and Ethics" rather than providing a conventional conclusion. This text encompasses some of my recent reflections about ethical responsibility in the context of curating participatory art projects. I also offer some concerns about the affordance and the limited capacities of contemporary participatory art projects given the contradictions between the current socio-political conditions and the aspirations of the artistic practices and the complicity of some of the art projects that result in strengthening the very same institutions that they criticize and claim that they want to change.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Kontrapunkt, the publisher, and Iskra Gešoska, the editor of the Punctum edition, for their tireless efforts, rigorous work, and unwavering dedication in bringing this collection of essays to life. I particularly appreciate the publisher's initiative in creating a parallel version in Macedonian, which Ana Dimiškovska painstakingly edited and translated. After over thirty years of writing and publishing in English, the other volume was the first book I published in my mother tongue, so the simultaneous release of the two volumes could not have come at a better time.

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I

History and theory of participatory art as a means for democratisation and social change

I.1

Participatory Art
A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects

The shift that has been recognised recently in the field of art from establishing relations between objects towards establishing relations between subjects is not the result of an overnight turn, as it may seem at first sight. It has been greatly influenced by philosophical or sociological theories and today is mainly appropriated by post-conceptual, socially and politically engaged art, or by art activism, although some similar art discourses and practices existed before, anticipating contemporary theory and practice. This text is envisaged as a kind of assessment in which I want to focus on the way some theoretical discourses have shaped this recent „participatory shift“ in the arts.

My main aims are to follow the trajectory along which the established theoretical concepts turn into art projects and to locate the gaps between the promise of participation in theory and its shortcomings in concrete art projects in different contexts. In such a limited space, I cannot undertake an in-depth analysis of the prehistory of the participatory turn. It is clear that, besides the theoretical background of this cultural shift, there have been some other overlooked participatory art phenomena, media and artists that long precede those starting in the early 90s, the period to be examined in this text. Let me mention only a few examples: the video art practice of the independent and guerrilla TV stations (e.g. Top Value TV), participatory theatres such as The Living Theatre, or the early happenings by Alan Kaprow and Mike Kelly from the 60s, as well as the „new genre public art" coined by Suzanne Lacy.

Besides avoiding any in-depth analysis of previous participatory art practices, I will also have to circumvent any analysis of the political circumstances during the late sixties and early seventies. However, it has to be stressed that they somehow invite a comparison with today's political context, e.g. the great number of armed conflicts in the world involving the USA or the international threat of anarchy and terrorism that incited the newly awakened social and political conservatism.

At this stage, I also find it important to differentiate between participatory art practices and the much broader term „interaction“, wherein the relations established between the members of the audience or between them and the art objects are much more passive and formal (usually directed by certain formal instructions, given by the artists, that are to be followed during the exhibitions). I have to make all these distinctions to narrow the framework of this text because I want to reflect particularly on the most recent shift of the artists' focus: from dealing with objects and installations towards dealing with subjects and enabling their participation in art activities. I am interested in the processes of establishing certain unique relations with these subjects that are initiated by the artists and in examining the effect of these projects as reflected in the real life of the participants (not only within the „laboratory conditions“ of art galleries). Participation is the activation of certain relations that is initiated and directed by the artists and often encouraged by art institutions, and that sometimes becomes the sole goal of certain art projects.

While inviting the audience to actively participate, the artists of the participatory projects create certain interfaces that are well prepared in advance and highly contextualised in a certain social, cultural and political environment. This shift, I will argue, happens both as an inevitable response by the art practice to the phil-

osophical texts dealing with the re-definition of the concept of community and communitarian, and as a kind of reaction to the societal demand to include and make visible the marginalised groups of citizens who have been excluded from the social environment or participation in public cultural life. Nevertheless, it becomes obvious that art stemming from theoretical and societal participatory discourse invites severe criticism and this text will therefore look at the sources of this criticism as well.

Among the many different categorisations of various participatory art practices I present the one suggested by the art market researcher Alan Brown:

- Inventive Arts Participation - engages the audience in an act of artistic creation that is unique and idiosyncratic.
- Interpretive Arts Participation - a creative act of self-expression that brings alive and adds value to pre-existing works of art.
- Curatorial Arts Participation – a creative act of selecting, organising and collecting art according to one’s own artistic sensibility.
- Observational Arts Participation - encompasses arts experiences motivated by some expectation of value.
- Ambient Arts Participation - experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that is not consciously selected.[1]

In order to be able to locate the reasons for the vehement criticism directed at participatory projects, let me go back to certain theoretical concepts that I find relevant to such projects. Several references can be used as starting points when discussing participatory art. They are interconnected and interwoven, since all of them concentrate on intersubjectivity, communitarianism or Hardt/Negri's „multitude".

I will start my account with a discussion of the philosophical concept of „being singular plural" as it is formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, or the „coming community" by Giorgio Agamben.2 I will then move towards the sociological concepts that emphasise participation as a crucial societal tendency, vitally necessary today to control the all-embracing neo-liberalism driven by the „consumerisation" of human relations. At the end, I will focus on the discourses that are very closely related to art theory and art practices, such as the concept of „relational aesthetics" coined by Nicolas Bourriaud.

Nancy's concept of „being" is always already „being with". According to him, „being" always entails „with" as an inevitable conjunction that links different singularities.[3] Nancy is a philosopher of the „coessentiality of being-with" because he does not believe in any philosophical solipsism or any „philosophy of the subject in the sense of the final [infinite] closure in itself of a for-itself."[4] He goes as far as saying that „there is no ›self‹ except by virtue of a ›with‹, which, in fact, struc-

tures it.“[5] He finds Heidegger\'s existential analytics incomplete because, according to him, even though „Mitsein“ is coessential with „Dasein“, it still has a subordinate position.[6]

When Nancy claims that the sharing of the world is a co-implication of existence he refers to the problem that at this moment we cannot truly say „we“: that we have forgotten the importance of „being-together“, „being-in-common“ and „belonging“, and that we live „without relations“. To attain this knowledge and the praxis of „we“, according to Nancy, it is important to understand that „we“ is not a subject in terms of self-identification, nor is that „we“ composed of subjects.[7] Here Nancy reminds us that the aporia of the „we“ is actually the main aporia of intersubjectivity and he points out the impossibility of pinning down a universal „we“ that consists of always the same components.[8]

Whatever participation is to be discussed in the context of art, it always necessarily refers to a certain „we“, to a certain identification with a particular community in which different members of selected communities (members of the audience, professional groups, homeless people, or children) are to become co-existing parts of a certain „we“. Even when the conditions of participation of the audience or a selected group or community of people are clearly marked, it is always the „we“ that needs to be created in order for a project to start functioning as a participatory one.

The other part of this „we" is the artist, the curator, the art institution, or even the state (in some public art projects) that supposedly cares for the invisible, marginalised or neglected „other" as the counter-part of the very same „we." The usual problem with this imaginary „we" is that it mostly exists only for the duration of a particular art event, except for rare examples where the artists create self-sustainable projects that continue even when they leave with the circus.[9] Interestingly enough, the always newly created „we" contains different parts and counter-parts each time when necessary, but it is never stated what happened to the previous parts/participants.

Often the lack of a feeling of belonging to a common group, the lack of having a common identity with the artist-initiator prevents a thorough participatory effect. However, a real participatory effect in fact happens exactly when the conditions of participation are not based on strict commonality and predictable decisions for participation, or on a clear identification with the artist or the concept in terms of social, cultural or political commonalities. In addition, the clearly distinct „inoperative communities" that refuse to be state „accomplices" can always be more easily seduced by art methods and practices, as they are less involved in official political structures.[10] For Nancy, the fear of communitarian work is related to the fear of totalitarianism that has existed ever since Stalin was associated with communist ideas; he therefore suggests that we should re-think the question of community.[11]

In this context it is important to look at Nancy's remark that community cannot arise from the domain of work.[12] He states that community takes place through the withdrawal from work or „unworking" („dèsoeuvrement"), to use Blanchot's term. Interruption, fragmentation, suspension: that is where community happens for Nancy. „Community is made of interruption of singularities… community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works…"[13] This interpretation of community as being intrinsically inoperative and fragmentary helps in understanding the way in which participatory art projects function or fail to function in practice, especially when they are to be controlled by institutions.

This is linked to Agamben's warning about the fact that „what the State cannot tolerate in any way, however, is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple presupposition."[14] Similarly to Nancy, Agamben sees „being-in-common" as

distinct from community. In fact, the most frightening community for the State, according to him, is the one that rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, that is based on singularity and that wants, not to belong, but itself to appropriate belonging.[15] Participatory art projects are distinct from the sociologically highly valued communitarian projects and they differ exactly in the possibility they offer for circumventing the conditions of belonging to a certain pre-existing and socially defined community.

The main question for Nicolas Bourriaud in his „Relational Aesthetics“ stems from Guy Debord's „Society of Spectacle“, and is related to Debord's claim that our society is „a society where human relations are no longer ›directly experienced‹."[16] In line with Debord's critique of representation and its mediation of the world, Bourriaud asks: „Is it still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field of art-history traditionally earmarked for their ›representation‹“?[17] For him, the answer to this question lies precisely in the direct relations that artists can establish through their art activities as „social interstices“, which, according to him, is an effect of urbanisation.

Bourriaud contrasts Jean-Jacques Rousseau's „natural state“, which was dense and „trouble-free“, with the city as a „tangible symbol and historical setting of the state of society.“[18] By referring to Althusser's notion of a „state of encounter imposed on people“, Bourriaud

interprets this system of intensive encounters as a direct source of linked artistic practices, as „an art form where the substrate is formed by inter-subjectivity, and which takes ›being-together‹ as a central theme.“[19]

Perhaps Bourriaud's interpretation of works of art in Marxist terms as social interstices, using the term „interstice“ as a space in human relations that suggests alternative „trading possibilities than those in effect within this system“, best explains the basis for his „relational aesthetics“, but it does not explain very well the participation of these relational projects within the overall societal functions.[20]

In one of her texts, Marie Gee cites Arza Churchman's discussion of various kinds of participation. According to Gee, Churchman defines participation as „decision-making by unelected, non-appointed citizens, or the incorporation of community members in planning and design. Without that decision-making element in participation, or if decisions are made by elected or appointed representatives, she will not even call it ›participation‹ but rather ›involvement‹.“[21] Two additional contradictions are at work in participatory art practices:

/ the limits of participatory and relational theories of art in the light of a postcolonial critique of art and cultural institutions

/ the inclusion/exclusion binary and the tension between its social and political definitions in different contexts (e.g. liberal democracy and transitional societies)

One of the main criticisms of the impact of relational theory and the extent to which it applies to artists influenced by postcolonial critique is that participatory art projects can easily be captured in the vicious circle of criticism without taking into account positive perspectives and any proposition for „real" participation. These kinds of projects can be more easily accepted by society as a welcome, mild social critique instead of a more direct political critique.

There is another problem with participatory art in activist circles when art is understood as a call for revolution and its success or failure is measured according to its revolutionary prerogatives. The interpretation of art as an agency that should circumvent the main societal and ideological obstacles that artists face outside of European democracy is prescriptive and expects too big an impact from art activism projects.

Finally, I would argue that art has yet to find a position that would reconcile the contradictions between these two radical ends: between „critique for critique\’s sake" and art that can be turned into a revolutionary instrument.

Notes

1 „The Five Modes of Arts Participation“, January 31, 2006 http://www.artsjournal.com/artfulmanager/main/005967.php

2 Jean-Luc Nancy. *Being Singular Plural*. Trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne O'Byrne. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000. Giorgio Agamben. The Coming Community. Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1993.

3 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.13.

4 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.29.

5 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.94.

6 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.93.

7 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.75.

8 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* p.75.

9 Thomas Hirschorn's project „Bataille's Monument“ during Documenta 11 is a typical example of a participatory project that provokes many hopes among the targeted local community that later cannot be fulfilled (a criticism addressed at Hirschorn during the public debate after his lecture held in the Victoria Miro Gallery in London, organised by Goldsmiths College's Visual Culture Department as a part of the conference „Field Work: Reports from the Fields of Visual ulture“, 2003).

10 Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Inoperative Community,* ed. Peter Connor, Minnesota University Press, 1991, p.80-81. Nancy writes about the inscription of „infinite resistance.“

11 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community,* p.2.

12 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community,* p.31.

13 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community,* p.31.

14 Agamben, *The Coming Community,* p.86.

15 Agamben, *The Coming Community,* p.87.

16 Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics,* Paris: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002, p.9.

17 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,* p.9.

18 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,* p.15.

19 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,*, p.15.

20 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics,* p.16.

21 Marie Gee, „Yes in My Front Yard: Participation and the Public Art Process“, *High Performance* #69/70, Spring/Summer 1995, 31 Jan. 2006, <http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/1999/12/yes_in_my_front.php>.

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I.2

„Infelicitous“ Participatory Acts on the Neoliberal Stage Participatory art’s promises and hopes for democratization of society

In an earlier text, “Participatory Art: A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects” published in 2006, I addressed the paradigm shift from establishing relations between art objects and audiences to establishing relations between subjects (Milevska 2006)[1], a shift that was also discussed under the notion of “relational aesthetics” (Bourriaud 2002: 9).

It should be noted that although similar shifts towards interaction between artists and audiences already took place in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the term "participatory" focuses more directly on the subjects involved (Fontaine 2012). In this text, apart from looking at different types of participatory art and what they promise, I address different social limitations that hinder contemporary participatory art projects from fulfilling their potential.

Artists who initiate interactions with voluntary (and in some cases paid) participants in a variety of events and actions in the art context or in the public realm have developed different strategies. My aim in this text is to discuss the potentials and limitations of such strategies for social change and democratization. While the emphasis in relational aesthetics still rested predominantly on the evaluation of the active relationship between the audience and an artistic object (in contrast to the traditionally conceived passive reception of art), more recent participatory practices have shifted the focus of art discourse in yet another direction and called for other evaluation criteria. With the exception of artists who, although still listed as "relational," use objects, such as ready-mades, for mediation of different concepts of participation,[2] the newly proposed criteria do not necessarily link art production to aesthetic enjoyment and art objects.[3]

Although I still find the shift towards participation relevant, in the ten years since I published my earlier text, the field of participatory art and the discourse on it has developed rapidly, and the overall influence of ne-

oliberal politics on the cultural field has also changed. Therefore, I argue that today it is necessary to revisit participatory art and to reevaluate the extent to which it can and has fulfilled its main promises (Colouring in culture 2015).

Many of the initial promises of participatory art and the high expectations connected to it seem overrated today, for example, its aim to erase the clear-cut and hierarchical division between artists (interpreted as experts and essential for the creation of the work) and audience members (interpreted as passive observers). Particularly relevant, but also difficult to evaluate is the aim of striving for democratic changes in society. This claim is saturated with authoritarian governance practices perpetuating inequality and hierarchies. Democratic changes were meant to be brought about through inclusion of diverse audiences previously not interested in art (the issue of "outreach"). However, such audiences' lack of interest stems precisely from art's elitist and intimidating social construction, which can't be overcome by individual projects. Also difficult to evaluate is participatory projects' aim of revealing social injustice within cultural, social, and political structures.

In this respect, the question posed by Giorgio Agamben with regard to World War II concentration camps

of what type of “juridical structure [is present] that such events could take place there?” (Agamben 1998: 166) is among the key questions asked by artistic practices with reference to injustices present in contemporary society. Albeit the question is merely rhetorical as artists hope to raise awareness of specific social injustices rather than bring about substantial changes. However, the question of whether art truly possesses such potential is currently more relevant than ever before and begs clearer articulation, as “participatory art” has become too general a term.

Among the many different categories for characterizing participatory art practices, those suggested by the art market researcher Alan Brown based on different media and professional designations remain especially relevant: inventive, interpretive, curatorial, observational, ambient arts participation, and politically driven participatory projects (Brown 2006). Another interpretation of participatory art’s call for dismantling social hierarchies can be linked to Niklas Luhmann’s theory of social systems, which focuses on questions of communication, the relationship between power and trust, and the construction of truth within “art as a social system.”[4]

However, the crucial distinction is between two different types of participatory art projects: the first type, based on the various waves of artistic and curatorial/institutional critique, (see Möntmann 2009: 155-161;

Alberro/Stimson 2009; Steyerl 2006), is concerned with participation *within* the art system and deals with the relationship between the a) art institution–audience, b) artist–art institution (museum, gallery), c) artist–curator, etc. I see this first branch of participatory art as closely linked to and instrumental for institutional-critique.

Although still relevant, the limits of such art practices have already been pointed out by the common criticism that the outcome of institutional critique is reviving the art institutions, but does not lead to fundamental institutional change.[5] Unfortunately, even though the main aims of participatory art stemmed from the need to deconstruct existing hierarchies between "high" and "low" art and culture and were therefore linked from the outset to institutional critique and other critical practices and discourses, it rarely manages to go beyond an individual-centered artistic practice and does not overstep an aesthetic-centered authority although it strives to become a means for expanding the art field's projections, promises, and expectations.[6]

The second type of participatory art practice deals with participation as a means for establishing a more democratic society in general–its main prerogative is therefore to foster more profound social and political changes that are not limited solely to changes within the art system. This more ambitious kind of participa-

tory art induces the need to reflect on participation in the more general socio-political context of contradictions in contemporary democratic societies. My main claim in the earlier text from 2006 was that rather than looking at participatory art merely in the context of art history and curatorial practices, a perspective dominating art circles and literature on art at the time, a wider social analysis that includes philosophical, cultural, and socio-political theories of democratization of art and its institutional structures would facilitate a better understanding of participatory art and its discourse. The critical responses to some of the more recent art projects that have claimed to use relational and participatory strategies, voiced by their participants, other artists, and activist initiatives confirm the need to challenge elitist and hierarchical structures in the context of conceptually and politically defined critical art practices.[7]

This is not to say that all participatory art discourse is misconstrued, nor is it an attempt to criticize its emphasis on social and ethical values over aesthetic and formal components. Art theories are not always capable of locating the gaps between participation's promise in theory and its shortcomings in concrete art projects in different contexts. I am actually interested in the promises and hopes raised by establishing certain unique relations with subjects in such projects, but it is not enough to locate them within the "laboratory conditions" of art galleries; instead, it is also vital to reflect

on these projects in relation to both the real life of their participants and the general social context. Philosophical, political, and sociological theories are currently appropriated mainly through post-conceptual, socially and politically engaged art, or through art activism. However, similar art discourses and practices, such as community-based art projects, were produced by artists in the 1960s and 1970s, for example by Stephen Willats, and anticipated contemporary theory and practice.[8]

Participation is a demanding activation of multiple relations that are initiated and directed by artists and often prompted by art institutions. These relations, however, often become objectified as they are limited to short-term projects and are subjected to the pressures of producing outcomes and reaching out to audiences, as reflected in numbers, etc. This is also linked to the tensions stemming from collaborative art practices, in particular regarding authorship and remuneration, which often create new invisible hierarchies between initiators and participants based on professional or other differences. While inviting the audience to actively participate, artists offering participatory projects create an interface that needs to be well-prepared in advance, and one that is highly contextualized within a specific social, cultural, and political environment.

The shift of focus from the reception of art objects to the more demanding and complex relations among

subjects (e.g., artists, collaborators, invited or accidental participants, organizers, etc.) that are structured through the artistic procedures and strategies is tied to neoliberal policies. It happens as a kind of enforced response of art practice to a redefinition of the concept of community and the communitarian in the frame of neoliberal, multicultural policies and as a kind of follow-up to the social demands for inclusion. The shift focuses on marginalized groups of citizens who have been excluded mainly from their own social environment or from participation in public cultural life rather than from aesthetic objects.

I would like to point out a paradox: such a "participatory shift" in the arts simultaneously creates new hierarchies and differentiations, new fears and obstacles, and the political correctness principle governing such practices is often demotivating for artists who are not members of underprivileged or minority groups.[9]

Some of the artists who have been engaged with participatory art practices and have involved underprivileged communities in their projects turn towards commercial and profit-driven artistic practices and continue to produce objects and cultural artifacts produced based on the previous collaborations. One of the reasons for this is that commercial galleries tend to ignore participatory art and art-for social-change practices, as such works are generally expensive to produce and difficult to present and tend to sell at art fairs and on the art market what is easier to sell: art objects–with the exception of those artists who work in these fields and have already become international stars and therefore possible "assets".

Paradoxically, by turning towards underprivileged groups, artists profiled as "participatory" actually also

play into the hands of the market. Ironically, this creates a vicious cycle, which, at the same time recuperates the art market and perpetuates both the elitist non-for-profit and the commercial art system. In the case of participatory art these mechanisms of appropriation, recuperation and rejuvenation are, however, not easily recognizable because they are dictated by the rules and institutions of the political and economic systems rather than by the art system and its institutions.

The aims of having more open art institutions and involving the audience more profoundly in the process of artistic practice and production and fostering their participation produces new distinctions and "elites" by inviting the audience to become directly involved at different levels, because at the same time, the participants are not given equal credit in the various stages of the process, such as the presentation of results at future exhibitions, their participation in traveling exhibitions, or share in income from possible sales. The participation of audiences can lead to the development of more diversified art and cultural policies among curators and art administrators, and it can foster a greater awareness among the "elitist" museums and gallery audiences of the existence of "other" publics/participants. However, such "other" audiences often turn out to be difficult to control and manipulate, and are frequently excluded from any possible recognition (e.g., in the end, they are merely recorded on a documentary video).

"Free education" provided by participatory projects is one of the justifications for expanding the program of educational museums and other art institutions. Apart from this positive aspect of participatory practices, they have also been the key model for perpetuating the use of free labor in the art industry, which led me elsewhere to propose a mandatory budgetary item in such projects that could be called a "participatory budget" (Milevska 2014). All this shows that the second type of participatory art is not necessarily more successful in terms of fulfillment of its promise, dubbed "felicitous acts" by J. L. Austin in the context of his Speech Act Theory.

According to Austin, the difference between what one says and what one does depends on the context and circumstances and hence the context can substantially affect fulfillment of a promise.[10] The second kind of participatory art is thus even more reliant on the socio-political context than the first. Such projects' "success" is also ever more resistant to a simple evaluation of their impact exactly due to the contradictions be-

tween the artistic and social positions, when the stage is not a theater stage in Austin's terms, but instead, the general political arena determines the art projects' influences. Therefore, I consider it more challenging to focus on the promises and the reasons for the failure of such promises in the second type of participatory art practices.

It is important to state that participatory art practices' problems in fulfilling the promises of democracy and emancipation (in terms of calling for equality in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, race, sexuality, and disability) are directly linked to the context of the contemporary neoliberal society in which they operate. The artists' initial expectations may be leveled by caution and a self-critical approach, whereby the impact of the projects is presented more realistically, but the rhetoric of many participatory projects resonates with neoliberal political rhetoric. I would therefore like to locate the main reason for the failure of such a systemic "mission impossible" within the inner contradictions of contemporary democratic societies rather than in the organization or structure of such art projects. In whatever way participation is to be discussed in the context of art, it always necessarily refers to a certain "we" and to a specific identification with a particular community wherein members of different sub-groups (audience members, professional groups, homeless people, or children)become co-existing parts.

One part of this “we” is the artist, curator, art institution, or even the state (in some public art projects) that supposedly *cares* for the invisible, marginalized, or neglected “other” as the counter-part of the very same “we.” The problem with this imaginary “we” is that it almost always exists for the period of the particular art event, with rare examples where the artists create self-sustainable projects that continue even when they leave. Long-term participatory projects that do not function only for the duration of the exhibitions, but are planned well in advance in terms of structure, organization, projected aims, and also secure funding for all project participants have much better chances of achieving their expected goals or declared promises.

Addressing the "we": Democratization and neoliberalism

For me participatory art in general is related to the political theory of deliberative and participatory democracy and the inter-subjective philosophy of *"being singular plural"* as conceptualized by Jean-Luc Nancy,[11] as well as to Giorgio Agamben's work on *coming community* (Agamben 1993). Jean-Luc Nancy, for example, reminded us that the *aporia* of the "we" is actually the main aporia of intersubjectivity, and he points out that it is impossible to pin down a universal "we" that always consists of the same components.[12] I therefore propose the hypothesis that when participation gives preference to the art institution and remains focused on the art system – which I have identified as the first type of participatory project, it cannot truly fulfill the promises that characterize the second type of participation, precisely because of the limited outreach of art and cultural institutions from the outset, and the limited "we" that they address.

Interestingly, the constantly newly created "we" contains different parts and counter-parts, but does not give any indication of what has happened to the previous parts/participants who become a certain *inoperative community* (Nancy 1991: 80-81). For Nancy,

however, community occurs exactly in situations of interruption, fragmentation, and suspension: "Community is made of interruption of singularities… Community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works…" (Nancy 1991: 31). This interpretation of community as being intrinsically inoperative and fragmentary helps us to understand the way in which participatory art projects function or fail to function in practice, especially when they are controlled by institutions. Similarly to Nancy, Agamben thinks of *being-in-common* as distinct from community (Agamben 1993: 87).

Participatory art projects aiming towards democratization could also be linked to the older philosophical progressive assumptions proposed by John Dewey, mainly in his critique of education as an instrument of social change (Dewey 2001: 333-341). It is no coincidence that many participatory art projects are run by the educational departments of museums and other institutions, or are contextualized within pedagogy and epistemology. The "participatory turn" and "educational turn" are often interlinked through artistic and curatorial contemporary art projects engaging with critical education and pedagogy, mostly based on the ideas of Ivan Ilich (*Deschooling Society*), Paulo Freire (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Pedagogy of Hope*), Peter McLaren (*Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture, Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*), and Jacques Ranciere (*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*).[13] Research and art projects

by artists such as Olafur Elliasson, Tanja Ostojić, Tania Bruguera, Ahmet Ögüt, Chto Delat, and Pablo Helguera have indicated the pedagogical potential of participatory and socially focused art practices.[14]

Applying elaborate ethical research principles already at work in the social sciences and humanities may be helpful for artists in many respects–in appreciating the communities and the subjects whom they address with their projects, in creating projects that have the social relevance that they aim for in the first place, in understanding the tensions and conflicts between the spectacle of representation of the communities in directed performances and the fulfillment of the hopes to bring about social change (Brigstocke 2011; Noorani/Blencowe/Brigstocke 2013; Billington et.al. 2015). Already in the late 1980s Raymond Williams offered a very ambivalent definition of democratic culture addressing the contradictions and controversies surrounding culture as a resource of hope and as a means to foster democracy (Williams 1989: 3-18).

Participatory art projects can easily become caught within a vicious cycle of criticism that does not take into account any positive aspects or outcomes, because they often end before making any proposals for self-sustainable participation or providing any models that would secure the desired and promised social effects. However, most of these projects are still welcomed by society, since mild, social critique that eventually recuperates the institutions critiqued and most likely perpetuates

the status quo is preferred to a more direct political critique of social inequality and injustice.

Authors such as Jodi Dean and Slavoj Žižek have pointed out the fundamental contradictions between democracy and neoliberal social developments. For example, Dean argued that while the left attempted to develop and defend a collective vision of equality and solidarity, the ascendance of "communicative capitalism," consumerism-driven gridlocks, privileging of self over group interests, and the embrace of the language of victimization have constantly undermined such attempts (see Dean 2009). Žižek went so far as to announce the separation of the two: "the eternal marriage between capitalism and democracy has ended" (Dutent 2013). However, this separation has not been politically acknowledged despite the fact that it has become more obvious in the wake of recent economic and political scandals, such as the Panama Papers, which have exposed the close link between democratic and neoliberal powers. It is currently extremely difficult to make a clear distinction between democratic norms and values and right-wing politics, and it becomes especially difficult to define and justify when it comes to the analysis of governing when financial capital and philanthropy are the main resources for supporting politically engaged and participatory art projects.

The second type of participatory art often leads artists to engage in social activism, and to collaborate and show solidarity with existing and newly established ac-

tivist organizations in order to overcome the paradox of democracy in neoliberal times (Clements 2011: 18-30). Solidarity and collaboration between artists and non-professional community members may overturn fears of negative responses to affirmative action in the realms of art, culture, and education. Participatory art often focuses on issues such as social inclusion of different communities and individuals – with reference to ethnicity, gender, race, and class – in all social strata. Participatory art projects often use means that express values similar to political correctness, when they critique privileges, exploitation, and discrimination in order to overcome inequality.[15]

Another radical aim of some participatory arts projects is to fundamentally change society. Art, then, is understood as an "imperative,"[16] or a fetishization: as a call for revolution, which means that its successes or failures are measured against the projects' revolutionary prerogatives (Penny 2011). The interpretation of art as an agency meant to overcome the main social and ideological obstacles outside of democratic systems has been heavily critiqued. But the accusation and reproach that such a notion imposes excessive expectations on the social impact of art activists' projects is made from a safe and privileged position on the part of critics.

On the one hand, one could not agree more that participatory art projects establish a new and more productive context for such entanglements with neo-

liberal politics and that they open up new potentialities for greater social impact of contemporary art practices in general. On the other hand, it becomes obvious that by organizing participatory art projects, art institutions often compensate for the lack of establishing and developing a profound and long-term relationship with their audiences who have become mere numbers and statistics required for further funding applications. The distinction between "audience" and "participants" may also very well be simply an artificial distinction that leaves the institution with control to define the terms and "limits" of participation.

Furthermore, through a subtle transfer of their programming to artists, institutions can exploit participatory art as a kind of "liability reserve," as along with the assignment, they also transfer their social responsibilities. To conclude, it is not possible to discuss the paradigm shift from objects to subjects in participatory art in isolation from the general social context and without taking into consideration all involved parties (governmental policies, economic changes, institutional interdependence of cultural policy decision makers with real politics, local governance deliberation, etc.). The experiences of Brazil's Porto Alegre participatory budgeting, which is the main financial instrument of the community's selfsustainable policy,[17] or the art informed by the Occupy movements show that art that takes social context into account, can lend its own means to such movements.[18]

Conclusion

To state it quite bluntly, the general socio-political and economic context in which art is produced and practiced inevitably over-writes participatory art's ambitious goals. This calls for further distinctions to be made among participatory art projects of the second type that rely on different, concrete historical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts and promise a move towards democratization. These projects also induce hope for a more profound discussion of how different participatory artists position themselves in the general social and political contexts on the one hand and of the relevance of art institutions' responsibility on the other. It is difficult to imagine and expect any social changes prompted by artistic projects in the long run without support from both the institutions where the projects are organized and the communities for whose empowerment such projects were conceptualized and initiated in the first place.[19]

However, although theoretical and academic research may help to analyze the advantages and obstacles regarding the social relevance and impact of par-

ticipatory art projects, any prescriptive propositions are inadequate without concrete references to particular contexts and projects.[20] Even though neoliberalist cultural policies currently prevail in most European countries,[21] the gap between promise and delivery remains wide and predictable, given the stringent neoliberal policies that appropriate participatory art and manipulate its aims to gain political "points," while interpreting its failures as "infelicitous" acts and justification for the most blatant populist ideology.

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Notes

1. This text is actually a longer version of the more recent article: Milevska (2015).

2. For example, the use of food in Rirkrit Tiravanija's projects presented in art institutions could be interpreted as both relational and participatory, making a clear cut distinction between these terms difficult, although his project The Earth (1998) with Kamin Letchaiprasert, imagined as a self-sustainable environment in Thailand (near Sanpathong) links Tiravanija's work more obviously to participatory art.

3. The older discussions dealing with the terms as "new genre public art" (coined by Susanne Lacy) or "community based art" resonate with participatory art. For more recent debates on participatory art practices and theories, see: Lind 2004; Bishop 2006; Bishop (ed.) 2006.

4. Here I want to acknowledge my gratitude to the artist David Goldenberg for his generous revision suggestions, comments, and text recommendations including: Goldenberg 2012, Goldenberg/Reed 2008.

5. In his recently published article, Gregory Sholette had argued that activist art returns as a new and politically more effective institutional critique, an argument that could also be linked with several more recent participatory practices striving towards institutional critique. See Sholette 2016.

6 For example, most projects that dealt with issues related to the condition of Roma in Europe during the Decade of Roma Inclusion (an official instrument of EU that focused from 2005 to 2015 on supporting art and cultural projects centered around Roma issues) did not have a long-term impact: although there were many art projects financed with the EU funds, and even two Roma Pavilions curated at the Venice Biennial, Roma artists have yet to be included in any major international art Exhibition.

7 For example, some artists, activist initiatives, and collectives (such as WAGE, Precarious Workers Brigade, ArtLeaks) have scrutinized and critically evaluated participatory art projects for their inconsistent labor policies. The case of the feminist artist Susan Lacy is one of the most contradictory since she was one of the pioneers of such practices: her project *Between the Door and the Street* at the Brooklyn Museum co-organized by Creative Time was targeted in an open letter from the participants (Bocar et.al. 2013) and in a text (Kimball 2013). Another example of similar critique was when Yvonne Rainer criticized Marina Abramović for her performance at a MOCA gala fundraiser in an open letter sent to the director of the institution and the artist; see Graham/Vass 2014.

8 However, exactly his practice recently turned appealing and easily recuperated by institutions although his historic significance cannot be undermined.

9 Particularly relevant for this discussion is Thomas Nagel's commentary on the negative effects of affirmative action and preferential policies favoring students from underprivileged backgrounds in the U.S. educational system. See Nagel 1979: 91–105.

10 See Austin 1975: 100. For a more precise analysis of the failure behind all speech acts, e.g., a promise uttered from a performing stage, see Shoshana Felmann's text on Molière's *Don Juan* and his character's double speech: Felman 2002.

11 Nancy's concept of *being* is always already *being with.* According to him, *being* always entails *with* as an inevitable conjunction that links different singularities. See: Nancy 2000: 13.

12 He refers to the problem that, at this moment, we cannot truly say "we," that we have forgotten the importance of *being-together, being-in-common,* and *belonging* and that we live *without relations* (Nancy 2000: 75).

13 Future Academy (2002–2007), Clementine Deliss, Edinburgh College of Art (eca), Academy (2006), Charles Esche/Irit Rogoff, Vanabbe Museum, Radical Education (2006–2014), Bojana Piškur, Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, Deschooling Classroom (2011–2013), TkH/Kontrapunkt.

14 In the last decade we've seen the rise of such education-focused participatory art projects, e.g., Tanja Ostojić, *Office for Integration-Language Lessons* (2002), *The School of Engaged Art*, Bertolt Brecht's "Lehrstücke" inspired Russian collective Chto Delat, Anton Vidokle's *Unitednationplaza,* Berlin (after the cancelation of the European Biennial Manifesta 6, 2006, Nicosia/Cyprus), see: Vidokle (n.d.); most of the long-term projects by Tania Bruguera (e.g., *Immigrant Movement International,* conceptualized in 2006, implemented between 2010–2015*)*; Ahmet *Ögüt's Silent University,* (2012–); and the instruction works and books by Pablo Helguera, e.g. Helguera 2011.

15 The continuous efforts and work strategies of artists, groups, and collectives that dedicated their practice to participatory art are not easy to follow, analyze, or evaluate, since they are often of small scale, locally produced and presented in a low-key way (e.g., the Berlin based NGBK, or the Vienna based collective WOCHENKLAUSUR, see Zinggl/Barber 2001).

16 Or "Imperative der Involvierung" as coined by Raunig 2015: 17.

17 For more information on the structure of the participative budget as an example of urban creative self-governance in Porto Alegre, Brazil, see: UNESCO – MOST Clearing House Best Practices Database (n.d.), and how this example even became a topic of an academic course at the Hague Academy for Local Governance, see: The Hague Academy for Local Governance 2014.

18 For example, the exhibition Disobedient Objects that was held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (July 26, 2014–February 1, 2015) addressed different forms of collaboration between artists and grass-root activist movements, but nevertheless, the "disobedient" art objects turned souvenirs, such as Suffragettes' teapots, were available for purchase in the museum's shop, as usual, thus emphasizing the major contradictions between the spaces of museums and barricades. See: V&A Shop (http://www.vandashop.com/Disobedient-Objects-Exhibition/b/4930353031).

19 In the 2016 issue of *Trends Watch*, the website publishing the annual reports of The Center for the Future of Museums (CFM), part of the American Alliance of Museums, proposed are different global trends that museums should consider in order to move forward to better respond to society's needs. See also Voon 2016.

20 For conceiving this argument, I am grateful to Mick Wilson and the students of his course "Art, the market and the question of values" at the Valand Academy during my guest lecture that preceded and was closely linked to this paper. Gothenburg, March 18, 2016.

21 For example, one of the EU funded Life Learning Projects MAPSI claimed to provide specialization in the management of artistic projects with societal impact. Such a very ambitious aim seems problematic from the outset, precisely because the project's aims of "create[ing] an international network focusing on educating cultural managers and facilitators to manage and mediate artistic and cultural projects with societal impact" exceed any realistically achievable impact, when taking into account the complexity of each local context and the project's limited duration and sustainability.

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1.3

Becoming contentious. Participatory art and artistic research as a challenge to difficult cultural heritages

The essay is conceptualised as a triangulation of the artistic research on the topic of contentious heritage(s), participatory art, and the co-production between artists and institutions [→ Merging art & ethnography].[1] More specifically, I put the focus on the debate over the potentials of institutional critique and participatory art as some of the instigating artistic genres which contributed to both, the development of artistic research, and to the interest of artists in contentious heritages (e.g. the provenience of the museums, problematic art collections and other property, debated monuments, and

others). The text starts from the assumption that, for a successful critical analysis of the role that contemporary art can have in dealing with contentious cultural heritages, it is important to reflect on the potentials of various new models of artistic practices, art genres, media, methodologies, and strategies. Eventually this will also make clearer the role of contemporary art for inducing sustainable institutional changes regarding the inherited contentious systemic structures and concepts from the past.

My central argument unravels around the reciprocal relations between contentious objects of heritage and the subjects that directly or indirectly define the contentiousness of the objects. The main aim is to clarify whether and how certain artistic research methods or media are more appropriate and successful in addressing contentious objects and collections and have bigger potentials for inducing social change of the circumstances that lead to defining such heritages as contentious.

There are generic and officially circulated and accepted ethical principles for social science research. For example, in March 2015 the Academy's Council formally adopted five guiding ethics principles (n. A. 2018). The five ethical principles are:

1. Social science is fundamental to a democratic society and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods, and perspectives.

2. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values, and dignity of individuals, groups, and communities. 3. All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose.

4. All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.

5. All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm.

Unfortunately, there is no official consent regarding any specific ethical principles to be applied in the context of participatory art that often relies on artistic research [→ Creative co-production]. Neither is it clear how to reconcile the long-term tensions between ethical and aesthetical values due to the prevailing dilemmas imposed already by modernist theories of art, mainly due to complexity and diversity of artistic practices (Milevska 2019). Although there is also no reason why these ethical principles should not apply to artistic research, the question remains open whether some additional principles should be drafted particularly in the context of participatory and collaborative projects with a focus on performativity [→ Performativity]. One reason are the numerous different understandings of what is art among general audiences coming from different social and cultural contexts (Carroll 2000; Lillehammer 2008).

The rigorous formalist division between aesthetic and ethical aspects of art, or more precisely the polarised distinction between form and content, or between beautiful and good, has yielded some of the most debilitating outcomes of modernist and formalist theory. The either-or polarity that often results from hierarchical positioning of one of these poles still has a key bearing on our understanding of art's position, and its role in different cultural contexts and in contemporary society in general.

The conflation of the realm of philosophy – to which the aesthetic category of the beautiful belongs – and the realm of art has gradually resulted in a contradictory long-term pursuit of an ever more precise, and false, dichotomy between art and society, as if they could ever be isolated from each other.

Taking the current neoliberal political context as a point of departure, it is necessary to reveal and disentangle the difficulties that still prevent many art theorists from abandoning completely (or at least partially) modernist ideals and formalist criteria regarding art and the valorisation of its production. I find it urgent to discuss why and how the socio-political factors that enabled the long-term dominance of modernist aesthetics still affect, or more precisely prevent, the embracing of institutional critique and participatory art as relevant contributions to art theory and art practice.

The criticism, for example, that participatory art merely caters to societal needs is one of many commonplaces stemming from modernist principles. This is the death grip of formalist aesthetics' invigilators: issues of autonomy and positioning – and other contradictions. For a certain limited period after the Second World War, the *l'art-pour-l'art* position enjoyed widespread acceptance in Western art theory, as if the ancient ideal of *kalokagathia*[2] had never existed, and as if the ideals of an otherwise autonomous pure art should be protected from any societal values. The modernist

myths of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, universality, art genius, autonomy (Krauss 1985) were also influenced by the Russian early formalist school of Viktor Shklovsky and semiotic analysis of art, wherein the issue of the arts' autonomy stemmed from political interventions in both, art's content and form. Joseph Kosuth published his early attack on the modernist aesthetics of Clement Greenberg in his essay *Art After Philosophy* in 1969 (Kosuth 1991) – in which he addressed Modernism's fallibility deriving from its equation of aesthetics and art (stressing the relevance of conceptually focused art vs. form-driven and -evaluated art). However, he was not yet ready to fully abandon the understanding of art as an entity separate from society.

The problems with calling for art's *autonomy* from its contextual background have become clearer, although such anti-aesthetic art tendencies had already co-existed with modernist art in the past, in avant-garde movements in both East and West (Huyssen 1986).

In this respect, attempts to detach art from the ethical, cultural, and social codes and norms prevailing in the period and geopolitical context of its production became questionable and unattainable – for various geopolitical, sociological, and cultural reasons. Thus, the reframing of the triangular relation between ethics, aesthetics, and art is still partial, although the position of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline (and not only a modernist one) relevant in determining art's

definition has weakened. Modernist and formalist aesthetic ideals endured for only a couple of decades, but the unwinding of the short modernist time span via poststructuralist and postmodernist debates became a lengthy endeavour that continued throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s and still prevails.

Participatory art as a critique of institutional structures

I have argued elsewhere that the urgency for the emergence of a participatory paradigm shift in the arts (Bishop 2012; Milevska 2006, 2016, 2018) stemmed from the uneven development of theory, which was lagging behind art practices that challenged institutional structures in art and culture. The shift from art that focused on the production of art objects towards art that implicated and engaged various subjects (such as art producers, mediators, audience members, citizens) in order to create new and relevant relations amongst them was imagined as an inevitable strategy of intervening in existing distinctions and hierarchies in order to change them, or to dismantle them entirely. This is one of the obvious reasons that participatory art, I would argue, has the potential to address, extricate and redress the contentiousness in various cultural heritages [→ Conflict learning].

However, it must be acknowledged that there still are tendencies to keep the art discourse away from issues of social justice and political reality – justified by the absence of relevant artworks (read: objects) – as

well as to interpret art's involvement in such changes as irrelevant and counter-aesthetic.

Such tendencies relate to the implication of art-world structures in the overall socio-political and economic systemic structures, to which the art production system belongs by default. Ultimately, the remnants of modernist definitions of art are directly linked to this compromised position, to the production and distribution of art in the market, and to the other usual suspects of the prevailing late capitalist and neoliberal economy. Therefore, I want to stress that some of the issues regarding aesthetic and art criteria of evaluation of participatory art still remain unresolved. Yet they are pertinent for a more profound understanding of art's changing role in society, and its effort to break with the inherited socio-political and economic relationships that facilitated the preservation of the strict division between art and society in the first place. The fight with the formalist aesthetic canons and criteria that were instrumental for the prevailing concept of the arts' autonomy is still going on, inducing social change in the art world and elsewhere.

Artistic concepts, genres and theoretical terms like *community based art, institutional critique, social intervention, relational aesthetics, participatory art, socially engaged art* and *artivism* – all conceived to provide adequate analytical means for better understanding the problems with such modernist dichotomous in-

terpretations of the relations between art and society – survive. They continue to fight against conservative attempts in the art world to use autonomy as a tool of maintaining the status quo.

Adorno's reflections on the relationship between art and society gave way to different interpretations of autonomy, so there can be several different levels of autonomy in art, which makes intersectionality across different levels and registers even more complex (Hamilton 2009, 287–305). Thus, a more specific analysis of conceptions of autonomy could clarify the inner paradox of art's claimed right to autonomy. Obviously, there is an overall distinction between social and aesthetic autonomy, but artists and their artworks also belong to differing and often contrasting registers of autonomy depending on their institutional affiliations and/or allies. In a recent essay, I addressed the issue of the neoliberal socio-political and economic context as one of the major obstacles for fulfilling the promise of participatory art for social change (Milevska 2016). Distinguishing between two different types of participatory art projects could help clarifying some of the contradictions between the enthusiastically set aims of participatory art and the pitfalls set by institutional power. The first type, based on the various waves of artistic institutional critique (Alberro/Stimson 2009) is concerned with a critique of art institutions, and calls for more substantial participation *within* the art system, in the presentation and/or production of art

projects, and in making decisions regarding art. Such projects deal with the relationship between a) art, art institution and audience, b) artist and art institution (museum, gallery), and c) artist and curator.

Although important, I see this first branch of participatory art as too self-referential and self-indulging, and consequently it is easier to have it incorporated and co-opted within existing art institutions and immanent institutional frameworks (Milevska 2016).

The second type of participatory art that could be defined as 'participatory institutional critique' aims towards more substantial critique and societal change, beyond the confines of the art world (Milevska 2016). Participatory institutional critique has more ambitious goals and potentials, but it also faces stronger adversaries: the general political climate and its conflicts, or the inherited colonial pretext [→ Individual story]. Hence, the artistic goals and media of such projects vary: performing social and/or anthropological research; issuing calls for restitution, repatriation, and decolonisation of institutions; engaging with conflicted local communities, often with unforeseeable but imminent results (Milevska 2018b). In this respect, some of the pertinent questions remain regarding which objects, images, and spaces are considered contentious cultural heritages and who decides this (Macdonald 2018), and how they are transmitted and reflected in the European 'culturescapes' and 'memoryscapes'.

More precisely, in Regina Römhild's words: "What we tend to forget is that this fragility and contestedness has always been the case. There never was a clear-cut, consensual entity called 'Europe', nor a geographically defined continent or a cultural formation." (Römhild 2018) These issues are extrapolated regardless of whether the researched materials are included or displayed in collections of various European art and cultural institutions or are presented in public spaces or kept in other contexts. Moreover, questions arise as to how and why these objects became contentious in the first place [→ Contentious heritage].

Stereotypical and racialised representations; institutional reluctance to acknowledge the questionable provenience of unlawfully required objects and unethical sponsorship; propositions of how to deal with the repressed memory of the spaces once inhabited by conflict or marked with contested monuments dedicated to disgraceful historic figures or events; collective memory about commoning movements (Milevska 2018a) that contested the appropriation of public space: these are just some of the topics addressed in the project TRACES.[3]

This is not the first time that the question whether and how artistic research contributes to a politics of emancipation arises. The questions of the relations between ethics and aesthetics, the form and social content and conduct in artistic research have been ad-

dressed in various academic and artistic contexts. The issue of representation in different artistic and curatorial projects and institutional decisions towards the making of images and objects representing difficult ethical contents (dead and wounded bodies, human remains, Holocaust victims, poverty, amongst others) as well as their different approaches towards reproduction, display, distribution, and circulation also have been debated in various contexts. These include, for example, the discussion regarding the photographic (Didi-Huberman 2008) and video representation of the Holocaust[4], the debate about the making, displaying, and circulation of images of human remains stored in museum collections (Harries et al. 2018) and the more general debate about Jacques Rancière*'s* concept '(re) distribution of the sensible' and 'indisciplinarity' (Birrell 2008).

Starting with invisible heritages and contentious objects, images, and spaces, as I proposed in the book *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency* (Milevska 2016) or in the exhibition *Contentious Objects/Ashamed Subjects* (Milevska 2019*)*, one needs to clearly declare the urgent need to acknowledge past wrong-doings in order to rethink, deconstruct, and dismantle pre-existing regimes of representation and systemic malfunctions, while proposing alternative trajectories for future research. The application of various theoretical and research methodologies (as developed in art history, museology, anthropology, ethnology, so-

ciology, pedagogy, political sciences) together with artistic research methods, artistic media, strategies, and actions allows approaching the specificity, appropriateness, applicability, affordance (Gibson 1979) and efficiency in accomplishing these challenging goals, on both ethical and conceptual levels.

Some of the strategies employed by contemporary arts' stem from the legacy of postcolonial and feminist critique and the research practices around various theoretical analyses and case studies which have developed in the frame of the humanities and social sciences. Hereby I refer to art projects under the umbrella of TRACES. These included, but were not limited to, the use of critical analysis of vernacular art, field trips, photography as research, lecture performances, interviews, focus groups, contextual inquiry, usability study, survey, diary and hybrid records, critical databases, video essays, curatorial forensics, militant image research, institutional critique, thought experiments, social intervention, participatory research of art made by prisoners, as well as elements of material culture, re-enactment, activist campaigns for naming and renaming, countermonuments, social design, agonistic research, critical friend, creative co-production, petition, public apology, manifestos, critical and social advertising, advocating and lobbying for decolonisation, repatriation, return and restitution. Instead of dwelling on negatively charged memories, participatory projects cherish research processes that deal with

shared or multidirectional memory (Rothberg 2011, 525), and productive shame (Gilroy 2005) in a committed and catalytic way.

Institutional critique, participatory art and co-productions focusing on contentious cultural heritages

The turn towards a participatory paradigm in arts is based on the main assumptions of institutional critique that the institutions and experts have a monopoly on defining art and that they control access to its production and representation. While audiences do not take an active part in the creative process of production and presentation of art, they want and need to do so exactly because of many problematic decisions that do not take into account the implicated and contested communities. Participatory art therefore offers an approach to artistic processes in which the process is considered incomplete without the viewers' involvement – turning audience members into co-authors, editors, or active performers who complement and resolve the artist's concept [→ Invisible threads]. The main intent behind the emergence of participatory art is not to simply add a new genre to existing art genres and media. This conception is instrumental for challenging the dominant forms and relationships in the art world: a small protected class of professionals that have the monopoly over making and defining art and who conceive of the audience as the 'other': passive and marginal observers

celebrating the results of the creation. In this respect, participatory art is closely related to the practice of institutional critique through which different generations of artists have called for revealing, critiquing, and dismantling elitist and exclusive art structures.

Participatory art projects, research, and collaboration with other professionals continue to promote the understanding that an artwork is not just an object that you passively enjoy while quietly looking at – it is a creation in which even non-specialised viewers actively participate, a dynamic collaboration between the artist, the audience, and their environment. Often there are also objects produced in such participatory processes, however these material outcomes are not the main priority because relational, interactive, and collaborative structures established in the process are also considered art. Thus, participatory projects often initiate the emergence of new communities and instigate new and complex relations between the artists, produced objects and images, and the participants. Therefore, although the results of participatory art may be documented with photography, audio, video, and broadcasted, the artwork is really to be found within the interactions and relations that emerge from the audience's engagement with the artist and the situation created. Even so, participatory art cannot always overcome societal strictures, and despite the attempt to erase divisions between the artist as a producer and the audience as participant, very often new hierarchies

are created, depending on class, ethnicity, access, and so forth. Living with and within the current reigning contradictions in the art world is difficult.

It is especially difficult to juggle all these contradictions for artists and curators collaborating with high-profile art institutions with inherited colonial or other contentious pasts. According to George Lipsitz (2000, 80), the inability to speak openly about contradictory consciousness from within or outside of institutions can lead to a self-destructive desire for "pure" political positions that ultimately have more to do with "individual subjectivities and self-images" than with a "disciplined collective struggle for resources and power." Lipsitz states that "the ultimate goal behind the pertinent critique of the exclusive and hegemonic institutional models is to overcome the deterministic approach" (Lipsitz, 80). I would like to conclude with a similarly positive and optimistic understanding of participatory art. Its full potential is still to be unleashed and developed. This can happen only if achieving a quality of relationship among the participating subjects (artists, theorists, curators, audiences, and other implicated and interested individuals) is fully accepted as a possible ultimate goal of art. One should not expect this goal to yield any beautiful objects in the conventional sense. Regardless of whether this is interpreted as anti-aesthetic, counter-aesthetic, or artistic, or merely does not allow the institutions to continue with the difficult issues and relations without acknowl-

edging and challenging their problematic systemic nature, it is obvious that to challenge the relations among the subjects that are instrumental for producing and transmitting the contentiousness is one of the most pertinent aims of participatory art and artistic research employed in such projects. I want to argue that contemporary art projects that focus on participatory research and collaboration have enhanced potentials for catalysing social change and fighting systemic racism precisely because they focus on dialogical relations rather than on objects and images with contentious pasts.

The recent hateful outbursts from the far right in Europe and elsewhere (such as antisemitic and anti-Roma sentiments, racism towards indigenous and black populations, patriarchal violence towards women, and prejudices and aggression towards LGBTQ communities) can be confronted only with clear critical arguments against similar hatred from the past, entailed in some of the prestigious Eu-ropean art and cultural institutions, and by establishing reciprocal and intersectional relations between art, academia, and political activism that would work as control mechanism of the ruling socio-political structures.

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Notes

1. The article addresses some of the pertinent issues that have been discussed in the Horizon 2020 research project TRACES.

2. Kalokagathia: Ancient Greek: καλὸς κἀγαθός, beautiful-and-good: the Ancient Greek ideal of harmony between noble human personality and any art action (documented in Herodotus and other texts).

3. The exhibition Contentious Objects/ Ashamed Subjects (curated by the author, 18.01.– 05.02.2019, Politecnico di Milano) was imagined as an archive of a long-term curatorial research on artistic research methodologies, methods and strategies used and/or developed by artists and researchers from social and humanist sciences that deal with contentious cultural heritages. It comprises of eleven cross-disciplinary collaborative research projects produced in TRACES or other art, academic or activist contexts.

4. Relevant debates on the representation of the Holocaust in photography and film include the French documentary Shoah (1985), directed by Claude Lanzmann.

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II | Representation, participation, solidarity

II.1

Four patches for the world game: Game Theory and Art Practice in the Balkans

In the present text, which continues some of my previous explorations of specific applications of different media in the Balkans, I would like to propose a kind of preliminary mapping of artworks created by Balkan artists that mime various games. By copying the appearance, rules or even the entire structure of certain conventional board games (for instance, *Mon-Apoly* by Tadej Pogačar), interactive electronic games (*Match Maker Game* by Ana Stojković and *There are no Earthquakes in Manhattan* by Luchezar Boyadjiev) or video games (*Go West* by Gentian Shkurti), a number of Balkan artists have applied the metaphor of the

game to the cultural, social and political circumstances in which they live and work.

In the context of the cultural translation of different media I would like to examine how some of these artists stretch the 'rules of the game' to suit their needs and how the game metaphor functions in such a complex political situation. While game theory is not always and entirely applicable when analysing social, economic, or political 'games' in reality and may even fall short when the analysed 'games' are art projects, nevertheless I found some of its assumptions helpful for making comparisons between reality, 'real games' and the 'art games'.

As the *Web Dictionary of Cybernetics and Systems* defines it: *'Game theory is a branch of mathematical analysis developed to study decision making in conflict situations. Such a situation exists when two or more decision makers who have different objectives act on the same system or share the same resources.'*[1] The definition goes on to state that five initial assumptions are essential in order to select the best decision or set of decisions for finding the 'optimum strategy' for winning the game.

Certain obvious parallels may be drawn between this theory and the kind of daily decisions we all make. The first two assumptions presented in the definition sound very close to what usually happens on the playing field of life – and especially to what has been taking place in the Balkans over the past fifteen years:

‘1. *Each decision maker [‘PLAYER’] has available to him two or more well-specified choices or sequences of choices (called ‘PLAYS’).’* [2]

(Consider, for example, the decision faced by each of the former Yugoslav Republics as to whether or not they would remain part of the Yugoslav Federation.)

‘2. *Every possible combination of plays available to the players leads to a well-defined end-state (win, loss, or draw) that terminates the game.’* [3]

Although this assumption also sounds as if it might be applicable to the Balkan context, it is far more difficult for us to judge who won and who lost in the making of certain decisions. Still, the game theory assumption that decision-makers have full knowledge of the rules of the game but no knowledge about their opponents’ moves (according to the *Web Dictionary of Cybernetics and Systems*) can be discussed in the context Yugoslav conflicts of the 1990s.

In this regard, in fact, it is much more interesting to observe how game theory differs from what happens in real life and, indeed, how the general assumptions of this sophisticated theory may even contradict life experience:

‘4. Each decision maker has perfect knowledge of the game and of his opposition; that is, he knows in full detail the rules of the game as well as the payoffs of all other players.

5. All decision makers are rational; that is, each player, given two alternatives, will select the one that yields him the greater payoff.’[4]

These last two assumptions can hardly be applied to everyday life situations and are, in particular, of little use when it comes to explaining the events that took place during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. None of the ‘players’ had ‘perfect knowledge’ of what was going on, nor there were ‘rules’, while the decisions that were made were in no way ‘rational’ and the ‘payoff’ was impossible to estimate.

To a certain degree, this essay also questions the processes behind the fetishisation of the electronic arts and, more generally, advanced technologies. I am interested in stimulating a debate about the dangers of fetishising the electronic arts in the Balkan region and asking whether the increase in the use of new technologies in art (which have only rarely been accompanied by serious critical and theoretical discussion) may be conceived as a result of such postcolonial processes as globalisation and the subordination of marginal societies and their art systems. To this end, my inquiry into the nature of the relationship between art and advanced technologies will be based on a comparison of

electronic artworks (including videotapes, CD-ROMs, video projectors, computers and other technical equipment, all of which may become art objects within the framework of certain installations) using the notions of fetish and gift.

If it seems that electronic art projects are today inevitable and have already been widely embraced by techno-cultural society, we should remember that in many cases high-tech artists were among the first regular practitioners of these more advanced technologies who not only used them but also subjected them to serious critique. Conceptual electronic artists have managed to avoid fetishising the medium inasmuch as they have refused to turn their electronic art objects into commodities, just as they try to avoid turning any art object into a commodity. Nevertheless, the inevitable question arises as to whether artists from technologically underdeveloped countries are in a position to avoid accepting the 'gift' (in both the practical and a phenomenological sense of the word) of unequal exchange that is involved and affects their use of new technologies and new media.

In order to contextualise our discussion within a wider theoretical framework, we might refer to Heidegger's well-known description of technology as *'a means and human activity'*[5] or Habermas's understanding that the great problem of technological modernisation has little to do with technology per se but rather

with its influencing life by its tendency to authorise 'instrumental' and strategic notions of rationality so as to de-legitimise genuine practical or political issues (as subjective).[6]

Myths of technology and development are inevitably linked in a firm and inseparable relationship, but they are also intertwined with the *'epistemology of democracy'*.[7] The power of cultural strategies enforced by democratic civil epistemology and technology has imposed itself and has already started to create new social and political realities.[8] Thus, it can hardly be expected that many scientists would be willing to participate in any debate about 'usable systems' that posed such questions as, *'Could we gain a better understanding of usability if we collected our data within the context of the users' real work?'* or *'How do we people find computer systems usable?'*[9]

The real concerns here are not whether machines are like people in their thoughts and actions, but whether they constitute tools that can be used objectively. Terry Winograd finds the gap between the theory and practice of technology to be very large indeed.

In his view, although 'there is highly developed and successful body of practice in making usable systems, the theoretical discussion about usability is dominated by a background based on a narrow hint of cognitivism'.[10]

On the other hand, for the contextualists, usability has its basis in the experience of the users, 'the phenomenology of usability': *'Only users know their own experience of the product, how they are using tools to do their work and their perceived requirements of their work.'*[11]

Critiques of the grand narratives of development and globalisation, such as those recently proposed by Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and others, have shown these processes to be extremely demanding in regard to the acceptance by underdeveloped countries of new technological means, especially when this has been followed by unequal development and democratisation in the system of application. The continuous rise of electronic art objects and installations to the top of the art-world hierarchy is only one symptom of such paradoxes.

In other words, high technology, on the one hand, serves as a tool for unequal exchange in the so-called 'globalised' market, while, on the other hand, artists from Eastern Europe (and other underdeveloped regions) use high technology to demonstrate that there is little difference between the artworks they produce and the work of artists from more developed countries. Questions about standardising the use of new technologies and media in art and whether or not they make a difference in the work itself will not be treated here, since my main concern has more to do with the mech-

anisms involved in choosing to use new media rather than with the content and quality of the art they help to create.

I would now like to clarify the distinction between the notions of fetish and gift as they relate to the electronic art object. In order to understand this distinction we can turn to Slavoj Žižek's account of the Marxian notion of commodity fetishism, which he discusses with reference to the work of Lacan. Commodity fetishism can be understood as being *'a definite social relation between men that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things'*.[12] The value of a certain commodity assumes the quasi-'natural' property of another commodity, namely, money. The essential feature of commodity fetishism, consequently, does not imply the famous replacement of man with things ('a relation between men assumes the form of a relation between things'); *'rather, it consists of a certain misrecognition which concerns the relations between a structured network and one of its elements'*.[13]

In this regard, we should also consider Žižek's radical interpretation of Marx as an anticipator of Lacan's theory of reflection and identification in the mirror phase. According to Žižek, the identification of the king solely through his subjects sounds very much like Lacan's description of subjectification and identification with the Other. When it comes to identifying with things, Žižek makes the paradoxical observation that commodity fetishism appears in capitalist societies

where there is exchange between free people but does not exist in societies where there is a relation of fetishism between men themselves, that is, in pre-capitalist societies. In such societies commodity fetishism has not developed because the production there is 'natural', that is, products are not produced for the market.[14] On the contrary, in a society where relations between men are not *'relations of domination and servitude'*, where people see in each other only other subjects who share similar concerns, and where these other people are of interest to you only if they possess something – a commodity that can satisfy your needs – then in such a society commodity fetishism, that is, the social relation between things, serves as a cover for real social relations between individuals, which can be treated as a *'hysteria of conversion'*.[15]

Taking account, then, of the complex paradoxical nature of the notion of fetish/commodity, I would propose another way of approaching the issues of unequal exchange and the use of new technologies, in art and in general, in underdeveloped countries. The notion of gift, which has been so extensively discussed by Marcel Mauss and other anthropologists, is usually considered within the framework of primitive societies as one of the agents of cultural difference. Jacques Derrida, too, later introduced it as a subject for deconstruction when he stated that such a concept as gift is always aporetic: it cannot exist inasmuch as it always already implies a favour in return.[16]

Here the deconstruction of the concept 'free gift' may help us understand what happens when a country in the process of development accepts unquestioningly the offer of a technological paradise and so becomes a prisoner of the strategic situation dictated by its own *'desire to be agents of the developed society'*.[17] Of course, the development offered by technologisation means 'creating jobs', but because this is a 'free gift', the workers who fill these jobs usually have to give up certain forms of social welfare and at the end of the day must be satisfied with less.

The drawbacks of enlightenment for its own sake alone – a development in which the only thing developed is a condition of dependence in an eternal vicious circle – are not so obvious when it comes to the use of high technology in art. The illusion of equal access[18] is reinforced by numerous calls for entry, open Internet competitions and projects especially designed for artists from the Balkans and Eastern Europe.

What I would like to argue here is that the concept of multiculturalism in art is to some extent inimical to electronic art. The fetishisation of electronic art objects has contributed to the unequal distribution of wealth and power within the art scene in a way that resembles the stock market. On first sight, there is nothing wrong with facilitating and promoting high-tech art. But alongside the issue of whether artists from underdeveloped countries will ever be true competitors, there are

other, not so obvious, questions that point to no less important problems inherent in such 'cultural' policies.

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I would now like to discuss four separate projects created by Balkan artists who sought to overcome the inner contradictions of the medium of the game as they adapted it from various economic, cultural or political contexts to suit their own intents.

Tadej Pogačar, in his board game *MonApoly* (2004), proposes a *'new cartography'* of global sex work and trafficking in humans. *'Instead of accumulating capital, [the game] explains the geopolitics of sex work in the period of global capitalism and new economy,'* Pogačar says. From the artist's description of the project, it is clear that although *MonApoly* is inspired by the famous Monopoly game both visually and in its basic rules, the artist's aim extends beyond a simple pun. For him, it is important to provide players with relevant information about global sex work, activist organisations, crime groups and the organised slave trade in general (recall the fourth assumption from the *Web Dictionary*'s definition of game theory). The fact that players can finance and construct a safe house, or support the activities of organisations that fight for the rights of sex workers, gives the audience a limited but nevertheless important chance to enter into the 'real' game of human trafficking.

MonApoly is part of Pogačar's long-term project *CODE:RED*, in which the artist explores various aspects of prostitution and sex work as a kind of parallel economy. The first public presentation of this bigger project took place at the Venice Biennale in 2001, when Pogačar, as Slovenia's official representative at the Biennale (with the financial support of the Slovenian Ministry of Culture and in collaboration with the Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes from Pordenone, Italy) organised the *First World Congress of Sex Workers and the New Parasitism*. In a tent at the entrance to Venice's Giardini park he brought together sex worker organisations from Europe, Asia, America, and Australia. Such a 'patch' to the well-known Monopoly game, while perhaps not very functional, nevertheless targets in its critique both the capitalist 'game', which teaches even the youngest children the strict social distinction between winners and losers, and the globalising tendencies of world trade, which do not circumvent even the world's 'oldest profession'.

The game *Go West,* created by the Albanian artist Gentian Shkurti, presents an even more explicit example of how the medium of a commercial video game may be transferred into the art field using the game structure to critique its own consequences. Shkurti's game is centred on the phenomenon of illegal refugees from Albania who travel by night in tiny boats across the Adriatic to Italy. They become the main targets to be shot and killed by the Italian police, the *carabinieri*.

The consumerist society, where among other products there is abundance of entertaining but violent games, is seen as an ideal that is often worth the risk of dangerous and forbidden journeys to 'the other side'. But for those who undertake such journeys, even if they complete their 'adventures' in the most successful way, there is only a very low-tech simulation of an award. *'While the typical hi-tech shoot-'em-up drags the player into a full immersion battle (and into the subsequent withdrawal symptoms), a game like Go West challenges the user to find his/her own role not within the game narrative and roles structure, but rather outside the game itself.'*[19]

In this sense, the whole game *Go West* may be interpreted as a 'patch' – a term that refers to the recently developed technical capacity that allows players to modify their favourite games by adding programme variables. Only here the programme is actually the entire world of the digital communication: *'Not only does Go West mix fun with a certain degree of ambiguity, but it shows that low tech interventions may well become tactical tools to deliver radical ideas even in the over-crowded world of digital communication, which means that the game of modifications can be part of a wider communication strategy that expands outside the gamers' online communities.'*[20]

Another project that deals with a kind of cultural translation of power games is the interactive Inter-

net-based *Match Maker Game* (2001) created by the Macedonian artist Ana Stojković (in collaboration with the electronic engineer Danko Ilić).[21] In her description of the project, Stojković claims that the Japanese language has no exact translation for the word 'love', or more precisely, the Western concept behind this word. In her view (and she quotes a passage from James Clavell's novel *Shogun* to support it), love is a '*differentia specifica*' of the Christian religious and cultural conceptualisation of human behaviour and has no exact match in Japanese culture. We are told that in the older language of neighbouring China love exists as a character, but it is not recommended to utter the word personally and directly.

This is the basic information behind the *Match Maker Game,* which is intended to challenge the Western obsession with the 'games' surrounding love – something that, in the artist's opinion, is not always essential for the perfect couple.[22] One could say that the artist sees the concept of love as inevitably limited by societal structures even as she takes account of the fact that love games are always predestined and embedded in the gendered and patriarchal society.

While playing the game it becomes obvious that its structure was conceived as copying the marketing campaigns for tourist agencies; the game presents itself as a simple competition: *'Win a trip to Japan'*. All you have to do to play the game and win the trip, one that will

presumably offer you a holiday away from love, is to match the pairs of hidden images – all of which, except for two hearts, are symbols associated with Japan. Like other simple board game models, this game is based on the player's memory, ability to make associations and quick thinking. While the structure of Stojković's game mimes that of many successful competitions, it is used in a very ironic way: we might say it adheres to the assumption of such marketing competitions that by playing the game you will begin to consider taking a vacation from love so that, even if you don't 'win' the game, you will go ahead and book a holiday.

Through these two different movements – introducing a discussion on the cultural limitations of the concept of love and critiquing its commercialisation by miming a marketing campaign – it becomes obvious that the game is conceived as a critique of the West's marketing of even the most abstract concepts. At first glance, the cultural critique of the catachrestic concept of love sounds as if this was in contradiction to embracing an advertising campaign that mimes capitalistic strategies of consumerism. But when we juxtapose the rules of love games and the rules of consumer games (neither set of rules is explained by the artist, who presumes there is no need for this), it becomes obvious that both are similarly driven by obsessions: the one to win, the other to gain the 'object of desire'.

Of course, the rule that there is no 'free gift' in the wider societal context is unwritten; it becomes obvious only after you win/lose the game. For example, in real competitions of this sort you learn very soon that, if you win, you have to pay very expensive taxes, the trip is on the basis of two people sharing, meals are not included, etc., while the way you 'pay' for the gift in the vicious circle of the love game is even more complex and clandestine.

Luchezar Boyadjiev's ironic project *No Earthquakes in Manhattan* (2001) presents the most radical departure from any belief in the possibility of winning. The artist has invented a computer game where the characters/objects to be shot and killed are isolated riders from the famous Albrecht Dürer's woodcut *The Four Riders of Apocalypse.* The player is supposed to exterminate the 'bad guys' and save us from the ultimate disaster. The text 'Apocalypse No More', which appears on the screen after you have killed the 'bearers' of the Apocalypse, represents the artistic deconstruction of any belief that Apocalypse can be averted. This ironic text, which plays on the usual good/evil structures of most such games, is juxtaposed with printed texts: newspaper clippings about various end-of-the-world prophecies prompted by a solar eclipse or some big catastrophe. In a way, these clippings underscore the fact that for many people the struggle with moral and material calamities is something more than a computer game.

Computer games might seem like *'free gifts'* to spoiled children, but every once in a while they become dangerous *'patches'* for the world game. Artists who develop works that follow game structures are probably more aware of this danger than most ordinary 'users' of games or even the world-game industries.[23] An older work by the Polish artist Zbigniew Libera, which takes the form of Lego block kits for making *'concentration camps'* – *Correcting Device: Lego Concentration Camp* (1996), composed of original Lego™ plastic blocks and boxes made by the artist (for example, box no. 6773 is titled *'Crematorium and Guard Tower'*) – offers perhaps the best proof how such 'patches' can transcend the rules of the game and enter the world of adults, how the boundary lines between reality, 'real games' and 'art games' can easily be blurred and even erased. The curators of the group project *The Making of Balkan Wars: The Game* (2004), which included a few art game projects (such as Shkurti's *Go West*), emphasise this phenomenon on their website: *'Both geopolitical war games and epic strategy video games are interrelated in this multi-media project. While virtual battle scenes are celebrated as the 'most realistic ever,' contemporary warfare has begun to resemble science fiction.'*[24]

In conclusion, I would like to note that it is very difficult to estimate the emotional and psychological impact art games might have if they are produced and played to the same extent as *'real games'*. If that ever happens, I suggest the phenomenon be explored by ex-

perts. For the time being, however, these kinds of art projects/games are produced only in limited editions and remain only conceptual experiments or, if you like, *'conceptual fetishes'* for adults.

Notes:

1 IIASA [International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis], "Game Theory," in *Web Dictionary of Cybernetics and Systems,* <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ASC/GAME_THEOR.html> (retrieved 24 February 2005).]

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'Heidegger on Gaining a Free Relation to Technology', in Andrew Freenberg and Alaistair Hannay, eds., *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995), 100.

6 Robert B. Pippin, 'On the Notion of Technology as Ideology', in Freenberg and Hannay, eds., 55.

7 Yaron Ezrahi, 'Technology and the Civil Epistemology of Democracy', in Freenberg and Hannay, eds., 159.

8 Ibid., 168.

9 Terry Winograd, 'Heidegger and the Design of Computer Systems', in Freenberg and Hannay, eds., p. 115.

10 Ibid., 116.

11 Ibid., 117.

12 Slavoj Žižek, 'How did Marx Invent the System', in Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Mapping of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1999), 308.

13 Ibid., 310.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., 314.

16 John D. Caputo, 'Apostles of Impossible', in John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon, eds., *God, the Gift and Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1999), 204.

17 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999), 357.

18 For a more precise argument concerning the importance of the problem of unequal access to the medium of the ready-made among artists from different cultural contexts, see Suzana Milevska, 'The Ready-made and the Question of Fabrication of Objects and Subjects', *Afterimage* 28 (no. 4): 27-29.

19 Vanni Brusadin, 'No Cheats for the Unplayable Games', <http://www.ram-net.net/articles/text2_b.htm> (retrieved 24 February 2005).

20 Ibid.

21 See <http://www.cac.org.mk/capital/project/matchmaker/index.html> (retrieved 24 February 2005).

22 Ana Stojković, 'Match Maker Game', in Suzana Milevska, ed., *Capital and Gender – International Project for Art and Theory,* exhibition catalogue (Skopje: Museum of the City of Skopje, 2001), 145.

23 See nn. 9 and 11.

24 'The Making the Balkan Wars: The Game', <www.personalcinema.org/wargame> (retrieved 24 February 2005).

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II.2

The Difference between Saying and Doing in the Use of "We": The limited potentials of art for social change, and the internalization of anti-Romaism in art institutions as a symptom of the bigoted relationship between neoliberalism and democracy

I am writing this text in the wake of the end of the "celebration" of the Decade of Roma Inclusion,[1] which took place parallel to the apparently endless, countless decades that "celebrated" the ubiquitous symptoms of Schizo-Capitalism and philantrocapitalism.[2] The last few months that are left before the "closure" of this affirmative action, which is also a disputed political instrument, encouraged me to explore the limitations of

those arts and culture-related anti-racist institutional instruments the creation of which was one of the objectives of the Decade of Roma Inclusion.[3]

In this context I want to argue that the Decade of Roma Inclusion revealed and highlighted one of the main paradoxes and limitations of the general art context when it strove to change our societies on ever more sophisticated and advanced platforms of democratisation. For this purpose I propose to use the concept of "infelicitous acts" from speech art theory as a theoretical and critical means to analyse the arguments related to the debate on the general potentials of this international initiative and its concrete achievements.[4]

In the general context of challenging the viability of art as a means of democratization,[5] I will concentrate on those circumstances in society that meet or resist different cultural policies and strategies, rather than on the concrete methodological means, instruments and art projects which have been realized with this programmatic act, because my intention is to show how a number of general starting conditions prevented the Decade from lasting and succeeding beyond the period stated in its title.

Ironically, even the event to mark the "closure" of this temporary project with questionable results was titled "A Lost Decade? Reflections on Roma Inclusion 2005–2015."

With regard to the final stage of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, its official web site states:

> Following the decision to mark the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015 at the 28th International Steering Committee in Sarajevo, the Decade Secretariat undertook to provide an overall reflection on the initiative and its actual impact on the local, national and international level. For that purpose, we published an assessment to mark the closure of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015.[6]

Roma and non-Roma activists outside of the framework of the project, or activists and artists not involved in the project, were not the only ones to criticize the achievements of the Decade; the initiators themselves questioned the results:

> The aim of the publication is to describe and explain the developments and processes; as well as highlight the achievements and failures of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005 – 2015 initiative. It focuses on the international perspective, with notions on the differences between participating countries where relevant.[7]

Now that the ten years of general efforts towards attaining equity for the Roma in the art system of Europe and the world have come to an end without substantial results, the obstacles that the initiative has faced need to be subjected to a profound theoretical and po-

litical analysis, and a general public debate. Smaller but more focused initiatives, such as Gallery8,[8] invite a certain nuanced exploration of the current situation; while these positive examples may not fully overlap with the Decade's official structure, they took place in the very same period.[9]

In any case, the objectives of Gallery8 are not, according to its initiators, different from the general goals of the Decade, while its programme has a cleaner and leaner range of priorities, such as "to serve the Roma community: to enable and support the production, presentation and interpretation of Roma artworks. It is an intercultural space, where the experimentation, creation, collaboration, and discussion between Roma and non-Roma take place and result in new works and solutions for a future in peaceful coexistence."[10] This small art institution focuses on the presentation of mostly young artists with a Roma background, who dedicate their art to various issues within their communities.[11]

However, the curatorial team also aims to research the socio-political and cultural background of the overall condition of the Romani population in the past and present, and Gallery8's research and art projects have thematic interests that include traumas and the Holocaust, as well as the analysis of stereotypical representations of the Roma in the new media, in the texts and illustrations of textbooks, in comics, etc.[12]

According to J. L. Austin, the difference between what one says and what one does depends on the context and circumstances, and the context can substantially affect the fulfilment of the promise. If in the context of speech act theory an unfulfilled promise is a failure, dubbed an "infelicitous act" by Austin, not all socially and politically concerned art is unsuccessful in terms of the fulfilment of its promise. To understand the promises of the diverse art practices and the reasons for their failures, it is necessary to understand the institutional frameworks.

Note that the general problems of art practices that aim to counter racism and anti-Romaism, and to attain democracy and emancipation, are directly tied to the context of the contemporary neoliberal societies in which they operate. Therefore the main reason behind such systemic failures must be sought in the internal contradictions of contemporary democratic societies rather than in the structure of such art projects.

Whenever artistic social engagement and interest in broader participation is to be discussed in the con-

text of art, we must remember that a certain "we" is invoked, a community wherein members of selected communities (the audience, professional groups, African Americans, Jews, Roma people and travellers, homeless people, or children) become parts of a new community.

When disputing the right to use "we" for non-members of such communities, there is the risk of essentialisation, though. Needless to say, forgiveness and compassion towards others, those who are not members of our own communities, are some of the most relevant faculties necessary for a healthy political life.[13] The most recent crisis in the situation of non-citizens and refugees revealed again the need for compassion towards all political subjects – for the use of a "we," however vaguely defined.[14] However, the right to use "we" is not a given: one has to earn the other's trust to secure the basic conditions and the illocutionary force to make this speech act felicitous.[15]

The other part of this "we" is the artist, the curator, the art institution, or even the state (in some public art projects) that supposedly *cares* for the invisible, marginalized or neglected "other" as the counter-part of the very same "we." This is the inner friction, the crack in "we," the division always already there even before it is uttered. The other common problem with this imaginary "we" is that it mostly exists only during the period of the given art event, with the rare exception of artists creating sustainable projects that continue even

when they have left with the circus. Long-term participatory community-oriented projects, such as Gallery8, which are planned well in advance in terms of structure, organization, projected aims and funds for all of the projects' participants, stand a much better chance of achieving the expected goals.

The traumas from the past and the spectre of racism continuing in the present cannot be celebrated; yet, while their effect on Roma communities in Europe was supposed to be at least alleviated, it seems that the general anti-Roma sentiment in Europe only grew in visibility and strength in this period. Therefore, it becomes very important, although more difficult, to discuss historic memories and the amnesia that masks traumas in the context of the wide-spread neo-Nazi riots that have occurred all over the continent, from Germany, Austria, France and the rest of Western Europe, to East, Central and South Eastern Europe.

According to Ivana Marjanović's critical analysis of the Decade of Roma Inclusion, it is not only a European project but an international one as well.[16] Unfortunately, the issues of racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Romaism, xenophobia and the more recent anti-Islamic hatred towards the wave of refugees from Syria can easily be linked to such arguments, and to similar movements and periods from the past.

This may be considered as an outcome of Eastern Europeans' long-standing denial of the locals' involve-

ment in the Holocaust; an oblivious tolerance in the EU for monuments to figures with Nazi biographies; an ignorance of anti-Fascist events and figures from the past; or what is even more common, the vandalizing of anti-Fascist monuments and Jewish memorial sites and cemeteries.

The amnesia of anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi politics became particularly manifest in the wake of the inconceivable atrocities committed during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, once a land of "brotherhood and unity," as well as in the face of increasing xenophobia, racism and ethnic conflicts all around Europe. Therefore we need to address the lack of institutionally acknowledged shame with a comparative cultural approach to the geopolitical context of such defects in the collective memory that became apparent in the recent, ideologically driven rewritings of the history of the Second World War and other periods.

Many of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc have lately stopped celebrating the anti-Fascist victory, as this part of the historic past has been tendentiously suppressed and replaced with celebrations of local, national efforts for liberation from further back in history (as in the Ottoman past of some of the former Yugoslav republics), or more recent neo-nationalist myths. It seems the transfer of responsibility and the blaming and shaming of the other is still a more popular "strategy" than any committed collective work towards the acknowledgment of a community's role in historic events.

To understand the recurrence of institutionalised racism today, it is particularly important to see the links between racism, shame, and the more recent, well-known appropriative methods of neoliberalism for strict protocols for citizenship and *belonging*, the security measures, the regeneration of urban areas for the purposes of tourism and the creative industries, the strict policies against travellers, refugees, and *sans papiers* – which all lead to a form of disappropriation and thus shaming. It is an urgent task to react against the re-racialization of Europe, and to act in solidarity with the communities that are undermined, marginalized, and chased away from territories where they have lived for a long time (consider the Roma all over Europe, the Albanians driven from Serbia, or the Serbs from Croatia).

The unknown or suppressed facts of the insufficiently researched Roma Holocaust, the wars in Yugoslavia, the secret sterilization of Roma and Sinti women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, or the Hungarian National Guard, are just a few of the most glaring exam-

ples of the causal relationship between the long-suppressed, forgotten and carefully regulated truths from the past, and the new *protocols of shame* that different governments and institutions keep issuing. However, it is not easy to recognize the historic roots of awakening conservatism, nationalism and racism, which today obviously operate under the auspices of neoliberal capitalism, and cause the present *shameful* condition of the Roma and other "racialized" minorities; nor is it easy to tackle them with vigorous action.

Any *protocols* actually presuppose and project a kind of difference and danger that justify new and strict regulations on the one hand, and shame on the other. The state protocols seem to exclude the Roma, other minorities and immigrant communities, through strategies the likes of which are familiar from the past: by introducing ever new protocols that target certain communities and bar them from *belonging*. By doing so, the neoliberal state produces a vicious circle wherein it first proclaims the targeted community to be an atypical part of the population, which does not belong to the nation (with direct reference to collective shame), and then creates atypical *protocols* that leave these people outside normality and the common rule, *sealing* in the act all stereotypes and prejudices.[17]

In the system whose coordinates are provided by sameness, difference and the essentialization of identity and difference, the questions of nationalism, race,

and racism have shaped the visual field of contemporary society, and made the issue of representation relevant on levels and in registers more numerous than those discussed in art history and aesthetics. While trying to explain the denial and amnesia that paralyse speech and remembering, it is necessary to point to the circular movement that transferred shame on the victims' account. For example, according to Agamben, what happened in concentration camps prompted guilt and shame for those who stayed alive. Agamben called this "the aporia of the proxy witness": the survivors' testimony as "a potentiality that becomes actual through an impotentiality of speech [...] an impossibility that gives itself existence through a possibility of speaking."[18]

Elsewhere[19] I related activist art in general, and participatory art in particular, to the political theory of deliberative democracy and the intersubjective philosophy of *"being singular plural*"; to Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of *being* as always already *being with*[20]*;* and to Giorgio Agamben's work on the *coming community*. Jean-Luc Nancy for example reminds us that the aporia of "we" is actually the main aporia of intersubjectivity, and he points out the impossibility of pinning down some universal "we" that always consists of the same components. He refers to the problem that we have forgotten the importance of *being-together, being-in-common* and *belonging,* and that we live *without relations.*[21]

Thus it becomes extremely sensitive and questionable to use "we," exactly because of the gap between uttering the pronoun and acting out in accordance with its promise, particularly when hijacking the "we" from the privileged position of the gadji (non-Roma) and forgetting about Thomas Nagel's warning about the cognitive impossibility of fully understanding what it is like to be someone else (even when discounting cultural similarities or differences).[22] However, proximity and empathy may still be the necessary aporic relations

to strive for in order to work through "we," even when conscious of the approximate impossibility.

Created anew every time, "we" always contains different parts and counter-parts, making no reference to what happened to earlier parts/participants, which it turns into a certain *inoperative community*.[23] For Nancy, however, community occurs exactly in situations of interruption, fragmentation and suspension: "Community is made of the interruption of singularities… community is not the work of singular beings, nor can it claim them as its works…"[24] The hypothesis is that if art activism, institutional critique, participatory art and other forms of "artivism" as politically driven art initiatives remain focused only on the art system, they cannot really fulfil their promises of socio-political change, exactly because the outreach of art and cultural institutions is limited from the outset, as is the "we" it addresses. This interpretation of community as being intrinsically inoperative and fragmentary helps us to understand the way in which participatory art projects function or fail to function in practice, especially when they are controlled by institutions. Similarly to Nancy, Agamben thinks of *being-in-common* as distinct from community.[25]

Art projects aiming for democratization should also take into account progressivist concerns like those proposed by John Dewey, mainly as regards the critique of education as an instrument of social change.[26] It is no accident that many activist, community based and participatory art projects are run by the educational

departments of museums and other institutions, and focus, even in their contexts, on pedagogy and epistemology.

Already in the late 1980s, Raymond Williams offered a very ambivalent definition of democratic culture, claiming its contradictions and controversies may also be the sources of hope and the means of democratization.[27] Socially engaged participatory art often involves the artists in activism that is related to civil society, or solidarity-based collaborations with existing and newly established activist organizations, in order to overcome the paradox of democracy in neoliberal times.[28] Art that challenges issues such as the social inclusion – with reference to ethnicity, gender, race, and class – of different communities and individuals in all societal structures, often employs means such as political correctness and the critique of privileges, exploitation and unfair preferences, in order to overcome inequality. In this context the goals and activities of Gallery8 can benefit from contemporary art's shift towards participation.

However, authors such as Jodi Dean and Slavoj Žižek already pointed out fundamental contradictions between democracy and neoliberal ideals of development in society. For example, Dean argued that while the left attempted to develop and defend a collective vision of equality and solidarity, the ascendancy of "communicative capitalism," the gridlocks of consumerism, the privileging of the self over group interests, and the

embracing of the language of victimization, constantly undermine such attempts.[29] Slavoj Žižek went so far as to declare the split between the two: "the eternal marriage between capitalism and democracy has ended."[30]

As for the marriage of "Schizo-Capitalism" and "Representative Democracy," it has been a complex, multifaceted and dysfunctional relationship ever since Global Corporatism started to combine Fascism, Communism and Capitalism, the three ideologies that have coexisted in the past century, transcending borders and creating a supranational meta-system. Democracy may well have become inefficient while capitalism indulges in maintaining itself, hypocritically urging the poor to practice austerity. In this sense the question whether Capitalism can be successfully fused with Neoliberalism and Democracy is only the tip of the iceberg, the myriad increasingly pressing problems that await us in the meta-system of the globalization of the deteriorating society.

Artists, curators and art managers can intervene in this vicious circle of rhetorical questions even if at times their actions might resemble to philantrocapitalists' ones, and we might feel uneasy over the abundance of answers as we remember that the relationship between speech and action is doomed to failure from the outset. At the same time, we must note that that the alternatives to "infelicitous acts" are limited to silence and passivity.

Notes

1 According the web page of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015, it was initially imagined as an instrument with an “unprecedented political commitment by European governments to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma”, and was supposed to bring together “governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society, to accelerate progress toward improving the welfare of Roma and to review such progress in a transparent and quantifiable way”. See: http://www.romadecade.org/about. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

2 The term “philanthrocapitalism was first used in the 23 February, 2006 article of *The Economist,* “The birth of philanthropocapitalism.” http://www.economist.com/node/5517656. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

3 For a more critical analysis of the term philantrocapitalism and its inner contradictions see: Japhy Wilson, “Counting on Billionaires: Philanthrocapitalists like George Soros want us to believe they can remedy the economic misery that they themselves create,” *Jacobin Reason in Revolt,* https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/george-soros-philanthrocapitalism-millennium-villages/ Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

4 John L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*. Ed. by J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa. Second Edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 100. See also Shoshana Felmann’s text on Molière’s *Don Juan* and his character’s double speech: Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body Don Juan with J. L. Austin, or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, CA., 2002).

5 For a critical analysis of similar issues but with a different theoretical background, see Keti Chukhrov, "On the False Democracy of Contemporary Art" #57 September 2014 | e-flux http://www.e-flux.com/journal/on-the-false-democracy-of-contemporary-art/ Last accessed on 15 October 2015. The text is constrained by the self-referential debates about the autonomy of art in a philosophical and aesthetic context, and remains mostly confined to the circuit of the usual references to the issues of the avant-garde and modernism. There are, however, some political arguments cited that offer an analysis relevant for the debate on autonomy in art, as that of Hito Steyerl.

6 More information on the final stages of the initiative can be found at: http://www.romadecade.org/news/a-lost-decade-reflections-on-roma-inclusion-2005–2015/9809. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

7 Geogre Soros (the major "philanthrocapitalist" behind most of the actions and grants related to the Decade of Roma Inclusion) authored one of the texts in the promotional publication mentioned, which can be downloaded from: http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9809_file1_final-lostdecade.pdf. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

8 Established in Budapest in 2013, Gallery8 is strategically located on Mátyás Square, in the 8th District, an area with a dense Roma population. There is both an advantage and a disadvantage to this decision: while the location is part of the long-term strategy of the curatorial concept and counts as a real investment towards the local community's development, it also makes the Gallery less visible within the art scene of Budapest. For more information on Gallery8see their website at http://gallery8.org/gallery8. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

9 The organization initiating Gallery8 is the European Roma Cultural Foundation (ERCF), which was registered as an independent non-profit foundation on 2 August, 2010, in Budapest, Hungary. The mission statement of the ERCF states that it is conceived as "the oper-

ational and fundraising body" that "exists to strengthen and widely promote the role of Roma arts and culture in the enlarging Europe (and beyond) as a way to fight against negative stereotypes and hostile attitudes towards Roma communities."

10 From Gallery8's mission statement. See: http://gallery8.org/gallery8. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

11 The website of Gallery8 puts emphasis on social change and on "investing in the capacities of young Roma artists, presenters, managers and entrepreneurs to help them to succeed, to learn, to be accepted positively by broad audiences, to become more knowledgeable and actively engaged in networking and collaboration in Europe and beyond." http://gallery8.org/gallery8. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

12 For one of the most ambitious curatorial endeavours of the Gallery8 team to address the most delicate issues from the Roma's past, see a recent project curated by chief curator Timea Junghaus (and co-curator Moritz Pankok): "Transmitting Trauma: Contemporary Reflections on the Memory of the Roma Holocaust." http://gallery8.org/en/news/3/93/transmitting-trauma---contemporary-reflections-on-the-memory-of-the-roma-holocaust. Last accessed on 15 October 2015.

13 Glen Pettigrove, "Hannah Arendt and Collective Forgiving." In: *The Journal of Social Philosophy* 37:4 (Winter 2006), 483–500. www.blackwell-synergy.com

14 Agamben's argument is influenced by Hannah Arendt's article "We Refugees," published in *The Menorah Journal* in January 1943 (XXXI), which he developed in his text of the same title. 15 Oct. 2006 <http://roundtable.kein.org/node/399>.

15 Austin 100.

16 In her 2011 article Marjanović focused on the complex circumstances of the complete demolition of Bellville, a Roma settlement in Belgrade, and the exclusion of the Roma from urban environments. She pointed to

the contradictory and questionable involvement and collaboration between different local and international organizations in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, such as "the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Open Society Institute, the United Nations, and on the other hand, countries that were noted to lack the inclusion of Roma people, as well as international Roma NGOs." Ivana Marjanović, "Questioning Inclusion: Struggles against Antiromaism in Europe." *Journal of Visual Art Practice,* 10:2 (2011), 149–163.

17 For a very obvious example of how protocols are put to work, see the expulsion of nearly one thousand Roma from France to Romania and Bulgaria in 2011, authorized by a personal memo from president Nicolas Sarkozy, itself sanctioned by the strict security act called *Loppsi 2*. See: "France: New Law on Internal Security, Loppsi 2," *Library of Congress*, 22 March 2011. Last accessed on 15 October 2015. http://www.loc.gov/lawweb/servlet/lloc_news?disp3_l205402583_text.

18 Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York Times, Zone Books, 1999), 146.

19 Suzana Milevska, "Participatory Art: A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects" *springerin,* Volume 12/2, 2006: 18-23, 25 April 2006. Last accessed on 15 October 2015 http://www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=1761&lang=en.

20 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural,* trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne O'Byrne, (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 2000) 13.

21 Nancy 75.

22 Thomas Nagel, *Mortal Questions,* "What is it like to be a bat?" (1974). Reprinted in *Mortal Questions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 165–180.

23 Jean-Luc Nancy. *The Inoperative Community*. Edited by Peter Connor (Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1991), 80–81.

24 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* 31.

25 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1993) 87.

26 John Dewey, "Education and Social Change," in F. Schultz, *SOURCES, Notable Selections in Education* (3rd ed, McGraw-Hill Dushkin, New York, 2001), 333–341.

27 Raymond Williams, "Culture is Ordinary," *Resources of Hope: Culture, democracy, socialism*, ed. by R Gable, introduction by Richard Blackburn (Verso, London, 1989), 3–18.

28 Paul Clements (2011), "The Recuperation of Participatory Art Practices." *International Journal of Art and Design Education* (30:1), 18–30.

29 See: Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Duke University Press, Durham, N.C., 2009).

30 Nicolas Dutent, "The eternal marriage between capitalism and democracy has ended", Interview with Slavoj Žižek. Trans. by Harry Cross, *L'Humanitè* (English edition), 2 September 2013. Last Accessed: 2 April 2015, http://www.humaniteinenglish.com/spip.php?article2332

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II.3

Dialogical and Participatory Methods in Artistic Research: The Reciprocal Relations Between Subjects, Objects, Images, and Stories in *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*

The artists involved in *Transforming Long Kesh/ Maze* dedicate their project entirely to the eponymous prison that operated from 1971 until 2000, now abandoned, where most of the political prisoners from Northern Ireland's "Troubles" were held. The project – developed by artists Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, primarily in Belfast between 2016 and 2018 – is conceptualised as a collaborative social sculpture.[1] Their art-based research, as well as various project presentations in the form of exhibitions, public conferences, lec-

ture performances, and other related events, motivated me to look more closely at the reciprocal relations and emerging micronarratives brought forth during the project.[2] Specifically, this engages the complex networks of social interactions that the artists established through the unique grid of participatory strategies, research methods, intertwined structures, and contentious relations between the subjects, objects, and images involved in their art practice.

Moreover, the emergence and intersection of certain microhistories enables and reveals direct and indirect intersubjective and dialogical relations through proximity, in the context of the current sensitive political conditions in Northern Ireland.[3] The project was initially informed by publically announced local government plans (which have since failed) to transform the abandoned and dysfunctional building. These attempts mainly aimed to mollify memories of the troubled years preceding the Good Friday Agreement of 10 April 1998 (the basis for the current devolved system of government in Northern Ireland), such as the negative recollections of the victims of armed conflicts, the "hunger strikes" of 1981, and other events that were collectively nicknamed "The Troubles."[4]

Gradually the project shifted its focus towards the art produced by former inmates from Long Kesh/Maze.[5] After the closure of the prison, the last of these objects were gradually dispersed around Belfast and

other places as the last of the eligible prisoners were released in 2000. The destiny of these objects, and the research of archaeologist Laura McAtackney on the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze more directly, motivated the artists to conceive a complex project structure that went far beyond the fate of the prison's architectural remains.[6]

Various artistic strategies, research methods, media, and materials of production and presentation (photography, postcards, posters, installations, collages), as well as discursive events, were employed to enable the development and completion of the project. However, the research and production process depended above all on the readiness of local communities to take to memory lane and work towards interweaving the many different layers of the project.

The research into the historical and political context, the everyday life conditions in the prison, the materiality of the objects produced in the prison, the interaction among the members of different smaller communities and individuals in the present, eventually resulted in the production of original images of existing or new objects based on acquired knowledge about the materials used, and low-key, bricolage techniques – all assembled in a time-based social sculpture.

How can one, then, situate and contextualise the newly composed relations in the framework of ongoing theoretical, philosophical, and artistic discussions

regarding representation and participation, and extrapolate the artistic research means and strategies employed by the artists to explore their ambitious vision and realise their goals. Some of my concrete queries pertinent to this context derive from the debate surrounding the complex relations between art and contemporary social reality, as well as questions surrounding the power and potential of art to transform existing societal and systemic structures. These questions move from a simple enquiry about the general conditional context towards a more intricate deliberation on the possibility of fulfilling the project's promise to engage with the unexpected (either positive or negative) implications of the dismantled border between art and society.

Transforming Long Kesh/Maze is a bold and optimistic move from the outset, in both artistic and political terms. Although its title already confirms the artists' belief in the possibility of effecting certain change, it also ironically resonates with the attempts of local government and communities to turn the abandoned remnants of the former prison's buildings into something functional, even lucrative.

At first sight, the project's attempts "to avoid negatively dwelling on the past or the reiteration of previously rehearsed and ideologically overdetermined narratives" seem very optimistic, almost impossible.[7] This is particularly so when taking into account the long history of armed and political conflict between the two major, radically polarised political positions of the divided local communities (Republican/Nationalist and Loyalist/Unionist). Furthermore, the differences between the major political opponents, and the many different implicated smaller parties, subgroups, and individual citizens–combined with ongoing tensions in contemporary divided communities and the gloomy

prospect of Brexit – add ever more uncertainty to the political and cultural horizon of Belfast, and Northern Ireland as a whole. This context highlights the importance of art's critical potential and agency to offer successful strategies for social intervention within existing relations.

The complex subject-object relation has never been adequately resolved in philosophy or theory. It is even more complicated when, in this context, one not only needs to address the issue of how objects are perceived but also how they are represented as images. Philosophers and theorists have long been puzzled by the inevitable conundrums instigated by such complex issues as visual perception, representation, and the reification of such relations. They have conceptualised or subscribed to various cognitive systems to understand subjects' relations to the material world, and in relation to particular objects or images (e.g. idealism, realism, conceptualism, subjectivism, or speculative realism), but they have never reached agreement on any one of these relations.[8]

There has never been a consensus on one single and unified theoretical "recipe" to encompass all the potentialities of the relations between subjects, objects, and images, though they all agree on the extreme relevance of these relations and representation in the construction of subjectivity (feminist theories are almost entirely based on such critique). According to Hegel, the "master" (subject) exemplifies "consciousness"

that defines itself only in mutual relation to the slave's consciousness – a process of mediated relation and reciprocal interdependence. Self-consciousness (and thus subjectivity) is not independent but *dependent*.[9] In other words, both master and slave in Hegel's pair understand their own existence only in relation to recognition or reconciliation" of the other.[10]

To put it in the terms of Hegel's "master/slave" dialectical relation, the slave works positively with the objects, puts a specific form to them, so that while working on them he/she becomes aware of his/her independence. Self-consciousness is achieved when the slaves realise that they are not things, not objects, but subjects who can transform material nature.[11]

In a similar vein, Homi Bhabha has discussed the master-slave dialectic in the context of Fanon's postcolonial critique of cultural hegemony and domination.[12] I am far from suggesting that the prisoners' art is linked to the Northern Ireland political struggle to the same extent that the Haitian revolution operated for Hegel (instrumental for the development of the "master-slave" dialectic), the African American struggles for Fanon, or the struggle for Indian independence for Bhabha; however, some of the objects featured in *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* could undeniably be interpreted in the light of postcolonial critique. The colonial relation in the background of the British-Irish conflict could also be interpreted through production, ownership, representation, and other aspects of prison art as a contentious cultural heritage.

For many centuries objects remained largely unquestioned in the realm of artistic practice, as well as in aesthetics and art theory. The production and representation of objects were assumed, by default, to be the very requirements for calling any activity “fine art.” Moreover, the production of objects was predominantly accompanied by the production of images as the result of the perception and representation that obscured the relations between subjects and objects. Accordingly, the evaluation of the look and craftsmanship of objects and images was at the core of most definitions of art.

Walter Benjamin’s assumption in his celebrated essay “The Author as Producer” (1934) that the role of the author as a member of a society is to address class struggle–and must thus be rethought because s/he is part of an industry defined by modes of production–is indirectly linked with the shift from art-object production towards the incorporation of more “subjects” in contemporary art practices, as well as participants not trained or involved in arts in the long-run.[13]

Perhaps Benjamin is the main "culprit" behind the ever-more invigorated discussions about aesthetics and political engagement because according to him artistic quality and politics are inextricably linked and should not be separated.[14]

Guy Debord's critique that ours is "a society where human relations are no longer directly experienced" gets an update in Nicolas Bourriaud's more recent critique of representation and its mediation of the world, what he called "Relational Aesthetics."[15] Bourriaud's question of whether it is "still possible to generate relationships with the world, in a practical field of art-history traditionally earmarked for their 'representation'" is a rhetorical one.[16] For him, the answer lies precisely in the direct relations that artists can establish through their creative activities as "social interstices." Perhaps Bourriaud's interpretation of works of art in Marxist terms, as well as his use of the term "interstices" as social spaces of human relations suggesting alternative "possibilities than those in effect within this system"– best explains the basis for his relational aesthetics.[17] However, it does not explain very well the potentials of these relational and participatory art practices to eventually change overall societal and systemic structures.

As such, we can specifically turn towards the dialogical and reciprocal relations that Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn have induced between them, creating a pair of collaborators (rather than working individu-

ally); we can also attend to the relations amongst the artists and involved participants, amongst all active participants, and between them and the objects, images, and narratives that either pre-dated the project, or were created in the context of the research, exhibitions, objects created by inmates of Long Kesh/Maze prison, the latter were made either by the artists or in collaboration with project participants (some of them also former inmates).

Indeed, the artistic intervention created new relations and also changed the dynamic of existing relations. This, however, could be fruitfully challenged by the much more deterministic understanding of objects offered by the Austrian cultural theorist Nora Sternfeld, a conceptualisation of the obstacles towards a more relational understanding of the potential in the de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of objects:

> The histories of violence and their corresponding conflicts have left traces–not only because they could not simply be eradicated, but mostly because the magic of the aura and of the fetish would be of no value whatsoever, if it were not valorised by rendering the traces of violence harmless. Following this theory, the things carry within themselves the conflicts in which they are embroiled, and through which they emerged. They are part of their sediment; they are petrified within the object.[18]

This is not the same as saying that Sternfeld's "object-effect" and the reference to speculative theory (closely linked to Bruno Latour's concept of "factish") had no value.[19] However, by denying any possibility for change to the petrified memory contained within objects, one becomes trapped in a vicious circle where the past determines both the present and future, something that Krenn and O'Beirn do not want to settle with, and which they have attempted to overcome from the very outset of their collaboration by contesting existing narratives and instigating contacts where previously there were none. In her well-known article "Arts of the Contact Zone," Mary Louise Pratt defines "contact zones" as "[s]ocial spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today."[20]

At this point it is also worth referring to the work of James Clifford, who extended Pratt's concept of contact zones to contexts of conflict, as well as artistic and museological contexts. In his view, "When museums are seen as contact zones, their organizing structure as a collection becomes an ongoing historical, political, moral relationship–a power-charged set of exchanges, of push and pull."[21] Moreover, not only should one consider contact zones as completely open, public, and cultural spaces, but they can also include organisations and institutions with more defined profiles and structures.

The long-term involvement of the artists in *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* was a pre-requisite for the expected involvement of local participants. Arza Churchman has defined participation as “a process, not a one-time event.”[22] Moreover, in her introduction to a themed issue of the *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, dedicated entirely to participation, she writes about long-term involvement as a prerequisite to participation, or “decision-making by unelected, non-appointed citizens, or the incorporation of community members in planning and design. Without that decision-making element in participation, or if decisions are made by elected or appointed representatives, Churchman will not even call it ‘participation’ but rather ‘involvement’.”[23]

For *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*, this is extremely relevant because of the time and continuous effort that participatory projects require on the part of the artists who initiate them. Needless to say, this is necessary for gaining the interest, trust, and dedication of participants who for the most part are not art professionals.

Accordingly, the artists had the advantage that whilst O'Beirn is an Irish artist living and working in Belfast, Krenn is from Austria, having spent a lot of time in Belfast during the completion of his Ph.D at Ulster University before his collaboration with O'Beirn. This unique amalgamation of different cultural and national backgrounds enabled them to establish and maintain continuous contact with different local communities and gain profound knowledge of the history and current status of existing socio-political, economic, and professional art conditions, whilst also affording a kind of distance through a more neutral and international perspective where necessary.

The participants who voluntarily consented to be involved in various capacities and thus to contribute to the project's development and its eventual presentations–for example by providing relevant historical information about certain objects' trajectories, by showing the artists existing objects that they owned or kept, or by telling some more personal stories–in the course of the project became researchers on their own. Intrigued by the project's challenge they activated their personal and collective memories and thus created unique micronarrative units, which later became captions for the photographed images of the objects. Thus, artistic research became an instigator of participatory research and the reactivation of their memories, as well as the memories of the eventual audience members who may have had similar or different recollections of the same objects, positive or negative, clear or fuzzy (such as "Cat's Whisker, Early 1980s," a photograph of the home-made radio that served to secretly relay news to the prison wings, or "Emergency, Early 80s," which depicts the internal prison telephone.)

Relations Between the Participants and the Newly Produced Objects

Not all participants were directly involved in the production of new objects, images, and names/titles for the captions of exhibited photographs. Those who engage in the coproduction or reproduction of long-lost or still-existing objects, or of creating entirely new ones, take their involvement in a different direction which goes beyond repetition, re-iteration, and re-staging. The emphasis placed on co-production did not necessitate any artistic training, so as to skip any hierarchisation. The focus, on the contrary, was on collaborative and participatory research (executed both by artists and participants on an equal basis), as well as the material conditions, narratives, and affects that enabled the production of the objects made in the prison.

The project began with a long process of establishing connections amongst different communities and organisations, as well as gaining the trust of various individuals who gradually showed their interest in participation (mainly after the *Transforming Maze/ Long Kesh* conference that took place at the Metropolitan Arts Centre in Belfast on 25 April 2017). Perhaps at the beginning, the involvement and engagement of the activist organisations, community museums, and some independent citizens unconnected to either side of the conflict in a direct political way was somehow facilitated through the subtle and academic (read: more neutral) appeal of the project run by the artist duo, and because of the support of highly respected institutions, such as Ulster University and the EC Horizon 2020 Programme.

Relations of Re-staging, Re-appropriating, and Re-telling

The relations between subjects, objects, and images were established through artistic research methods and media such as audio interviews, photography, and caption naming. The artists refer to three specific methods: *re-staging*, *re-appropriation*, and *re-telling*. The selection of objects, the formulation of short accompanying statements, and finally naming the objects and producing the captions were all joint efforts, executed in the ad-hoc mobile photographic studio that was "rebuilt" for each session and venue.

The photographic *re-staging* of prison objects took place at several community museums, a community centre in Belfast, and O'Beirn's studio (at PS²), with the participants present (who either made, owned, or just took care of the photographed objects). The "naming process" was particularly important and creative: participants were asked to give a title and date to each artefact that they offered or consented to be photographed. The label was always made on site and in their presence, with a small portable labelling machine, then placed on the same background as the

object before being photographed, so that the title became integral to the final image.

To return briefly to the theoretical discussion in relation to this, it is interesting that Pratt, to a large extent, relied on variationist sociolinguistics and William Labov's theory of "referential indeterminacy."[24] These theories explore different ways in which people name things in their everyday life and various ordinary settings that resonate with the complex artistic concept of dialogical naming–and thus the coproduction of the labels.

Re-appropriation refers to the project's phase that relates to the ephemeral nature of prison objects–many of them have been lost, destroyed, or damaged. The lost objects remained only as mental images in the participants' memory that was re-staged by re-appropriation. For example, in the process of re-making of the vanished objects and images, traditional materials and methods from the prison were mainly applied, following participants' testimonies and instructions.

The artists' collaboration with the 50+ Group and their host organisation Tar Anall (dedicated to the welfare of the former Republican prisoners and their families) resulted in yet another strategy: *re-telling*. Most importantly, various micronarratives and micro-relations were produced while the women members of the 50+ Group were making objects and simultaneously

constructing a kind of meticulously embroidered network of relations.

The community museums that own or store objects created by former Long Kesh/Maze prisoners, which were approached by Krenn and O'Beirn, are somewhere between being completely open urban public spaces and conventional museums.[25] In fact, these spaces are perhaps close to what Clifford had in mind as contact zones (opposed to both conventional anthropological, ethnographic, historical, and other professional museums, as well as public spaces with conflicted histories) due to their accessibility and hospitality; yet in some ways even they are confined by politically contentious relations and tensions inherited from the past.[26]

Although the *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* project is still ongoing, it already far exceeds many pre-existing troubled narratives from the past, attempting to overcome them through various research methods and strategies. However, many of the questions that emerged during the research process and various presentations remain unresolved. Before this project began, the objects, subjects, and mental images of them that existed were isolated, separate, and confined to the small premises of community museums or private homes, which according to McAtackney's work on the material culture of Long Kesh/Maze (the initial, instrumental impetus for the artists), ultimately led to the idea of Belfast (and beyond) becoming a dispersed "museum" of the prison. With *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*, the exhibitions of images of objects, postcards and posters (though not necessarily the objects themselves) serve as a temporary and mobile museum that does not aim for any form of monumentalisation.

In embracing the dispersed nature of the prison, the artists have produced an "interstice"– a social space where it's possible to overcome attachments to negative memories, a place that prompts discursive and social change in an indirect but efficient way. Their subtle, long-term societal critique and attempts to disentangle and dismantle internalised power relations have unleashed the potential of such a project. This has been made possible through "excavating" and producing various oral microhistories related to new objects, as well as existing ones (that although having been made during confinement were not immersed only in negative and burdening narratives). As well, and moreover, this is a function of participation, collaboration, and co-production during both the research and production phases, which resulted in the creation of self-standing social networks somewhat unburdened by contentious and troubled historic memories.

Notes

1 *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze* was developed as an integral part of the three-year cross-disciplinary project Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts: From Intervention to Co-Production (TRACES), for the EU Programme Horizon 2020.

2 This essay was written in the context of my position as Principal Investigator in the TRACES project and as a result of a research trip to Belfast (2–6 September 2017), direct communication with the artists (that continued via Skype and e-mail), and my presence during some of the work sessions and the Belfast Mural Tour with Belfast Black Cab Tours (8 September 2017).

3 The reference to "microhistory" stems from the difference between "macrohistory" and "microhistory" proposed in the 1970s in the works of the Italian historians Giovanni Levi, Carlo Ginzburg, and Simona Cerutti. According to this intervention in the historical methodology, the discipline was in crisis because while "macrohistory," traditional history, was entirely dedicated only to generalised accounts of significant events and personalities from the past, to mega narratives, microhistory calls for a reverse perspective: for intensive and profound investigations focused on smaller, seemingly insignificant, units of research (shorter local events, smaller villages, everyday-life case studies, diaries, personal written testimonies, and oral histories).

4 For more information about the public discussions surrounding the prison's future during the period when Krenn and O'Beirn conceptualised their project, see George Legg, "Redeveloping the Long Kesh/Maze Pris-

on: Profiting from the Hunger Strikes?" *Irish Times,* 5 May 2016, irishtimes.com/culture/books/redeveloping-the-long-keshmaze-prison-profiting-from-the-hunger-strikes-1.2636134.

5 The use of the term "prison art" is relative because in this context it encompasses found objects that were part of the prison infrastructure (such as the telephone in "Emergency Only, Early 1980s"), together with the hand-made objects that during the functioning years of the prison were produced by the now-former prisoners. However, the strict terminology is not relevant here because the project *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*, to a large extent, relativises the distinction between professional and non-professional artists.

6 Laura McAtackney, *An Archaeology of the Troubles: The Dark Heritage of Long Kesh/Maze Prison* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

7 Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, during an informal discussion, PS^2 Belfast, September 2017. Recently, Declan Long extensively analysed the complexity of contemporary art production that was informed and heavily influenced by the long-term conflicts and tensions in Northern Ireland (e.g. various projects by Willie Doherty and Aisling O'Beirn). See Declan Long, *Ghost-Haunted Land: Contemporary Art and Post-Troubles Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

8 Some examples include: the Hegelian master-slave dialectic prompted by the access and cognisance of the means of production, in G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 119; George Berkeley's subjective idealism (with which he denied the existence of any object beyond the field of perception); the Marxist theory of fetishisation of objects and his differentiation between the means, and technical and social relations of production; and Badiou's "objectless subject," in Alan Badiou, "On a Finally Objectless Subject," in *Who Comes After the Subject?* ed. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 24–33.

9 “He is, therefore, not certain of existence-for-self as the truth of himself; on the contrary, his truth is in reality the inessential consciousness and the inessential action of the latter [the slave].” Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 1979: 117.

10 Hegel furthermore asserts that “self-consciousness exists in and for itself inasmuch, and only inasmuch as it exists in and for itself for another, i.e. inasmuch as it is acknowledged, only through the recognition by the other self-consciousness”. Ibid., 111.

11 See Suzana Milevska, “Master-Slave Dialectics in the Feminine,” in *Performative Gestures, Political Moves*, ed. Katja Kobolt and Lana Zdravković (Ljubljana: City of Women, Ljubljana and Red Athena University Press, 2014), 27–46.

12 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 61.

13 Suzana Milevska, “Participatory Art: A Paradigm Shift from Objects to Subjects,” springerin 12, no. 2 (2006): 18–23, springerin.at/en/2006/2/partizipatorische-kunst.

14 Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Part 2, 1931–1934*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone et al. (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) 768–782.

15 Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 17; Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presses Du Réel, 2002), 9.

16 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 9.

17 Ibid., 16.

18 Nora Sternfeld, “The Object-Effect,” *CuMMA Papers* 19 (2016): 8, cummastudies.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/cumma-papers-19.pdf.

19 Ibid., 4.

20 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 91 (1991): 33–34.

21 James Clifford, *Routes, Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 192–193.

22 Arza Churchman, introduction to issue on “Public Participation around the World,” *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 1–4.

23 Ibid.

24 William Labov, “The Boundaries of Words and Their Meanings,” in News Ways of Analyzing Variation in English, ed. Charles-James Bailey and Roger Shuy (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1973), 340–373.

25 The Eileen Hickey Irish Republican History Museum (the artists photographed objects in their collection), The Roddy McCorley Society Museum, The Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre, and The 50+ Group (under the umbrella of Tar Anall), as well as various private collections (Simon Bridge, Phil Holland and David Stitt).

26 Clifford, *Routes, Travel and Translation*, 192–193.

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II.4

Solidarity and the Aporia of "We"
Representation and Participation of Refugees in Contemporary Art

In all iterations of Olafur Eliasson's *Green Light*, asylum seekers and refugees were asked to participate by producing crystalline *green light* lamps, consisting of polyhedral units fitted with small, green-tinted light fixtures. The module was invented by Eliasson's longtime friend and collaborator, Einar Thorsteinn, as part of the numerous geometric studies they undertook at the studio. The small modules were made predominantly from recycled and sustainable materials (European ash, recycled yogurt cups, used plastic bags, and recycled nylon) and green LED lights that could function either as single objects or be assembled into a variety of architectural configurations. The lamps were

ultimately sold for €250 each. Participants in the workshop, for their part, could access free language classes, counselling education and other workshops.

Eliasson is one of many artists who have attempted not only to depict or record refugees in the context of contemporary art, but also to invite them to participate directly in projects and events organized by art and cultural institutions.[1] In this manner, refugees become represented not only by "proxy" – in images, objects or recorded videos that represent their plight – but through their very presence in real time when they are invited to become participants, collaborators and co-producers of art projects. When discussing his project, Eliasson stated:

> I want to thank you all for co-hosting us and one another because I think there is something very important going on here – the decentralization of hospitality, which means there is no center, but rather only periphery. Obviously, this is not completely true, because there is an organization, TBA21, behind this, but I would still argue that *Green Light* aims to decentralize hospitality.[2]

There is nothing wrong with such a statement at first sight. The obvious question, however, is whether such "decentralized hospitality" can really occur in the contexts in which Olafur Eliasson staged his project, particularly when accounting for how profoundly integrated the art system's institutions – TBA21 Vienna

and the 2017 Venice Biennale – are in the capitalist mode of production.

In Venice, the project occupied a huge space in one of the first rooms of the prestigious Central Pavilion. Refugees were invited only for the duration of the professional and press opening, where the audience consisted primarily of journalists commissioned to review the Biennial, museum and gallery directors, employed and freelance curators, art collectors and dealers. The participants-turned-producers were instructed on how to make the objects – in other words, there was no creativity involved on their side; they were simply present in the installation – and their communication with the audience during the exhibition's events was reduced to a minimum.

The budget and distribution of the initial funds, as well as those raised and obtained through the project, were not made transparent. In addition, thousands of images of the anonymous refugee participants have circulated ever since the installation. Alongside the green lights, then, the participants in Eliasson's project were eventually nevertheless turned into images. One might also inquire about the fees, copyrights, and lecture honoraria generated from the project, and ask other difficult questions about the circulation and distribution of capital beyond the event itself.

This paper attempts to unravel the hidden contradictions and challenges stemming from prevailing ex-

pectations of this emerging strategy of participation. At first sight, by comparison with other art genres that use representation,[3] such a strategy and mode of art production seems more appropriate to the current social climate (which the media refer as to a "humanitarian crisis" or "refugee crisis"). More traditional forms of artistic representation are frequently stereotypical and prejudicial, regardless of whether they involve fully documented citizens or refugees of various statuses who are kept marginalized and mostly invisible in the common social fabric. The so called crisis has also made already existing social tensions more visible, exacerbated by the outburst of hatred and racism towards recently arrived refugees (for instance, with the anti-Islamist and neo-Nazi Pagida riots in Germany and Austria).[4] Participation in art projects is, thus, to a large extent imagined as a kind of enacted compensation for both faulty artistic representations and the lack of inclusion and participation in sociopolitical life. Clearly, there is an ethical debate over whether and how to represent vulnerable and suffering subjects in general, but it nevertheless remains pertinent to ask whether and how people's direct involvement in artistic projects substantially changes their existence and living conditions, or improves society in general for that matter.[5]

According to various statements by Eliasson, *Green Light* was conceived as a metaphorical "device" for refugees and migrants (in Austria and beyond) in order to employ the "agency of contemporary art and its potential to initiate processes of civic transformation" by eliciting "various forms of participation and engagement."[6] In an interview, Eliasson elaborates similar good-faith, critical intentions:

> Systems are normally defined as hierarchical, top-down, institutional, and exclusive – also systems that claim to be inclusive are in fact exclusive, systems that claim that we can identify with them but that we actually struggle to identify with. Let me give one example: one system that we like is the EU, but we have no emotional understanding of what on earth the EU is. Another system is the UN: we have come to love the UN, but we have no emotional narrative to understand what the UN is. We all think that these systems are important, but we feel disconnected. So I am very interested in when we feel connected and when we feel disconnected.[7]

While international asylum laws differ in the various countries that hosted the project, in most European countries (among them Austria and Italy, where *Green light* was installed) refugees do not have the legal right to be engaged in paid activities or to access free education if they have not been granted asylum. The political institutions responsible for either embracing or refusing the requests for refugee status, legalization, residential permits, or citizenship rarely contemplate the means for future inclusion of refugees or the political frames in operation. Accordingly, participatory art is often seen as the only alternative compensation for a situation in which it is not unusual that refugees' entire life is confined to in-betweenness and the non-spaces of refugee camps.

The substantial difference between *inclusion* and *belonging* (access to state institutions that secure such equal civic rights as rights to education, visas, residential and work permits, employment, and citizenship), and the symbolic inclusion and short-term participation in art projects is one of the main reasons it is urgent to analyze the political dynamics of participatory art practices that include refugees. While the representation of undocumented subjects in the context of political institutions operates on a different register, I would nevertheless like to challenge this difference and question the source of such assumptions, emphasizing that any political representation is also symbolic (and vice versa). The main questions, therefore, are

twofold: first, whether inviting refugees to take part in art projects necessarily leads to an exploitation of their (already) difficult position and condition; second, whether, in re-enacting their plight and their impeded political status time and again, such projects necessarily have an advantage over figurative and conceptual artistic representation simply because such representations are not "mediated" and (if possible) the participation is paid. Most importantly, it is important to discuss whether it is possible at all to avoid the perpetuation of stereotypical representations and to induce sociopolitical changes with participatory strategies that apply the instruments of direct democracy in an art context.

The Aporia of “We”

What form does “inclusion” take in participatory art projects? What imagined community is figured in and through the work? During the recent refugee crisis in Europe, perhaps the biggest since World War Two, the phrase “we refugees” became a slogan of apparent solidarity with exiles, a mode of offering one’s own home to those arriving. It involved a form of political over-identification, and proof of compassion and empathy for people who have been stripped of their basic human rights in their new domiciles. Of course those who mobilize this phrase (for my purposes here, the artists or organizations, such as BAK, Utrecht, organizing participatory works) are not refugees themselves and do not belong to the ones fleeing political turmoil in their home countries. Although accompanied by calls for equal participation of non-documented immigrants and refugees in civil society, claiming democratic rule of law and “equal justice for all,” the “we” of “we refugees” often rings flat, since the slogan is ambiguous and open to charges of self-interest, condescension, and even racism. The “we” can, even as it claims solidarity, conceal a suppressed fear of the refugee, of the

‘other’ who supposedly crosses the ‘threshold’ of one’s home without legitimate right to do so. It can also express the Eurocentric divide between ‘us’ (already settled and privileged citizens) and ‘them’ (the newcomers, including those, for example, from the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in eastern Europe, or between Christian and Muslim immigrants).

Expressions of solidarity with refugees can thus conceal essentialism and condescension based on citizenship, class and religion. Governments’ flagrant neglect of responsibilities entailed by use of the “we” reveals the aporias of a solidarity founded in national belonging. Ever since Hannah Arendt’s essay “We Refugees,” the phrase has been used to express sympathy with the underprivileged, the precarious and the politically persecuted.[8] Fifty years later, Giorgio Agamben borrowed it for the title of an essay comparing Nazi concentration camps and the contemporary detention centers.[9] Agamben’s argument in favour of the use of “we,” emphasizing the need for compassion towards all political subjects, was directly influenced by Arendt, whom he quotes at the beginning of his essay. The sentiment organizes the politics of “inclusion” present in participatory art practice.

Jacques Derrida’s term “hostipitality,” however, points to the complexity of the concept of “belonging” and “hospitality,” unravelling the challenges to the legislation and socialization of refugees. Hostipitality

derives from the tension between hospitality and cosmopolitanism, or more precisely from the conflict between the privacy of the home and an unconditional ethics and openness to the world; the tension proceeds from fears for the stability of the home if the problems of the world enter in. Derrida has stressed that "If we try to draw a politics of hospitality from the dream of unconditional hospitality, not only will it be impossible but it will have perverse consequences."[10] The aporia of absolute hospitality comes from the fact that it "requires that I open my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided by a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.) but to the absolute, unknown, anonymous other, and that I give place to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names."[11]

The paradox of not being able to give a gift and still have it, of not being able to offer your home to the Other if you have already offered it to someone else, is related to issues of "power and possession." Yet the paradox of hospitality, according to Duformantelle, is that it is not confined to possessing a home:

> "To offer hospitality, is it necessary to start from the certain existence of a dwelling, or is it rather only starting from the dislocation of the shelterless, the homeless, that the authenticity of hospitality can

open up? Perhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality."[12]

The story about the Iranian refugee Mahboubeh Tavakoli cooking and feeding other refugees in Athens' Victoria Park only two years after her and her family arrived as refugees in Greece defies the logic of hospitality based on sharing wealth, comfort and political decisions, and comes as close as possible to this ideal of unconditional hospitality.[13]

Thus when Derrida and Dufourmantelle coined the oxymoron "hostipitality" they wanted to stress that the state becomes the "critic" endowed with the power to distinguish friend from foe, guest from parasite, hospitality from hostility, the "we" from an "us."[14] In the context of contemporary art, the limitations and contradictions entailed in the concept "hostipitality" become more apparent in participatory art. Although not the initial aims of the artists, these contradictions cannot be reconciled by addressing only the figure of the refugee without taking into account the figure of the legislator and the political context in which such projects take place.[15]

For example, two projects by BAK in Utrecht used similar phraseology: One of them, *We Are Here,* was dedicated to refugees, and was publicized as "the first large-scale organization of refugees" established in collaboration with artists and cultural workers.[16]

The other was a publication dedicated to the socio-political conditions of Roma: *We, Refugees* (2014).[17] Both projects resonated with the practice of masking the sponsors or organization (otherwise known as "astroturfing") because – although they were made to appear as though they originated from grassroots participants – there is little evidence of this. There is an inner split within the "we" itself, caused by its unspecified and heterogeneous alignment – as if the right to use the pronoun were allocated on a "first come, first served" basis. However, the question of whom it includes and how one gains the right to utter it is not only semantic. The origins of the distrust also need to be discussed.

English, unlike some non-European languages, has no exclusive form of the first person plural pronoun; in other words, no grammatical distinction is made between an all-inclusive "we" and a "we" that includes only certain addressees. Despite this fact, or perhaps exactly because of it, there are many possibilities for duplicity and hidden agendas in the use of the "we." It is therefore necessary to discuss the difference between "saying" and "doing" in the use of the first person plural, and how its mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion work in the participatory art context and beyond.

The emphasis on doing is particularly urgent given the responsibility of politicians and government representatives, non-governmental agencies or ordinary citizens to the "we," and the flagrant neglect of those responsibilities in the case of refugees.[18] In some cases, governments use refugees' tragic destinies in political negotiations. In 2002, for example, the Macedonian government opened an inquiry into the shootings of innocent immigrants who were originally portrayed in Macedonia as Al Qaeda mujahedeen. The alleged ter-

rorism was used to avoid the expected solidarity – the "we" – with the refugees. However, autopsies performed on the men (as well as police photos) suggested that the police were responsible for the shootings and had even staged the crime scene. All bodies had multiple bullet wounds, in one case, fifty-three. Later it emerged that six Pakistani immigrants and one Indian had been even lured onto Macedonian soil with false promises and been ruthlessly killed as a part of Government's strategy to flirt with NATO and the US administration.[19]

"We refugees" thus sometimes sounds like a hollow marriage proposal by a notorious philanderer. In this respect, the concept of "infelicitous acts" is a useful way of analyzing the aporias surrounding conflicting normative and legal obligations towards refugees.[20] According to J. L. Austin, the difference between what one says and what one does depends on context and circumstance; context can substantially affect the fulfillment of a promise. In speech act theory, an unfulfilled promise is referred to as an

> infelicitous act."[21] When a certain "we" is invoked, members of communities with different statuses and origins (African-Americans, Roma and travellers, homeless people, Syrian refugees or child refugees of any religion) supposedly become, whether voluntarily or not, part of the community – a prime example of an infelicitous act.[22]

The problem with the "we" of "we refugees" is that it is a no-win game: regardless of whether one is using it oneself or disputing the right of others to do so, essentialism is inevitable. The right to use the "we" is pre-determined neither by genetic nor by ethnic inheritance or simple grammatical appropriation. On the contrary, one has to earn the other's trust in order to secure the preconditions and illocutionary force to enable this speech act to count as having been felicitous vis-à-vis invisible hierarchies and privileges.

The concept of the nation-state itself does not help, since it is founded on precisely the same mistrust and hierarchical differentiations. Ètienne Balibar has critiqued modern conceptions of the nation-state and examined the uncertain historical realities of the nation.[23] He contends that it is impossible to pinpoint the beginning of a nation, or to argue that the people who inhabit a nation-state are the descendants of the nation that preceded it. Because no nation-state has an ethnic base, according to Balibar, every nation-state creates fictional ethnicities in order to project stability.[24]

These stable identities are produced because the greatest threat to national identity are the different identities that pre-existed and preceded the more recent waves of immigration. As Balibar puts it, "the idea of nations without a state, or nations 'before' the state, is thus a contradiction in terms, because a state is always implied in the historic framework of a national

formation (even if not necessarily within the limits of its territory)."[25] The "we" is therefore fated to be distrusted and feared, both by the included and the excluded, as already pointed out by Arendt in her early criticism of Herzlian Zionism, Minority Treaties after World War One, and her warnings about the problems she detected with any mode of linking the nation and state predicated on turning into stateless some other citizens.[26]

With the arrival of Syrian refugees in 2015 at the height of “refugee crisis,” racism enhanced the pre-embedded Islamophobia against different ethnicities and communities practicing Islam already living in Europe for centuries, including Albanians, Turkish people, or Roma. Some European Roma are Muslim, but they often claim different religions in local censuses exactly to avoid the consequences of racism, and yet they are mainly perceived as Muslims.

Balibar offered a more profound analysis of the need, but also of the danger of the uncritical “we.” He made a clear distinction between the different types of “we,” pointing out the responsibility that is lost with the appropriative “we”:

> We, French citizens of all sexes, origins and professions, are greatly indebted to the ‘sans-papiers’ who, refusing the ‘clandestineness’ ascribed to them, have forcefully posed the question of the right to stay. We owe them a triple demonstration, which also gives us some responsibilities.[27]

Balibar's skeptical view of the effects of the 1994 Maastricht Treaty are linked to the paradox that European citizenship was, from the outset, based on the false equation "citizenship equals nationality." European citizenship is thus defined by restrictions on the right to asylum.[28] The hypocrisy of the promise behind the "we" is clearly stated in his proposition for a responsible position towards sans papiers:

> We owe them for having shattered the pretensions of successive governments to play two games: on one side, 'realism,' administrative competence and political responsibility (regulating population flows, maintaining public order, assuring the 'integration' of legal immigrants [...]); on the other side, nationalist and electoral propaganda (creating scapegoats for insecurity, projecting the fear of mass poverty into the phantasmal space of identitarian conflicts).[29]

Jean-Luc Nancy has argued that while sharing the world is an implication of our existence, and that the concept of "being" is always already determined by a certain "being with," we cannot truly say "we," or at least not ethically so. One cannot say "we" even about the community to which one undoubtedly belongs. The aporia of the "we" is the aporia of intersubjectivity.[30] Nancy warns us of the impossibility of pinning down a universal "we" whose components always remain the same. He argues that we have forgotten the

importance of “being-together,” “being-in-common,” and “belonging”; that the “we” is not a subject, nor composed of subjects. According to Nancy, we live our lives “without relations.”[31] There can be no “we” unless the relations are established as “being-in-common” rather than understanding them only in additive and accumulative terms.

This is linked to his concept of “inoperative communities,” communities that refuse to be state “accomplices.”[32] In this kind of appropriation of the “we,” there might be potentials for certain positive impacts of a new “we” not based on belonging as such. This is a “we” that wants not to belong but to appropriate belonging, but only if this triggers moral responsibilities not necessarily resulting from legal, political or social ties.[33] Nancy’s notion of “inoperative communities” gestures in important directions for modalities of participation not premised on the dynamics of “inclusion” or “belonging” detailed above.

When it comes to general ethical principles, contemporary art remains experimental and, with few exceptions, not much has been formally drafted, although standard legal and institutional implications apply to projects in a variety of ways. Therefore, the generic and officially circulated and accepted ethical principles for social science research are often applied without necessary corrections.

For example, in March 2015 the British Academy of Social Sciences' Council formally adopted the five following guiding ethics principles:

"1. Social science is fundamental to a democratic society and should be inclusive of different interests, values, funders, methods and perspectives.

2. All social science should respect the privacy, autonomy, diversity, values, and dignity of individuals, groups and communities.

3. All social science should be conducted with integrity throughout, employing the most appropriate methods for the research purpose.

4. All social scientists should act with regard to their social responsibilities in conducting and disseminating their research.
5. All social science should aim to maximise benefit and minimise harm."[34]

However there is no official consent regarding any specific ethical principles to be applied in the context of participatory art, which often relies on artistic research. Given the complexity of different art media and the specificity of crossdisciplinary concepts, it is very difficult to conceptualize a uniformed set of rules to be followed by artists, particularly for an art form that by default tries so hard to resist rules.[35] Neither is it clear how to reconcile the long-term tensions between ethical and aesthetic values due to the prevailing dilemmas imposed already by modernist theories of art, mainly due to the complexity and diversity of artistic practices.[36]

Yet there is also no reason why some (if not all) of these ethical principles could not apply to artists' accountability when artistic research involves live participants (or human remains), although additional principles should be drafted specifically in the context of participatory and collaborative projects with a focus on the performativity and involvement of members of various vulnerable communities. One reason for such thoughts is the numerous different understandings of what art is among audiences coming from different so-

cial and cultural contexts not necessarily informed by the rapid reformulations of art and eventual challenges related to what is expected from or of them.[37]

The rigorous formalist division between aesthetic and ethical aspects of art, or more precisely the polarized distinction between form and content, or between the "beautiful" and the "good," has in any case yielded some of the most debilitating outcomes of modernist and formalist theory. The either-or polarity that often results from hierarchical positioning of one of these poles still has a key bearing on our understanding of art's position and its role in different cultural contexts and in contemporary society in general. The conflation of the realm of philosophy – to which the aesthetic category of the beautiful belongs – and the realm of art has gradually resulted in a contradictory long-term pursuit of an ever more precise (and false) dichotomy between art and society, as if they could ever be isolated from each other.

Taking the current neoliberal political context as a point of departure, it is necessary to reveal and disentangle the difficulties that still prevent many art theorists from completely (or at least partially) abandoning modernist ideals and formalist criteria regarding art and the valorization of its production. I find it urgent to discuss why and how the sociopolitical factors that enabled the long-term dominance of modernist aesthetics still affect – or more precisely prevent – the

embracing of institutional critique and participatory art as relevant contributions to art theory and art practice.

The criticism, for example, that participatory art merely caters to societal needs is one of many commonplaces stemming from modernist aesthetic principles – the death grip of formalist aesthetics' invigilators – surrounding issues of autonomy and positioning and other contradictions. For a certain limited period after the World War Two, the *l'art-pour-l'art* position enjoyed widespread acceptance in Western art theory, as if the ancient ideal of *kalokagathia* had never existed, and as if the ideals of an otherwise autonomous pure art should be protected from any societal values.[38]

The modernist myths of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, universality, artistic genius, and autonomy were also influenced by the Russian early formalist school of Viktor Shklovsky and the semiotic analysis of art, wherein the issue of the arts' autonomy stemmed from political interventions in both art's content and form.[39] Joseph Kosuth published his early attack on the modernist aesthetics of Clement Greenberg, addressing Modernism's fallibility deriving from its equation of aesthetics and art, and stressing the relevance of conceptually focused art vs. form-driven and form-evaluated art.[40] He was not yet ready, however, to fully abandon the understanding of art as an entity separate from society. The problems with calling for art's *au-*

tonomy from its contextual background have become clearer, although such anti-aesthetic art tendencies had already co-existed with modernist art in the past, in avant-garde movements in both East and West.[41]

In this respect, attempts to detach art from the ethical, cultural and social codes and norms prevailing in the period and geopolitical context of its production became questionable and unattainable, for various geopolitical, sociological, and cultural reasons. Thus, the reframing of the triangular relation between ethics, aesthetics and art is still partial, although the position of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline (and not only a modernist one) has weakened relevance in defining art. Modernist and formalist aesthetic ideals endured for only a couple of decades, but the unwinding of the short modernist time span via poststructuralist and postmodernist debates became a lengthy endeavour that continued throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and prevails even today.

I have argued elsewhere that the emergence of a participatory paradigm shift in the arts is urgent, stemming from the uneven development of theory, which lagged behind art practices that challenged institutional structures in art and culture.[42] The shift from art that focused on the production of art objects towards art that implicated and engaged various subjects (such as art producers, mediators, audience members, and citizens), in order to create new and relevant relations amongst them, was imagined as an inevitable strategy of intervening in existing distinctions and hierarchies in order to change them, or to dismantle them entirely. This is one of the obvious reasons that participatory art, I would argue, has the potential to address, extricate and redress contentiousness in various cultural heritages and the issues as provenance, the decolonization of museums, the repatriation of looted artefacts, etc.

However, it must be acknowledged that there are still tendencies to keep art discourses away from issues of social justice and political reality – justified by the absence of relevant artworks (read: objects) – as well

as to interpret art's involvement in such changes as irrelevant and counter-aesthetic. Such tendencies implicate art-world structures in the overall socio-political and economic systemic structures, to which the art production system belongs by default. Ultimately, the remnants of modernist definitions of art are directly linked to this compromised position, to the production and distribution of art in the market, and to the other usual suspects of the prevailing late capitalist and neoliberal economy. I want to stress, therefore, that some of the issues regarding aesthetic and artistic criteria for evaluating participatory art still remain unresolved, even as they remain pertinent to a more profound understanding of art's changing role in society, and its effort to break with the inherited socio-political and economic relationships that facilitated the preservation of the strict division between art and society in the first place.

The fight with the formalist aesthetic canons and criteria that were instrumental to the emergence of "autonomy" as a privileged posture in and for artistic practice continues, inducing social change in the art world and elsewhere. Artistic concepts, genres and theoretical terms like *community-based art*, *institutional critique*, *social intervention*, *relational aesthetics*, *participatory art*, *socially engaged art* and *artivism* – all conceived to provide adequate analytical means for better understanding the problems with such modernist dichotomous interpretations of the relations be-

tween art and society – survive. They continue to fight against conservative attempts in the art world to use autonomy as a tool for maintaining the status quo.

Adorno's reflections on the relationship between art and society gave way to different interpretations of autonomy, so there can be several different levels of autonomy in art, which makes intersections across different levels and registers even more complex.[43] Thus a more specific analysis of conceptions of autonomy could clarify the inner paradox of arts' claimed right to autonomy. Obviously, there is an overall distinction between social and aesthetic autonomy, but artists and their artworks also belong to differing and often contrasting registers of autonomy depending on their institutional affiliations and/or allies.

The turn towards a participatory paradigm in the arts is based on the main assumptions in institutional critique that institutions, experts and artists have a monopoly on defining art and that they control access to its production. Also, they give priority to discussing problems on behalf of “others” (whose problems they discuss) and to representations by proxy, thus giving priority for example to art “about” rather than to art “with” or “by” refugees. Starting with the 2015 photograph in which Ai Weiwei famously (re)staged a press photograph of the drowned Syrian infant refugee, Alan Kurdi, by posing his apparently lifeless body in the same position as was pictured in the original photograph, the questions of who represents, how and on whose behalf, raises serious questions about the various means, methods and regimes of representation employed when addressing the refugee crisis.[44]

Ai Weiwei’s practice was even more spectacularized, objectified and commercialized in his metaphoric *Law of the Journey* (2017), where he filled a 70-meter-long inflatable boat with 258 large faceless refugee

figures filled with helium. In doing so, he created an ostentatious, oversized, and over-prized monument of the current problematic human condition.[45] His more recent film, *Human Flow* (2017), continued to "explore" the same topics, advertising the documentary as a "detailed and heartbreaking exploration into the global refugee crisis."[46]

Distinguishing between two different types of participatory art projects could help clarify some of the contradictions between the enthusiastic aims of participatory art and the pitfalls set by institutional power: The first type, based on the various waves of artistic institutional critique is concerned with the critique of art institutions, and calls for more substantial participation within the art system, in the presentation and/or production of art projects and in making decisions regarding art.[47] Such projects deal in a critical way with the relationship between a) art, art institutions and audiences, b) artists and art institutions (museum, gallery), and c) artists and curators. Although important, I see this first branch of participatory art as too self-referential and self-indulgent, and consequently easier to incorporate and co-opt within existing art institutions and immanent institutional frameworks.[48]

The second type of participatory art, that can be defined as "participatory institutional critique," aims towards a more substantial critique and a deeper societal change, beyond the confines of the art world. Partici-

patory institutional critique has more ambitious goals and potentials, but it also faces stronger adversaries: the general political climate and its conflicts, or the inherited colonial pretext. Hence, the artistic goals and media of such projects vary: performing social and/or anthropological research; issuing calls for restitution, repatriation, and decolonization of institutions; engaging with conflicted local communities, often with unforeseeable but imminent results.[49] With this form too, pertinent questions remain: Which representations in which art objects, images, and spaces are considered contentious cultural heritages, and who decides this?[50] How are they transmitted and reflected in European "culturescapes" and "memoryscapes"? More precisely, in Regina Römhild's words, "What we tend to forget is that this fragility and contestedness have always been the case. There was never a clear-cut, consensual entity called 'Europe,' nor a geographically defined continent or a cultural formation."[51] These issues are extrapolated regardless of whether the researched materials are included or displayed in collections of various European art and cultural institutions, or are presented in public spaces or kept in other contexts. Moreover, questions arise as to how and why these objects became contentious in first place.

Art involving refugees does not raise the question of whether and how artistic research contributes to a politics of emancipation for the first time. The question of the relations between ethics and aesthetics – and form,

social content, and conduct – in artistic research have been addressed in various academic and artistic contexts. The issue of representation in different artistic and curatorial projects and institutional decisions towards the making of images and objects representing difficult ethical contents (dead and wounded bodies, human remains, Holocaust victims, poverty, amongst others) as well as their different approaches towards reproduction, display, distribution and circulation also have been debated in various contexts.[52] These involve discussions around stereotypical and racialized representations, institutional reluctance to acknowledge the questionable provenance of unlawfully acquired objects and unethical sponsorship, propositions for how to deal with the repressed memory of the spaces once inhabited by conflict or marked with contested monuments dedicated to disgraceful historic figures or events, collective memory about commoning movements that contested the appropriation of public space.[53]

Starting with invisible heritages and contentious objects, images and spaces (as I proposed in *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency*), one needs to clearly declare the urgent need to acknowledge past wrongdoings in order to rethink, deconstruct and dismantle pre-existing regimes of representation and systemic malfunction, all the while proposing alternative trajectories for future research and more engaged participatory artistic practice. The application of various

theoretical and research methodologies (as developed in art history, museology, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, pedagogy, political sciences) together with artistic research methods, artistic media, strategies and actions allows for specificity, appropriateness, applicability, affordance and efficiency in accomplishing these challenging goals, on both ethical and conceptual levels.[54]

Some contemporary artistic strategies stem from the legacy of postcolonial and feminist critique, and the research practices around various theoretical analyses and case studies which have developed in the frame of the humanities and social sciences. Here, I refer to art projects that use different research means and methods, such as field trips, photography-as-research, interviews, focus groups, contextual inquiry, usability studies, surveys, diaries, critical databases, video essays, forensic research, militant image research, institutional critique, thought experiments, social interventions, participatory research of vernacular art made by different self-taught artists and communities, as well as elements of material culture, re-enactment, activist campaigns for naming and renaming, counter-monuments, social design, agonistic research, critical friendship, creative co-production, petition, public apology, manifestos, critical and social advertising, advocating and lobbying for decolonization, repatriation, return and restitution.[55] Particularly important is for artists to team up with existing professionals and organizations

that are completely dedicated to the issues stemming from the refugee crisis in order to avoid doing more harm than good.

While audiences typically do not take an active part in the creative process of art's production and presentation, participatory art argues that audiences should, precisely because of the many problematic decisions made by institutions that do not take into account the communities which are implicated and/or contested. Participatory art therefore offers an approach to artistic processes in which is the process is considered incomplete without the viewers' involvement – turning audience members into coauthors, editors, or active performers who complement and resolve the artist's concept.

The main intent behind the emergence of participatory art is not simply to add a new genre to existing art genres and media. This conception is instrumental for challenging dominant forms and relationships in the art world: a small protected class of professionals which has a monopoly over making and defining art, and who conceive of the audience as the "other": passive and marginal observers celebrating the results of the creation. Participatory art projects, and collaborative research with other professionals continue to promote the understanding that an artwork is not just an object that you passively enjoy while quietly looking at it; it is rather a creation in which even non-specialized

viewers actively participate, a dynamic collaboration between the artist, the audience and their environment.

Often, objects are produced in and through such participatory processes, however these material outcomes are not the main priority because relational, interactive, and collaborative structures established in the process are also considered part of the art-work. Thus, participatory projects often initiate the emergence of new communities and instigate new and complex relations between the artists, produced objects and images and participants.

Although the results of participatory art may be documented using photography, audio, video, broadcast media, or other media technologies, the artwork is really to be found within the interactions and relations that emerge from the audience's engagement with the artist and the situation created. Even so, participatory art cannot always overcome societal strictures, and despite the attempt to erase divisions between the artist as a producer and the audience as participant, very often new hierarchies are created depending on class, ethnicity, access, etc.

Given all of this, living with and within the current reigning contradictions in the art world is difficult. It is especially difficult to juggle all these contradictions for artists and curators collaborating with high-profile art institutions with inherited colonial or other conten-

tious pasts. According to George Lipsitz, the inability to speak openly about contradictory consciousness from within or outside of institutions can lead to a self-destructive desire for 'pure' political positions that ultimately have more to do with "individual subjectivities and self-images" than with "disciplined collective struggle for resources and power."[56] Lipsitz states that "the ultimate goal behind the pertinent critique of the exclusive and hegemonic institutional models is to overcome the deterministic approach."[57]

I would like to conclude with a similarly positive and optimistic understanding of participatory art. Its full potential is still to be unleashed and developed. This can happen only if achieving a quality of relationship among the participating subjects (artists, theorists, curators, audiences and other implicated and interested individuals) is fully accepted as a possible ultimate goal of art. One should not expect this goal to yield any beautiful objects in the conventional sense. Regardless of whether this is interpreted as anti-aesthetic, counter-aesthetic, or artistic, it doesn't allow institutions to perpetuate difficult issues and relations without acknowledging and challenging their problematic systemic nature. To challenge of the relations among the subjects that are instrumental for producing and transmitting contentiousness is one of the most pertinent aim of participatory art and artistic research employed in such projects.

The recent hateful outbursts from the far right in Europe and elsewhere (such as anti-Semitic and anti-Roma sentiments, racism towards Indigenous and Black populations, patriarchal violence towards women and prejudices and aggression towards LGBTQ communities) can be confronted only with clear critical arguments against similar hatred from the past entailed in some of the prestigious European art and cultural institutions, and by establishing reciprocal and intersectional relations between art, academia and political activism that would work as control mechanism of the socio-political ruling socio-political structures.[58]

I want to argue that contemporary art projects that focus on participatory research and collaboration have enhanced potentials for catalyzing social change and fighting systemic racism precisely because of their "affordance:" they focus on dialogical relations rather than on objects and images that often lacked referencing contentious pasts. In this respect participatory art's potentials for collaborations, alliances, commoning and non-hierarchical "we" that is not based on patronizing are undeniable, but only when imagined as parts of long-term structures rooted in communities, rather than one-off spectacles in restrictively art-designated spaces.

The urgent task of countering the re-racialization of a distinctly "European" identity, and of acting in solidarity with communities driven from the regions

where they have lived for a long time – consider the Roma across Europe, the Albanians from Serbia, or the Serbs from Croatia – or who have newly arrived as refugees, are two sides of the same coin. These are the main assumptions behind the participatory projects that invite and include refugees in the process of conceptualization or production of art projects.

Instead of dwelling on negatively charged memories, participatory projects mostly cherish research processes that deal with shared or multidirectional memory,[59] and productive shame[60] in a committed and catalytic way. It should be emphasized, however, that the contradictions are not easy to circumvent. Regretfully, this affordance and potentiality is easily hindered by the concrete contexts of a spectacularized world of international art biennials' "assembly line," to which participatory art practices are not immune, but which they rather serve quite perfectly due to the numbers of participants and audiences they include and attract.

The main contradiction of the project *Green Light* – as in many other participatory art projects dealing with the refugee crisis that has been presented in recent international exhibitions[61] – stems exactly from the fact that refugees without legal status in Europe are for the most part not allowed to receive directly any compensation for their work,[62] so that when they are engaged in participatory projects, the payment comes in the form of compensation or trampa (the simple ex-

change of labor for goods). Thus, even when Eliasson continues to criticize the political system – full of contradictory protocols, rules and laws – and even when he honestly confesses and apologizes for the limitations of his understanding of the refugee crisis, he nevertheless fails to acknowledge the "hostipitality" at the heart of refugee participation.

The project *Shamiyaana – Food for Thought: Thought for Change*, presented by Rasheed Araeen at Documenta 14 in Athens (2017) also deserves a rigorous extrapolation in this context because it raises very sensitive ethical concerns. In the work, the artist and the Documenta 14 curators established a communal-like free-kitchen under a colorful Pakistani wedding tent installed at Kotzia Square. The project obviously aimed to attract refugees as a kind of compensation for the well-reported lack of financial support for refugees in Greece. However, its strategy of participation and hospitality (or rather "hostipitality") faced many challenges and obstacles internalized in the context of the hierarchical art world and usual elitist divisions inevitably reinforced by art management in such huge events (due to budget and organizational restrictions). The main problem was that the project was based on the strategy of redistributing funding, and thus on delegating the performative agency to the institution (Documenta 14), in a kind of a philanthropic rerouting of the resources assigned to art, rather than to the refugees who became passive recipients of help (in the form of

food). It was not so much a question of the formal and aesthetic aspects of the project, as its questionable and consequential ethics – particularly if one takes into account how sensitive the act of eating in public (in front of the elitist art professionals and other aficionados) may be for the vulnerable community of refugees.[63] At the heart of the project's problematic consequences was the fact that the project somehow contributed to the societal and class contradictions regardless of the artist's sincere concerns and good intentions, invested in societal transformations, and regardless of his hopes invested in the potential and agency of participatory art.

In another instance, when I visited the Venice Biennale in 2015, I came across a small sign simply stating "Anonymous Stateless Immigrants Pavilion – A New Pavilion for the Unrepresented at Venice Biennale 2015;" I followed the arrows but did not find the Pavilion. Only much later, I found out that the work was by the Anonymous Stateless Immigrants Collective. The Pavilion/conceptual project was a kind of labyrinth within the Venice labyrinth of streets, consisting only of the graffiti-like text and arrows: signs that were meant to trick you into following the directions and imagining what such a pavilion might look like. There was no building, no installation, no spectacle, no queues of visitors, no paid or unpaid artists, no paid or unpaid participants, no paid or unpaid attendants (some Pavilions go so far as to use the unpaid labour of

students or refugees for attending to their expensively rented spaces).

The Anonymous Stateless Immigrants Pavilion was also a participatory project: any audience member who tried to find this project employed her own imagination and creativity while following the directions and inevitably activated the remnants of various already-seen representations of immigrants and refugees that are profoundly engraved and thus hard to be erased from the visual memory. Representation and participation are inevitably intertwined and only careful extrapolation and conceptualization of art works could think one from another and prevent the proliferation and perpetuation of the already internalized socio-political prejudices that are at work in the media, institutions and policies that regulate immigration and refugees interstate and inter-continental flows.

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Notes

1 For example, Batycka's "At Manifesta Artists Address Italy's Migrant Crisis" was entirely dedicated to art about the refugee crisis, questioning whether in the context of international biennales such projects could have a purpose other than raising questions. In this regard, he mentioned *Trampoline House*, an art project in Copenhagen that exceeded and went beyond its original concept as an art project.

2 This reflection on the first stage of project *Green Light* appeared in TBA21's online journal in the conversation bet ween the artist Olafur Eliasson and Andreas Roepstorff entitled "Hosting the Spirit of *Green light*," which preceded the project 's presentation at the Venice Biennial in 2017.

3 This is true even in cases where representation is applied in a more conceptual way, for example, with text, signs or symbols.

4 See, for example, the protests of Pagida anti-Islamist protests in Dresden, and the conflicts against the Akademikerball held in 2015 in Vienna's Hof burg – the gathering of right-wing par ties under the auspices of the Austrian radical right-wing party FPÖ.

5 In *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency*, I argue that the neoliberal socio-political context turns many socio-political engaged projects into "infelicitous speech acts" that stem from the contradictions bet ween the artists, institutional limitations and the neoliberal socio-political and economical paradigm of production and distribution of art. More recently Abreu's "We Need

to Talk about Social Practice" offers an in-depth analysis of the contradictions at work between the promises and expectations of the art projects aiming towards social change and the final results that often hit the "wall" of the overall socio-political climate.

6 Eliasson, "Assembling a Light, Assembling Communities."

7 Eliasson and Roepstorff, "Hosting the Spirit of *Green Light*." Eliasson then takes a more personal tone: "We know a lot about the refugee crisis from the media and from one another because we talk about it, but the emotional narrative is very difficult. It is so abstract! I know what I think about the crisis, refugees, EU, the climate – you name it. I know what I think about it, but it is so difficult for me as a civic participant to engage with. If I cannot feel the 'we,' I am also a populist, because populism means anti-we. So I suffer because I have become numb and I don't have a sense of we."

8 Arendt, "We Refugees," 110 – 119. The article was first published in *The Menorah Journal* In January 1943. The English edition of the article appeared in 1951, the same year that Arendt received US citizenship, after briefly being detained by the Nazi regime in 1933 and fleeing illegally across the border bet ween Germany and Czechoslovakia; in 1937, when she had been deprived of her German citizenship.

9 Agamben, "We Refugees." Different versions have been published under the same or different titles, including "Beyond Human Rights."

10 Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 72.

11 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 25.

12 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 56.

13 Campana, "She arrived with nothing."

14 Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*.

15 Milevska, *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency*.

16 BAK, *We Are Here*.

17 Baker and Hlavajova, *We Roma*. This project was published in the context of the Roma Pavilion organized by BAK platform for contemporary art at the Venice Biennale in 2011. The project used the Open Society Institute, Budapest, and EU funds assigned to Roma, but mostly promoted artists and theorists of non-Roma origin.

18 Cole, "On the borders of solidarity."

19 Wood, "A Fake Macedonia Terror Tale That Led to Deaths." The terrorist background of the refugees, their false intent and the crime scene were all staged in order to prove the country's dedication to the "war on terror," to avoid sending local soldiers to Afghanistan, and to justify the use of disproportionate force in fighting local Muslims – the ethnic Albanians.

20 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*. See also Felman's *The Scandal of the Speaking Body*, on Molière's *Don Juan* and his character's double speech.

21 Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 100.

22 Thanks to Tyler Morgenstern, I became aware that the German word for promise "versprechen" by default anticipates the possibility of its unfulfillment because of the elusive prefix "ver" that could mean "miss" or "wrong."

23 Balibar, "Is European Citizenship Possible?"

24 Balibar, "Is European Citizenship Possible?" 329.

25 Balibar, "Is European Citizenship Possible?" 331, 351.

26 Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 269 –270.

27 Balibar, "What we owe to the 'Sans-papiers'."

28 Balibar, "Is European Citizenship Possible?", 195-216.

29 Balibar, "Is European Citizenship Possible?", 213.

30 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 75.

31 Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 75.

32 Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, 80 –81.

33 Agamben, *The Coming Community*, 86 –87.

34 Academy of Social Sciences, “Academy Adopts Five Ethical Principles for Social Science Research.”

35 Bolt, Alsop, Sierra, Vincs and Kett, *Research Ethics and the Creative Arts.*

36 Milevska, “Relations, Participations, and Other Dialogical Framework s.”

37 Carroll, “Art and Ethical Criticism”; Lillehammer, “Values of Art and the Ethical Question.”

38 Kalokagathia (Ancient Greek: καλὸς κἀγαθός [kalos kaːɡatʰós]) means beautiful and good, the Ancient Greek ideal of harmony bet ween noble human personality and any art action (documented in Herodotus and other texts).

39 Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-garde*.

40 Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After*.

41 Huyssen, *After the Great Divide*.

42 Milevska, “Participatory Art ”; Milevska, *On Productive Shame, Reconciliation, and Agency*; Milevska, “Shameful Objects, Apologising Subjects.” See also Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

43 Hamilton, “Adorno and Autonomy of Art,” 287–305.

44 Monica Tan, “Ai Weiwei poses as drowned Syrian infant refugee in ‘haunting’ photo.” For a more fulsome discussion of the impact of this image, see Ghosh’s chapter, included in this anthology.

45 @aiww#refugeecrisis. See www.twitter.com/hashtag/refugeecrisis?src=hash. In my article, “‘Infelicitous’

Participator y Acts on the Neoliberal Stage," I argue here about the sociopolitical limits of participator y art, addressing the neoliberal socio-political and economic context, and the pressure for spectacles and commercial ventures in the arts as one of the major obstacles for fulfilling the promise of participatory art for social change.

46 Knowing that the film had gross earnings (as of December 21, 2017) of $527,845 in the US only (according to www.IMDB.com), the term "explore" even sounds cynical.

47 Alberro and Stimson, *Institutional Critique*.

48 Milevska, "'Infelicitous' Participatory Acts on the Neoliberal Stage."

49 Milevska, "Shameful Objects, Apologising Subjects."

50 MacDonald, "Contentious Heritage."

51 Römhild, "Reflexive Europeanization, or: Makings of Europe."

52 These include, for example, the discussion regarding the photographic (Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All*) and video representation of the Holocaust, the debate about the making, displaying and circulation of images of human remains stored in museum collections (Harries, Fibiger, Smith, Adler, and Szöke,"Exposure") and the more general debate about Jacques Rancière's concept '(re)distribution of the sensible' and 'indisciplinarity' (Birrell, "Editorial: Jacques Rancière and The (Re)Distribution of the Sensible").

53 Milevska, "Shameful Objects, Apologising Subjects."

54 Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*.

55 Milevska, "Relations, Participations, and Other Dialogical Frameworks."

56 Lipsitz, "Academic Politics and Social Change," 80.

57 Lipsitz, "Academic Politics and Social Change," 80.

58 In this regard, see van Brummelen and de Haan's chapter in this anthology, which develops an argument about the irony of the repatriation of colonial objects, even as the borders of the Eurozone are strengthened.

59 Rothberg, "From Gaza to Warsaw," 525.

60 Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*.

61 For more information on other art projects dealing with statelessness and refugees at the National Pavilions and collateral projects during the 57th Venice Biennial, Venice 2017, see Ellis-Petersen, "Art of the state: how the Venice Biennale is tackling the refugee crisis."

62 Elliason, "Assembling a Light, Assembling Communities."

63 During an intense conversation with the Greek artist and researcher Sofia Grigoriadou, she expressed some concerns regarding the realization of the otherwise good artist 's intentions and aims of the project. According to her, the project resulted in a lot of contradictions and hierarchies on a local and international level. For example, during the distribution of food and tickets for gaining access to the communal-like kitchen, the project attracted simultaneously the people at tending similar local communal kitchens for the homeless and international curators, so the long queues for food replicated the world contradictions and hierarchies bet ween different communities.

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III | Feminist research, performativity, and transindividuality in participatory art

III.1

Feminist Research in Visual Arts*

This paper addresses the diverse methods and methodologies applied by various feminist art researchers and focuses on their eventual implications on artistic research in the field of visual arts in general. While it is widely accepted that there are no specific feminist research methods in any discipline, feminist methodology and feminist research practice in arts can certainly be discussed considering the common questions feminists ask, the positioning of the researcher within the process of creation and argumentation, and the intended purpose of the produced knowledge.

I already mentioned that one cannot distinguish any research methods specific to feminist research. It is important to stress that feminist research itself is considered a methodology in both humanities and social sciences. Moreover, one could easily agree with the statement that feminist art from its outset actually borrowed the already existing methodology from the social and humanist research context. However, one of the main aims of this text is to investigate what makes the specificity of feminist art research, or more precisely to investigate why feminist art is socially relevant and necessary in addition to already existing research in other more academic disciplines.

The political concerns of feminist artists are of course not unique to feminist art: they are concerned with understanding why inequality between women and men exists and with investigating the main reasons for male domination in society and culture. Thus, like any other feminists, feminist artists also deal with the questions of how to change this and how to achieve liberation for women by using quantitative and/or qualitative methods known from both social sciences and humanities.

I want to argue that it is urgent to look at the genealogy of feminist methodology and epistemology that is specific to the recent feminist art practices, because although feminist art has been around for half a century, there has been no substantial reflection on

the specificity of the feminist research methodology in art. Today this prehistory of feminist research is even more relevant because ever since the first feminist art projects in the 1960s, research-based art became prevalent among feminist artists and comprises many diverse and unique examples of research projects that in different ways explored the relation between the personal and the political. Therefore I find it productive to explore and appraise the specific research processes that have been instigated through feminist art and I hold that they make a relevant basis for unique artistic thinking.

Besides the main political concerns of feminists, the artists using feminist methodology also deal with questions such as: How is a woman's gaze different from a man's? How does that difference influence the ways in which the two genders view the world? And how they view art? What constitutes obscenity and pornography? Where do they come from and what are their results? Are they always transgressive? What place do they have in art? How do we change inequality in the representation of women and the subsequent feminization of poverty? How do we achieve liberation for women in contemporary societies that do not share the same value system as the Western societies?

Ultimately I want to exemplify the cultural context as a relevant source for some culturally specific feminist art projects. Because feminism is not one unified

project, I will ultimately propose to look at several feminist research projects by feminist artists from the Balkans in order to challenge the assumption of universality of feminist methodology and any unified theory of knowledge production in feminist art.

The arguments in the paper are divided into three different main parts:

/ A general introduction to the history and relevance of feminist research in visual art.

/ A discussion of the implications of feminist research agendas on artistic research in general.

/ A description of the methods and methodologies applied by various feminist researchers – artists or curators in the field of visual arts – with emphasis on the specific cultural context in Balkan contemporary art.

Undoubtedly Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* from 1974–79 was one of the first feminist art projects that based its results on profound research of famous, less famous, and until then completely unknown women from the past. Chicago selected thirty-nine renowned women from history and mythology and set a triangular table for them. The table rests on a porcelain floor inscribed with the names of 999 others. Lavish and elaborate sets were provided, with hand-stitched runners setting off hand-painted china plates.[1] However, even though the facts were double checked and cross-abundant references were made, the selection was arbitrary and made according the form of the table, or the personal familiarity of the artist.

For many years Chicago was criticized for some of the images being "reactionary and 'essentialist', that is, it reduced women to their sexual and reproductive functions."[2] The work was also criticized for her voluntarism and deliberate selective use of facts, but the fact is that she never claimed that her project covered the complete women's history. Recently her project was

"rehabilitated" during the Brooklyn Museum's take on feminist art: the exhibition *Global Feminism* is where this seminal installation found its permanent home at the fourth floor of the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art.[3]

Many other feminist projects followed, but here I would like to mention only a few that already made it into most art history books: the project *Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained*, 1977, by Martha Rosler; *Three Weeks in May*, 1977, by Susanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz; and *Weenie Count*, 1989 – 2005, by Guerrilla Girls. The interdisciplinary approach toward art research applied in these projects mainly combined research methods from different disciplines and fields and pursued explicit activist engagement, thus turning statistics and analysis of data collected through interviews and statistics into powerful feminist tools. Important to mention is that although the projects were executed by women artists, they were actually easily distinguished from women's art of its time exactly because of their clear political messages and stances that were far from any essentialization of feminine aesthetics that was so clearly attacked in the crucial early essay by Linda Nochlin.[4]

In the context of this paper Martha Rosler's video project is relevant for a very specific reason: it actually mocks statistics and subjects to questioning this quantifying research method used by rationalist "macho" science as the relevant tool to analyze gender differ-

ence specificities because it is usually used to prescript the ideal measurements of female body. While Lacy and Labowitz in their project were concerned with the female body issue and number of violent attacks on women in Los Angeles at the time (thus imagining their project as a critique of the society's ignorance of the issue), Guerrilla Girls' project was conceived as an obvious institutional critique. The institutional critique did not target only the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York – one of the most powerful and prestigious art institutions in the world, where Guerrilla Girls pursued their research – but also art history as such, which in the project was metaphorically represented by the Metropolitan Museum.

On their famous poster from the project *Weenie Count*, the research question "Do women have to be naked to get into US museums?" was printed along with the research results: "Less than 3% of the artists in the Met. Museum are women, but 83% of nudes are female."[5] Obviously this was one of the seminal cases of feminist research art projects where the research method and feminist methodology became not only the topic and content but also part of the art medium itself. The poster was not based on the usual art research of forms and colors but its main concept was made of the research stuff itself (the numbers and percents and the nude, which is one of the main targets as the most stereotypical representation of the female body in art history).

Contemporary art that today bases its artistic results on research processes owes a lot to such pioneering feminist works and long-term projects that not only were some of the first to focus on art for social change but that also tried all possible methods known from various academic and scientific disciplines, and even tried to overcome their limits with severe criticism of being embedded in the ideologically constructed system of social hierarchies.

When I started my career as a curator and writer (back in the early 1990s), many of my colleagues – predominantly the male curators but also women – claimed that feminism was not necessary any longer because according to them all goals of feminists of the first three waves were already achieved. Moreover, for some, post-feminism did not bring anything radically new, and one should have aspired to newness in either the personal or the political realm. I could not agree less and in most of my projects since the very beginning I tried to question the limits and potentials of the feminist agenda of artists from different cultural and generational backgrounds, as well of different genders.[6]

While living in the Balkans, most of the time I personally faced the huge gap between theory and practice, and even though theoretically I did manage to conceive and curate several projects with recognizible feminist agendas, the conundrums surrounding their realization made me sustain in the demanding and uncertain role to which I voluntarily subscribed, first as a curator and later as a theorist and researcher in the history of contemporary art.[7]

For example, in my PhD research project, *Gender Difference in the Balkans: Archives of Representations of Gender Difference and Agency in Visual Culture and Contemporary Arts in the Balkans* (Visual Cultures Department, Goldsmiths College, University of London, 2001–06), I addressed the specificity of feminist and gender-focused art in the Balkans and its intertwining with nationalism.[8]

I was concerned with the emergence of a specific *grammar* of becoming feminist and the artwork that locates a certain voice – makes a difference between "who is speaking," which becomes irrelevant, and "the speaking itself." Claire Colebrook describes a difference between the *grammar of the being* and the grammar of becoming. At first, she identifies the *grammar and logic* of subject as tied to certain ways of speaking:

> The very concept of the subject is tied to a strategy of being and essence, rather than becoming. And this is because the subject is not just a political category or representation but a movement of grammar [...]. The concept and logic of the subject as such, then, demands or provokes a movement of thought, a specific temporality and, ultimately, a strategy of reactivism, recognition, and being (rather than becoming).[9]

Majoritarianism is affected by becoming-minoritarian and the mere possibilities of becoming-minoritarian shape majoritarianism. There are many restraints that

culture imposes on normal subjectivity in a form of biopower and these restraints are mainly suspected and disavowed in *becoming*. “Becoming here is a means to get ‘outside’, which is perhaps what Deleuze and Guattari meant in their insistence of becoming-woman.”[10] “However, as feminists know, each discourse of feminism is a multiple proliferation of a variety of discourses. Most of these aim to open discussion, investigating the gaps and holes in the discourse of ‘humanity’, essentially ‘manity’ or more correctly ‘majoritanity.’”[11] Becoming is about negotiating the discursive constitution of subject, but it should not be forgotten that discourse is corporeal “because we are enfleshed versions of the speech that constitutes us from culture without and from self-regulation or identification within [...]. In order for there to ever be a potential for actual becoming, the potential of the body we are now must be recognised.”[12]

Even though the history of feminist art in the Balkans is shorter and not very diversified or informed by Western feminism, I researched many known and unknown examples that are scattered and isolated in the past in personal artists’ archives, but that are still relevant for the contemporary turn toward research in feminist art in this region. For example, the works of the most recognized and long-term determined feminist artist from Croatia, Sanja Iveković, prove how feminist art, since its very beginning, relies on concrete research of history, political events, and societal

relations. However, Iveković's position and role of researcher is always boldly embedded in her research and she is often both the subject and object of the research, something that in the academic world one is usually advised to avoid. Her albums of photographs and newspaper cut-outs such as *Double Life* (1975), *Tragedy of a Venus* (1975), *Sweet Life* (1975–76), *Diary* (1975–76), *Before and After* (1975–76), *Eight Tiers* (1976), *The Black File* (1976), and other series from the same period based on Iveković's personal research into an artist's own archive became tokens of feminist art in ex-Yugoslavia.[13]

Perhaps even more intriguing from the perspective of the influence of popular and media imagery is Iveković's video *Personal Cuts* (1982) linking image, face, and event. The video shows the close-up of a woman, the artist herself cutting holes into a black stocking that covers her face. Each "cut" reveals a part of her face and also a short sequence of the Yugoslavian state television documentary program *The History of Yugoslavia*. The structure of the video somehow recalls a diary in which the "subject" is *becoming*, is revealed, and is thus rendered the visible alongside the historical political events. The personal and political are interwoven and reciprocally determined through putting side by side the subject – the artist who pursued the research – and the images that were results of the artistic research of the historical documentary archive of Yugoslavian state TV excerpts. Therefore, the personal "diary" cannot be

considered and understood without the state "diary." The title suggests that each of the historical events cuts a hole through the body of the subject, a wound in the personal that is therefore constructed as a result of this "tattooing" of media images that at the end unravel the hidden historic "silkworm cocoon."

Feminist Research in the Macedonian Art Context

In contrast with Croatia, where there were many social scientists, humanists, and art researchers who were not only women but also declared feminism their agenda in the late 1960s and since, on the Macedonian art scene it was only recently that the number of exhibitions by women artists noticeably increased and that some ground-breaking research projects were initiated. However, among the women artists there are rarely any who mention the problems of being a woman in the profession of art or who develop their concepts based on long-term feminist research.[14] It has to be mentioned that even though there have already been several group and solo projects and publications realized around the issues of gender difference, the main problem that repeats all over is the fact that these initiatives often sound very different from the final results of such projects so that at the end of the day all of them often have difficulties in conveying any critical message about the power structures and division of labor within society and end up as naive projects about a woman's body and its representation.

This is difficult to understand when taking into account the fact that until recently there was no single female artist teaching at the local Faculty of Fine Arts (currently there are only three, which is about 10 percent of all faculty), although the students are mainly women. If the arguments about inclusion and exclusion from the teaching or managerial teams seem to be predictable and not enough to convey the idea of the gender troubles in the art and curatorial world in the Balkans, this text emphasizes not only the problems of gender in the arts and curatorship, but also its wider reaching social, economic, and political issues as they are related to art production.

In 1996 I was invited to curate "Liquor Amnii 1" in the Turkish Bath Cifte Amam in Skopje. It was the first collaborative women's group exhibition in Macedonia and included five women from Boston and five from Macedonia, each of them having different views on the topic and on feminism in general. Due to the size of the project and its feminist theme (amniotic fluid as a metaphor for the relation between the mother and the child), it was the first time that I experienced directly the complexity of the curatorial position of a feminist curator.

As might have been expected, the project was greatly affected by the male, chauvinistic, bureaucratic tactics of the director of the festival and of other men involved in funding and organization (Ministry of Cul-

ture of the Republic of Macedonia and the Deputy of Ministry). This specific situation provoked me as appointed curator in such difficult circumstances (besides the funding and administration even the venue of the exhibition, a dark, abandoned, half-ruined area of a Turkish bath, was not very friendly) to reflect on this issue with a three-dimensional display within the space of the exhibition that consisted of a long, unraveled strip of accounting paper, indicating the figures of money spent beyond our control. It appeared as a very long navel cord and ran from the main entrance and through the dark tunnel. Its title, "With Special Thanks," referred to the inscriptions of the names of all men who had helped or obstructed the project (I interviewed the artists and collected their "favorite" men's names too), which had been written on the paper with green fluorescent pen and illuminated with dark ultraviolet light. The fluorescent names appeared to be floating in the dark, seemingly endless tunnel.

These people (mostly men) were not directly participating in the exhibition, but had affected the entire project with their positive or negative social presence during its completion, as ghosts/guests/parasites that appear when you don't expect them just to remind you that it is difficult to make clearcut distinctions between "us" and "them" (like in the Paul Auster novel *Ghosts*), that your own image is defined by their continuous gaze in the dark. The Turkish bath made a perfect context for critical questioning of the male gazes, and of

control of power, body, and discourse. In the text for the catalogue I also addressed the difference between the women artists from the Boston artist-run space Mobius and the Macedonian artists exactly in terms of the self-awareness and readiness to address gender and feminist issues: while the works of the American artists emphasized both the feminine and feminist themes, the Macedonian artists hardly bore any references to any feminist agenda.[15]

In the context of the international project for art and theory "Capital and Gender" (2001, Museum of the City, Shopping Mall, Skopje) I invited twelve female artists, four male artists, and two couples, as well as ten theorists and curators, hoping to initiate a critical and fruitful debate about the most urgent issues in the Balkans: the social and economic changes in relations between the genders in the transitional period.[16] The complex but rapid changes in the visual look of the main shopping mall, going from almost complete absence of public advertisements to great surfaces of oversized billboards with objectified female bodies, made a perfect venue for a profound critical inquiry into the effects of the neoliberal capitalistic strategies of consumerism on gender relations.

One of the direct provocations for the project was the marriage of the offspring of the families of two local entrepreneurs, which was crowned with a typical nouveau-riche wedding spectacle that took place in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje (1998).

The fact that for the first time such a private party took place in a public museum and thus marked a new era for the great merging between capital, gender, and art was even more provocative because of its resonance with the famous analysis of marriage that Gayle Rubin published in her article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." Rubin based her analysis on Claude Lèvi-Strauss's "general theory of exchange," in anthropology better known as alliance theory.[17] Rubin concluded that such systems of oppression are not based upon sex but upon gender, a classification that is attached to individuals by their culture and society. Although initially based on the biological sex division, this classification *is* developed through many cultural and societal confining models.[18]

The impetus for the project "Capital and Gender" was the failure of the communist project for claiming equality between genders that was emphasized by a kind of strong revival of patriarchy in the recent transitional years – a shifting toward conservatism and right-wing and neoliberal politics. The forty-five years of communism obviously did not succeed in the wider and more constructive distribution of the official gender politics of the time when taking into account the easy ride given with respect to all requirements for cutting off the pre-existing positive social and economic policies related to the laws of health insurance, child care, and pregnancy leave pushed by the EU Committees as conditions for the future inclusion in the EU. In

order to be included in EU, it was so easy to sacrifice hard-won rights that one cannot but conclude that the relations among men and women never changed substantially, that the old hierarchy was haunting and in a form of boomerang returned to society and societal structures through the new economic structures the very first moment when communism was dissolved through the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Aside from a few incidental and superficial provocations by some local sexists, the discussions ignited by "Capital and Gender" hardly continued in the local art and cultural circles after the project ended. Even though this project that gathered more than thirty participants (artists, curators, art managers, and theorists) turned successful in terms of the exhibition attendance, its theoretical part, the three-day conference, was attended mostly by women and most of the male participants did not show up to the theoretical sessions. In fact, right after my project there was a very strange retort in the context of the local criticism of feminism and feminist artists that treated this phenomenon as an import of Western feminist theory and art practice that to me sounded as if it were a claim that the Balkan patriarchy did not need feminism because feminism was interpreted as a capitalistic imported product.[19] Such a superficial communistic misconception of feminism only emphasized the fact that local research and debate on feminism was necessary and urgent.

The issues of politics, war, and globalization, which generally are attributed and interpreted as typically male power games, still suppress any serious attempts for conscious discourse of women within the local environment. Women in Macedonia, be they artists, curators, or from other professional backgrounds, have a long road ahead of them and a great deal of other fights if they are to arrive to the stage where they will be able to discuss the event of becoming woman and their female subjectivity.

A very well-known phenomenon is that Balkan female artists, when selected and curated by foreign curators, are usually put in an obsolete theoretical framework when it comes to the questions of ethnicity and gender, and that the female writers and curators were either not consulted or when invited did not want to go against the grain by discussing this topic. This has do on the one hand partly with the Balkans not being ready to deal with gender issues but on the other hand with the West not being ready to hear even the existing voices discussing these issues within the domestic art scenes. In fact, I want to argue that one of the roles of the women artists and curators from the Balkans is definitely to locate the difference between female art and art through rigorous research, aware and critically engaged with the questions related to gender difference and the urgent need for refurbishing the feminist agenda.

One of the rare examples of an art exhibition dealing with gender issues in Eastern Europe and the Balkans was the exhibition “Gender Check,” curated by Bojana Pejić (a Serbian curator who lives and works in Berlin).[20] However, it is important to mention that within this project it was obvious that the emphasis of this exhibition was put rather on analysis of representation of gender roles in art rather than on works with an explicit feminist agenda. The abundance of female nudes painted by male artists confirmed the already known fact: that socialism had an ambivalent approach toward women.

While socialist rule advocated equality between genders, art and culture perpetuated the old patriarchal visual regimes of representation. Therefore it is no surprise that the transformation of the former socialist societies and economies into neoliberal capitalist systems so quickly swept out gender equality based on an ambivalent, even biased and fragile agenda. Feminism thus became time and again an urgent issue that in art based on feminist research has manifold aims and prospects.

*I dedicated this paper to Manal, the Saudi woman who was arrested for driving a car according to the still-existing harsh laws in Saudi Arabia that forbid women from driving. The global petition in solidarity and for her release, “Drop Charges Against Saudi Woman Arrested for Driving a Car, started to be circulated on June 1, 2011, at http://www. change.org/petitions/free-saudi-women-drivers-immediately. In just a month, the petition collected over 75,000 signatures and pushed the Saudi government to release Manal and the other arrested women, but the law was still in effect during the symposium “Art as a Thinking Process: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production” which was accomplished through the support of the Fondazione per gli Alti Studi sull’Arte of the Fondazione di Venezia and the support of EARN-European Artistic Research Network (www.artresearch.eu).

Notes

1 Marcy Sheiner, "Review of Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party," in *Sexual Politics: Judy Chicago's Dinner Party in Feminist Art History*, ed. Amelia Jones (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 264.

2 Ibid.

3 "Global Feminisms," exhibition co-curated by Maura Reilly and Linda Nochlin, Brooklyn Museum, March 23–July 1, 2007. See http://www. brooklynmuseum. org/exhibitions/global_feminisms/.

4 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" in *Women, Art and Power and Other Essays* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988), 147–58. The text is also available at http://www.miracosta.edu/home/gfloren/nochlin.htm.

5 See Guerrilla Girls's website, http://www.guerrillagirls.com.

6 "Self and Other" (1994), exhibition at Yildiz Sabanci Cultural Centre, Istanbul; "Liquor Amnii I-II" (1996–97), Convergence X Festival, Providence, Rhode Island; "Bodily Fluids" (1997), exhibition at CIX Gallery, Skopje, Macedonia; "Capital and Gender" (2001), exhibition at City Shopping Mall, Skopje, Macedonia; "Art Under Construction" (2006), exhibition at the Foundation of Women Artists/City University, London.

7 I mainly refer to a very specific language coincidence that directly affected the reception of the profession of curator among women in Macedonia and in other Slavic countries. The sniggering addressed to me in private

and in public was due to the use of the word "curator" itself because in my mother tongue, Macedonian, the word sounds vulgar and "dirty" (the first syllable, "kur," is the slang word for "penis").

8 Suzana Milevska, *Gender Difference in the Balkans: Archives of Representations of Gender Difference and Agency in Visual Culture and Contemporary Arts in the Balkans* (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag, 2010).

9 Claire Colebrook, "A Grammar of Becoming: Strategy, Subjectivism, and Style," in *Becomings: Explorations in Time, Memory, and Futures*, ed. Elizabeth Grosz (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 117–18.

10 Patricia MacCormack, "Perversion: Transgressive Sexuality and Becoming-Monster," *thirdspace* 3, no. 2 (March 2004): 27–40, http://www. thirdspace.ca/articles/pr_3_2_maccormack.htm.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 For more comprehensive insight into Sanja Iveković's works, see the texts by Silvia Eiblmayr, Bojana Pejić, and Nataša Ilić in *Sanja Iveković: Personal Cuts* (Vienna: Triton, 2001).

14 Hristina Ivanoska's *Naming of the Bridge "Rosa Plaveva and Nakie Bajram"* is one of the rare clearly feminist projects based on research of the archives from the Ottoman period in Macedonia.

15 Suzana Milevska, "Female Art through the Looking Glass," *n.paradoxa,* no. 7 (July 1998): 38–42; Suzana Milevska, "Women Are Different, Aren't They?," in *Liquor Amnii* (Skopje: Skopsko leto, 1998), 5–6.

16 For more info on "Capital and Gender" (January 26–30, 2001, City Shopping Centre, Skopje) visit http:// www.scca.org.mk/capital/projects. html. The project included a solo exhibition of Marina Abramović and installations, digital works, and performances by Huseyin B. Alptekin, Luchezar Boyadjiev, Maja Bajević,

Zdenko Bužek, Violeta Čapovska, Danica Dakic´/Sandra Sterle, Marina Gržinić/Aina Smid, Hristina Ivanoska/Yane Čalovski, Slavica Janešlieva, Kai Kaljo, Zoran Naskovski/ Jelena Jocić, Tanja Ostojić, RASSIM, Dejan Spasovik, Ana Stojković, Igor Toševski, and Tatjana Vujinović.

17 Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210. In her article Rubin uses the established anthropological and socioeconomic theories (namely those of kinship systems and Marxism) to explain the development of sexual oppression in society through marriage and circulation of women between fathers and husbands. According to Claude Lèvi-Strauss's "alliance theory," no matter what the choice, the woman becomes a passive link in the chain that is formed based on economic offer/demand coupling.

18 Later Judith Butler developed a gender constructivist theory that was based on similar assumptions but that was followed by more complex argumentation in psychoanalytic terms. In that respect see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

19 "One of the reasons is that I repeated the mistake made in Bratislava two years ago when to Katy Deepwell, the editor of (N)Paradoxa [sic] or what was the name of that magazine, and the goddess (mind the language) of the female resistance against masculinism and machismo) […]. Bratislava inhabitants still remember my crucifixion as a result of my hubris to contribute and confirm the credits of postfeminism with this discovery of relativism. But I actually then have only asked for such relativism to be engaged according to the reality (including the social) that is my factual surrounding. And I said that the thesis of Gablik and Lippard are not of any importance for me, as a subject of the Macedonian reality, they have no meaning if I don't question them critically and put them in the context. How can you dare, she told me, destroy and 'un block' those authorities. Here it is, I said, because they are not my dis-

cursive argument, they do not live my reality, but if I act catachrestically than I realize the function and meaning of my cultural context. Forget it. I didn't convince her [...]. I thought 'a foreigner,' what does she know about my reality – as many of the foreigners that come and talk at little in cafes and then publish a study (for big honoraria) about Macedonian reality in some established world magazine for which we fall of and argue about ('take our eyes' for is his morbid expression)." Quoted from Nebojša Vilić, "Is there an outcast behind any thong?," *Forum* (July 26.07.-29.08. 2002): 111, 95. The debate continued during the following three months in the issues 108, 109, 110, 111, 112 of the same weekly magazine.

20 "Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe," exhibition curated by Bojana Pejić in 2009–10 at the mumok: Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien. For more comprehensive analysis of the differences between Western feminism and Eastern feminists in art see the texts by Edelbert Köbb, Rainer Fuchs, Agnieszka Morawinska, Boris Marte, Christine Böhler, and Bojana Pejić in *Gender Check: Femininity and Masculinity in the Art of Eastern Europe* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2010).

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III.2

Objects and Bodies: Objectification and over-identification in Tanja Ostojic´'s art projects

The complex issues of representation of the female body in contemporary art are still intertwined with the phenomenon of objectification. Regardless of the original concept of the artwork and the initial intention of the female artists using their bodies, there is still this danger of objectification whenever the female body is exposed to the gaze of the viewer (either male or female), even when it is obvious that this operation of objectification was the main target of the artist's critique.

In this context, the questions that Slavoj Žižek asked while tackling the phenomenon of over-identification and the regimes of representation of power relations are still relevant. When discussing the Slovenian NSK artists' group and the band Laibach, he was concerned with the problem of miming the regimes of power:

> This uneasy feeling is fed on the assumption that ironic distance is automatically a subversive attitude. What if, on the contrary, the dominant attitude of the contemporary 'postideological' universe is precisely the cynical distance toward public values? What if this distance, far from posing any threat to the system, designates the supreme form of conformism, since the normal function of the system requires cynical distance? In this sense the strategy of Laibach appears in a new light: it 'frustrates' the system (the ruling ideology) precisely insofar as it is not its ironic imitation, but over-identification with it – by bringing to light the obscene superego underside of the system, over-identification suspends its efficiency.
>
> (Žižek, 1993)

What I want to do here is to take on this notion of over-identification, and to discuss its mechanisms particularly the context of several gender projects by the artist Tanja Ostojić (1972, Uzice, Yugoslavia). Moreover, I want to show that with miming a certain regime, an artist can retain her/his distance from the mimed

regime and, as claimed by Žižek, can frustrate that very regime of power.

Since Judith Butler's pledge for understanding of gender as a cultural construct, it has become impossible to accept any dealing with the biological predispositions or using the image of the female body without a severe criticism. The question that arises as a result of most of the Ostojić's art projects is what are the options for different 'strategies' available to a woman artist in order to question the essentialist attitude, and not to be accused for 'essentialism' at the same time. Can it be true that there is no way out of this paradox similar to the body of oroboris with the head and tale being the same obsession for claiming the natural and biological determination of the relations between men and women?

In order to rehear some possible implications of the attempt to overcome such paradox with a different approach towards the essentialist formula in Ostojić's work, we may need to evoke the phrase 'strategic essentialism' coined by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak. In comparison to the regular type of essentialism, the 'strategic essentialism' would be different in two key ways:

> first, the 'essential attributes' are defined by the group itself, not by outsiders trying to oppress the group. Second, in strategic essentialism, the 'essential attributes' are acknowledged to be a construct.

> That is, the group rather paradoxically acknowledges that such attributes are not natural (or intrinsically essential), but are merely invoked when it is politically useful to do so. Moreover, members of the group maintain the power to decide when the attributes are 'essential' and when they are not. In this way, strategic essentialism can be a powerful political tool.
>
> (Danius and Jonsson, 1993)

It is necessary to point to the fact that since Spivak first used this phrase she has been highly criticized for its meaning, but it is also worth mentioning that most of the criticism overlooked the emphasis put on the word 'strategic'. (Milevska, 2003. In the interview Spivak claims that even though she had given up this phrase, she could not give up the concept itself, particularly because it entered the language and found its applications.) Mainly, it was related to Spivak's opinion that in different parts of the world where feminist movements did not have the same historic and cultural impact, the strategies for its development should differ and, therefore, if one group or individual estimates that even essentialism can be fruitful as a strategy against the essentialism itself, there is no reason not to accept the possible agency entailed in such a paradoxical method of feminist action.

> To become a 'subject' is thus to have been presumed guilty. Then tried and declared innocent. Because

> this declaration is not a single act but a status incessantly reproduced, to become a 'subject' is to be continuously in the process of acquitting oneself of the accusation of guilt... Yet because this guilt conditions the subject, it constitutes the prehistory of the subjection to the law by which the subject is produced.
>
> (Butler, 1997: 118)

The work consisting of a pile of 2,150 condoms in the corner of the main space of the installation titled the same as the exhibition 'Strategies of Success' and the handwritten text on the wall behind 'This is exact amount of condoms that I used during my carrier in order to serve curators who helped me becoming famous' deserve some attention and more careful elaboration being also a 'backdrop' for the performance at the opening night of Ostojić's exhibition Strategies of Success (2003, Gallery La Box, Bourges France). The scarlet environment immediately resonated with erotic assumptions that some 'event' of copulation happened. The exhibiting of the accumulation of condoms inevitably underlines this expectation. The boudoir environment and its erotically charged atmosphere leads to a premature conclusion that nothing should have contradicted the stereotypical idea of the rituals of seduction and the sexual intercourse used as a tool for flourishing of the young artist's career. Yet, it is the blunt 'confession' written on the wall that seems not to fit there.

The irony of the sentence on the wall complements the tone of the Venice Diary (2002) – the longer text read by the artist during the opening. The opening performance actually consisted of the artist reading the text of Venice Diary (after going through an extensive 'going out' ritual). The diary was written and published by the artist after the two projects that were commissioned for the Venice Biennial exhibition 'Plateau of Humankind' by its curator Harald Szeemann, and is full of details about Ostojić's Venice project I Will be Your Angel (2001, 49th Venice Biennial, Venice) and about her commitment to accompany the main selector and curator of the most prestigious international exhibition in the world, all during the four days of its official preview.

When Harald Szeemann, aged but still appreciated and famous curator, had accepted the 'rules of the game', those entailing that the young female artist dressed as a celebrity in a fashion designer' clothes was to accompany him as his 'guard' during his everyday obligatory meetings, press conferences, dinner parties, interviews, etc., it was already clear to him that the agreement also entailed many 'blind spots' – open possibilities for unexpected events to take place and to trigger his stabile curatorial position gained through many years of an international professional career.

The posh opening was imagined as a spectacular background event for another event, a kind of social

and cultural critique prompted by the artist herself with her simulation of an automaton, ‘an art dummy’, while smiling artificially and weaving ironically to the audience and art snobs. The issues of glamour and success were therefore put side by side to the issues of cultural and social power. By exposing herself: her body constrained by the not so comfortable tight corsets and shoes, and her personality constrained by the strict social rituals, she created a site for deconstruction of the institutional frameworks that she deliberately entered.

Tanja Ostojić obviously used the opportunity to work with Szeemann as an opportunity to subject him to an experiment: she picked the famous curator, still an attractive man aged in his 70s, communicative, and not single, in order to question most of the cultural stereotypes of the international art scene. The rituals of seducing, jealousy, exoticism, age difference, and the man/wife/mistress triangle were the main ‘blind spots’ to be tempted. Most of these themes are still taboos and preserved only for the gossiping sèances, but not for public discussion and interpretation.

The everyday lascive scene of Tanja Ostojić dressed glamorously in the Lacroix models, especially chosen and ordered by the artist for this occasion, walking side by side to Harald Szeemann on his daily duties during the preview for critics (press conferences, interviews, business meetings, openings, cocktails, concerts), put in movement the wheel of many paradoxes and absurd

interpretations as well as the instrumentalization and surveillance of her own body. The later development of events, the fall-out between the artist and the curator, the threats and ignoring of her work only proved that the usual ‘object of seduction’ can easily become the subject and that the power games are always twofold and the roles are completely reversible.

Therefore, instead of trying to acquit herself of the imagined and presupposed guilt and accusations, the artist subverts this expectation and turns it into a farce with exactly confessing the opposite: yes, I’ve done it. The revelation of truth is obviously not what is at stake here. The number of condoms and their presence in general are not enough to convince the viewer that what is stated with the sentence is the truth. On the contrary, the rumours eavesdropped over an official dinner might have been much more persuasive in effect. The ironic and ambiguous effect of the graffiti is a result of the fact that the sentence was written by the artist herself.

The dominance of the objects in the installation Strategies of Success obviously is an excessive claim to reality that simultaneously enforces and questions the complex relation between an assumption and the truth itself. To put it in the terms of Hegel’s ‘master/slave’ relation, the slave/artist works positively with the objects, puts a specific form to them, so that while working on them he/she becomes aware of his/her

independence[1]. Hegel does not speak of the gender of the slave or of the master, though.

When Ostojić used the condoms as objects – proofs of the presupposed guilt – she changed them into the opposite, the proofs of her independence and strength. It is a bold act to deal with this issue with using the same 'language of objects' that is somehow preserved for the 'boys' club of curators. Having said that, I need to clarify immediately that this Hegelian formula in Ostojić's work can be followed with a similar set of arguments that was applied in Hegel's interpretation of the struggle for mutual recognition in-between the slave and the master, but only that the final conclusion here differs significantly simply because the telos of this struggle does not end with the realization of the slave that he/she is independent.

1 Shou-Bang Jian, 'Hegel's account of master/ slave relation in Phenomenology of Spirit'. see http:// www.geocites.com/ shoubang/ files/ Hegel-masterslave.htm, p 9.

In fact, the 'absolute fear', 'the discipline service and obedience', and all other requirements of 'master/slave dialectics' do exist within the artist/curator relationship but 'the real power of self-consciousness, the 'absolute negativity' that is able to transform things'[2] does not belong to the master or to the slave. On the contrary, it is the 'truth' about the necessity of the mutual recognition that although announced from the very beginning never actually takes place. Or to put the relation between truth and objects by evoking Alain Badiu's words: 'the form of the object cannot in any way sustain the enterprise of truth' (Badiou, 1991: 24).

The complex and intriguing meaning of this project is also linked with the other project by Tanja Ostojić´s involving the late curator Harald Szeemann, the strange 'Black Square on White' (2001, 'Plateau of Humankind', 49th Venice Biennial, Venice). It consisted of her pubic hair shaved in a form of square instead of the natural triangle that took place at the same time as the performance I'll be Your Angel. This play with geometry imagined as an ironic homage to Malevic's well-known painting was supposed to be accomplished at the very moment when the 'chosen' curator would have actually seen the hidden bodily intervention. That was conceived as an apocalyptic moment of 'revelation

2 Eric Steinhart, 'The Master Slave Dialectic' (1998). See http://www.wpunj.edu/cohss/philosophy/courses/hegel/MASLAVE.HTM

of truth', unveiling of what was 'veiled' in the most intimate place, a kind of quick gaze at the hidden critique of the modernistic appropriation of the Russian 'icon' of avant-garde and turning its mysticism into geometric or optic forms. The symbolic of the act of showing to a man the 'mythic bauba' – the place of the horrifying 'lack' that causes the men's fear from feminine powers and castration, but at the same time stiffens his body and thus transforms it in a phallus (in certain Slavic languages the first syllable of the word 'curator' – cur means 'prick'), in the case of Ostoji´c, performance was deliberately and ironically supplemented by the 'geometric abstraction' – the modernistic privileged position to abstracting the content from the form.

The unanswered questions as when and under what circumstances this spectacular, but private event of revealing the 'shaved truth' took place, and whether the work existed at all, are less important than the gender overwriting and reshaping, 'shaving' the history of art with such courageous performative concept: to show to the famous art curator that in the most 'hidden' place of femininity there is nothing terrifying, there is only this abstract 'black square on white' that he has been accustomed to during his long career. We will never be sure whether this 'interactive' performance was really carried on, but the fact that it created certain discomfort and tension between the artist and the curator, the curator and his family, and the artist and organizers speaks for itself.

Nevertheless, the social, political, and economic structures, and particularly the gender roles issues are much more underlined in Ostojić's inter-medial projects such as the complex ongoing 'Looking for a Husband with EU Passport' that started already in 2000 and is still running. The first phase consisting of a simple Internet advert with an image of the artist's shaved body and the title was followed by the distribution of leaflets and posters in a shopping mall in Skopje (2001, 'Capital and Gender', Skopje), and with a website that enabled the correspondence between the artist and her 'suitors'. The project had gradually transferred from the realm of 'imaginary' to the realm of 'real' when the artist met and married one of the 'virtual' suitors (the German artist Clemens Golf who deliberately delved into the 'art-marriage' adventure), but it is still not accomplished. The final stage of this long-term art and life commitment started in the realm of a complex intertwining between the 'imaginary', 'real', and 'symbolic': when the artist started facing the German state authorities in order to acquire the long-awaited Schengen visa and started going through seemingly endless procedure for long-term residency. At this point, the artist herself did not anymore control the 'rules of the game' – it is the moment when the 'Law of the Father' enters and creates many surprising turns, but yet so dèjà vu. Namely, after three years of 'fictive' marriage, the couple split and filed for a 'real' divorce. Obviously, it is very difficult to make the borderline between the 'fictive' and 'real' in this context.

The ambiguity of this project is contained in the intentional play with the aesthetics of the artist's usage of her own image for the Internet advertisement: her skinny shaved body, without any traces of sensuality or the seductive gaze or gesture, conveys a completely opposite visual message than the usual aesthetics of the adverts. From out of this conflict between textual invitation and visual repulsion was born the gap of ambiguity between attraction and abjection.

The body and the social freedom offered in exchange for a Schengen passport yet subvert what seems a classic case of marriage of convenience. The contract signed by two artists transforms and utilizes the power of the social and cultural institution of marriage in another direction than its original. In spite of its social and political commitment, the process of over-identification also makes this project humorous, but simultaneously to the long battle through the German bureaucracy, the artist started another series of projects, much more delved in the realm of the political aspects of her own actions. Namely, she started the Integration Project dealing with immigration that consists of series of workshops, free language courses, dinners, and other social activities such as the Office for Integration (2002, 'Uncertain Signs/True Stories', Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe) that take place in parallel to her own integration within the German society, culture, and art scene.

All these intertwined relations between the realms of 'imaginary', 'real', and 'symbolic', to use Lacan's triad, are challenged in the context of Tanja Ostojić's art works through the everyday problems such as the globalization, market, virtual presence, stock exchange, gender roles, etc. She uses the procedures and material used in advertising campaigns: posters, flyers, and Internet advertisements in order to contrast the multiplication and proliferation of images to the uniqueness of her 'real' body, and also in order to interrupt the flickering 'symbolic chain of signifiers' with controlled interjection of her own image within it. The main target of Tanja Ostojić's work is the over-identification with the established regimes of power and representation through which the objectification of the female body usually takes place. Her body is only one of her media that she uses in order to stress the urgency for questioning these issues.

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III.3

The Potency and Potentiality of Transindividuality in the *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić* *

The project *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić* is the most recent artistic research project by the artist Tanja Ostojić, and it draws a complex psycho-geographical map of relations between proper name, identity, subjectivity, and belonging. The project comprised several parts: a long-term quest for others also bearing the name Tanja Ostojić; the artist's communication and encounters with the women she located in Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Germany, and elsewhere; a Facebook group with 28 members named Tanja Osto-

jić from different countries; a handmade drawing of a map that traced the cross-border movements of Tanja's name-sisters; and several public events.[1]

The current publication is also one of the outcomes of the project: a lexicon imagined as a compendium of different chapters encompassing the texts and images that are results of the various trajectories and phases of the research, as well as of the lives and careers of the name-sisters.

1 The first event of the series was the talk show 'Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić', in Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) Berlin, 10 April 2013. It was moderated by the author of this text, the participants were Tanja Ostojić, an artist from Berlin, and Tanja Ostojić, a designer, from Pula/Milan.

The project *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić* did not emerge overnight. It is the result of long and profound artistic research endeavours into issues and topics such as the body, gender, sex, politics, feminist struggle, class, belonging, transition, migration, displacement, and labour. It also bears relation to various earlier and parallel projects by the same artist, including: *Illegal Border Crossing* (2000); *Waiting for a Visa* (2000); *Looking for a Husband with EU Passport* (2000-05); *Integration Project Office* (2005); *Untitled / After Courbet (L'Origine du monde)* (2004);[2] and most recently, the series of delegated performances, *Misplaced Women*? (ongoing since 2009), and *Misplaced Women? Marking the City* (2011).[3]

2 Tanja Ostojić and Walter Mignolo, 'Crossing Borders/Development of Diverse Artistic Strategies', Social Text online, 15 July 2013 <http://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/crossing-borders-development-of-diverse-artistic-strategies/#sthash.kkSETDb2.dpuf> [accessed 10 February 2014].

3 See: Misplaced Women? [blog] <http://misplacedwomen.wordpress.com/> [accessed 10 February 2014].

In 2000, when Tanja Ostojić crossed the border, non-registered, between Slovenia and Austria, she broke state rules in a direct and dangerous way as part of her performance, *Illegal Border Crossing*.[4] The performance in fact mimics similar desperate actions undertaken by countless illegal immigrants who try to cross borders every day to reach the European Union; in a way, the *Illegal Border Crossing* performance actually precedes the *Lexicon* project.[5]

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4 See: Integration Impossible? The Politics of Migration in the Artwork of Tanja Ostojić, ed. by Marina Gržinić and Tanja Ostojić (Berlin: Argobooks, 2009), pp. 34-37. According to Ostojić, she crossed the border non-registered twice, in both directions. At the time, it was the border of the European Union, where approximately eight to nine illegal immigrants were captured per day. Now that Slovenia is part of the European Union, such 'illegal border crossings' have 'shifted' towards the south, gradually between Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia. Equipped with detailed maps, the artist and her friends (also artists) passed the border, taking enormous risks of being captured and imprisoned.

5 As in the case of her 'arranged' marriage project, Looking for a Husband with EU Passport, Tanja Ostojić stretched the borders of the legal system and explored its efficacy and ability to recognise different languages. The art language she uses does not differ substantially from the language of 'arranged' marriages, or the 'real crossings' of borders. The difference, however, is the motivation (which, of course, is difficult to prove, if it comes to a legal trial).

The Proper Name 'Tanja Ostojić' and its Geo-Politics

There is nothing unique or particularly amusing about the name 'Tanja Ostojić'. It is an arbitrary and common surname and given name. In this art project, artist Tanja Ostojić proposes a process of psycho-geographic research into the cultural biographies of a number of women, distinct personalities who coincidentally bear both the same first name and surname as her own, thus actually acknowledging its redundancy.

With some of the women she finds, Ostojić observes slight variations in the names, which have occurred because of various ethnicities, migrations, differences in the written versions of names, or change in marital status. Consequently, alongside the focus on the arbitrariness of proper names, even more importantly, Ostojić reflects on the specificities of common ethnic, cultural, and socio-political background, and the historic and generational context of individuals with the same or similar names. She also focuses on the endless potential contingencies and unpredictable diversified biographies of these individuals, depending on the circumstances of their birth, places of upbringing, and

displacements resulting from wars and conflicts and the split of the former Yugoslavia.

The artist's initial aim was to look at the various phenomena affecting women originating from the ex-Yugoslav republics, including migration, displacement, transition, and labour. Taking into account the ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, and sexual differences, the artistic research into the complex inner biographical and historical layers of the accidental 'homonymy' enabled Tanja Ostojić to draw a unique transindividual and psycho-geographic 'map', which traces the places of origin and various itineraries and movements of the women she contacted, all named Tanja Ostojić.

Similarly to a number of previous projects by Tanja Ostojić, this project is informed by and draws influences both from concrete social and political events, and from turbulent contemporary phenomena (voluntary or forced migrations, racism, gender inequality, sex work, arranged marriages). It aims to establish a sustainable network of women, who have not met before, but who benefit in various ways from establishing and maintaining these newly developed contacts and friendships – not only with the artist herself, but also among themselves.

The process of finding, collecting, indexing, and cross-comparing relevant information about the individual personalities who all go by the same name was meant to serve merely as a starting point for a project that gradually became a relational mapping – a kind of chart drawing various connections among the women.

Alongside an analysis of the various theoretical and artistic implications of this project, I also aim to establish links between this and several other earlier projects executed by Ostojić, which also dealt with patrilineality, kinship, and heteronormativity – phenomena that are often targeted by Ostojić's feminist critique. Primary questions that the artist posed throughout her project considered whether the arbitrariness of one's name affects our own subjectivities later in life, and how historical and biographical circumstances interweave and construct the formation of transindividuality and identity – because of, or in spite of the name.

During the first phase of the project, with the use of online research engines – including communication applications such as Skype, and the social network

Facebook – as research and artistic media, the artist acknowledges the newly added layer to the identitarian issue – the virtual layer that cross-references already existing layers of subjectivity and identity. The challenge of the project lies in the uncertainty of the research results and should not be perceived as the quest for a common denominator in this heterogenic group, but rather as a confirmation of the inner polyglossia and multiple layered personalities. Ostojić questions the imposed heteronymy and invests in the potentialities of subjective agency as a kind of potency and potentiality for an individual answer to societal, cultural, and political conformities, of which proper names are the most common, but not the only ones.

The violence of naming (Gilles Deleuze) and transindividuality (Gilbert Simondon) are tackled by the democracy of self-determination of each individual: you can be anybody you want; you can define your own personality, shaping it and re-shaping it, time and again, and all the time, still bearing the same name of Tanja Ostojić.

According to Jacques Derrida, *giving names* is, paradoxically, an act of both love and justice. In his book, *On the Name,* he writes that in everyday life, we give new names to people that we love as an ultimate gift, without expecting anything in return.[6] In other words, we want to give something to our loved ones, even when it is not ours to give away – 'heart', 'gold', 'queen', 'honey', etc. – as proof of our total commitment. Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that, in the view of Gilles Deleuze, the first moment of giving/receiving a name is in itself 'the

6 Jacques Derrida, On the Name, ed. by Thomas Dutoit (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 84-85.

highest point of de-personalisation' because it is here that we acquire 'the most intense discernibility in the instantaneous apprehension of the multiplicities' belonging to us.[7]

One of the questions posed by the conceptualisation of naming is: what, if any, might be the positive implications of *naming,* in cultural and political terms, when this is executed by artistic means? Perhaps Deleuze's warning could lead us to some answers through his understanding of our lives as the sum of little 'becomings' that inform and shape our identities, but that ultimately create idiosyncrasies that no longer fit within these identities. According to Gilbert Simondon, the process of *individuation is never concluded,* since the multiplicity of the pre-individual can never be fully translated into singularity; whereas the subject is a continuous interweaving of pre-individual elements and individuated characteristics.[8]

7 Gilles Deleuze and Fèlix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 40.

8 Gilbert Simondon's views are discussed in Paolo Virno, A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), pp. 78-79.

Ultimately, biopolitics and the 'society of control' (in Deleuze's terms) can be seen as reactions to the creative power of the multitude – the multitude which precedes naming as an arbitrary identitarian politics that is one of the imposed societal mechanisms of control.[9] The only way to defeat imposed identities that oppress us is to free our sub-individualities and combine them with others to form a multitude of possible and potential multiplicities.

Multiplicities thus formed will always be greater than the society of control, in that each of us is greater than any individual or collective label or name that might be assigned to us ('man', 'woman', 'student', 'lesbian', 'white', 'Roma'), because we are, each of us, more than the names we are given. Thus, the multitude of Tanja Ostojić formed through this project is an intentionally created community that functions as

9 Will Large, 'The Multitude', *Dave Harris (& Colleagues): Essays, Papers, Courses*, <http://www.arasite.org/WLnew/empire/multi.html> [accessed 5 July 2017].

a kind of arbitrary framework for various relations established very loosely for the duration of this project – and potentially beyond, in a similarly contingent way to which they were initially established, and beyond any controllable societal conditions and institutions.

In embarking on writing about the potentiality that is embedded in the notion of the *regional belonging* of Tanja Ostojić, it is actually inevitable to attempt to bridge the 'principle of hope' and the utopian belief in complete belonging (either to a nation, or to the world in general), with the potential of *not belonging* that is necessarily attached to belonging.[10] *Not belonging* is especially implied in the notion of regional belonging, where national meets cosmopolitan halfway. While the phantasm of *belonging* to a nation, and of belonging in general, is based on a positive and utopian hope: the very actuality of belonging.

10 I am using the negative concept *potential not to,* with reference to the philosophical notion of *aporia,* between potentiality and actuality, known already in the philosophy of Antiquity and of the Middle Ages. See: Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities,* ed. and trans. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, Introduction by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 243-71.

For example, belonging to a region is defined by the potential of *belonging without belonging,* or *belonging without having something in common*.[11]

Of all the emphatic expectations and phantasms emerging among different peoples and nations in the new Europe, the very desire and projected hope to belong to the European Union (EU) has become the most urgent. The EU political superstructure has started to function as a kind of political re-definition and even replacement of European geography. The EU is neither a nation nor a region, but belonging to it functions as a kind of supra-belonging.

Within such a political and cultural context, the notion of regional identity is one of the recently emerged political instruments of integration and belonging. Regional identity appears to be a kind of *aporia*, a specific form of *disjunctive* identity that, as a certain political compromise, a kind of 'dangerous

11 Suzana Milevska, 'Phantasm of Belonging: Belonging without Having Something in Common', in *Volksgarten: Politics of Belonging* (cat.), ed. by. Adam Budak, Peter Pakesch, and Katia Schurl (Cologne: Walther König, 2008), pp. 110-19.

supplement', overarches *belonging* to a nation with *belonging* to a European Union, which is comprised of different nations and identities.[12]

Ultimately, the concept of regional identity emerges as a kind of concession that contaminates the unconditional *belonging* with the potentiality of a partial *non-belonging* as the greatest nation-state danger: 'Whatever singularity, which wants to appropriate belonging itself, its own being-in-language, and thus rejects all identity and every condition of belonging, is the principal enemy of the State'.[13]

What does it mean to assume a regional identity? Does one ever genuinely identify as Balkan, Mediterranean, Trentinian-Alto Adige/Südtirolian, or Northern Macedonian (in Greece)? Does this mean that national identification suffers a loss of patriotism because of the expansion of the strictly defined national identity into a more heterogeneous regional identity, or does this only help clarify one's own identity? Or, is regionalism just a pragmatic tool used by smaller nations and ethnicities to boost their hopes of completeness, of belong-

12 I hereby refer to Jacques Derrida's concept of 'dangerous supplement'. See: Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 141-65.

13 Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community,* trans. by Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1993), p. 87.

ing to the globalised world? Critical regionalism originally worked as a kind of cultural mediator between the codes of universal civilization and the specificity of place, and it offered the urgent and necessary hope of synthesis of, on the one hand, the architectural forms that were created within minor cultures and regional borders, and, on the other, universal cultural values that could be reached through a critically conceptualised regionalism.[14]

All these questions can be addressed indirectly, through culture and art, and this, in part, is what makes the research behind the *Lexicon* so relevant, because it is there that regionalism is applied as a means of analysis of various minor differences in cultural codes and phenomena, starting from the everyday life of the name-sisters.

14 One example of the justification of regionalism came from architectural theory: the concept of 'critical regionalism', first offered by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, and later developed by Kenneth Frampton. Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture,* ed. by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16-30.

Following Richard Rorty's scepticism expressed in his 1996 essay 'Globalization, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope', about the relevance of the way in which globalisation has affected identity politics, and having in mind his remark about the 'loss of faith in cosmopolitanism and universalist notions', I would argue that at present there are certain attempts to compensate for the lost social hopes of cosmopolitan values, and these are mainly based on newly provoked beliefs in the regional values of daily life.[15]

It is no accident, however, that today's main contradictions and tensions are to be found not along the line of global-local, but in the pragmatic and calculative move between global-regional, wherein regional is seen as the democratic *potentiality* of the future, a concept that might supplement the local.

15 Richard Rorty, 'Globalization, the Politics of Identity and Social Hope' in *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), pp. 229-39 (p. 230).

Hope as longing for something better, for supplementing life *as it is*, was the main subject of Ernst Bloch's *The Principle of Hope.*[16] According to Douglas Kellner, for Bloch, 'individuals are unfinished, they are animated by "dreams of a better life", and by utopian longings for fulfilment'.[17] Furthermore, for Bloch, hope 'permeates everyday consciousness and its articulation in cultural forms, ranging from the fairy tale to the great philosophical and political utopias'.[18]

What made Bloch's understanding of 'daydreams, fairy tales and myths, popular culture, literature, theatre, and all forms of art, political and social utopias, philosophy, and religion' different from the other Marxist ideological critiques is his belief that all these forms 'contain emancipatory moments which project visions of a better life', and that they 'put in question the organization and structure of life under capitalism (or state socialism)'.[19]

16 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope,* 3 Vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986).

17 Douglas Kellner, *Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique,* 19 April 2008 <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell1.htm> [accessed 5 July 2017].

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

According to Kellner's profoundly analytical reading of *The Principle of Hope*, in Bloch's map of humanity, there are three dimensions of human temporality:

> a dialectical analysis of the past which illuminates the present and can direct us to a better future. The past – what has been – contains both the sufferings, tragedies and failures of humanity – what to avoid and to redeem – and its unrealized hopes and potentials – which could have been and can yet be.[20]

The *not-yet but realisable hopes* of the future, and a vision of a free future, are the most important part of Bloch's projections and convictions about creativity. The *not-yet but awaited* manifests itself as future and futurity: as an event of a coming, or future *advent,* as it is understood in some more recent work of philosophy and literature.[21] That is where the adventure of creativity is projected, since the hope's tense is always a future tense. In Kellner's opinion, Bloch encourages us to 'look for the progressive and emancipatory content of cultural artefacts' that are 'frequently denounced and dismissed as mere ideology'.[22]

20 Ibid.

21 Jean-Paul Martinon, *On Futurity. Malabou, Nancy and Derrida* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 152-53.

22 Kellner, *Ernst Bloch.*

Following Kellner's analysis of Bloch's 'principle of hope', one could easily agree with his conclusion that Bloch provides us with a model of cultural theory and ideology critique that is unique, since it differs from other more dominant critical models. While Lenin, Althusser, and to certain extent the Frankfurt School, presented 'ideology critique as the demolition of bourgeois culture and ideology, thus, in effect, conflating bourgeois culture and ideology',[23] according to Kellner, Bloch is 'more sophisticated than those who simply denounce all ideology as false consciousness' and interpret 'dominant ideology primarily as instruments of mystification, errors, and domination' of the 'ruling class' interest within ideological artefacts' because he rather 'sees emancipatory-utopian elements in all living ideologies, and deceptive and illusory qualities as well'.[24]

Bloch suggested reading more attentively for any critical or emancipatory potential. Interestingly enough, at first sight, paradoxically, Bloch deemed ideology not only responsible for having a negative impact on society, but he also believed that ideology contained a certain emancipatory dimension. Discourses, images, and figures that produced utopian images of a better world, according to him, aided the reconcil-

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

iation of subjects with the existing world. That is, of course, only if one believes and hopes that such reconciliation is possible.

Today, Ernst Bloch's assumption that art's mission, even when it is overburdened by ideological patterns, is to assist the subject's fulfilment and reification, somehow resonates with the Guattarian concept of art as a process of *becoming*. Even though he understands art as a kind of autonomous zone of production, it is still important for the 'innovative segments of the Socius', since, according to him, the future of contemporary subjectivity is no longer to 'live indefinitely under the regime of self-withdrawal'.[25] The artist's mission is to *recreate and reinvent the subject*:

> The artist and, more generally, aesthetic perception, detach and deterritorialize a segment of the real in such a way as to make it play the role of a partial enunciator. Art confers a function of sense and alterity to a subset of the perceived world. […] The work of art, for those who use it, is an activity of unframing, of rupturing sense, of baroque proliferation or extreme impoverishment, which leads to a recreation and a reinvention of the subject itself. A new existential support will oscillate on the work of

25 Fèlix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm,* trans. by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 132.

> art, based on a double register of reterritorialization (refrain function) and resingularization.[26]

The hope and potentiality for such a reinvention of contemporary subjectivity is under new pressure, particularly the pressure of globalisation and the tensions between the nation-state and national identity politics versus new overarching political and universalist concepts. What the project *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić* offers to its participants is exactly this potentiality of artistic resingularisation.

26 Ibid., p. 130.

In the context of the extrapolation of the intrinsic mechanisms of rapid globalisation, regionalism might seem an obsolete concept; yet, it has actually flourished in recent decades. The most important thing to state from the outset of a discussion of the regional paradigm is that regions are social and cultural constructs, and are established out of a belief in a common history and consideration of common interests.[27] It has become clear that a region cannot function as a relevant identity concept, due to the danger of essentialisation and the overburdening complexities and exclusions that prevent it being used as a common denominator.

27 For a profound analysis of regionalism in relation to globalisation, see: *Regionalism in the Age of Globalism, Volume 1: Concepts of Regionalism,* ed. by Lothar Hönnighausen, Marc Frey, James Peacock, and Niklaus Steiner (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 2004).

The Deliberative Potentiality of Regional Belonging, Transversal Politics and Transindividuality

Not only are regional distinctions and definitions still in use; they are also much more highly valued today, and not only as metaphors. Regionalism is also seen as heralding a turn from identity politics toward what Nira Yuval-Davis so successfully dubbed 'transversal politics'.[28]

As an alternative to universalistic assimilationist and exclusivist politics, as well as to identity politics, 'transversal politics' deals with:

> people who identify themselves as belonging to the same collectivity or social category [that] can actually be positioned very differently in relation to a whole range of social locations (e.g., class, gender, ability, sexuality, stage in the life cycle, etc.). At the same time, people with similar positionings and/or identities, can have very different social and political values.[29]

28 Nira Yuval-Davis, 'What is Transversal Politics', *Soundings – A Journal of Politics and Culture,* 12 (Summer 1999), 94.

29 Ibid., p. 95.

For some theorists, the only adequate political response to globalisation is the consolidation of democracy through the strengthening of national borders. For others, exactly the opposite is required, and indeed preferred, when national and other values are questioned from abroad. Many theorists of democracy would agree that democratic government could be maintained only by extending its borders beyond the nation. The expansion and acceleration of cultural, political, and economic activities cutting across national and regional borders is not inherently incompatible with democracy.

Adam Lupel identified three different ways in which the politics of transnationalism could serve to broaden democratic legitimacy beyond the nation-state: '(i) cosmopolitan democracy, (ii) democratic regionalism, and (iii) democratic network governance'.[30] On the contrary, one could argue that precisely the intrinsically different experiences and common but troubled past throws into question 'the viability of political integration on the regional scale'.[31]

30 Adam Lupel, 'Tasks of a Global Civil Society: Held, Habermas and Democratic Legitimacy beyond the Nation-State', *Globalizations,* 2.1 (2005), 117-133.

31 Ibid., p. 124.

It is difficult to see, then, how a democratic consensus could be reached at a regional level between the conflicted parts, e.g., in troubled regions such as the Balkans, where the borders and identities continuously overlapped and changed in the past, and the battles that continue for the national appropriation of common historic events and historic figures. In such a context, Chantal Mouffe's agonistic model of democracy has very little chance of surviving due to the operation of much deeper confrontations than those needed for the 'privileged terrain of agonistic confrontation among adversaries'.

> I agree with those who affirm that a pluralist democracy demands a certain amount of consensus and that it requires allegiance to the values which constitute its 'ethico-political principles'. But since those ethico-political principles can only exist through many different and conflicting interpretations, such a consensus is bound to be a 'conflictual consensus'. This is indeed the privileged terrain of agonistic confrontation among adversaries.[32]

32 Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (New York: Verso, 2000), p. 103.

Even though the potential of *not* belonging to a homogenous national identity inscribed within the broadened concept of regional identity cannot be the ultimate answer to the problems of either limited political, cultural, and economic resources of nation-state, or the answer to a homogenised and globalised cultural identity, it could enable the democratisation of various societal patterns of behaviour and bring forward certain hopes for the future.

Finally, it becomes clearer that the questions of *belonging* and of participatory and deliberative democracy, particularly in the case of regional identity, are intertwined in a complex and reciprocal relation. Being dependent upon each other in this case means that this leaning on belonging to a certain community, and not to some other, provides the motivation for a demanding participatory democratic process.

Economically, the project *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić* thus belongs to the realm of a certain staged 'ecological economical circle'.[33]

33 Anitra Nelson, 'Money Versus Socialism', in *Life without Money Building Fair and Sustainable Economies,* ed. by Anitra Nelson and Frans Timmerman (New York: Pluto Press, 2011), pp. 3-46 (p. 24).

A long-term interest in the relations between art and political economy was also the basis for her involvement in the long-term project and collective, Art&Economics Group (with David Rych and Dmytri Kleiner).[34]

In the context of this project, such a circle is formed around the re-distribution of grants and the delegated role of an artist to the found/invited participants (the only condition to 'belong' to this voluntarily and deliberately formed multitude is to have the "desired" name), who accept the invitation, not only to attend different events, but also gradually to produce content and design different formats. In this particular context, the artist enables a certain recuperation strategy – a knowledge platform that is unstable and open, with many loose and entangled ends that need to be connected or disentangled.

An inevitable question is how the recuperation is reversed and turned into 'small empowering acts' for each participant, rather than appropriated by the institutions that support the project (in contrast to the assumed systemic recuperation of institutions by Guy Debord).

34 The Art&Economics Group was established in Berlin in 2007 by Tanja Ostojić, David Rych, and Dmytri Kleiner, in order to investigate the intersection of art and political economy.

Recuperation here refers to the cultural appropriation of any subversive works or ideas by incorporating them and turning them into commodity.[35]

Shifts in societal and artistic institutions make possible a societal agency as both artistic motivation and production. We see something similar with the *tontine,* the new form of credit association that is developing in the 'Third World': such grassroots communalism 'shapes a collective identity, it constitutes a counter-power in the home and the community, and opens a process of self-valorisation and self-determination from which there is much that we can learn'.[36]

35 In Guy Debord's writing, the term 'recuperation' (from Latin, recuperāre: revive, recover, revive) designates the sociological process by which any radical ideas and images can be twisted, co-opted, and absorbed by mainstream and official culture and media in bourgeois society. *Internationale situationniste,* 8 (January 1963), 29-33; Guy Debord: *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1967); *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, ed. by Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

36 Silvia Federici, 'Feminism And the Politics of the Commons', *The Commoner*, 24 January 2011 <http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=113> [accessed 20 March 2013].

Ostojić, in particular, is concerned with new ways to conceive and produce art through *reverse recuperation*, i.e., through a solidarity that encourages and ignites various encounters, and through such new relations, she enables new rhizomatic relations to take form; through the new relations, indirectly, she opens up the potentiality of empowerment of the other name-sisters, or simply invites them to fully participate in various events and to enjoy the newly emerged friendships based on the arbitrary selection through this artistic project.

The common name 'Tanja Ostojić' as linked to a particular ethnic and cultural regional background, is only the starting point in establishing the loose structure that makes this project a unique artistic research experiment, and it is still open to many diverse developments. The art agency behind it relates also to the agency already entailed in all other Tanjas Ostojić who have or have not been contacted, and who, in a different way, on an everyday basis, overcome the determination of their own nation, gender, class, and generation, and encompass all these possible identities, making each of them so unique.

Notes

*This essay has been originally written by Suzana Milevska in 2013 and has been published in German language only in: *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić,* Ostojić, Tanja (ed.) UdK Berlin, 2014.

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III.4

Afterthoughts about the *Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić*, to be continued…

03.05.2017

Back in 2013, when I started writing the essay 'The Potency and Potentiality of Transindividuality in the Lexicon of Tanja Ostojić' the project was still in its research phase. Tanja Ostojić based her artistic research project on the outcomes of her long-term quest and communication with other women also bearing the name Tanja Ostojić. It was only a drafted proposition to look closer at various political, cultural, social, eco-

nomic, and art phenomena such as: political and ethnic conflicts, belonging, national and cultural identity, economic transition, migration, immigration and exile, professional advancement and creativity, gender difference in relations at work and in family, and precarious labour, as reflected in the lives of the located name-sake women.

The artist had already located and/or already established her communication with 28 women (whom she located in Bosnia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, and Germany, among other places) and several encounters and face-to-face conversations with some of the women had already taken place in various locations. A Facebook group was also created with 28 members bearing the same name – Tanja Ostojić – but at the time the group still didn't have continuous traffic and activities. The handmade drawing of a map that traced the cross-border movements of Tanja's name-sisters was still unfinished. In my text I also wrote that 'several public events were planned'.

The motivation for this short 'post scriptum' was exactly this humble announcement in anticipation of the process which later unravelled and disentangled various threads that were always supposed to be there (or were expected to take place) but were not yet visible and actualised. Despite ponderings and extrapolations that I based on various theoretical assumptions and arguments referring to, among others, Debord, Simon-

don, Virno, Agamben, Deleuze, Negri/Hardt, Federici, I could not have anticipated, and neither could the artist herself, all the directions and the extent to which these events would unleash the potentials entailed in the project's concept, and yet were not programmed and structured precisely in the initial draft.

The workshops planned for 2017 (in Belgrade, Banja Luka, Zagreb, and Rijeka) were yet to take place but now they are already realised outcomes of the project the interviews, discussions, and collaborations which have already taken place on social networks or in real places (e.g. Split, Banja Luka, Bratunac, Nikšić, Ljubljana, Lörrach, Belgrade, and Zemun) among the artist-initiator and the other women bearing the same name, as well as with other artists and professionals in the field of art and culture. Not only did they all become participants but also they acted as active collaborators and became involved in different phases of the organisational process and creative production (e.g. during three documentary embroidery workshops in Belgrade, Banja Luka, and Zagreb which in the framework of this project were led by the artists Vahida Ramujkić and Tanja Ostojić together).

Perhaps it is still too early to evaluate and draw conclusions about the ways in which the project affected the individual life trajectories of all women involved in these activities in theoretical and practical terms, regardless of whether their professional background is

directly related to art and cultural production. Aspects of self-actualisation that have already been discussed – emancipation, self-reflection, empowerment, 'reverse recuperation', and concrete results such as individually or collectively produced objects – as well as the coining of the phrase 'transformative encounters', are only some of the steps which led participants to agree to engage in different collaborations and collective productions, and most probably will have further effects. The acknowledgment (on all sides) of the necessity to share copyright to the various outcomes (interviews, art objects, designs) is also an indicator that incited and justified the need for these short a posteriori reflections.

As this is the first attempt to summarise and interpret the ways in which the project moved from a concept to realisation it is important to address the project's development in terms of artistic strategy, method of research, and the artist dealt with the complex outcomes. It is most importantly to state clearly that the period in which the concrete activities of the project have been scheduled does not mark the end and therefore completion of the project's effects. It is exactly as it is in chaos theory – the initial conditions structured by the artist-initiator later allow many unexpected encounters and intersections which rapidly develop in random, but profound relations, and are almost impossible to follow or provide an overview of their complexity and unpredictability.

Although the embroidered pieces visually representing the statistical data of the research results are remarkable objects of collaboration and collective labour, these and other produced artefacts and media were not the main aim of the project. However, their production was actually, in a way, imagined as only one means of transference and a strategy for enabling the newly produced inter-subjective human relations that eventually developed in friendships and professional collaborations.

The communication and very intense exchange among the women of different generational, professional, and ethnic backgrounds, as well as geographic location – who initially gathered apparently arbitrarily on voluntary basis, and only by coincidence of having the same first and last name as the artist – were possible only with continuous mutual respect for and genuine interest in each other. The time, scarce funding distributed to the involved participants and collaborators, and the artist's dedication was complemented by the institutional support facilitated the process in which the women-otherwise-strangers located the points of rhizomatic intersections between their destinies, common interests, and different layers of subjectivity and multitude that emerged in the process.

Most importantly, although transindividuality was always already inscribed, its potentiality became visible and comprehensible only through the 'transform-

ative encounters', the mutual introductions, and social exchanges during the one-to-one conversations, coproduction processes, discussions, and other public events. Thus a new sentiment of solidarity with the same (the name), but different (subjectivity and personality) has emerged. It can be read between the lines of this hypertext, the Lexicon with only one entry: Tanja Ostojić, but with so many 'homonyms' and a number of complex cross-references and interpretations that together create an ethnographic and psycho-geographic hypertext available for further research.

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IV Reversible recuperation and accessibility

IV.1

The Art of Tadej Pogačar. From Institutional "Parasitism" to Reverse Recuperation, Agency, and Solidarity

When contemporary artists express concerns about the hidden politics of the art system and its reflection in the mechanisms of art institutions, their critiques are rarely accompanied by proposals for functional models that institutions could apply in the interests of artists and for the good of society. The dangers of institutional elitism and exclusionism, of hierarchies based on socio-political status, class, gender, and sexual differences and inequalities, have been targeted as particularly critical issues, but unfortunately few options are offered to address these problems.

Some concerns and critiques have been expressed and published in the form of artist's statements, personal or group manifestos, or other texts that challenge institutional structures. One of the most potent myths of modernism and postmodernism – that of the artist's problematic role in unravelling the entangled relations between art and society – remains an unresolved question. Positing these relations as complicity and collaboration or, on the other hand, as conflict, opposition, and even subversion, modernism's most enduring response was to place art (and artists) outside of society in a special niche (or cage) – on the pedestal of aesthetics – and to call for the autonomy of art. For a long time this view ascribed to art a privileged but paradoxical position, for it left art without the right or potential power to influence society's development.

The assumption that art somehow operates outside, above, or beyond society has survived a great deal of criticism, over different periods, and it is still present in a number of contexts (e.g. art academies, art fairs, and private collecting, among others). At times, this rather hierarchical view of art's status pervades even the most democratized art forms, formats, and events.

In the work of the Slovene artist Tadej Pogačar, concerns about the way art and art institutions function in society led to the exploration and development of various alternative institutional models for art practice, which then became the basis for a number of his art projects or even served as artworks in their own right.

At the heart of Pogačar's carefully developed and precisely designed art strategies we find a long-term quest for specific models of institutional and non-institutional art practices that address various socio-political and economic issues relating to art production and promote new forms of collaboration and interaction between institutions, artists, project participants, and audiences. It is important to stress, however, that his strategies have changed over time, both in the way he conceptualizes issues and in his art practice itself. Over the course of his career (and specifically in the past two decades), his attempts to address transformed institutional frameworks – and social changes in general – have undergone significant self-critique and re-evaluation, producing new methods of collaboration and

participation. In almost every case, he applies his strategies in different ways, depending on the concrete socio-political and cultural context. But these strategies can also exist independently, in their own right, as working models or processes presented through a variety of artistic genres, media, and structures (e.g. relational, collaborative, or participatory).

In the early phase of his art career, Pogačar conceptualized his practice as "parasitism". It is clear that even when he began developing the "mission statement" for his P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art, he was interested in the relation between the artist and the art institution.[1] His main reference in this initial period of engaging with institutional structures was the concept of the "parasite", which has been so important for many theorists and philosophers, especially, Jacques Derrida and Michel Serres.[2]

1 Pogačar in fact established a number of different independent organizations, which for a certain period operated simultaneously. What was originally just the *Museum of Contemporary Art* was renamed the *P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art*; he later created the *P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute* and the *P74 Centre and Gallery*.

2 See especially Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

The usual notion of the parasite is that of a foreign body that preys on the resources of a host and is thus dependent on the host's hospitality. The role of trust and mistrust in the communication between parasite and host is crucial for an understanding of the complexity of the relationship. Serres's book *The Parasite* provides a useful framework for discussing this phase of Pogačar's engagement with the art system and its institutions. It can help us better appreciate the complex network of relationships the artist created vis-à-vis established art and cultural institutions, sometimes mocking or restaging their practices and sometimes merely overidentifying with them.[3] In both cases, however, the critical aspect was accompanied by successful collaborations with a number of museums and galleries.

3 Slavoj Žižek first proposed using Althusser's concept of overidentification in the context of art theory in the 1990s, in an article on the band Laibach and the Slovene art movement Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK). He noted that the state was afraid of anyone who overidentifies with its structure. In this way, he provided institutional critique artists with a kind of easy justification for their miming strategies. See Slavoj Žižek, "Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?", *M'ARS* (Moderna galerija, Ljubljana), v. 5 (1993), nos. 3–4: 3–4; available online at http://www. reanimator.8m.com/NSK/zizek.html (accessed 1 June 2013).

Serres offers "a set of concepts for thinking indeterminacy and transformation in social systems" and revalorizes the term "parasitism" in a way that makes it "essential to an adequate understanding of how what we call the social is ordered".[4] Indeed, the concept of the parasite allows us to view the order within art systems as part of a wider set of social operations. Parasitism thus emerges as a pivotal concept at the core of the logic behind working mechanisms across all living organisms and systems.

Ultimately, Serres argues that parasitism is not the exception in our world but rather its very condition and the parasite is not some bizarre violation of moral principle but its basis. While this assumption may seem extremely pessimistic, in Pogačar's conceptualization parasitism becomes a realistic if ironic basis for establishing open and fair communications; it creates a collaborative relationship in which the roles of parasite and host are performed and exchanged arbitrarily by mutual agreement between the artist, his own institution (established as a kind of parodic museum), and existing art and cultural institutions. Soon, however,

4 Steven D. Brown, "In praise of the parasite: The dark organizational theory of Michel Serres", *Informática na educação: teoria e prática* (Porto Alegre, Brazil), v. 16, no. 1 (2012): 83–100; available online at http://www.academia.edu/1561872 (accessed 10 May 2013).

the boundaries between the different elements became blurred and, instead of parasitism, we can talk about "symbiosis" (or to put it in the institutional jargon of contemporary culture, "partnership").

The concerns expressed in many artists' work about the inflexible elitist "art world" (as defined in Arthur Danto's institutional theory and understood, in kind of circular logic, as the most competent arbiter for the art system and art institutions), while not new, became especially relevant for art in the 1960s and 1970s. They received their strongest embodiment in the kind of artistic engagement that was the core of the contemporary art phenomenon known as "institutional critique", which had a further impact on the postconceptual art of the 1980s.

Pogačar's strategies in that initial period to some extent evoked "instituent practices" as a kind of follow-up to the first two phases of the institutional critique artists, who challenged the role of art institutions, and the art system in general, in various but interrelated ways.

As the Austrian philosopher and art theorist Gerald Raunig explains, while "the 'first generation' of institutional critique sought a distance from the institution, the 'second' addressed the inevitable involvement in the institution".[5]

This summation suggests that, in its first stage, institutional critique operated from the somewhat naive belief that art can function outside the art system without any rules or governance.

Raunig's "schematic perspective" (as he calls it) is important because, in his view, the differences between these "generation clusters" were blurred in their respective art practices.[6] Raunig also stresses the important distinction made by Michel Foucault between "not being governed at all" and "not being governed like that", which here suggests a constructive critique that calls for a transformation in the art of governing – what Foucault termed "governmentality" – as opposed to operating outside of institutions.[7] Noting that

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5 Gerald Raunig, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming", *in Art and Contemporary Critical Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique,* ed. Gerald Raunig and Gene Ray (London: MayFlyBooks, 2009), 9.

6 Raunig, "Instituent Practices", 4.

7 Michel Foucault, *The Politics of Truth* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 28, quoted in Raunig, "Instituent Practices", 4.

Foucault was not the only theorist to introduce "new non-escapist terms of escape", Raunig goes on to discuss other Western artists and thinkers who focused on various collaborative models of institutional critique.[8]

The "parasitic" phase in Pogačar's work occupies a similar position. These projects were well described by the late Slovene critic and curator Igor Zabel:

> Since Tadej Pogačar established the institutional basis and framework for his work in 1990 (the year in which he founded his *Muzej sodobne umetnosti – Museum of Contemporary Art* – which was later, in 1994, renamed *The P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art*), it is inevitable that we should speak about two substantial views in connection with him: about the "new parasitism" as his basic method and about the museum as the institutional framework and point of reference for that method. In the first place, we should certainly raise the question of the reasons that brought Pogačar to renounce his position of a creative individual and shift to the far more impersonal concept of the institution, as well as that of the relationship between the new parasitism as method and the concept of the museum. [9]

8 Raunig, "Instituent Practices", 6.

9 Igor Zabel, "Tadej Pogačar", Život umjetnosti (Zagreb), nos. 67–68 (2002): 44.

We should note, however, that the artists and critics who remained faithful to similar strategies after the first and second phases of institutional critique had to deal with many paradoxes and contradictions. Most of all, it was necessary for them to change their art strategies in conditions where capital was undergoing yet another phase in its development and where neo-liberal conservatism was strengthening consumerism and the object-centred society, in which even relations between people became objectified and subjected to monetization.

Perhaps Raunig's discussion of different concepts of post-institutional critique could help us to elaborate the issue further. He uses the terms "instituent practices" and "monster institutions" for the various models of art organizations and institutions that have recently been developed from concepts by theorists and practitioners of different periods and backgrounds, such as Gilles Deleuze, Paolo Virno, and Michel Serres:

> Figures of flight, of dropping out, of betrayal, of desertion, of exodus: these are the figures that several authors advance as poststructuralist, non-dialectical forms of resistance in refusal of cynical or conservative invocations of inescapability and hopelessness.[10]

10 Gerald Raunig, "Preface", in *Art and Contemporary Critical Practice* (see note 5), xvi.

Pogačar's later art practice, and particularly in the project *CODE:RED*, gradually marked a very important shift, not only for his own work but also in the wider context of institutional critique. This shift articulated the urgent need for yet another conceptualization of the relationship between art and its institutions and called for the transformation of governmentality and the establishment of new kinds of institutions. This, clearly, was a constructive institutional critique that demanded the constant and reciprocal redefining of the art system and art institutions by those involved in art production as a process in which the art system and art institutions would not only facilitate and present artworks but would also establish a more direct connection between art and society. In this way, the vicious circle of discussions of the autonomy of art would be avoided.

In Raunig's view, "instituent practices" are understood in opposition to what Antonio Negri calls "constituent power" – that is, "a permanent process of *con*stitution". For Raunig, indeed, "*in*stituent practices thwart the logics of institutionalization; they invent new forms of instituting and continuously link these instituting events."[11]

11 Raunig, "Instituent Practices", 7.

What is more, 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 a bad reality. Nor is it to be understood simply in the way that Antonio Negri's concept pair "*con*stituent power/constituted power" is conceptualized, necessarily in relation to being instituted or constituted power. Rather, "*in*stituent 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.[12]

12 Raunig, "Preface", xvii.

Raunig goes on to note:

> But while fleeing, "instituent practice" searches for a weapon. Introducing "monsters" into existing institutions, it gives birth to new forms of institutions: monster institutions.[13]

In this respect, it's very clear that what according to Raunig is the "transversal quality" of artistic institutional critique actually goes far beyond critique; one needs a new concept to define it (and Raunig himself supplies the name). At the same time, he recognizes that the transversal quality of artistic institutional critique does not only challenge and thwart the borders of the field of art; the strategies and specific competencies of art can also be deployed to spur on a general reflection on the problems of institutions, the predicaments of critique and the openings for new "instituent practices".[14]

Even some of the more recent institutional critique artists assume, wrongly, that subversive art as a system is independent of the overarching societal rules because, supposedly, subversive artists do not comply

13 Ibid. Such considerations led Raunig to collaborate with the Spanish Universidad Nómada on a special issue of the online journal *transversal* entitled "Monster Institutions" (May 2008); http://eipcp.net/transversal/0508 (accessed 1 June 2013).

14 Ibid

with the existing societal, political, and cultural rules. But this sounds as if we are not yet completely finished with the notion of artists as lunatics or outcasts: people who are allowed to, and able to, exist beyond or despite societal rules, but who are also viewed as martyrs who suffer from not being understood or accepted by the very society whose rules they shun.

Creating networks and collaborations with cultural institutions, corporate workers, student groups, and other artists inevitably raises questions about the artist's role in contemporary society. At the same time, new structures, models, and media – e.g. objects, photography, videos, advertising, massmedia formats, urban and social interventions, workshops, study groups, discussion forums, and opinion polls – develop during preparations for each new project precisely through consultations with new networks of collaborators. The concept "agency" suggests not only a physical institution but also action, or catalytic reaction, through mediation and with the goal of initiating change. The role of the artist, then, can be defined, more concretely, as that of an agent who places his services at the disposal of society even as, at the same time, he embarks on its symbolic "purification". What was once "social sculpture" (in the tradition of Joseph Beuys) can today be called "social agency": something that works through artists-agents towards the self-assessment and transformation of art.

In a number of different projects, Pogačar deploys *naming* and *renaming* as specific strategies in different cultural and socio-political contexts where he seeks to address the absence or misrepresentation of certain social groups in the public space. Projects such as *Monument to the Unknown Sex Worker*, *MonApoly*, and *Attention! Women in the City* dealt with the potential of naming to change the future in a positive way.[15]

For a few days in 2002, the *Monument to the Unknown Sex Worker* was erected in Ljubljana as a "temporary monument". It was conceived as a parody of the public unveiling of monuments and was accompanied by a round table discussion entitled "Globalism and New Exclusions". Based on an awareness of the synergies and contradictions in contemporary society – marked inevitably by the layering of past and present, of the public, the communal, and the individual, of artist and administrator – Pogačar's public urban interventions used a nameplate to reveal stratospheres of different present interests in the dominant situation in specific cities and systems and showed how these interests differed from those of the past (often erased, but with traces remaining in the collective memory, in ar-

15 This last project, in which a number of streets in Ljubljana were temporarily renamed in honour of important women from Slovene history, is presented in the book *The Renaming Machine*, ed. Suzana Milevska (P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute, 2010), 91–92.

chives and museums, etc.) as well as from the interests desired and hoped for by citizens in the future.

What the artist called a "temporary monument" in fact pointed to the instability of the public space and the specific fragmentary and heterogeneous nature of monuments, which can emerge as a spontaneous performative and non-linear subjectivity. One is reminded here of Henri Lefebvre's notion of the right to the city as a kind of generalized spatial *autogestion*:

> But for Lefebvre the right to the city "is like a cry and a demand" through which inhabitants declare their intention to begin a struggle to manage the production of urban space themselves, without the State and without capital. It is the most radical of political visions, one that is deeply Marxist in its rejection of capitalism and also deeply anarchist in its clear-eyed resolve to struggle against the State and its management of space. Because the right to the city necessarily implies spatial *autogestion*, it can never be content with management of space by State representatives *on behalf of* inhabitants.[16]

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16 Mark Purcell, "Lefebvre, the Right to the City, and Chris Butler" (review of Chris Butler, *Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life, and the Right to the City*), posted on Purcell's blog *Path to the Possible*, 20 April 2013, http://pathtothepossible.wordpress.com/2013/04/20 (accessed 1 June 2013).

Ever since the term *recuperation* was used by Guy Debord and the Situationists in the 1950s and 1960s to describe the procedure by which mainstream society takes an artist's radical idea and repackages it as a safe commodity, artists have been trying to find a successful strategy for defeating this almost mandatory societal effect.[17] Recently, theorists have argued that we are urged to rebel against the system in order to gain access to it: that is how the system works since, in any case, it overarches everything.

Therefore, according to *recuperation* as a critical concept, the artistic desire to subvert social norms is condemned to failure from the start. Guy Debord, the Letterist International, and later the Situationists' ideas about *dètournement* imagined "turning expressions of the capitalist system and its media culture against

17 In contrast to the common medical use of the term *recuperation* as the period of recovery from illness (from the Latin *recuperāre*, "to revive, recover"), Debord uses the word to refer to a sociological process through which radical ideas and images are distorted, co-opted, and absorbed by the mainstream culture of bourgeois society. *Recuperation*, then, is the cultural appropriation and incorporation of subversive works or ideas by turning them into commodities. See *Internationale situationniste* 8 (January 1963), 29–33; Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1967); and Tom McDonough, ed., *Guy Debord and the Situationist International* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004).

itself", and against *recuperation* (the pessimistic notion that "the system always wins").

However, ironic *dètournement*, although proposed as a critique of society, became a dominant art method that was itself criticized for never proposing any real action or solution. The Debordian tactics applied in institutional critique in 1980s and 1990s (e.g. overidentification, a model developed from Debord's concepts of *dètournement* and *dèrive*) had no aim other than to parody and ridicule the system, as if the artists were, indeed, positioning themselves above or outside the system (we should note that Debord and the other Situationists did themselves become involved in such social actions as wildcat strikes, although their artworks did not).

Pogačar's projects are conceived precisely to unravel the internal paradoxes and potentials of contemporary visual representation and the restructuring of physical labour in comparison with the specific nature of non-material, intellectual, and sexual labour. In addition, by establishing and orchestrating complex circuits of procedures and relationships, which often focused on the collaboration and participation of local individuals and people affiliated with the various hosts (art, cultural, and research organizations), Pogačar proposes different modes of art production. It is important to note that, regardless of the ironic background of his proposal, it is made in earnest, as a functional idea,

but only if art is taken seriously and artistic intellectual labour is understood as having the same capacity as any other intellectual (or sexual) labour.

Through an intelligent operation of subverting physical and sex labour to produce something as rarefied and incorporeal as art, what may seem like a play on words (e.g. in the *Daspu* or *MonApoly* projects) becomes the starting point for an urgent discussion of the role of art as work in contemporary society and everyday life.

Pogačar's projects, however, are not based on one-time interactions. Most of his projects employ various quantitative or qualitative research methods over a long-term engagement with the chosen topic; these methods provide a background and basis for developing the final art product (whether a video, installation, collaborative performance, social intervention, board game, or something else). His research-based art projects thus require a long-term commitment and complex methodology and discipline; as a result, *agency* and *reverse recuperation* are only two of the techniques that the artist has explored and developed over his long and consistent career.

In practice, authoritarian rule has always played an important part in the governing of states, including those that declare themselves committed to maintaining and defending individual liberty.

Even now, coercive and oppressive practices are clearly employed by many governments.[18]

Under such conditions, the use of *reverse recuperation* as an artistic strategy by contemporary artists, though ambivalent, can create what is often the only available space for reacting to the rule of governments that "govern too much".

In my interpretation, *reverse recuperation* is a recently developed strategy by artists who do not position themselves outside the society or institution or seek only to subvert the system but who also try to intervene in art's own institutions, structures and entangled relations. Using reverse recuperation, such artists strive to contribute to social transformations through concrete actions that, in a way, "outwit" institutional and governmental recuperation. They seek to expose, question, and change established hierarchies within different kinds of work as well as rules that need to be reshuffled and redesigned from within.

These artists position themselves as a kind of "think tank", or internal societal control mechanism, to re-evaluate the common good for the future and well-being of citizens and workers. Thus reverse recuperation and artist-agents function as cultural media-

18 See Barry Hindess, "Politics as Government: Michel Foucault's Analysis of Political Reason", *Alternatives* 30, no. 4 (2005): 389.

tors or even "traffic regulators" for different concepts and programmes in a process that can potentially introduce new dialogues and deliberations on the common social and cultural ground.

Ever since Gayle Rubin published her article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", the phenomenon of prostitution, or "sex work", has inevitably been linked to Lèvi-Strauss's general theory of exchange, better known in anthropology as "alliance theory".[19]

In her article, Rubin used established anthropological and socioeconomic approaches (notably, theories of kinship systems and Marxism) to explain the development of sexual oppression in society. Soon after her article was published, the term "sex work" was introduced as a way to overwrite the negative connotations of the word "prostitution" and counter the stereotyping and debasement of women and men who work in the sex industry.

Here it should be acknowledged that negative definitions of sex work sometimes arise also as a result of anthropological interpretations of the origin of sex

19 Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex", in Rayna Reiter, ed., *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 157–210.

work.[20] According to Lèvi-Strauss's *alliance theory*, for example, no matter what the choice is, the woman becomes a passive link in a chain based on economic supply-and-demand coupling.[21] Tadej Pogačar's long-term project *CODE:RED*, begun in 1999, looks at the established and developing debates surrounding sex work in social, economic, political, and visual art terms.

At the same time, it opens a discussion that goes far beyond Lèvi-Strauss's and Rubin's arguments. The idea that patriarchy is based on the endless exchange of women between men in a chain of give-and-take

20 The terms "sex work" and "sex worker" were coined soon after Rubin's article, at a conference in 1978, and are attributed to Carol Leigh (alias "The Scarlot Harlot"), an artist, film-maker, and prostitutes' rights activist based in San Francisco. She participated in the *First World Congress of Sex Workers and the New Parasitism*, which was part of Tadej Pogačar's project *CODE:RED* at the Venice Biennial in 2001

21 Rubin concluded that such systems of oppression are based not on sex but on gender, a classification attached to individuals by their culture and society. Although initially derived from the biological sex division, gender classification is developed through many culturally and socially restrictive models. Judith Butler later developed a gender constructivist theory based on similar assumptions but with a more complex argumentation in psychoanalytic terms. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

rituals and practices – a social critique that became a central argument in feminist scholarship – has evolved over time to allow slightly different interpretive potentials.

In Pogačar's project, instead of clinging to an understanding of sex workers as passive victims, the objects of a circular exchange, the artist views them as subjects and potential agents of change in the socio-economic relations between the genders.

In an ongoing series of events, performances, conferences, workshops, public art projects, and public debates, Pogačar addresses such issues as human trafficking, economics, the social, cultural, health, and human rights of sex workers, as well as other urgent socio-economic and political issues affecting this underprivileged social group. But in all its manifestations, the most important aspect of the project is the artist's effort to locate acts of free will and agency on the part of sex workers instead of complaints and self-victimization.

While viewing sex workers as agents, the *CODE:RED* project also investigates aspects of sex work as a specific form of parallel economy and "disobedience" to the economic system. It functions as a collaborative, interdisciplinary platform that, in its numerous sub-projects, explores the potential for analogue economic models by isolated groups and social minorities.

The artist starts from the fact that on every continent the sex work industry provides a vital source of income for classes that are excluded from the dominant economy. People forced into prostitution usually come from underprivileged groups on the edge of society that are often stigmatized, deprived of their basic human rights, and subject to physical violence. *CODE:RED* researches specific modes of self-organization in these marginalized communities that develop outside the dominant social, economic, and political frameworks and create better conditions for sex work. For example, the project *CODE:RED Sector Zagreb* (2003) resulted in the design of the *WORKING UNIT Z 01* module, a lightweight, mobile piece of architecture whose aim was to

help sex workers carry out their activities in their parallel economy. Consisting of five interior "zones" – a reception area, lounge, hygiene area, work area, and "light zone" – the module could be enlarged or combined with other modules in clusters or end to end. It could also be connected to local power sources and sanitation systems.

On various occasions, in its many editions, *CODE:RED* employed both real public spaces and virtual geography, thus creating an open dialogue between Pogačar, other invited artists, the participating sex workers, and the public. Significantly, the project built on the activities of existing advocacy organizations – groups that were already self-organized and aware of their subversive strengths. The first public *CODE:RED* event, which incorporated the subversive actions of sex worker groups in the urban, media, and virtual environments, took place at the 49th Venice Biennial in 2001 with the official support of the Slovene Ministry of Culture. Called *The First World Congress of Sex Workers and New Parasitism*, and the core part of *CODE:RED Sex Worker Project*, this public platform for discussions and public actions was realized in collaboration with the Committee for the Civil Rights of Prostitutes from Pordenone, Italy. The event ended with a march through the streets of Venice by sex workers who had come to the Congress as representatives from organizations in Europe, Asia, the Americas, and Australia. The route of the march went from the Giardini

through the Piazza San Marco to the A+A Gallery (the Slovene Pavilion).

Most of the event's activities, however, took place in a specially erected white tent near the Giardini on Via Garibaldi. This space was labelled "The Prostitute Pavilion" (*Padiglione delle Prostitute*), an ironic reference to the national pavilions at the Venice Biennial. Here sex workers from all over the world gathered during the opening days of the biennial to discuss issues sex workers face in their everyday lives and professional activities. A special issue of the newspaper *The Sex Worker* was printed in conjunction with the Congress.

A second conference, *The Ultimate Sex Worker Conspiracy Soirèe: Conference and Party*, organized in collaboration with leading sex worker activist groups, was held in New York in 2002, as part of *CODE:RED USA*. Activists from New York, Washington, Boston, and Baltimore participated. The project began with research into the specific social and legal conditions for sex work in New York City.

In the *CODE:RED* projects, Pogačar's P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E Museum of Contemporary Art develops connections between organizations, artists, activists, and sex workers. A special website, with a database and documentation of the project, gives the general public direct access to the project. Through performances, actions, interventions, and other media the participants of the projects exchange views on such issues as the impact of

globalization and new technologies on sex work practices, control of the public body, parallel economies and marginal communities, labour rights, sex workers' civil rights, legal and social regulations, taboos, the circulation of money and women, etc. Most importantly, the artist's collaborations have helped to empower this vulnerable and often criminalized group, which in many cases is seen only as a self-victimized community. Rejecting established models that portray sex workers as victims, the *CODE:RED* project focuses on women who actively participate in deconstructing the routes of exchange between sex and capital from within the sex work industry.

I discussed earlier the notion of *recuperation* and the question of whether artistic quests are necessarily condemned to failure, that is, to being turned into "safe commodities". My question here is whether it is possible, in a single art project, to entangle existing modes of recuperation and at the same time overcome them. At a time when there are many marginalized systems, is it necessarily a bad thing to *turn rebellion into money*? I raise this question in the context of the *CODE:RED* project, where the route of the money is redirected to an unexpected destination, namely, advocacy for the rights of sex workers.

I would claim that the project represents a witty "outfoxing" of neo-liberalism's vicious circle of recuperating subversive art: it uses the system of recuperation itself to benefit marginalized and ostracized communities.[22]

As I mentioned, authoritarian practices are used even in states that declare themselves committed to individual liberties – let alone those that make no such commitment. We see coercive and oppressive practices even in democratic Western countries – in regard to the Romany people, people with AIDS, immigrant communities, and the urban poor. We can see oppression and inequality in the way social services are provided and in the management of large private- and public sector organizations. Authoritarian practices are sometimes even invoked as being necessary for economic liberalization in much of Latin America, in parts of South East Asia, and in Central and Eastern Europe.[23]

How do such practices relate to liberal government? If, as Foucault suggests, the market plays the role of a "test", then it is one that surely cuts both ways, suggesting not only that some people and some fields of activi-

22 I am indebted for this part of my argument to the discussion that took place on the panel "Recuperation of Culture: End of Artistic Rebellion", moderated by Edi Muka at Stacion in Prishtina, Kosovo, on 6 December 2007.

23 Hindess, "Politics as Government".

ty are best governed through the promotion of suitable forms of free behaviour, but also that there are cases in which more direct regulation by the state is required. In this respect, the description of liberal political reason – considered as the rationality of the government of "the state as a whole" as concerned with governing through the promotion of certain liberties – must be regarded as incomplete.

Sex workers may well be the group most affected by such a hypocritical treatment of social and economical liberty. In the later editions of *CODE:RED*, Pogačar has been primarily concerned with the self-regulation, self-organization, and self-sustainability of sex workers' organizations in the liberalization of non-Western "wannabe" neo-liberal markets.

The interactive board game *MonApoly – A Human Trade Game* (produced in an edition of 100) was conceived as a way to bring attention to the new cartography of global sex work and human trafficking. Although in its basic look and structure it follows the famous Monopoly game, its content is completely different and, in a way, both critical and didactic. Following precise rules, players are given information about the global sex trade, activist organizations, the routes of human trafficking, the criminal gangs that run the modern slave trade, and so on. Players can finance the construction of a safe house, give money to groups that fight for sex workers' rights, and take action to rescue

a sex worker from trafficking.[24] In other words, instead of accumulating capital as in the original Monopoly game, the artist's game explains the geopolitics and distribution of sex work – the intensified trafficking of sex workers under global capitalism and the neo-liberal economy – and, at least in a virtual way, acts to recuperate the weak chains of the sex industry system.

The project *CODE: RED Tirana, te mbijetuarut (survivors)* (2005), which was presented as part of the exhibition *Democracies* curated by Zdenka Badovinac at the 3rd Tirana Biennial, was a collaboration with the non-governmental Association of Albanian Girls and Women in support of a safe house for victims of human trafficking who had been forced into prostitution. The organization, founded by former trafficking victims, supports a number of projects to aid residents, including vocational training and help with job placement. They partly fund their activities by producing and selling handicrafts. All their products in the installation at Tirana's National Gallery of Art were on sale during the biennial.

24 The descriptions of Pogačar's projects come, for the most part, from the artist's website, which is conceived as a virtual version of the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art:http://www.parasite-pogacar.si/projects.html (accessed 1 June 2013).

Art critic Jennifer Higgie described the collaborative project as “a sobering reminder of the imagination’s role in recovery”.[25]

In a way, the Tirana Biennial, an institution that might not otherwise have been involved in this important social concern, became an additional marketplace for the sale of goods in support of the shelter. Similarly, another edition of the *CODE:RED* project was the fashion show/performance for the *Daspu* fashion label.[26]

Daspu is an actual fashion label managed by sex workers that has captured the attention of the Brazilian media. The São Paulo Biennial, Latin America’s biggest art show, added a new twist to bringing art closer to people when it hosted a fashion show by sex workers who modelled their own designs.

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25 Jennifer Higgie, “Tirana Biennale 3”, Frieze, no. 96 (January–February 2006), https://www. frieze.com/issue/review/tirana_biennale_3/ (accessed 1 June 2013).

26 Pogačar’s project CODE:RED Daspu was made in collaboration with the Brazilian collective Davida and presented at the 27th São Paulo Biennial in 2006.

Their sex-work T-shirt line sold out, with profits going to the sex workers' advocacy group Davida. The highlight of the show was a wedding dress sewn from towels and sheets from Rio de Janeiro flophouses that featured a bridal veil made of condoms.

Another edition of the project, *CODE:RED Skopje, Lesson 1* (2007), was realized in the capital of Macedonia, a country whose position as a crossroads of East–West and North–South trade makes it a critical hot spot in international human trafficking and forced prostitution.[27]

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27 This project resonates with an earlier Pogačar's project *School's Out* (1997–present) that was first conceived as a site-specific project for the entvid Gymnasium. The Gymnasium's students were active participants. Separate installations featuring teaching materials, instructional aids, and ordinary objects were set up in various classrooms; they addressed the nature of knowledge, relations between students and teachers, instruction, discipline, and control. According to the artist, the series of works that developed later (from 1997 to the present) were made from a desire to explore the modern history of schoolteaching through subjective visual memory. Archival images, borrowed from the Slovene School Museum, depict the processes of teaching, discipline, and control in the 1940s, 1960s, and 1970s; these images are used in juxtaposition with objects and collages. The collages thematized the ideas of classification, visual structuring, and colour coding, using repetitions, emptiness, nonsense, clichès, and humour.

Particularly relevant, too, is the problem of the internal forced migration of sex workers, which has only recently been acknowledged by the Macedonian government under the pressure of activist organizations.[28]

28 Pogačar visited Skopje a number of times for *CODE:RED Skopje, Lesson 1*, for which I was the curator. The project developed around a small group of volunteers, including the human rights expert Žarko Trajanoski; the artist and activist Nora Stojanovik; Marija Toševa and Marija Todorovska, from the Health Options Project Skopje; and Marija Nikolovska, of the International Organization for Migration – Macedonia. The project was also supported in its research phase by the organization Open Gate – La Strada, a Skopje-based women's activist group against violence and human trafficking, and the Cultural Centre Točka, where Pogačar and I had our first meeting with local activists in April 2006.

Because there was no local self-organized community of sex workers, Pogačar took a different approach here, focusing instead on educating high school students about trafficking issues, prostitution, and even the terms “sex work” and “sex worker”.[29] Meetings were held with students at which they were asked to use the walls of the Press to Exit Project Space in Skopje as a blackboard. After a few meetings, the students agreed to write the sentence “Sex workers’ rights are human rights” over and over on the gallery walls. In this way, the artist underscored the role of education in breaking the cycle that perpetuates the oppression and social inequality of sex workers (through verbal, representational, cultural, and other stereotypes); at the same time, the project opened a way to greater tolerance and a better understanding of human rights. Significantly, not long after the launch of the Skopje project, Macedonia’s first self-organized sex workers’ advocacy organization was formed. Consisting of a small group of local sex workers, it was announced on 17 December 2007, the last day of the exhibition. Lat-

29 Five high school students from the Zdravko Cvetkovski Building Construction High School were invited to participate: Marija D., Laze L., Simona L., Elizabeta S. and Marija S. They worked with Pogačar and me under the guidance of their art teacher Ratka Ilievska-Lale. Even though some of the students were already eighteen years old at the time, their parents’ consent was requested due to the sensitive nature of the issue.

er, the organizers of Skopje's first International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers referred to the exhibition as one of the main triggers for the action.

The red umbrella that became a symbol for local participants in the event (some of whom had worked with Pogačar on *CODE:RED Skopje*) was, in a way, related to the red umbrellas that had been carried during the march through Venice at the first *CODE:RED* project (where they alluded to tour guides' use of different coloured umbrellas to distinguish their groups).[30]

Finally, we should stress again that what makes the *CODE:RED* project unique, in all its manifestations, is the intricate combination of various artistic, research, and activist methods over a period of years. Pogačar's goal here is not only to represent and examine the economic, political, and social complexities surrounding sex work but also to offer serious support to sex workers and their organizations in their fight for human rights, equality, and dignity.

30 See the 2007 archive of the "News" on the website of the Health Options Project Skopje, http://www.hops.org.mk/info_en.htm (accessed 1 June 2013).

Pogačar's methods offer some of the most relevant examples today of how artistic practice can help unravel and critique the values of the art system as something different from societal textures and mechanisms. What is more, in some of his actions Pogačar even attempts to propose new societal systems and models for working and living that would make art an organic part of social, economic and political systems – as opposed to operating outside the system or advocating an autonomous art. He teams up with existing independent and self-organized groups and applies their knowledge and experience to pursue common interests in areas where art intersects with other segments of society.

It is important to note, then, that Pogačar's current strategies largely diverge from those used by institutional critique artists in the 1980s and 1990s, such as overidentification (although this was to some degree present in Pogačar's early works, especially those involving *new parasitism*). Realizing that the internalization of institutional critique is filled with contradictions and usually leads to a dead end, Pogačar attempts in

his practice to avoid the two most frequent outcomes, that is, when institutions quickly internalize critiques by appropriating their vocabulary and superficially incorporating new structures, and when artists themselves become collaborators with institutions – teaming up with power, as it were – in order to build their careers.

Institutions that acknowledge criticism are usually strengthened in the process, even if they continue to work under the same rules: an institution constructs itself only after being interpellated by the right kind of critical opposition! On the other hand, when the critics themselves internalize institutional power, practising the same forms of criticism time and time again, it eventually starts to govern their own activities. By continuing to use the same methods, while receiving "protection" from more powerful institutions, they become gate-keepers and agents of a form of negation that itself amounts to the exercise of power, if of a different kind.

In what is clearly a leap forward in his expanding practice, Pogačar's more recent art strategies have focused on the conceptualization of various models of labour and, in particular, on what artists have in common with other professions as a kind of parallel economy and politics. Instead of institutional critique, Pogačar's art is now concerned with new ways to conceive and produce art through reverse recuperation,

that is to say, through a solidarity that empowers weak organizations and individuals. Shifts in societal and artistic institutions make possible a societal agency as both artistic motivation and production. We see something similar with the *tontine*, the new form of credit association that is developing in the Third World: such grassroots communalism "shapes a collective identity, it constitutes a counter-power in the home and the community, and opens a process of self-valorization and self-determination from which there is much that we can learn."[31]

The strength of Tadej Pogačar's art practice resides in the sharing of expertise, authority, funds, and other assets in a way that positions Pogačar not as an artist but as an "agent" who is able to intervene and make gradual shifts in areas where many other better-equipped institutions feel no urgency to act. Although his methods may involve interventions in the social sciences, economics, education, commerce, management, public relations, and other sometimes surprising fields, the results are always related to and directed at art and the art system.

31 Silvia Federici, "Feminism And the Politics of the Commons", *The Commoner*, 24 January 2011, available at http://www.commoner.org.uk/?p=113 (accessed 20 March 2013).

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IV.2

Participatory Institutional Critique and Other Critical Dialogues between Art and Society

The rigorous formalist division between ethical and aesthetic aspects of art, or more precisely the polarized distinction between content and form, and between good and beautiful, has yielded some of the most debilitating outcomes of modernist and formalist theory. The either-or polarity that often results from hierarchical positioning of one of these poles still has a key bearing on our understanding of art's position, and its role in different cultural contexts and in contemporary society in general. The conflation of the realm of philosophy – to which the aesthetic category of the beautiful belongs – and the realm of art has gradually resulted

in a contradictory long-term pursuit of an ever more precise, and false, dichotomy between art and society, as if they could ever be isolated from each other.

Taking the current neoliberal political context as its point of departure, this essay attempts to reveal and disentangle the difficulties that still prevent many art theorists from abandoning completely (or at least partially) modernist ideals and formalist criteria regarding art and the valorization of its production. More importantly, I find it urgent to discuss why and how the sociopolitical factors that enabled the long-term dominance of modernist aesthetics still affect, or more precisely prevent, the embracing of participatory art as a relevant contribution to art theory and art practice. And how participatory art nonetheless continues to develop its strategies despite such skepticism toward its results. The criticism, for example, that participatory art merely caters to societal needs is one of many commonplaces stemming from modernist principles.

I have already argued that the urgency for the emergence of a participatory paradigm shift in the arts (Milevska 2006) stemmed from the uneven development of theory, which was lagging behind art practice. The shift from art focused on the production of art objects toward art that implicated and engaged various subjects (e.g. art producers, mediators, audience members, citizens) in order to create new and relevant relations

amongst them was imagined as an inevitable strategy of intervening in existing distinctions and hierarchies in order to change them, or to dismantle them entirely. However, it must be acknowledged that there still are tendencies to keep the art discourse away from issues of social justice and political reality – justified by the absence of relevant artworks (read: objects) – as well as to interpret art's involvement in such changes as irrelevant and counter-aesthetic.

Such tendencies relate to the implication of artworld structures in the overall sociopolitical and economic systemic structures, to which the art production system belongs by default. Ultimately, the remnants of modernist definitions of art are linked directly to this compromised position, to the production and distribution of art in the market, and to the other usual suspects of the prevailing late capitalist and neoliberal economy. Therefore I want to stress that some of the issues regarding aesthetic and art criteria of evaluation of participatory art are still unresolved. Yet they are pertinent for a more profound understanding of art's changing role in society, and its effort to break with the inherited sociopolitical and economic relationships that facilitated the preservation of the strict division between art and society in the first place.

The death grip of formalist aesthetics' "invigilators": issues of autonomy and positioning – and other contradictions

For a certain limited period after the Second World War, the "*l'art-pour-l'art*" position enjoyed widespread acceptance in Western art theory, as if the ancient ideal of *kalokaigathia*[1] had never existed, and as if socialist and communist policies were the only "culprits" for the contaminated and defiled ideals of an otherwise autonomous "pure" art.[2] When Joseph Kosuth published his early attack on the modernist aesthetics of Clement Greenberg in his essay *Art After Philosophy* in 1969 (Kosuth 1991) – in which he addressed Modernism's falli-

1 Kalokagathia [Ancient Greek: καλὸς κἀγαθός (kalos kaːgatʰós)], *beautiful-and-good*: the Ancient Greek ideal of harmony between noble human personality and any art action (documented in Herodotus and other texts).

2 The modernist "myths" of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, universality, art genius, autonomy, etc. (Krauss 1985) were also influenced by the Russian early formalist school of Viktor Shklovsky and semiotic analysis of art, wherein the issue of the arts' autonomy stemmed from political interventions in both, art's content and form.

bility deriving from its equation of aesthetics and art (stressing the relevance of conceptually focused art vs. form-driven and -evaluated art) – he was not yet ready to fully abandon the idea of art as an entity separate from society. Nevertheless, ever since Hal Foster published the critical reader *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture* (Foster 1983), the problems with calling for art's *autonomy* from its contextual background have become clearer, although such "anti-aesthetic" art tendencies had already co-existed with modernist art in the past, in avant-garde movements in both East and West (Huyssen 1986).

In this respect, attempts to detach art from the ethical, cultural and social codes and norms prevailing in the period and geopolitical context of its production became questionable and unattainable – for various geopolitical, sociological, and cultural reasons. The reframing of the triangular relation between ethics, aesthetics and art is still partial, although the position of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline (and not only a modernist one) relevant in determining art's definition has weakened. Modernist and formalist aesthetic ideals endured for only a couple of decades, but the unwinding of the short modernist time span via post-structuralist and postmodernist debates became a lengthy endeavor, starting in the late 1960s and continuing all through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. And

there are still sporadic attacks on calls for bringing art back together with its societal context.

The fight with the formalist aesthetic canons and criteria that were instrumental for the prevailing concept of the arts' autonomy is still going on, inducing social change in the art world and elsewhere. The self-appointed modernist "watch" over the quarantine of art practices is still lurking in the established, elitist art world and in complex networks of private galleries, art dealers and collections (both private and corporate-owned) on the one hand, and art critics, curators, museum and biennial directors on the other. Those concerned voices still struggle, "warning" us that excessive concern with societal quality and equality impedes the production of "adequate" art.

Still, artistic concepts, genres and theoretical terms like *community based art, institutional critique, social intervention, relational aesthetics, participatory art, socially engaged art* and *artivism* – all conceived to provide adequate analytical means for better understanding the problems with such modernist dichotomous interpretation of the relations between art and society – still survive, continuing their fight against conservative attempts in the art world to use autonomy as a tool of maintaining the status quo. Ever since the basic conditions for autonomy emerged, the paradoxical

nature of the autonomy of art has become apparent, owing to competing definitions of autonomy that are interwoven and contradictory, because of the different positions of those who claim such autonomy.

There is a dialectical relationship between social and aesthetic autonomy, just as between autonomy and commodification, which should not be forgotten. Artists are free to choose their paths and diversify their justifications for various positions when calling for art for art's sake: whether based on the need for a formalist separation of aesthetic and moral values; or in giving precedence to aesthetic values above all other values; or in staking out a distanced, disinterested Kantian aesthetics; or even in asserting that art is completely independent of life and subject to wholly independent rules of development (Milevska 2009).

One of the biggest paradoxes of the burgeoning "autonomy period" is often forgotten: art could only become autonomous because it was commodified (and thus not yet completely independent in the way artists were originally fighting for) through its involvement in the capitalist market system and the exchange of symbolic values. Adorno's reflections on the relationship between art and society gave way to different interpretations of autonomy, so there can be several different levels of autonomy in art, which makes intersectional-

ity across different levels and registers even more complex (Hamilton 2009, 287–305). Thus a more specific analysis of conceptions of autonomy could clarify the inner paradox of art's claimed right to autonomy. Obviously, there is an overall distinction between social and aesthetic autonomy, but artists and their artworks also belong to differing and often contrasting registers of autonomy depending on their institutional affiliations and/or allies.

The first is the claim to autonomy originating with the artist; he/she uses this claim when speaking and writing in public about the artwork and artistic production, and how it relates to society, both in the Eastern and the Western political and art systems. The second claim to autonomy derives from various institutions that are responsible for the production and presentation of the artwork. They mostly assert their responsibility to define and protect the autonomy of the artwork from intrusion by different sources. The third is the position of published art criticism, which produces texts claiming the right to autonomy and stressing the importance of aesthetic value (often helping the artwork receive an award or be sold). The fourth position is that of the independent art scene and of diverse activist organizations, which are, one must note, not unified; claims to autonomy do arise from certain artists and artworks on this side as well.

The call for the autonomy of subjectivity as a position in the liberal legal societal and political context is, of course, the most complex issue to discuss, because it is never clearly stated or protected by the state. It has often served various purposes when its derailment started threatening the state itself and its interests. Finally, artists' class, gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation, and the specificity of their art production, have made the issue of autonomy even more complex.

If one accepts the general assumption that autonomy is still needed and reflects an unresolved contradiction of an artwork's structure, the conundrums that still remain to be addressed are: What kind of autonomy and for whom? Why do artists and institutions claim the right to autonomy, even in contexts where they have already accepted various "worldly" alliances of political and economic power? The inevitable internalization of a critical position towards institutions ("to bite the hand that feeds") is a two way street. Institutions very quickly internalize the critique aimed at them, appropriating the vocabulary of their critics and sometimes superficially incorporating new structures in order to rehabilitate themselves – a danger already anticipated by Guy Debord (Clements 2011, 18–30). Thus, the institutions criticized in this way may become strengthened in the process, even if they continue to work under the same rules as before: an

institution constructs itself only after being interpolated by the right kind of critical opposition. On the other hand, critical subjects internalize institutional power, practicing the same forms of self-criticism time and time again, to the point where it starts to govern their own activity. By continuing to use the same methods, under the pretext of receiving protection from more powerful institutions, one runs the danger of becoming a gatekeeper oneself, an agent of negation of other art practitioners' right to position themselves critically. This itself amounts to an exercise of power, albeit of a different kind (Milevska 2009).

Participatory art as a critique of institutional and ideological structures

In a recent essay, I addressed the issue of the neoliberal sociopolitical and economic context as one of the major obstacles for fulfilling the promise of participatory art for social change. (Milevska 2016) Distinguishing between two different types of participatory art projects could help clarify some of the contradictions between the enthusiastically set aims of participatory art and the pitfalls set by institutional power. The first type, based on the various waves of artistic and curatorial/institutional critique, is concerned with participation *within* the art system. Such projects deal with the relationship between a) art, art institution and audience, b) artist and art institution (museum, gallery), c) artist and curator, etc. Although important, I see this first branch of participatory art as too self-referential and self-indulging, and consequently much easier to incorporate and co-opt within existing art institutions and immanent institutional frameworks (Milevska 2016).

The second type of participatory art that could be defined as "participatory institutional critique" aims towards more substantial critique and societal change, beyond the confines of the art world. (Milevska 2016) Participatory institutional critique has more ambitious goals and potentials, but it also faces stronger adversaries: the general political climate and its conflicts, or the inherited colonial pretext. Hence the artistic goals and media of such projects vary: performing social and/or anthropological research; issuing calls for restitution, repatriation, and decolonization of institutions; engaging with conflicted local communities, often with unforeseeable but imminent results (Milevska 2018).

Transforming Long Kesh/Maze is one of the most recent projects that has been developed by artists Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, with carefully formulated research questions and a fully developed subtle participatory strategy.[3] The research project first focused on the existing material culture of Long Kesh/Maze, the

3 I am indebted to the artists Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn for generously sharing with me information on the development of the project *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*. The project was developed in collaboration between the artists, and in partnership with Ulster University within the framework of the research project "Transmitting of the Contentious Cultural Heritages through the Arts" (TRACES), Horizon 2020, 2016–2018.

now closed prison just outside Belfast. The closure of the prison, which incarcerated male prisoners from all sides of the Troubles – including Republicans, Loyalists and those belonging to other smaller parties formed in the long period of conflict in Northern Ireland – saw much of its architectural and material infrastructure left behind, abandoned or rendered "homeless". In contrast, many of the handmade objects produced there by the prisoners are now in private hands, having been taken home at their release or gifted to friends and family. More items, salvaged chunks of prison infrastructure and the prisoners' hand-crafted objects, were donated to and collected by various local museums. Both categories of objects, infrastructural or handcrafted, either in private collections or publicly accessible in small community museums, became Krenn and O'Beirn's focus for three years, as catalysts for a complex map of interpersonal relations that were invigorated by the project.

The artists went through a slow and delicate process of identifying and approaching a diverse range of participants, collaborating with people who had first-hand experience of the prison, members of prisoners' families, or people who simply inherited, owned and/or were taking care of objects produced in the prison. In order to gain their trust and produce new productive interactions beyond the long-term political divide,

the artists devised different dialogical methods for working with former prisoners and other participants. For example, they *restaged* and photographed these dispersed objects, occasionally repairing a damaged item. *Reappropriation* and *retelling* were also used as strategies to avoid negatively dwelling on the past, and to overcome previously overdetermined political narratives.

The process of photographing the objects turned performative on both sides. While the artists were *performing/staging* a portable, but professional photo studio, the participants were asked to activate their memory and share short narrative fragments regarding the provenience, meaning and importance of the objects (to them and to the community). The recorded statements and labels were results of the performative "naming ceremony". Each participant was asked to name the object, most often differently from its existing exhibition label. This became the work itself, along with the newly emerged relations between the artists and the communities, as well as between members of the communities; or indirectly, through organized events such as conferences, exhibitions and direct contacts, despite a backdrop of ongoing political tensions.

The collaboration of the artists with the 50+Group of women and their host organization Tar Anall, which

is dedicated to the welfare of Republican ex-prisoners and their families, also utilized the strategy of *retelling*. Various micro-narratives and micro-relations were produced while the women of the 50+Group were making new objects, from memory, using similar techniques and materials to those used in producing original prison-made objects. The various research and participatory models were all used as a kind of empowering reciprocal device, stitching together into one fabric myriad threads and looms to produce a kind of meticulously embroidered network of relations, which otherwise were (and still are) torn apart.For several decades, I have been looking at various contradictions that induced the development of artistic research models and frameworks of collaboration and production. These have been able to work around strictly controlled networks and hierarchized relationships in art, thus challenging traditional institutional structures. For example, in a book about the work of Slovenian artist Tadej Pogačar (Milevska 2014), I proposed a new concept – "reverse recuperation" – as one of the possible artistic strategies for avoiding the cliches of one-directional participatory art. The concept "reverse recuperation" enabled me to exemplify and relate current theoretical concerns with the development of Pogačar's artistic career. He dedicated more than fifteen years of artistic effort – in parallel to other art projects and works

– to collaboration with sex-workers' self-organized communities. During his long-term research, participatory and activist project CODE: RED (1999–2016), Pogačar's interests were invested in the interventions of sex workers within the existing economy and their development of various new models of parallel economy. In multilayered collaborations, artistic strategy intertwined with the activist strategies of different local organizations and cooperation partners around the globe (Slovenia, Croatia, Brazil, Italy, Albania, Greece, Germany, etc.), creating solidarity with and supporting the empowerment of the sex workers, who face difficult working conditions and impediments in exercising their right to work.

I coined and applied the concept "reverse recuperation" as a means of circumventing established, simplistic reading models related to the hermeneutics of self-instituting and self-institutionalized practices (mostly dominant in contemporary Slovenian art theory and practice). It is an alternative umbrella model encompassing artistic strategies that attempt to create more relaxed institutional and organizational structures (sometimes real, but more often fake in legal terms). Within such meta-institutions (e.g. in 1993, Pogačar established the P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art, which was legally registered, but not a real museum), artists develop their own cultural

and artistic policies, focusing more on the democratic and de-hierarchized participation of various marginalized, vulnerable (and often criminalized) communities than on the existing hegemonic and hierarchical principles already at work in most of the existing institutions.

Under the umbrella model of "reverse recuperation", I bring together long-term art projects similar to those undertaken by Pogačar during the last couple of decades. These efforts offer different organizational models and networks and thus are self-instituting in the sense of Cornelius Castoriadis. Both the self-organized sex workers and the artist aimed to empower communities through artistic means, thus acting as antidotes to the co-optation, monopolization and "recuperation" of resources in the arts, fears expressed by Guy Debord in his use of the latter term.

Living with and within the current reigning contradictions in the art world is difficult, especially for artists and curators collaborating with high-profile art institutions. According to George Lipsitz (2000, 80), the inability to speak openly about contradictory consciousness from within or outside of institutions can lead to a self-destructive desire for "pure" political positions that ultimately have more to do with "individual subjectivities and self-images" than with "disciplined col-

lective struggle for resources and power." Lipsitz states that "the ultimate goal behind the pertinent critique of the exclusive and hegemonic institutional models is to overcome the deterministic approach" (Lipsitz, 80).

I would like to conclude with a similarly positive and optimistic understanding of participatory art. Its full potential is still to be unleashed and developed. This can happen only if achieving a quality of relationship among the participating subjects (artists, theorists, curators, audiences and other implicated and interested individuals) is fully accepted as a possible ultimate goal of art. One should not expect this goal to yield any beautiful objects in the conventional sense, regardless of whether this is interpreted as anti-aesthetic, counter-aesthetic, or simply artistic.

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IV.3

The Amplitude of Participatory Art

The issue of accessibility has been already addressed in many different discussions about the reasoning behind the phenomenon of participatory art. Accessibility together with inclusivity and democratisation of museums is regarded as one of the most pertinent motivations and goals that prompted the emergence and development of various participatory art practices that aim to induce social change. (Milevska 2016: 19–20)

This essay intends to make clearer the links between the issues of accessibility, lack of access, and affordance through several theoretical arguments, personal empirical observations, and one example of a participatory art project that focused on accessibili-

ty and access. I want to argue that while the hindered accessibility to art institutions is inevitably interwoven within the main rationale of participatory art practices, the lack of access to societal and political means, infrastructures and protocols is even more relevant for the emergence of participatory art, such are representation and participation in decision making via voting, deliberation, and other democratic processes. However, although the ultimate amplitude of such art projects is undisputed, I also aim to challenge the assumption that participatory art could resolve such complex socio-political, economic and gender issues by default.

The fact that the aims of participatory art projects are not related to the need to openly discuss and change only art institutions and their limitations, but are also deeply rooted in the need to analyse and criticise the socio-political systemic structures and contexts underlines the challenges, contradictions and obstacles that are generated when participatory artists create participatory art which is supposedly not confined to elitist and professional goals but is yet produced within that very system. (Gregorič and Milevska 2017: 10–27)

Let's now look closer at some of these conundrums starting from Irit Rogoff's contentious distinction between access and accessibility. Rogoff detected a certain tension between these two while aiming to clarify at least some of these contradictions and she assertively argued in favour of shifting the focus from the term accessibility towards access:

> For some time now I have struggled with trying to understand how we, in the art world, might be able to shift from a dictated imperative to provide accessibility to displayed culture, to another possibility, one of forging through it, some form of access to the culture at large. (Rogoff 2013: 71)

In Rogoff's view the notion of access is more productive than accessibility. According to her, accessibility rather hinders one of the key motives for trying to involve more people in the arts in the first place – to turn them into active agents in the conversations about art and culture.

> In part this has followed on from a democratizing impulse of inclusiveness, of trying to find ways in which 'everyone', regardless of origins or particularities, might have an entrèe into culture. This has gone hand in hand with the politics of representation and the desire to bring into representation those who might have not seen themselves easily mirrored within mainstream or hegemonic culture. (Rogoff 2013: 71)

The main reason for the need to focus on access rather than on accessibility according to Rogoff is that accessibility assumes that inclusion and representation necessarily mean 'this kind of process by which one sees oneself and one's identity group reflected in culture and therefore taking up a rightful place within it' (Rogoff 2013: 71) and that it's concerning the

assumption that art needs mediation and translation because these groups seem to be undermined as they are regarded as less knowledgeable of contemporary art by default:

> Accessibility also assumes that beyond the politics of representation we also have a commitment to translate that which goes on outside the spaces of display directly into them – that we need to ensure, through these strategies of inclusion, translation, representation, and easy access, that our visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction measurements meet the required targets. At the heart of accessibility is the model of a client-based relationship with consumers who know what they want and can evaluate their satisfaction from it. Within such a set of relations there is no room for the unexpected, the speculative, or the seductive. (Rogoff 2013: 71)

Therefore, for Rogoff the tension between accessibility and access results from the fact that the 'first instrumentalizes the second, turning it into a simple system by which you can consume rather than experience'. (Rogoff 2013: 72) For this she blames the 'nostalgic desire that persists through conventional opposition between creativity and institutions in a classical modernist mode'. (Rogoff 2013: 72) and continues with even harsher criticism of the instrumentalization of accessibility:

> While there is probably not much harm in such backward-looking approaches, they block any newly forged understanding that we are living out a complex entanglement of practices in which it is almost impossible to chart the boundaries between imagining, making, theorizing, questioning, displaying, being enthralled by, administrating, and translating. (Rogoff 2013: 72)

Regardless of how convincingly Rogoff issues her calls for shifting of the paradigms through and within the work in joint experiences of the makers, displayers, and viewers and regardless of how relevant her warnings are that such shifts are entirely lost by overemphasising the calls to accessibility[1], such theoretical and high-brow discussion about the semantic difference between the two terms might sound patronising and tone-deaf. Discussing the issue of accessibility with individuals and communities that struggle to gain not only accessibility but also any visibility, recognition and representation in the art context and cultural institutions would be particularly problematic. This is not the same as saying that Rogoff's arguments are not compelling and valid for the self-indulgent art world. However, given the current institutional conditionality that is a result of the hierarchical systemic structures and the unchallenged contentious historic, material and narrative heritage all too many individuals and communities are not entitled and/or capable of joining and enjoying 'the unexpected, the speculative, or

the seductive' (Rogoff 2013: 71). Rather even if they joined the discussion could be futile and the tension between accessibility and access cannot occur simply because neither of them exists from the outset.[2]

In this respect, what is lacking from Rogoff's generalised analysis is the contextualisation of her critique and how the issue of accessibility differs depending on different ethnic, gender, class or other contexts such as disability, sexuality, citizenship status, etc. A more precise socio-political positioning is needed of such a critical analysis of the emancipatory potentials of art projects that focus on accessibility, and not only in cultural terms, but also in the context of education, art production, decision making of cultural policies, etc. In context of the discussion of the intertwinement and the tensions between accessibility and access due to the neoliberal crisis of identity politics and the limitations that it imposes to accidental encounters and enthusiastic relations necessary for creative artistic processes the acknowledgement of the class, ethnic and gender hierarchies that prevent such reciprocal processes from happening at first place makes Rogoff's analysis only a one-way street and does not explain the various stages of emancipation of the different groups in need of accessibility and eventually access to art debates and production.

Jacques Rancière's definition of emancipation as an 'encounter between two heterogeneous processes'

(Rancière 1995: 63) could be helpful for an understanding of the more complex but relevant tension, the one between accessibility and emancipation. The first process for Rancière is the one of governance. It assumes a creation of community that relies on distribution of shares, hierarchies of positions and functions. This is what Rancière calls 'policy'. The second process is the one of equality, multitude of practices that starts from the assumption that everybody is equal and aims to prove this assumption. (Rancière 1995: 63) Undoubtedly ignoring or undermining the pre-existing societal hierarchies doesn't help and the access would be futile anyway. Therefore, the acknowledgement that there are many participatory art projects that think together the issues of accessibility and access could help in overcoming the generalised theoretical discussion about the tension between the two. (Tunali 2017: 67-75) Artists as Tania Bruguera, Tanja Ostojić, Tadej Pogačar, Alfred Ulrich, Carmen Papalia, the collectives Chto Delat, Etcetera, and Assemble, or the Project Row Houses have all engaged with issues such as accessibility and access to art, education, freedom of movement and citizenship in the context of different communities – e. g. refugees, sex-workers, African-Americans or Roma, homeless, etc. However, without any prejudices they also address how different socio-political contexts that determine the hierarchical relations and intersections of gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race, or capability hinder the access to otherwise

available contents. Thus, accessibility and access are reciprocal and mutually co-dependent.

One of the art projects that in my view addressed both aspects in a subtle and suggestible way was Dan Perjovschi's Room Drawing from 2006 – a project that was 'installed' in the Members' Room at Tate Modern.[3] This particular project is close to my heart not only because of its hands-on approach and potentials to reveal the existing hierarchies in different corners of the art world but also because as a Ph.D. student in London while already being an experienced curator in my home country, North Macedonia, I've been experiencing these hierarchies exactly during that period (between 2001 and 2006) – and most directly and paradoxically I've found out that my curatorial credentials were not valid in the UK. While the openings back home were free of charge and accessible to everybody (it was the period of a slow transition between socialist and neoliberal economy, so the culture was completely non-commercial) and were publicised without any privileges and hidden agendas, in London, I could hardly attend any art event.[4] Without a special personal invitation, paid institutional membership, or expensive tickets for which the long waiting list was also an obstacle it was simply impossible to attend any official opening of an exhibition, conference, performance, etc. Thus, the unique and successful participatory effect of Perjovschi's project, at least in my view, consisted exactly of the given opportunity to non-members

to enter this elitist and prestigious membership-based 'club' (the single annual membership costs £90).

For the duration of the exhibition, Perjovschi turned the walls of the Members' Room into surfaces for his renowned signature 'murals' – black and white graffiti consisting of many combined cartoon-like drawings and texts. Perjovschi's project was a rare opportunity for the artist not only to meet the professionals and members of Tate Modern but also to mingle with the members of the general audience. However, even today all you can read on Tate Modern's web site about the project is: 'Treating the walls of Tate Modern's Members' Room as a blank canvas, Dan Perjovschi creates a witty, provocative and occasionally cutting social commentary, using drawing to deal with socially relevant issues. His work follows the tradition of political cartoonists' drawings which link humorous observations of everyday life with ironic commentary.' (https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/dan-perjovschi-room-drawing-2006)No mention of the open doors of the otherwise secluded space, nor about the new protocols of communication and relationships that were forged in the course of the project.[5]

In the centre of the discussion about accessibility and access is the urgent need to challenge the received assumption that art is not obliged to deliver truth, but it rather constructs it. Even when it aspires

toward grasping certain truths art's main role is not necessarily linked to ontology, gnoseology, epistemology, and critical thinking in general. Art rather clings to its hermeneutical, representational and creative role. Such definitions of art imply that neither art aims to reveal some kind of absolute truth, nor it is about delivering truthful facts regarding various world phenomena. The main rationale behind this argument is the paradox stemming from such a definition of art that still prevails in different contexts in contrast to the social-practice based art and the political activist art that dominate the current non-commercial art scene. According to Trenton Merricks' theory of 'Truthmaker' the assumption that each truth has a truthmaker can be problematic because it assumes that 'for each claim that is true, there is some entity that, by its mere existence, makes that claim true'.[6] (Merricks 2007: xiii) For Merricks, however, each truth depends substantively on being: 'making true' means that: x makes p true only if, necessarily, if both x and p exist, then p is true. (Merricks 2007: xiv) Merricks therefore introduces a certain 'conditional necessitarianism' and explores the question of whether and how the truth 'depends on the world'. (Merricks 2007: xiii)

In this respect, one could conclude that truth exists and can be revealed and accessed as long as the accessibility and access to it exist for all: for the artists, the institutions and for all sorts of different audiences, either individuals or communities that are at various

stages of understanding of art, and this is true regardless to how complex and opaque the meaning of art is.

For various reasons, art comprises and is capable of powers that are not affordable to the state and political centres of power. I want to argue that truth as a social construct that is controlled by the societal structures of power can and should be tackled by various artistic strategies, but it takes a carefully extrapolated and targeted approach towards the stratified audiences and communities. The amplitude and affordance of art for addressing even the most uncomfortable truths about our society are relational.[7] (Gibson 1979: 127) It's safe to state that the affordance of art depends on accessibility. Unfortunately, the inaccessibility of art is definitely one of these uncomfortable truths, and both accessibility and access to art and its institutions should be rethought and reassessed time and again. Participatory art is definitely one of the artistic practices that aim to such reassessment and do it with bigger or lesser success. The current deceptive mechanisms that grind and shape truth on levels that were extremely difficult to anticipate and imagine in the pre-internet and pre-social networks era are mechanisms that are and have been affordable to artists by default. Moreover, by questioning the offered and received truths and by producing new truths and knowledges participatory art and artistic research are capable of drawing relevant intersections between the ontological, epistemological and gnoseological role of art and thus redefining it.

The promise of participatory art is fundamentally based on the need to surpass and overcome this misgiving between the general audience and the art world. However, while on the one hand aiming to open the art institutions towards a more profound involvement of art audiences in the process of artistic practices and productions, on the other hand such tendency towards participation can produce new distinctions and ’elites’ because of the too general invitation to the audiences in different levels of direct involvement without taking into account the multi-layered and stratified audience.

Such differentiation of audiences can lead towards developing more diversified art and cultural policies among curators and art administrators but also towards a greater awareness among the ‘elitist’ museum and gallery audiences of the existence of other publics and participants. Yet the issues of access and accessibility remain fundamental for even starting to think the diverse structure of the audience exactly because accessibility is as complex as the audiences that need the access.

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Notes

1 The Art Review published a very positive, but short review of the book 'Visual Cultures as Seriousness' that didn't question the contentiousness of some of Rogoff's claims: McLean Ferris, Lana, 2014. *Visual Cultures as Seriousness* by Gavin Butt and Irit Rogoff. In: *Art Review*. 10 July 2014visited 20.03.2021 https://artreview.com/april-2014-book-review-visual-cultures-as-seriousness-by-gavin-buttirit-rogoff/ (visited 23 March 2021)

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3 The short description of the project and a video recording of the talk with the artist are still accessible online: Perjovschi, Dan, 2006. The Room Drawing, curator Maeve Polkinhorn, 25 March-23 June 2006, London, Tate Modern. https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/dan-perjovschi-room-drawing-2006 (visited 23 March 2021)

4 Perhaps this doesn't apply to Perjovschi as a native Romanian, but for a completely other reason: The National Museum of Contemporary Art in Bucharest is based in the Palace of the Parliament or People's Palace – Nicolae Ceausescu's building that is one of the largest and most guarded and inaccessible museum buildings in the world.

5 In one of the several emails during the correspondence I had with the artist about this project for this particular essay Perjovschi wrote: ‘Members’ Room is exclusive to the 80.000 members, but they do not come all at once [...] and it’s basically a coffee shop (coffee, sandwiches and sweets and champagne) not open for everybody. And here was the deal. I asked and got permission to open the Members’ Room (5th floor I think but not sure) for everybody the whole week (except on Saturday and Sunday when usually it is full because of the splendid terrace). I had to talk with the Tate director of flux of people (can u believe it?) because of opening for the public to the floor (and elevator) reserved usually for members card holders.’ (email from Dan Perjovschi, 26 March 2021)

6 For a more precise definition of the concept ‘Truthmaker’ as it is defined in philosophy see: Merricks, Trenton, 2007. *Truth and Ontology*. Oxford: Oxford Clarendon Press.

7 The concept of affordance in art and culture was coined by James J. Gibson and first appeared in his 1966 book *The Senses Considered as Perceptual Systems*.

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V | Instead of Conclusion: About the curatorial responsibility in the context of participatory art projects

The Return to *Kalokagathia:*
Curating as Leverage in the Ongoing Dialogues between Aesthetics and Ethics

Abstract:

This essay argues that curating brought back a kind of leverage that redressed the otherwise imbalanced relationship between aesthetics and ethics. Curating lends out to art its innocent and aspirational belief in such a balance because the ethical concerns in art theory and art criticism have long been toned down while form was prioritized over content. Ever since the curatorial profession created its own niche in the art world – started, for example, in the West, in the late

1960s with curators such as Siegelaub, Szeemann, or Lippard – curating began to mediate this relationship, thus helping to activate the catalyst potential of art without having to compromise its formal aspects. More specifically, this essay explores the ways in which theories and practices of curating brought back to mind the ancient Greek notion of *kalokagathia,* the intertwinement of aesthetics and ethics and, with it, other ethical responsibilities, principles, and values that art forgot to address while giving privilege to its formal aspects.

Keywords:

kalokagathia; curating; aesthetics; ethics; sublime; autonomy of art

1. Introduction

Ethical concerns in art, art theory, and art criticism have often been toned down while form in those disciplines and practices has been prioritized over content. Even now, the “*l’art-pour-l’art*” dictum still has its supporters, long after it enjoyed widespread acceptance after the Second World War.[1] This strict division between aesthetics and ethics was also prompted and enhanced by various modernist art discourses and debates that were central to Western European aesthetics and art theory. This division also dominated Eastern Europe during the same period, and particularly, in what concerns me personally (I hail from North Macedonia), the ex-Yugoslavia with its academic and museum programs, even after their cultural policies broke off from the socialist realism that dominated the region at the time [1]. Unofficially, this strict division was also the desired alternative of Eastern European artists who

1 I refer here to the well-known debates stemming from the rigid and class-driven priority that Clement Greenberg gave to aesthetics and to his disdain for content and social engagement.

did not subscribe to the ideologically driven socialist realist aesthetics of the time. However, everything slowly changed in the late 1960s, when the curatorial profession entered the art world and started to mediate this relation between aesthetics and ethics.

In this essay, I want to argue that curating gave art the possibility of renewing the balanced and reciprocal relations that can potentially exist between artistic action and ethics. In other words, curating helped activate the catalyst ethical potential of art, without having to compromise its formal aspects. I want to argue this by keeping in mind a too-often-forgotten notion, namely that of *kalokagathia,* this aspirational ideal of harmony between the beautiful or the aesthetical and the noble and good or the ethical.[2] Armed with this notion, I want to argue that curating helped leveraged

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2 Kalokagathia Ancient Greek: (καλὸς κἀγαθός), meaning the beautiful and good. The word is derived from two adjectives: *kalós*, beautiful + *agathós*, honest, good, noble, courageous, worthy of admiration. This Ancient Greek ideal of harmony between any artistic action and the noble and good human personality is documented in Plato's teaching on the harmony between bodily, moral, and spiritual values (also present in other ancient texts). For example, in Plato's dialogue Lysis the relationship between beauty and goodness is established with an emphasis on both categories as positive human values. Socrates says, "Now I maintain that the good is [the] beautiful. What do you think? (λέγω γὰρ τἀγαθὸν καλὸν εἶναι. σὺ δ'οὐκ οἴει)." [2] (p. 65).

this imbalanced relation between aesthetics and ethics in the context of art. More specifically, I want to explore the ways in which the rise of curating brought back the idea of an ethical responsibility in art alongside other principles and values. Starting with the etymology of the term curating, which by default puts an emphasis on embedded ethical positions and principles, my aim is to show that in the last decades of the twentieth century – and more specifically at the end of 1960s – curating had a radical effect on art that helped redefine art's role in society.

Although the relation between aesthetics and ethics was never perfectly balanced, the role of this relation in the interpretation and evaluation of art never got defined during the modernist period, with its unchallenged hierarchy of aesthetics over ethics. This lack of challenge and this predominance of formalist aesthetics had an overwhelming and long-term impact on the general understanding of the potential for art to have a societal and ethical role. This is obviously the result of a systemic flaw and of the infra-structural conditions in museums, galleries, and other art institutions throughout the period. However, it is also the result of the institutionally and politically preferred formalist discourses that have created obstacles for any in-depth discussions of the reciprocal relation between ethics and aesthetics. Not only did this affect and undo the existing relations between the two fields in the past, such divisions still exist and prevail today – both in the

professional debates and in the wider sphere of culture that appropriated the curatorial phenomenon in the broader sense of this term [3].

In this essay, I will only address a couple of theoretical "heavyweights" (namely, Adorno and Kant) who still influence this bias towards the aesthetic and against the ethical concerns of art. In doing so, I will not be discussing the endless conundrums arising from the personal ethical positions of individual curators. I will also not be delving or exploring the specificities of certain curatorial movements that privilege and overestimate the importance of the role of curators over and beyond that of artists. Finally, I will opt for a slightly conjectural and speculative tone in order to address this long debate and a possible way out of it.

2. The Sublime and the Evil in Art

In different periods of the history and theory of art, the broken link between the aesthetic category of the beautiful and the ethical category of the good has always been supplemented or justified by other categories. Ever since Theodor Adorno wrote the enigmatic statement “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” [4] (p. 34), his words have been used as a slogan for justifying the imbalance between aesthetics and ethics, especially when the harmony between the two is seen as something impossible to achieve. However, Adorno’s words have often been misquoted and their meaning has been misconstrued, thus reverberating with discomfort and unease especially for artists who continued making work. This is partly due to the fact that the statement juxtaposes poetry with the site of one of the most incomprehensible Nazi crimes, thus stressing their un-thinkability together [4] (p. 35). This is also due to the fact that Adorno’s words stand as an overt admission of the paradox that humans are incapable of understanding and representing various human phenomena, or more concretely, of translating their own deeds, and particularly negative ones, into art.

This, however, is not the same as to say that art cannot engage in ethical debates and oppose violence, injustice, or other social ills. On the one hand, Adorno's statement has served as an excuse for apolitical silence, refraining from taking a political position due to its metaphysical impossibility. On the other hand, modernist abstention from representation and Adorno's negative dialectics can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the admission of ethical impairment and the inability to understand and represent human nature, even if various artists early in mid-twentieth century had different explanations for the urgency of abstract, anti-representational, and formalist art. It comes as no surprise then that, in his landmark essay, "The Sublime is Now" (1948), the American abstract expressionist painter Barnett Newman stated that the category of the sublime – "this impulse of modern art" – resides in a "desire to destroy beauty" [5] (pp. 170–171), since beauty prevents the artist from realizing man's desire for the exalted, for the sublime.[3] For Newman the preoccupation with the beautiful has impeded the perception of "the Absolute", particularly in religious art, with its emphasis on the figurative [5] (p. 170).

3 The impossibility of representation was best exemplified by Barnett Newman's sculpture *Broken Obelisk* (1963).

All throughout the modernist period, when all arguments against representation were respected, the sublime has been pushed forward as the best justification for abstraction, as a kind of a mystical device enabling one to think the un-representable. Barnett Newman's view accords here with that of philosophers Immanuel Kant and Edmund Burke. For example, in his text, "Analytic of the Sublime" (1790) in *The Critique of Judgment*, Kant locates examples of the sublime not only in nature, but also in the human condition. He famously argues that the sublime, unlike the beautiful, "cannot be contained in any sensible form, but concerns only ideas of reason" [6] (p. 99).

Interestingly enough, this radical critique of the aestheticization of art could also be interpreted as one of the steps that later enabled the inevitable return towards the rapprochement of the aesthetical and the ethical in art. According to Kant's and Burke's definitions, what sublime and evil have in common is incommensurability and incomprehensibility. As Phillip Shaw writes: "The sublime ... is on the side of the mind rather than nature; and since the extent of the mind is unbounded it cannot be adequately represented by

an object with determinate bounds" [7].[4] I want to argue here that this negativity in the Western metaphysical tradition (which goes as far back as both Eastern and Western mystical traditions of discussing negative theology and its arguments about the possibility for humans to comprehend and overcome their limits and essence) still influences our belief in humanity's potential to change the trajectory of its development and re-define its own nature. The limits of human capacity to understand this are responsible for the conceptualization of both the sublime and evil, often leading to bewildering statements that eventually end up conflating the two, as was, for example, Damien Hirst's statement that "9/11 [was] wicked but a work of art" (despite the fact that they operate in completely different registers) [8].[5]

4 According to Phillip Shaw the "subject matter" of Newman's work is "creation itself", "an act associated no longer with God but with man." This discussion is in a way related to several recent philosophical projects that attempt to re-evaluate and rehabilitate the potential of "Prometheanism" and "Enlightenment" beyond a simple call to re-think modernist values.

5 Arnold Berleant also argues in his article "Art, Terrorism, and the Negative Sublime" that one cannot dismiss such statements [9].

Any attempt in art to refrain from understanding and/or interpreting the reasons for this confusion is as politically motivated and as dangerous as misinterpretations of Adorno's often simplified statement [10] (p. 234).[6]

In contrast to this statement, terror, politics, and aesthetics are not always interpreted as contradictory as in Adorno's analysis. Adorno's continual revisions and re-interpretations of his own aphorism[7] led to many contradictory positions regarding whether one could comprehend and represent evil and what kind of representations of evil are ethically acceptable. Adorno's critique of the dominant climate of post-war Germany was also directed against the discussions surrounding Heidegger and his denial(s) of his affiliation to National Socialism. Regardless of Adorno's disagreements with Heidegger, the arguments that, later on, Jacques Derrida put forward in defence of Heidegger's refusal to officially distance himself from his affiliation with

6 The best example is the well-known part from Walter Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* in which he reflects on the extreme self-alienation within fascism, which according to him, allows for the destruction of humanity to become an aesthetic experience.

7 Adorno revisited and revised his statement in his *Negative Dialectics,* into "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream." [11] (361).

National Socialism are equally problematic. These indeed seem now similar to Adorno's denial of the potentiality of poetry and language to express the horror of Auschwitz. In the very beginning of the first chapter of his book *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question,* Derrida mentions a possible title "How to avoid Speaking: Denials" that actually exists as a separate text published in several other anthologies. It not only refers to Heidegger but also deals with Derrida's "denial" of the uncritical influence of negative theology and subsequently of its power to speak the incomprehensible.[8] With such post-Adornian inheritance in mind, it becomes now clear of the impact of Adorno's own sentence. Not only did Adorno's original statement question German culture and its future after Auschwitz, it also forced intellectuals around the world to take a stance on whether politically and socially committed art is possible in conditions of incomprehensible cruelty and evil. This coercion raised to the level of universal truth led many socially engaged artists at the time (conceptual, process, and land artists, for example), to be co-opted by form and market forces. Perhaps this is another reason why interpretations of the sublime and evil position themselves in the same register.

8 See [12] (p. 79) and [13] (p. 2).

Although it is obviously unreasonable to equate the ethical category of evil with the aesthetic category of the sublime (even though ethical aspects of the sublime were already discussed by Kant), one should acknowledge that these two categories share a certain negative dialectic and even negative theology, and this correspondence needs a more profound analysis. The central question here, for me, would be why certain periods privilege silence over loud protests (the demand for politically engaged art in the 1970s versus the insistence on formalism in the 1980s, for example), passivity over active response to what is shunned as wrong and evil? An additional question is how evil can be represented differently than through the sublime, the meaning of which is usually understood as falling under the rubric of the aesthetic? Yet, precisely because the modernist hiatus between ethical and aesthetic arguments has become unsustainable in most recent discussions about art, the difference between the representation of the sublime and evil has become more intricate than ever before. As recent texts have shown, revisiting the theory of the sublime has therefore become urgent and the disenchantment with the sublime remains a rather frequent topic of discussion [14] (pp. 20–42).

3. The Death Grip of Formalist Aesthetics' "Invigilators"

The rigorous formalist division between the ethical and aesthetic aspects of art, or more precisely, the polarized distinction between content and form, and between good and beautiful, has yielded some of the most debilitating outcomes of modernist and formalist theory. The either/or polarity that often results from hierarchical positioning of one of these poles still has a key bearing on our understanding of art's position, and its role in different cultural contexts and in contemporary society in general. Kant's rigorous division between ethics and aesthetics was not the only philosophical legacy that contributed towards the solidification of the modernist "myths" of originality, authenticity, uniqueness, universality, art genius, autonomy, etc. [15]. It was also influenced by the Russian early formalist school of Viktor Shklovsky [16] and the semiotic analysis of art, wherein the issue of art's autonomy stemmed from political interventions in both art's content and form. Given the divisive and politicized culture of the post-war period, the strict division between form and content that was often interpreted as a form of escapism also implied that the socialist and

communist policies were the only "culprits" for these tendencies of social and ethical issues to contaminate and defile ideals of an otherwise autonomous "pure" art.

When Joseph Kosuth published his early attack on the modernist aesthetics of Clement Greenberg in his essay "Art After Philosophy" of 1969 [17] – in which he addressed Modernism's fallibility for having equated aesthetics and art (stressing the relevance of conceptually over and beyond form-driven art) – he was nonetheless not yet ready to fully abandon the idea of art as an entity separate from society. We have to wait for Hal Foster's critical reader, *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays in Postmodern Culture* [18], to see the problems associated with calling for art's autonomy away from its contextual background.

However, such "anti-aesthetic" tendencies in art have always co-existed with modernist art in the past, and specifically, in avant-garde movements in both the East and West [19].

The conflation of the realm of philosophy – to which the aesthetic category of the beautiful belongs – and the realm of art has gradually resulted in a contradictory long-term pursuit of an ever more precise, and false, dichotomy between art and society, as if they could always be isolated from each other. Taking the current neoliberal political context as its point of depar-

ture,[9] this essay attempts to reveal and disentangle the difficulties that still prevent many art theorists from abandoning completely (or at least partially) modernist ideals and formalist criteria regarding art and the valorization of its production despite the vigorous calls for social change in art. The usual criticism, for example, that curatorial interventions merely cater to societal needs is one of the many commonplaces stemming from modernist principles. I therefore find it urgent to discuss why and how the sociopolitical factors that enabled the long-term dominance of modernist aesthetics still affect, or more precisely prevent, the embracing of ethically and socially focused art practices as a relevant contribution to the art field, dubbing them "politically correct art." Furthermore, how the socially engaged art that is concerned both by ethical and aesthetical demands nonetheless continues to develop its strategies, despite such skepticism toward its results.

I have already argued elsewhere that the urgency for the emergence of socially and politically engaged art such as, for example, community-based art or collaborative and participatory art stemmed from the un-

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9 This neoliberal political context refers to all the market-oriented policies set in place in democratic countries, both in the West and East, that are largely responsible for the widest range of social, political, ecological, and economic problems. On this use, see, for example, [20].

even development of theory, which was lagging behind art practices in terms of ethical concerns [21]. The shift from art focused on the production of art objects toward art that implicated and engaged various subjects (e.g., art producers, mediators, audience members, citizens) in order to create new and relevant relations amongst them was imagined as an inevitable strategy of intervention in the existing distinctions and hierarchies in order to change or dismantle them entirely. However, it must be acknowledged that there are still many trends in the art world to keep both the art discourse and art theory away from issues of social justice and political realities – mostly justified by the supposed absence of relevant artworks (read: objects) – as well as to interpret art's involvement in such changes as irrelevant and ultimately counter-aesthetic. These trends, so visible in biennales and other fairs, only reveal the fundamental fraught infrastructures of art, which are in Europe and elsewhere mainly driven by privileged, white, and patriarchal orders, including those hiding under the bandwagon of neoliberal feminism.

Furthermore, such trends often reveal the interconnectedness of art-world structures to the wider socio-political and economic systemic structures to which the art production system belongs by default. Ultimately, the remnants of modernist definitions of art are directly linked to this compromised position that sees socially and politically engaged art remain dependent on the production, distribution, and marketisation of art and

on the many other structures that underpin the prevailing late capitalist and neoliberal economy, such as, for example, the world-wide use of social media and its many coopting tactics. Therefore, I want to stress that some of the issues regarding the aesthetic criteria of evaluation of socially engaged art are still unresolved. Yet they are pertinent for a more profound understanding of art's changing role in society, and its effort to break with the inherited sociopolitical and economic relationships that facilitated the preservation of the strict division between art and society in the first place.

In this respect, attempts to detach art from the ethical, cultural, and social codes and norms prevailing in the period and the geopolitical contexts of its production became questionable and unattainable – for various geopolitical, sociological, and cultural reasons. The reframing of the triangular relation between ethics, aesthetics, and art is still partial, although the position of aesthetics as a philosophical discipline (and not only a modernist one) relevant in determining art's definition has weakened. Modernist and formalist aesthetic ideals endured for only a couple of decades (the 1960s and 1970s), but the unwinding of this short modernist time span via poststructuralist and postmodernist debates became a lengthy endeavor, starting more or less at the same time and continuing all the way to the 1990s, especially those made by art historians and art

theoreticians reading the incursions made by authors in the fields of deconstruction, semiotic theory, and political theory.

The self-appointed modernist "watch" over the quarantine of socially and politically engaged art practices is still lurking, on the one hand, amidst the established, elitist art world, and the complex networks of private galleries, art dealers, and collections (both private and corporate-owned), and on the other, amongst art critics, curators, museum, and biennial directors. Those concerned conservative voices still struggle, "warning" us that excessive concern with societal justice, ethical, and political concerns, as well as social and racial equality impedes the production of "adequate" art. Even today, there are still many sporadic attacks in the art world against all efforts to bring art back together with its societal context. Against these, it is therefore crucial to look into the way curating intervenes as this is often overlooked and undervalued. Curating in my view indeed adds the necessary weights to the fight against the formalist aesthetic canons and criteria that were instrumental in sustaining the prevailing concept of art's autonomy.

4. The Ethical Conundrums of Autonomy of Art and Curating

Needless to say, artistic concepts, genres, and theoretical terms such as institutional critique, social intervention, relational aesthetics, participatory art, socially engaged art, artivism, as well as those we already highlighted earlier, namely, community-based art and collaborative art, were all conceived to provide adequate analytical means for better understanding the problems associated with the modernist dichotomous interpretations of the relations between art and society. They all contributed towards enhancing the importance of the ethical positions in the context of art. This means that curating did not act in an ethical vacuum, but it did so in a paradoxical way. On the one hand, curating helped both art and artists to survive and to continue their fight against conservative attempts in the art world that still use the autonomy argument as a tool for maintaining the status quo, but on the other hand, it made even the most radical art susceptible to institutional recuperation and self-cooptation in the neoliberal contexts described earlier. Curating's intervention was therefore always ambiguous and the cooption of curators and artists alike never far from the

kinds of discourses held by formalists and conservative proponents.

This paradox is not, however, unique. Ever since the basic conditions for autonomy emerged, the paradoxical nature of the autonomy of art has become apparent, owing to competing definitions of autonomy that are interwoven and contradictory because of the different positions of those who claim such autonomy. The dialectical relationship between social and aesthetic autonomy, just as between autonomy and commodification should not be forgotten. Artists are free to choose their paths and diversify their various positions when calling for "art for art's sake": calling for a formalist separation of aesthetic and moral values; giving precedence to aesthetic values above all other values; staking out a type of distanced and disinterested Kantian aesthetics; or even asserting that art is completely independent of life and subject to wholly independent rules of development [21, 22].

One of the biggest contradictions of the burgeoning "autonomy period" is often forgotten: art could only become autonomous because it was commodified through its involvement in the capitalist market system and the exchange of symbolic values. Adorno's reflections on the relationship between art and society gave way to different interpretations of autonomy, so there are different levels of autonomy in art, which makes shifts and moves across different levels and registers

even more complex and paradoxical [23] (pp. 251–66). Thus, a more specific analysis of conceptions of autonomy could clarify the inner contradictions of art's claimed right to autonomy. Obviously, there is an overall distinction between social and aesthetic autonomy, but artists and their artworks also belong to differing and often contrasting registers of autonomy depending on their institutional affiliations and/or allies.

Let me survey a few of these artistic registers of autonomy. The first is the claim to autonomy originating with the artist. He/she uses this claim when speaking and writing in public about the artwork and how it relates to society, both in the Eastern and the Western political and art systems. The second claim to autonomy derives from various institutions that are responsible for the production and presentation of the artwork. They mostly assert their responsibility to define and protect the autonomy of the artwork from intrusion by different sources. The third claim is the position of published art criticism, which produces texts advocating for the right to autonomy and stressing the importance of aesthetic value (often helping the artwork to receive an award or be sold). The fourth, but not last, claim is that of the curation on the institutional or independent art scene and of diverse activist organizations, which are, one must note, not unified. Claims to autonomy do arise from certain artists and artworks on this side as well. The call for the autonomy of subjectivity as a position in the liberal legal societal and political

context is, of course, the most complex issue to discuss, because it is never clearly stated or protected by the state. It has often served various purposes when its derailment started threatening the state itself and its interests. Finally, artists' class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, and the specificity of their art production have made the issue of autonomy even more complex.

If one accepts the general assumption that autonomy is still needed and reflects an unresolved contradiction of an artwork's structure, the conundrums that still remain to be addressed are: What kind of autonomy and for whom? Why do artists and institutions claim the right to autonomy, even in contexts where they have already accepted various "worldly" alliances of political and economic power? The inevitable internalization of a critical position towards institutions ("biting the hand that feeds") is a two way street. Institutions very quickly internalize the critique aimed at them, appropriating the vocabulary of their critics and sometimes superficially incorporate new structures in order to rehabilitate themselves – a danger already anticipated by Guy Debord's discussions with regards to media, appropriation, and recuperation [24] (pp. 18–30).

Institutions criticized in this way may become strengthened in the process, even if they continue to work under the same rules as before. On the one hand, an institution constructs itself only after being interpolated by the right kind of critical opposition. On the other hand, critical subjects internalize institutional power, practicing the same forms of self-criticism time and time again, to the point where it starts to govern their own activity. By continuing to use the same methods, under the pretext of receiving protection from more powerful institutions, these supposedly critical institutionalized subjects run the danger of becoming at best gatekeepers, at worst, agents fighting other art practitioners' right to position themselves critically. This itself amounts to an exercise of power, albeit of a different kind [22].Under the umbrella model of "reverse recuperation", I want to address long-term concepts undertaken by various curators and artists during the last couple of decades. It is one of the possible artistic strategies for avoiding the clichès of one-directional participatory relations. I arrived at this "reverse recuperation" while writing a book about the work of

Slovenian artist Tadej Pogačar [25]. Tadej Pogačar has dedicated more than fifteen years of artistic effort – in parallel to other art projects and works – to collaboration with sex-workers' self-organized communities. During his long-term research, participatory, and activist project CODE: RED (1999–2016), Pogačar's interests were invested in the interventions of sex workers within the existing economy and their development of various new models of parallel economy. He curated multilayered collaborations that were combined with his artistic strategy and intertwined them with the activist strategies of different local organizations and cooperation partners around the globe (Slovenia, Croatia, Brazil, Italy, Albania, Greece, Germany, etc.). These projects acted in solidarity with and supporting the empowerment of sex workers who faced difficult working conditions and impediments in exercising their right to work.

This "reverse recuperation" is a means of circumventing established, simplistic reading models related to the hermeneutics of uncritical self-instituting and self-institutionalized practices that have career advancement as their only aim in order to ultimately establish themselves in existing institutions. It is an alternative umbrella model encompassing artistic strategies that attempt to create more relaxed institutional and organizational structures (sometimes real, but more often fake in legal terms). Within such meta-institutions (e.g., in 1993, Pogačar established the

P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Museum of Contemporary Art, which was legally registered as an institution but had no real museum building), artists-turned-curators develop their own cultural and artistic policies and ethical principles, focusing more on the democratic and de-hierarchized participation of various marginalized, vulnerable (and often criminalized) communities than on the existing hegemonic and hierarchical principles already at work in most of the existing institutions.

These efforts offer different organizational models and networks and are thus self-instituting in the sense developed by Cornelius Castoriadis [26] (p. 373). Both the self-organized sex workers and the artist aimed to empower communities through artistic means, thus acting as antidotes to the co-optation, monopolization, and "recuperation" of resources in the arts, fears expressed by Guy Debord in his use of the latter term [27].[10] Living with and within the current reigning contradictions in the art world is difficult, especially for artists and curators collaborating with high-profile art institutions.

10 Guy Debord uses the term "recuperation" (from: Lat. *recuperare*: revive, recover, revive) in order to encompass the sociological process by which any radical ideas and images can be twisted, co-opted, and absorbed by mainstream and official culture and media in bourgeois society [27] (pp. 29–33, 4).

According to George Lipsitz [28] (p. 80), the inability to speak openly about contradictory consciousness, this Gramscian term to explain how American workers in the nineteenth century exercised a "half-conscious complicity" in their own victimization can lead to a self-destructive desire for "pure" political positions that ultimately have more to do with "individual subjectivities and self-images" than with "disciplined collective struggle for resources and power." Lipsitz states that "the ultimate goal behind the pertinent critique of the exclusive and hegemonic institutional models is to overcome the deterministic approach" [28] (p. 80); that is, this feeling that there is nothing to be done, and that as victims, we are de facto complicit. A curators' role in such a context becomes even more complex, even though it is always called to negotiate and balance the critical struggle between the power and truth.

6. Conclusions

Although the arguments put forward until now are rather bleak, I want nonetheless to conclude with a positive and optimistic understanding of curatorial agency. In my opinion, curating's full potential is still to be unleashed and developed, but this could happen only as long as the ethical quality of relationship among the participating subjects in the global art scene (art institutions, artists, curators, theorists, audiences, and other implicated and interested individuals) is interpreted and fully accepted as a possible end-goal for art. This cannot only be the production of beautiful objects, regardless of whether this is interpreted as anti-aesthetic, counter-aesthetic, or simply art. The concept of critical curating that emerged in the 1990s, came out of such a necessity to differentiate curatorial engagements in research, knowledge production, and critical theory from the ones dominated by the managerial, organizational, and promotional approach to curating as uncritical assembling and representing art works and objects due to the pressure and expectation of neoliberal art markets.

For several decades now, I have been looking at various contradictions that were provoked by the development of collaborations between curators and artists. I have also been looking at the ethical issues in different models and frameworks, some of which resulted in artistic and curatorial productions aiming towards socio-political and ethical changes in the art scene. These collaborative projects and frameworks were able to work around strictly controlled networks and hierarchized relationships in art, thus challenging traditional institutional structures. There is therefore some hope in the way these models and projects challenge the complacency and conservatism of formalist and aesthetic institutionalized structures.

However, I want to finish by emphasize the importance for curating of the term *kalokagathia* as a way to bridge the aesthetical and ethical principles in art. To do so, I simply want to go back to the original meaning of the term *kalokagathia*. Even in Plato's dialogues, it is not completely clear whether the beautiful and good are thought together as one and the same, because there are several philosophical and linguistic nuances that should never be overlooked when applying *kalokagathia* to contemporary contexts. For example, the meaning of Plato's term *kalos* is not completely symmetrical to the contemporary meaning of the word "beautiful", which is sometimes translated

as “fine”.[11] However, the asymptotic proximity and striving towards harmonization of the two is an ideal that, even if it is to be revived, faces a lot of obstacles. This challenge could be looked at through the prism of what was dubbed “felicitous acts” by J. L. Austin in the context of his speech act theory. According to Austin, the difference between what one says and what one does depends on the context and circumstances, and hence, the context can substantially affect fulfilment of a promise [30] (p. 100). With regards to *kalokagathia,* a felicitous act is therefore one in which the act is considered not just pertinent or relevant to a given context but manages in and for that context to bridge the gap between the aesthetic and the ethic or between the beautiful and the good.

11 For Plato, the relationship between beauty and art is not one of simple equivalence, but it is definitely related to form. Furthermore, Plato also uses another term, *kalon*, that is even closer to the ethically charged “goodness.” Finally, the often-quoted line from Plato’s *Lysis* has two different possible translations: “the beautiful is the good” and “the beautiful is good” because the Greek grammar does not allow “to discern whether *kalon* is a predicate adjective or a predicate substantive, nor does the context allow us to disambiguate” [29] (p. 147).

The key here is to keep in mind that curating is often more reliant on the socio-political context than the art itself. This means that when it comes to a felicitous *kalokagathian* curatorial practice, the evaluation of the "success" of the said practice is often more resistant to a simple assessment of its impact because of the contradictions between the personal, ethical, and social positions of the artists. When the "stage" is not a theatre stage, as in Austin's examples, but is instead the general socio-political arena that determines the "success" of art, curating is in a way protected, shielded in the way it adds a new contextual layer, since it creates a new set of socio-political and community rules. In doing so, any curatorial agency that deliberately seeks to implement Plato's forgotten term as part of its endeavors can substantially fulfill its ethical and aesthetic promises. Even if it does not change the world's ethical and socio-political issues, it can at least create a potential micro ethical climate of its own.

I want to give here an example of what could be perceived as a felicitous *kalokagathian* curatorial project. The project focused on the porous borders between three countries in East India: Coochbehar in West Bengal (on the border of India/Bangladesh), Dzongu in Sikkim (on the border of India/Bhutan), and Karimguni in Assam (on the border of India/Bangladesh). These borders were roughly drawn up during the 1947 partition, dividing communities with relatives on one side, for example Bangladesh, and other relatives in

the other, for example India. However, the partition was not done systematically everywhere. This resulted in the creation of specific no-man's lands, with inhabitants, for example, not knowing for decades, whether they belonged to India, Bangladesh, or Bhutan. Inhabitants would often have no citizenship, formal education structure, health care system, or employment rights. The project, called *Project Borderland*, was curated by Anshuman Dasgupta in 2013. It emphasized interactivity and collaboration with the local communities with a view of sharing knowledge about the local area. Using Poor Theatre techniques,[12] the aim was to create communal maps to help these communities in their struggle to acquire a sense of place in one or the other country. The felicitous curatorial outcome was that some of the participants reconfigured their understanding of these no-man's lands and started the process of acquiring if not a citizenship, at least a place to call home. This is *kalokagathian* in as much as it bridges the gap between the beautiful cartographies drawn by the communities and the ethical imperative of enhancing knowledge and improving lives.

12 The Poor Theatre technique was created by Jerzy Grotowski, the innovative Polish theatre director who wanted to rid cultural productions of all theatrical excesses, such as stages, costumes, and sets (hence "poor"). The map-making workshops in East India were conducted following this technique with minimal curatorial props.

In a response to various urgent issues related to contemporary art, culture, and politics, this type of curating literally calls for bridging both the gaps and the incommensurable dissimilarities between differently conceptualized art practices (e.g., poor theatre, fine art, cartographies), while strongly opposing these hackneyed hegemonic forms of curating that impose themselves to the art of disenfranchised communities and "subaltern cultures." While aiming to expand the curatorial field and reflect on its social relevance, curators advocating such a type of curating no longer see the exhibition as the ultimate format of their curatorial practice. As culminating manifestations, these curators rather assume the mere research process and, in parallel to their exhibitions, include theoretical critical formats as conferences, seminars, interviews, close reading workshops, projections, public debates, and various online events and platforms that are responsive to actual urgencies.

Overall, one could say that the kind of felicitous *kalokagathian* curatorial practice curators should perhaps aim for and correspond to a type of ethical curatorial agency instead of a bland form of managerial practice. Curatorial agency is a concept that is even more directly indebted to the rethinking of the ethical role of curating in the context of contemporary art, culture, and society [31] (p. 152 and pp. 164–165). Drawing on Alfred Gell's concept of "art as agency", curating indeed can unleash and enhance art's power

to act, instead of just passively representing the world. Curatorial agency assumes that the curator is no longer considered to be a mere presenter of already existing artistic concepts and projects or to be dubbed the "author" of the exhibition. It acts as a social and ethical agency that entrusts its intellectual and theoretical capacities in curatorial knowledge production as well as art for social change and collaborations among curators, artists, and activists. It is embedded as one of the major cultural policy concepts in relation to the urgent need for cultural translation of lesser-known art and cultural traditions inevitably linked to the postcolonial critique and theory.

If conceived in this way, a *kalokagathian* curator is rather assumed as an active societal agent that contributes towards a cross-referential understanding of art and towards the rapprochement between different artistic, cultural, ethnic, class, gender, and sexual camps and moreover, towards improvement of society in general by building the bridge between aesthetics and ethics. Such a practice does not require a particular figure who would master the intricate balance implied in *kalokagathia,* and it does not require a particular platform from which to speak and impose this harmony between the aesthetic and the ethics. It simply requires from anyone who ventures onto this noble path, a kind of social practice of shared learning and doing, one which suffers no top-down managerialism. The danger will always be, of course, the kind

of liberal humanitarianism that these kinds of projects often generate, but this can hopefully be circumvented if the intentions of the curator come after that of the participants involved, whether they be artists or local communities. In doing so, a felicitous *kalokagathian* curatorial practice is therefore an invitation to finally confront the modernist split that modernity instituted between ethics and aesthetics as well as rejecting art's aloof autonomy for the sake of the wellbeing of communities. There is thus still hope that curating's arrival on the art scene can renew our relationship to both the beautiful and the ethical.

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Selected projects that inspired the essays in this publication

1. Tal Adler, Commemoration plaques at the parish church St. Josef Weinhaus, Vienna, 2015
Photo: Tal Adler. Courtesy of the artist. Tal Adler, Commemoration plaques at the parish church St. Josef Weinhaus, Vienna, 2015
Photo: Tal Adler. Courtesy of the artist.

2. Tal Adler, Father Peter Zitta at his office, looking through the window at the commemoration plaque, 2015
Photo: Tal Adler. Courtesy of the artist.

1-2 The photographs 1 and 2 were part of the artistic research project MEMSCREEN (2012-2015). In the course of his research of the Vienna archives of various professional, religious, and cultural associations Tal Adler unravelled many contentious biographic details about some significant personalities from Vienna's history, such as the anti-Semitic and/or Nazi past of some of the most prominent members of the researched associations. Josef Weinhaus is one of the relevant examples. The plaque with detailed information about his anti-Semitic past was installed only after Adler's voluntary participatory research project.

3 - 4. Azra Akšamija and CULTURESHUTDOWN, *Solidarity Day*, 2013
Participatory campaign/photographs, dimensions variable. Courtesy of CULTURESHUTDOWN and the artist.
CULTURESHUTDOWN.NET is a platform that was co-founded by the artist Azra Akšamija in 2012.
The platform comprises over 250 cultural institutions from 40 countries that participated in the protests that were initiated against the decision of Bosna and Herzegovina's Government to close all state cultural institutions because of their unresolved legal status and difficult financial conditions.

5. Luchezar Boyadjiev, *There are no earthquakes in Manhattan,* 1999
Artist's game, computer installation, LCD projection. Courtesy of the artist.

6. Sasha Huber, *Rentyhorn – Correspondence,* 2008
12 letters A4, part of the long-term correspondence of the artist with various responsible institutions requesting to rename the peek Agassizhorn. In collaboration with the platform 'Demounting Louis Agassiz' launched in 2007 by the Swiss historian and political activist Hans Fässler. The reason for the initiative to rename this and many other toponyms that were named after Louis Agassiz (1807-1873) was his involvement in the conceptualisation of the contentious scientific racism. ©Sasha Huber. Courtesy of the artist.

7. Sasha Huber, *Rentyhorn – Intervention,* 2008
Video, 4:30 min. Photograph: Siro Mikeroli. © Sasha Huber. Courtesy of the artist and the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki.

8. 50+ group, Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn. Workshop, 16th August, 2017. Photograph from 50+ Workshop: Work on H Block, cladding with matchsticks. Courtesy of the 50+ Group and the artists.

9. Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, *Thankfully Never Used* 1976-2000, 2018 Project Transforming Long Kesh/Maze, TRACES/Horizon 2020. Stainless steel whistle on a chain with buttonhole clasp. 'Made in England' embossed on the whistle barrel. 42 cm x 59.4 cm.
Testimony and artefact courtesy of Phil Holland, a former prison officer.
Photo: Martin Krenn. Courtesy of the artists.

10. Photo of the labelling machine used for naming the works by Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn in the project Transforming the Long Kesh/Maze, TRACES/Horizon 2020, 2018. Courtesy of the artists.

11. Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, *Father* 1995, 2018
Project Transforming Long Kesh/Maze/Horizon 2020
Lollipop sticks, matchsticks, tobacco tin, paint, and varnish.
42 cm x 59.4 cm.
Testimony courtesy of David Stitt, loyalist ex-prisoner, artefact courtesy of the Andy Tyrie Interpretive Centre and the artists.

12. David Medalla and London Biennale artists, *Wrestling Match,* 2005
Anywhere in the World, 2005, Curator: Gut Brett. Institute of Contemporary Art - ICA, London. Courtesy of the artists.
London Biennale is one of the rare participatory international Biennials that aimed to dismantle the hierarchies between institutions, curators, and artists. It was initiated by David Medalla (1942-2020), who was a London-based artist of Filipino origin. Courtesy of the artists.

13. Tanja Ostojić, *Integration Project – Office for Integration,* 2002
Uncertain Signs /True Stories, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe, Germany. In the frame of the project, the artist created a free advisory office for immigrants and refugees that was installed in the Badischer Kunstverein's space. Courtesy of the artist.

14. Tanja Ostojić, *Integration Project: Sprachschule,* 2003
Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg, Germany. In the frame of the project, the artist initiated a free course for learning German for immigrants and refugees, Lüneburg, 14-18. 07. 2003. Courtesy of the artist.

15. Tanja Ostojić, *Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić,* 2011-18
Collaborative art project. *Embroidered Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić,* Workshop, Muzej Savremene i Moderne Umetnosti Rijeka, 2017.
Co-authors: Jelena Dinić, Tanja Ostojić (Banja Luka), Tanja Ostojić (Berlin), Tanja Ostojić (Trn), Tanja Ostojić (Udine), Tanja Ostojić-Guteša, Tanja Ostojić-Petrović, Tanja Petar Ostojić, Tatjana Tanja Ostojić, Tatjana Ostojić Alabama, Vahida Ramujkić i Sunčica Šido. Photo: ©Tanja Ostojić. Courtesy of the artist.

16. Dan Perjovschi, *Room Drawing,* 2006
Drawing Installation, free access to the general audience.
Tate Modern – Member's Room, London Courtesy of the artist.

17-18. Tadej Pogačar, *World Congress of Sex Workers and New Parasitism,* 2001
Pavilion of Republic Slovenia, 49th Venice Biennale, Venice.
The Pavilion of sex workers included many activities that took place in a tent that was installed in front of the Giardini, and a march of the sex workers from Giardini to San Marco Square who were led by Carol Leigh. These were the first events of collaboration and solidarity of self-organised sex workers on a global level. Courtesy of the artist.

19. Tadej Pogačar, *MonApoly*/CODE:RED, 2004
Interactive board game / 41 x 28 x 5 cm/edition of 100.
Courtesy of the artist.

20. Tadej Pogačar, *MonApoly*/CODE: RED, 2004
Interactive board game /41x28 x 5 cm/edition of 100.
The artist plays the game with the audience of the project Workers' Club (curated by Suzana Milevska for the International Contemporary Art Biennale - Prague, Czech Republic, Prague), 2005.
Courtesy of the artist.

21-23. Reinigungsgesellschaft, *Change Reality: Renaming the Streets of Zagreb,* 2006
Participatory urban interventions, part of Urbanfestival, various locations in Zagreb, in collaboration with various independent organisations, 18–15 September 2006. Included in the book: T*he Renaming Machine:* The Book. Edited by Suzana Milevska. Ljubljana: P.A.R.A.S.I.T.E. Institute, 2010, 145-148.
Courtesy of the artists.

24-25. Sašo Stanojkoviḱ, *To Whom It May Concern,* 2005
Participatory instruction workshop with instructions for correct writing of diacritical signs contained in the names and surnames of artists from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The workshop took place in the frame of the exhibition Anywhere in the World. Curator: Guy Brett. Institute of Contemporary Art - ICA, London.
Courtesy of the artist.

26-27. Alfred Ullrich, *Landfahrerplatz kein Gewerbe (Site for Travellers: No Trading),* 2011
Photograph, variable dimensions. An activist project aimed to remove the signs that prohibited parking to Roma Caravans for alleged peddling. It took six years for the artist to persuade the responsible institutions to remove the stereotypical signs. Courtesy of the artist.

01.

02.

HISTORIJSKI MUZEJ BIH
Sarajevo, Bosna i Hercegovina
HISTORY MUSEUM OF BH, SARAJEVO, (B&H)

MUZEJ SAVREMENE UMJETNOSTI METELKOVA (MSUM+) Ljubljana, (SLO)

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART METELKOVA (MSUM+), LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

DAN SOLIDARNOSTI / DAY OF SOLIDARITY

WWW.CULTURESHUTDOWN.NET

04.

APOCALYPSE

APOCALYPSE

NO MORE

NO MORE

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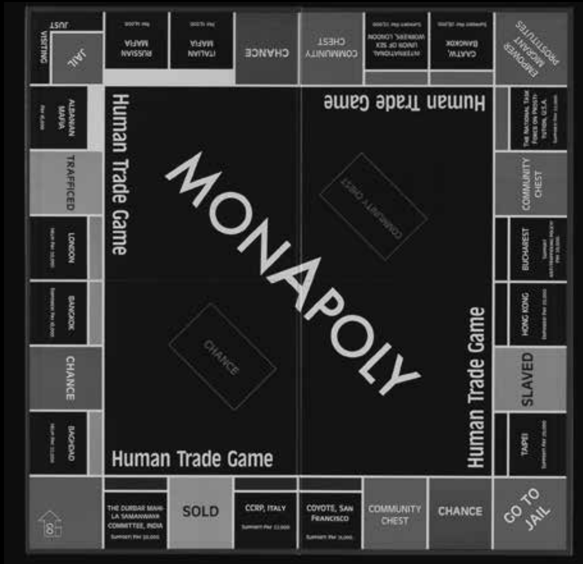


19.

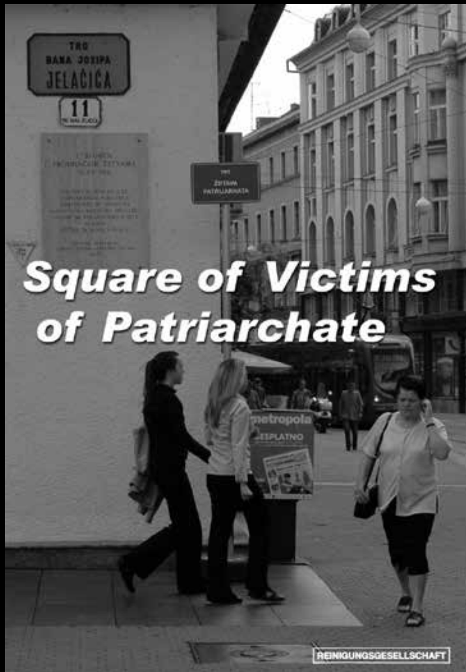
20.

RENAMING THE STREETS OF ZAGREB
an urban intervention by REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT
produced and realized in the framework of UrbanFestival Zagreb/Croatia 2006

The project provides a possibility for voluntary initiatives and civil society organizations to create ideas for new street names and present them in public space. It is an invitation for committed citizens to present their ideas about the society they live in, and also about the future. They were asked to propose street names that define goals and concepts of their organization and the civil society.

Starting point of the project is the fact that street names have always expressed a specific idea on how history or reality should be viewed. This becomes evident when we remember how many streets have been renamed in times of great changes in political systems. The interaction between the new street signs and the old original plates in the streets shall bring attention to the current social events in the city. This renaming creates a sensibility for the synergies and contradictions in the development of a society, so strongly influenced by the overlapping of public and private interests.

REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT (whose German implications range from "Cleaning Service" to "Purification Society") is an artist's project group that works at the point of intersection between art and social reality. RG works with partners from different backgrounds, providing platforms for interdisciplinary activities. Our way of working is based on the positive potential of connecting different spheres of society. RG initiates projects that generate new relations and interest groups of people. REINIGUNGSGESELLSCHAFT understands contemporary art as a catalyst of social and political processes.



BaBe (Be active, Be emancipated)
A WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

Proposal and short explanation:
We would like to re-name the main square "Trg bana Josipa Jelacic" into "Square of Victims of Patriarchate" because we think that women as well as men are victims, at least majority of them. Patriarchate, which strictly divide people based on gender, namely binary - male, female (regardless of the fact that some have been born as well as hermaphrodites - pseudo- or real) and subsequently prescribe what does it mean to be a woman and what does it mean to be a man.
This patriarchate handicaps people because it does not allow them to develop their own personality exclusive of the gender in which they have been born. Discrimination, wars, hierarchy... these are all malignant by-products of a patriarchal system of values. It is about time to overcome it.

www.babe.hr

22.

MULTIMEDIA INSTITUTE

Proposal: to rename the "Square of the Victims of Fascism" into "Square of Renamed Squares"

In the 1990s the cabinet of Croatian President Franjo Tudjman took the decision to rename The Square of the Victims of Fascism as The Square of The Great Men of Croatia. After massive protests this decision was taken back and the name of the square is again The Square of the Victims of Fascism.

Multimedia Institute is a Zagreb-based organization working on social approaches to digital technologies, media activism, social theory and cultural policy. Locally it is primarily known through activities of its public space - net. culture club MAMA, while internationally through its free software/culture activities.

www.mi2.hr

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Martin Krenn and Aisling O'Beirn, *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*

Krista Geneviève Lynes, Tyler Morgenstern, and Ian Alan Paul, *Moving Images, Mediating Migration as Crisis*

Mara Ambrožič and Angela Vettese, *Art as a Thinking Process*

Visual Forms of Knowledge Production
Feminist Review Collective

Tanja Ostojić, *Lexicon of Tanjas Ostojić*

Tadej Pogačar, *From Institutional Parasitism to Reverse Recuperation, Agency and Solidarity - The Art of Tadej Pogačar*

Martin Krenn and Gerald Bast, *Dialogical Interventions Art and the Social Realm*

Martin Krenn, *Appropriate Journal*

Jean-Paul Martinon, *Philosophies*, Special Issue *Curating and Ethics*

Iskra Gešoska, *Kontrapunkt* – Edition *Punctum*

Tal Adler

Azra Akšamija and CULTURESHUTDOWN.NET

London Biennale artists

Luchezar Boyadjiev

Sasha Huber

Martin Krenn, Aisling O'Beirn and 50+ group

Tanja Ostojić

Tadej Pogačar

Reinigungsgesellschaft (Martin Keil and Henrik Mayer)

Sašo Stanojkoviḱ

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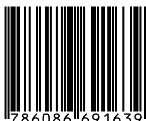

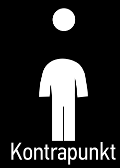
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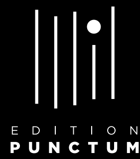
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