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Master thesis:

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT CULTURAL SECTOR
IN CROATIA**

by:

Nataša Bodrožić

Supervisor:

Sanjin Dragojević, PhD

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Abstract

Within the last fifteen years, non-profit, *independent cultural sector* has been developing in Croatia. It started to form in opposition to the nationalist political and cultural climate of the 1990s, inciting new forms of cultural production, in the same time politicizing the cultural field. The *independent cultural sector* (often recognized as *the third sector*), composed of civic initiatives involved in cultural production is often perceived as a parallel system of culture co-existing with the official, state supported institutions.

This thesis is focused on the independent cultural sector in Croatia, trying to document its development, position it within the wider cultural context and explore its potential locally and internationally: its influence on the creation of cultural policy and its potential for establishing platforms for articulation of different sorts of civil, social and political issues using means of culture and advocacy.

The information contained in this study was collected by consulting the existing literature, press materials, surveys, and through interviews with cultural operators, activists and experts.

Through this research I found out that the Croatian independent cultural scene is a relevant cultural phenomenon, considering its influence on cultural policy development in the country and the level of its organization. Currently in the initial phase of institutionalization, it is faced with numerous new challenges.

While some emphasize critical positions of the independent cultural scene towards the cultural and political mainstream, the others consider it an important factor in post-socialist cultural sector transformation i.e. in taking over the role of the state, in adapting culture to changed global conditions, political, economical and technological.

Key words: civil society, non- profit cultural sector/the third sector, institutional critique, parallel system of culture, politization of the cultural field, networking, participative cultural policies, post-socialist public space, culture as the process of exchange

Introduction

Since beginning of the 1990s in Croatia, the independent¹ cultural scene has been growing gradually. *The independent cultural scene* could be seen as a sort of new cultural entity, a formation of non profit, civil associations and artist initiatives, gathered loosely around the (more or less) common values and interests, partially interconnected through the collaborative platforms of program exchange. The independent culture exists in parallel with public, state supported- *official* culture, represented by the state institutions, a structure inherited from the Socialist period that did not go through any significant transformation to meet the demands of a new, changed political, social, economical and technological environment. Its *independent* position is derived from the status of the organizations that form it; they are (mainly) self- managed civic associations, and they have various sources of funding i.e. they do not depend on one, single source.

As a relatively new phenomenon, with its own structural and operational framework, the independent scene was often perceived as “alternative”. However, there is a strong difference between alternative and independent. The former gained its strength through actively criticizing and opposing power.² In the transitional context of today, it still, more or less, stands on this position developing socially engaged projects, new forms of art and collaboration. The independent scene emerges, more and more, as a representative subject of the “contemporary cultural and artistic production” in this part of the world.

In envisaging this thesis, I initially sought to analyze the existing non profit cultural scene development in Croatia and Serbia, but due to the wide range of activities and dynamics of the sector, I focused mainly on Croatia. However, several interviews with relevant cultural operators from Serbia, mostly gathered around platform *Druga Scena/Other Scene*,³ were included in my research, to be able to consider Croatian independent sector

¹ Here I use the term *independent cultural scene*, as it is used colloquially, although it is not fully adequate. *Non- institutionalized* or *non profit* cultural sector are other terms used to describe the phenomenon.

² By this I firstly mean the political environment in Croatia of the 1990s when the scene emerges, but its position of the active critic remains as the government changes in 2000.

³ <http://drugascena.org/node/2>

development from different perspective and in wider context. I have also been following regional networking of the non institutionalized cultural initiatives and some of the findings have been included within my thesis.

The analysis of the independent cultural scene is inseparable from the analysis of the context in which it emerges, local socio- political environment the scene reacts to, followed by the crises of (cultural) institutions within the changed global conditions that opened the way to the creation of new social and cultural formations and structures. Technological transformation based on information technology was the base for the socio- economic transformations during the 1980s and 1990s that brought along numerous dramatic effects in technological, political, economic, social and cultural life. The appearance of the independent cultural scene has to be observed in the light of those changes on the global level, with standardization processes taking over the field of culture when American culture, step by step, took the leading position globally and began dominating local cultures.

However, what marks Croatian cultural scene developed in the 1990s is its strong opposition to the dominant nationalist political and cultural climate. Zagreb based theorist, Professor Andrea Zlatar defines the Croatian culture of the 1990s as ethnocentric, neo-conservative, past oriented, auto- referential, autistic and xenophobic.⁴ The organizations of the independent culture were the ones that appeared in that climate as carriers of the new possibilities, new way of operating, developed by new technologies and social conditions, challenging the existing cultural paysage which remained passive and silent towards the changing reality.

If we take as examples the activities on the Zagreb cultural scene within the last ten years, it can be seen that the political activism of the active groups is more and more focused on very concrete socio- political issues: from urban planning to cultural policy

⁴ According to Andrea Zlatar in Dea Vidović's essay: *The development of the Croatian independent cultural scene (1990-2002) or what preceded the Clubture network; A glimpse outside the yard* , CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007

creation. “Pulling out the art from its isolated social position, resulted in an all embracing socialization and politicization of the art/cultural, or better to say, what happened was the total overlapping of those two spheres.”⁵

In my research I found important to emphasize one more topic: the cultural heritage of the socialist period, searching for the continuity between the critical art practices of the 1970s in Yugoslavia, and new, cultural practices in the 1990s that constituted the independent scene. The cultural heritage of the SFRY is insufficiently studied due to the „post- communist discourse“⁶ prevailing in so called post- socialist countries, where “the knowledge” about communism *is formed in accordance with the existing political normativity, meaning that this attitude is necessarily anti-communist*. As Zagreb based curator and theorist Ana Dević states, the artistic activities of the seventies and the recent forms of self-organised critical practices can be interpreted as two waves of collectivity, which have positioned themselves, though in different social and political circumstances and with different aspirations, in relation to the official institutions. She adds that although the opposition between the ‘official’ and the ‘unofficial’ artistic system is not as sharply polarised in the case of socialist Yugoslavia as in the case of the countries of the Eastern block, within the Croatian scene it is possible to follow the continuity of the development and co-existence of the parallel culture systems from the late sixties and seventies to the present day.

During the 1990s, the independent cultural scene has been growing in parallel with the development of the civil society, supported by the international foundations. In a situation when international funds⁷ started to withdraw from Croatia in the beginning of 2000, it became more evident that the representatives of institutional culture will not be those who will initiate the transformation of a complete cultural system, which would favour dynamism and sustainable development of the complete cultural field. It became clear that this role would need to be overtaken by agents of the independent cultural scene.

⁵ <http://www.zarez.hr/179/esej1.htm>

⁶ Boris Buden « In the shoes of communism »,

<http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=veranstaltungen&subkat=kongrpro&lang=en>

⁷ The international foundations had been the only investors and financial supporters of the independent culture NGOs for years, thus helping the NGOs to achieve social significance. These foundations (such as Soros) withdrew from the region in 2000.

After the year 2000, the independent culture protagonists intensively work on gaining visibility and strengthening the *scene* through collaborations and networks. Since 2003, the platform of the independent organizations in culture has initiated a series of regional, international, and interdisciplinary collaborations which have been presenting and developing new group dynamics, new collective strategies, and new working forms in culture production. The aim has been the wider recognition of the independent culture.

This thesis has the intention to show the beginning of the third sector development in cultural field in Croatia with its local specificities. Concentrating mostly on Zagreb, where the movements of the independent culture have been particularly intense, the aim is to explore the changes within the cultural, social, political environment within the last fifteen years, due to its existence and activities. However, the research includes critical reflection on the independent cultural scene as well. Taking the view that culture is possible subject and a medium of the political mission of civil society, it includes discussions on the phenomenon of *culturalization* (Boris Buden), understood as a form of depoliticization. This means not only simple translation of political issues to cultural ones. It refers to all embracing system: the education, cultivation, and breeding of subjects for the dominant (western) culture.

The text that follows is arranged in three chapters; the first one introduces the expressions such as *non profit sector*, *independent culture*, *third sector* trying to define them focusing on the specificities of the local context and its relation to the civil society development. It also considers the transformation of the civil society concept through the history and within political discourse. The second chapter is focused on the cultural heritage of the socialist period and the historical, political and cultural environment in which the scene emerges, while the third follows the actual development of the independent cultural scene in Croatia, from the early 1990s till 2009.

The main source of information for this research was the book *CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007*, published by The Association of NGOs Clubture in Zagreb in November 2007 edited by Dea Vidović. It was published on the occasion of 5th anniversary of the *Clubture* network. The internet portal *Kulturpunkt.hr* is another important source, as it daily publishes informations from the field, along with theoretical reflections tackling the whole range of topics referring to contemporary culture. As far as theoretical framework is concerned, the important source for this research was the web site of the European Institute for the Progressive Cultural Policy, <http://transform.eipcp.net>, and several books and publications dealing with the civil society development or the third sector studies.

Since my professional activities have been placed within the *independent culture field*, in the last five years, my own experiences, personal observations, discussions and exchanges with colleagues constituted vivid and relevant source for this research.

1. Definitions: Third Sector/ Non- Profit Sector, Independent Cultural Scene.

The 'third sector' refers to organisations between the market and the state. More specifically, there is no single 'correct' definition in Europe, with different collective nouns involving varied criteria of definition used for different purposes and in different contexts. The 'third sector' provisionally includes those organizations which are self-governing and constitutionally independent of the state; do not involve the distribution of profits to shareholders; and benefit to a significant degree from voluntarism. The specific 'indigenous' conceptualizations deployed in practice are a question to be determined empirically, not *a priori* imposed.⁸

1.1. Problems with Terminology

In the article entitled “Development of cultural non-profit and independent sector in Croatia from 1990 till nowadays”⁹ published on the Croatian web site “Kulturpunkt”,¹⁰ the authors Sanjin Dragojević and Dea Vidović emphasise certain problematics of terminological determinations when naming notions and phenomena related to the respective field. The problem does not refer only to linguistic level, the authors claim. There is a worldwide attempt to set the system of socially acceptable and politically operative naming within this particular period connected with neo-liberal wave in world economy. A social need for new type of associations is expressed by this terminology, as well as a respect for public goods and interests, but first of all for the guarantee and protection of civil rights and liberties.

⁸ This definition is taken from Third Sector European policy (TSEP) network, see more at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/faqs.htm>

⁹ Dea Vidović, Sanjin Dragojević, Development of non profit and independent cultural sector in Croatia since 1990s till nowadays, published on <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kultrapunkt/6/?pid=14>

¹⁰ Kulturpunkt.hr is the independent culture internet portal. It was initiated by Clubture network in 2005. and since then it has been following continuously the independent cultural scene activities, as well as contemporary arts. It has also been offering its space to citizens initiatives dealing with public policies, inciting responsible social and political decision making in Croatia, and larger scale of citizens participation in decision making process. Besides, the portal focuses on youth culture, urban culture, social activism, new technologies, alternative economies, free software etc.

This discussion is particularly important if we have in mind that since the end of the 1980s, in European and global proportions, the opinion of the professional public has been divided as to whether the non-profit sector development is the right answer to the growing influence of the USA and globalization processes or not.

It can also be noticed that, since the year 1995, terms such as civil society, non-profit sector, non government sector, third sector, independent, primarily cultural initiative have been perceived as completely positive as a value from the stand point of western, so called democratic intellectual authorities. One part of the general public, in Eastern Europe, including some independent experts, finds that dynamics of the respective field, no matter how we call it, has contributed greatly to the general democratization process, pluralism and transformation of (specifically) Croatian society from the 1990s on. That is why the authors of the article stress that they cannot use this terminology neutrally. Since the public opinion has developed extremely firm attitudes towards the NGO sector, in the contextual analysis of public opinion makers, mostly, especially in the 1990s, taking positions on the issue cannot be avoided, ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative attitudes.

The authors emphasise one more thing referring to the examination of the terms **independent culture** on one hand and **non-profit cultural sector**, on the other. According to them, those terms do not have the same meaning. The first term, the independent culture, relates to opposing dominant aesthetical, ideological, political, social concepts and ideas while the second marks the essence of the sector itself, the standpoints of many, interrelated initiatives, with a common idea of the respect for general, public and social goods and if there is a profit, they invest it in primary activity. The first approach primarily critically refers to retrograde and hyperinstitutionalized ideas and poetics (according to their opinion) that are wasted, in a way, within the traditional context, while the other term marks the development of a whole new sector whose underdevelopment in the countries in transition represents the main social anomaly. In the attempt to deconstruct the artistically closed and self-referential poetics of social enactment, the independent scene wants to achieve some kind of a social change, by

choosing the cultural field as a central place of all-embracing change, which inherently contains a dimension of a counteract as well as of parallel existence. It primarily relates to a certain something, which parallelly co-exists, co-relates with it and in this sense it gains culturological and social significance and artistic reach.

Once again, the non-profit sector tries to overcome and accelerate the process of democratisation and participatory political decision-making as well as to create a base for new forms of civil gathering along with expressing the interests and needs of the public. In short, the conclusion would be that the first term (independent scene) refers to the art field, artistic and cultural intervention, while the second one (non-profit sector) is related to the field of socio-cultural activism, questioning the efficiency and self-rationalisation of existence and the functions of the public cultural sector as a whole. Paralely it emphasizes the insufficient development of the private sector.

1.2. Civil Society in Theory

Since the concept of *Civil society* is closely related to the one of the *Third sector*, it is important to take a closer look on what constitutes it and how it transformed historically, theoretically and within the political discourse.

From an historical perspective, the actual meaning of the concept of civil society has changed twice from its original, classical form. The first change occurred after the French Revolution, the second during the fall of communism in Europe. By The London School of Economics definition, civil society refers to « the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil

society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power ».¹¹

The philosophical reflections¹² on civil society go way back to classical period of Ancient Greece. In the classical period, the concept was used as a synonym for the good society, and seen as indistinguishable from the state.

The concept of civil society in its pre-modern classical republican understanding is usually connected to the Age of Enlightenment in the 18th century. Generally, civil society has been referred to as a political association governing social conflict through the imposition of rules that restrain citizens from harming one another. As a natural consequence of Renaissance, Humanism, and the scientific revolution, the Enlightenment thinkers raised fundamental questions such as “What legitimacy does heredity confer?”, “Why are governments instituted?”, “Why should some human beings have more basic rights than others?” and so on. The Enlightenment thinkers believed in the inherent goodness of the human mind. They opposed the alliance between the state and the Church as the enemy of human progress and well-being because the Church legitimated monarchs by positing the theory of divine origin. Therefore, both were deemed to be against the will of the people. The political philosophers of the time held that social relations should be ordered in a different way than in natural law conditions. Some of their attempts led to the emergence of social contract theory that contested social relations existing in accordance with human nature. They held that human nature can be understood by analyzing objective realities and natural law conditions. Thus they endorsed that the nature of human beings should be encompassed by the contours of state and established positive laws (Hobbes, Locke). Both Hobbes and Locke had set forth a system, in which peaceful coexistence among human beings could be ensured through social pacts or contracts. They considered civil society as a community that maintained civil life, the realm where civic virtues and rights were derived from natural laws. However, they did not hold that civil society was a separate realm from the state. Rather,

¹¹ "What is civil society?". Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics. 2004-03-01. http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm.

¹² The considerations about historical development of the civil society concept are based upon the book by Michael Edwards : *Civil Society*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2004.

they underlined the co-existence of the state and civil society. The systematic approaches of Hobbes and Locke (in their analysis of social relations) were largely influenced by the experiences in their period. Their attempts to explain human nature, natural laws, the social contract and the formation of government had challenged the divine right theory. In contrast to divine right, Hobbes and Locke claimed that humans can design their political order. This idea had a great impact on the thinkers in the Enlightenment period (Rousseau, Kant).

In modern history, the concept of civil society completely changed, giving rise to a modern liberal understanding of it as a form of market society as opposed to institutions of modern nation-state (Hegel). Hegel held that civil society had emerged at the particular period of capitalism and served its interests: individual rights and private property. For Hegel, civil society manifests contradictory forces. Being the realm of capitalist interests, there is a possibility of conflicts and inequalities within it. Therefore, the constant surveillance of the state is imperative to sustain moral order in society. Hegel considered the state as the highest form of ethical life. Therefore, the political state has the capacity and authority to correct the faults of civil society. Alexis de Tocqueville, after comparing despotic France and democratic America, contested Hegel, putting weight on the system of civilian and political associations as a counterbalance to both liberal individualism and centralization of the state. Hence, Hegel's perception of social reality was followed in general by Tocqueville who distinguished between political society and civil society. This was the theme taken further by Karl Marx. For Marx, civil society was the 'base' where productive forces and social relations were taking place, whereas political society was the 'superstructure'. Agreeing with the link between capitalism and civil society, Marx held that the latter represents the interests of the bourgeoisie. Marx rejected the positive role of state put forth by Hegel. He argued that the state cannot be a neutral problem solver. Rather, he depicted the state as the defender of the interests of the bourgeoisie. He considered the state and civil society as the executive arms of the bourgeoisie. This negative view about civil society was rectified by Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci located civil society in the political superstructure. He underlined the crucial role of civil society as the contributor of the cultural and ideological capital required for

the survival of the hegemony of capitalism. Rather than posing it as a problem, as in earlier Marxist conceptions, Gramsci viewed civil society as the site for problem-solving. Agreeing with Gramsci, the New Left assigned civil society a key role in defending people against the state and the market and in asserting the democratic will to influence the state. At the same time, Neo-liberal thinkers consider civil society as a site for struggle to subvert Communist and authoritarian regimes.

The post-modern way of understanding civil society was first developed by political opposition in the former Soviet block East European countries in the 1980s. From that time stems a practice within the political field of using the idea of civil society instead of political society. However, in the 1990s with the emergence of the nongovernmental organizations and the New Social Movements (NSMs) on a global scale, civil society as a third sector became a key terrain of strategic action to construct 'an alternative social and world order.' Henceforth, postmodern usage of the idea of civil society became divided into two main: as political society and as the third sector - apart from overplus of definitions. The Washington consensus¹³ of the 1990s, which involved conditioned loans by the World Bank and IMF to debt-laden developing states, also created pressures for states in poorer countries to shrink. This in turn led to practical changes for civil society that went on to influence the theoretical debate. There are opinions that rapid development of civil society on the global scale after the fall of the communist system was a part of neo-liberal strategies linked to the Washington consensus.

Post-modern civil society theory has now largely returned to a more neutral stance, but with marked differences between the study of the phenomena in richer societies and writing on civil society in developing states. Civil society in both areas is, however, often

¹³ The term Washington Consensus was initially coined in 1989 to describe a set of ten specific economic policy prescriptions that is considered should constitute the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-ravaged developing countries by Washington, D.C.-based institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the US Treasury Department. Subsequently, the term has come to be used in a different and broader sense, as a synonym for market fundamentalism.

viewed as counter-poise and complement rather than an alternative in relation to the state. In a way the state was seen as a precondition of the civil society.

1.3. The Third Sector

The expression *Third Sector* referring to the field in between the public and private sector, has been in use since 1970s in the USA and continental Europe. However, the renewed interest and more thorough research of the third sector in Europe have grown quite recently, due to the changes and political restructuring of the Eastern Europe.¹⁴ The role of the third sector actors as “those who deliver” services in the domain from which the Welfare State progressively withdraws makes this field of action more and more relevant for the analysis.

Researches show that the third sector performs important social, economical and political functions in Western societies.¹⁵ In many European countries the researchers have begun to examine how nonprofits provide social services, contribute to arts, education, research and help shaping policies at local, national or international level. Other scholars claim that the sector played an important role in the development of the *Third World* countries. Even before the fall of the Berlin wall, some Eastern European countries have allowed, to varying degrees, the private, nonprofit provision of quasi public goods.

The theories on nonprofit sector were first introduced in the 1970s in the USA. They either heighthlighted “market failure” or “government failure” as the reason behind the emergence of nonprofit organizations. By the end of the 1970s in Europe there was a tendency to reexamine the division between “private” and the “public” and to consider the third sector as a possible remedy for the “crises of the welfare state” (looking for ways of

¹⁴ According to the essay : In spite of the cultural policy and beside it : practice and strategies of the Third and the Fourth sector in Vienna and Belgrade by Martina Böse, Brigitte Busch and Milena Dragičević-Šešić in the book *TRANSCULTURAL EUROPE, Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe*, edited by Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou, CLIO, 2008.

¹⁵ According to Helmut K. Anheier, Wolfgang Seibel, *The Third sector: comparative studies of nonprofit organizations* ; Berlin- New York : de Gruyter 1990.

reducing state responsibilities). In many European countries, an increased interest in foundations and individual philanthropy was discussed against the background of a restrictive tax structure.

At first ideologically neutral approaches towards the third sector changed with the ideological shift of the mid 1970s that coincided with growing international economic crises. The public sector and expectations of what it could or should achieve moved to a central place of the political agenda. The third sector was approached from different angles by American and European scholars. While American social scientists viewed the third sector as an essential ingredient of a civil, liberal society, many European scholars emphasized its historical importance in conservative political scenarios. Critically engaged Europeans found it difficult to see the third sector as an organizational universe of its own.

Through more recent comparative researches of the third sector in different countries, many questions emerged pointing at differences of its development, questions like: Why do different countries make different choices about the public- private division of responsibility for providing quasi- public goods and services? Under which conditions has the nonprofit organization developed as an institutional form? Under what circumstances does it have comparative advantage over government and private, profit maximizing organizations? To what extent can fees and donations replace tax revenues for financing goods they produce? What are the implications of relying on private funding versus government subsidies for the provision of these goods? What kinds of regulations are needed to make the sector stable? Can third sector organizations avoid bureaucratisation and competitive entrepreneurship? The answers to these questions vary from country to country.

There are several criteria which can differentiate the third sector from other sectors. According to some theoreticians¹⁶ we can identify three major sets of criteria: institutional characteristics of organizations; the different rationales for social and

¹⁶ According to Helmut K. Anheier and Wolfgang Seibel (Ibid.)

economic action in the three sectors; the institutional functions served by the organizations.

Political scientists have conceptualized the third sector as an intermediary zone between market and state. It mediates between special and general interests. The central characteristics of mediating organizations in this sector are “their ability to combine aspects of social and political integration with economic objectives.”¹⁷ There are many demonstrations of such a connection; the researches pointed towards the links between the development of voluntary welfare agencies to the emergence of social and political movements in Germany or, as some scholars suggest, large foundations in the USA served as ideological shelters for business interests.¹⁸

As it was already mentioned, the researches show distinct national styles in the third sector development. For example, in Germany there is a long tradition of the relations between the government and the third sector (due to the early emergence of private welfare organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century), while in France the third sector was discovered quite recently, in the 1980s, when the term *économie sociale* entered political discourse. “At that time, the third sector seemed to offer for the socialist government an alternative to both capitalist and public bureaucracy, and thus fitted well into the government’s approach to decentralization.”¹⁹

While economical, political and social analyses posing various questions and doubts about the sector have been widely present within the last few decades, the third sector in the field of culture still lacks serious studies. The relation between the Third sector and cultural production is usually considered within the context of the political art. Cultural activity is usually taken as a part of wider socio- political project, whether as a tool of democratization or as an expression of civil society that is considered to be inherent to every democracy.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ A quasi official « *Conseil pour la vie associative* » was initiated by the French Government in 1982, and was followed by the appointment of a secretary of state responsible for the « *économie sociale* » (Ibid).

2. In Search of the Forgotten History:

Redefining the Relation towards the Cultural Heritage of SFRY

This chapter will try to outline the complex socio-political and cultural situation existing in former Yugoslavia and the *specific nature* of the SFRY socialist regime which (passively or deliberately) allowed certain liberties in the field of culture that resulted in early appearance of a sort of the institutional critique (anti-ideological in its nature), which can be treated as a relevant cultural continuity in this part of the world that will, according to some opinions, indirectly influence development of the independent cultural sector in the 1990s.

It will also touch upon the issue of the “post- communist discourse” (Boris Buden), as a prevailing ideological framework of the 1990s on, being a part of so called “processes of normalization”,²⁰ and necessarily anti- communist in its essence, having as a result one sided, partial and non elaborated relation towards the big part of recent history of former socialist countries. In my opinion, explaining the “post- communist discourse” is important for better understanding of the post- Yugoslav 1990s, the general atmosphere and ideological climate in which the independent cultural scene starts to form. The independent culture emerges as a relatively new phenomenon, a sort of *parallel world*²¹ existing in the environment of the traditionalist, nationalist culture of the 1990s, but still along the lines of the institutional critique present from the beginning of the 1970s.

The text that follows will less examine the political system of former Yugoslavia. It will concentrate more on some of the side effects that it produced. Terms such as “socialist consumerism” (Branimir Dimitrijević) will be introduced describing the *nature* of the system of a *non- aligned* country in “between the two worlds”, western democracies and the Eastern bloc.

²⁰ The term “normalization” refers to the adaptation of ex- communist countries to the prevailing, hegemonial standard of liberal- democracy and capitalist system.

²¹ Dea Vidović used this expression in her essay The development of the Croatian independent cultural scene in CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007.

2.1. Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia: in between the Two Worlds

It is generally believed that in 1989, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, a period of European history “reached its conclusion”. The formerly *communist* and *socialist* countries each experienced this epoch in different ways (“different types of communism”) and thus also produced very divergent cultural and art scenes.

It could be argued that the specific social and political frame in SFR Yugoslavia was unique in Europe. Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was a case of the socialist country, which under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, pursued a policy of neutrality during the Cold War and became one of the founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement.²²

Dissociating themselves from the Soviet Union in 1948, the Yugoslav communists developed the model of "workers' self-management." This social experiment of self-managed socialism started at the end of 1949, with the establishing of workers' councils in the nationalized factories, as *organizations of socialized labor*. From the 1960s onward, structures of self-management arose in all areas of society. It seems that a complicated and ultimately unmanageable system consisting of various levels of delegation emerged that became increasingly cumbersome and bureaucratic.

Nevertheless, Boris Buden explains this typical Yugoslav concept of social self-management (that was meant consequently to lead towards slow passing of the state), as a true commitment to Marxist ideas by the Yugoslav communists²³. He sees their attempt as a value, considering the system of councils as a truly democratic concept and practice of social organizing. However, he continues referring to writing of Hannah Arendt, the

²² *The Non-Aligned Movement* is an international organisation of states considering themselves not formally aligned with or against any major power bloc. The movement is largely the brainchild of India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, former president of Egypt Gamal Abdul Nasser and Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. It was founded in April 1955. The purpose of the organisation as stated in the *Havana Declaration of 1979* is to ensure "the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics.

²³ <http://www.prelomkolektiv.org/pdf/prelom05.pdf>

bureaucracy of the nation state or the party machineries have always succeeded to destroy this basically authentic concept.

“There were very dangerous political, ideological, economic and other “tensions” between Yugoslavia and a big part of the world, including the countries of the Soviet bloc. We had an impression to be in between two separate worlds and that we take some advantages from both of the existing systems”,²⁴ says Želimir Žilnik, the film director active in Yugoslavia from the 1960s onwards.

Speaking about the specific nature of Yugoslav socialism, Belgrade based curator and theorist Branimir Dimitrijević²⁵ introduces the term of *socialist consumerism*, as a peculiarity of SFR Yugoslavia. “I spoke about the term “socialist consumerism” to emphasise an important aspect that describes the anthropology of everyday life, of an ecological and political system and a cultural identity. It is about the way the ideological basis, the “transition to communism”, was blurred with a dream world of consumption. From the mid-sixties, the Titoist system created a public sphere made up of an ideological and practical mixture of the utopian promises of communism and the consumer promises of capitalism.”²⁶ Asked about conditions in which extreme nationalism in ex Yugoslavia was able to arise, Dimitrijević explains that when America’s entertainment industry broke in upon Eastern Europe and Asia in the nineties with its “colonisation of the subconscious”, referring to German film director Wim Wenders – and this started in a controlled way in Yugoslavia as early as 1950 – it was a sign of the liberalisation and new openness of these countries. The spread of Western popular culture became synonymous with the process of democratisation. This type of cultural dominance prevented other forms of or experiments with democracy. In Tito’s Yugoslavia, the illusion of a high standard of living, a relatively free market, freedom to

²⁴ Želimir Žilnik in a debate « Missed history » held on November 18, 2005, as a parallel event within the exhibition « Lasting moment of art; Novi Sad neo-avantgarde of the 1960 es and 1970’es. », extract taken from NOVINE, no.09/11. Gallery NOVA, January/July, Zagreb 2006.

²⁵ Branimir Dimitrijević, born in Belgrade in 1967, is an art historian, writer and curator. He is Senior Lecturer at the School for Art and Design (VSLPUB) in Belgrade and Associate Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade. In 1999 he co-founded the School for History and Theory of Images in Belgrade. He has published several essays on contemporary art and the theory of art, film and visual culture.

²⁶ <http://www.kontakt.erstebankgroup.net>

travel and the acceptance of foreign currencies in fact prevented the development of a real alternative to dogmatic socialism. He thinks that socialist consumerism numbed the entire Yugoslavian society and created a new form of class distinctions – which in the end led also to the national conflicts. However, he adds that this question implies a much broader analysis. Speaking of the specificity of SFR Yugoslavia as a socialist country outside of the Soviet block and its early “opening towards the world”, Dimitrijević proposes another interesting reflection: “We should perhaps assume that the first post-communist impulse could already be found in Yugoslavia in the early fifties – as Stalin’s dogma crumbled and the processes of Westernisation and liberalisation began. They were manifested at first in popular culture and images. This later led to events, as in the demonstrations of the “68ers”, when students demanded “more communism” in a communist state. »²⁷

The terms like *socialist consumerism* or *consumerist socialism* are not rare to come by among the researchers of the respective period of ex Yugoslav social history. The Yugoslav pioneer organization²⁸ is the subject of the research by Ildiko Erdei (Growing up in socialism: from “small pioneers” to “the army of consumers”²⁹), who made a research on progressive diminution of ideological contents within the state pedagogical programs. Symbolical unity here takes the image of Yugoslav childhood which was based primarily on the existence of a common market, from the 1970es on, as well as on consumption of the same products: toys, clothes, children’s magazines, TV serials and candies. This, special sort of *consumerist socialism* brings Erdei to the conclusion that mass culture phenomenon represented a controversy for the official ideology and the regime was ambivalent towards it. What followed, she continues, was the market desintegration during which the defence of *our products* begins to mark the borders between *us* and *the others*.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Union of Pioneers of Yugoslavia was the pioneer movement of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The organization was founded on December 27, 1942. It was a substructure within the Socialist Youth Union of Yugoslavia. Typically, the induction ceremony took place in school for children aged 7 in the autumn of their first year in school, as part of the Republic Day celebrations.

²⁹ Devijacije i promašaji. Etnografija domaćeg socijalizma. Lada Čale Feldman i Ines Prica (ed.) Institut za etnologiju i folkloristiku, Zagreb 2006.

2.2. *Politics of Collective Amnesia*

Rising ethnic nationalism in the 1980s to the 1990s in the SFRY initiated dissidence among the multiple ethnicities, which led to the country collapsing on ethnic lines that were followed by wars fraught with ethnic discrimination and numerous human rights violations. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the wars that followed have left tense relations between the succeeding states and a significant degree of animosity and xenophobia still exist particularly between ethnic groups, which fought each other in the Yugoslav Wars.

The general parochialism of the ex- Yugoslav countries in the post-war period of the 1990s and disappearance of a once interconnected cultural space³⁰ correlated with a sort of *historical amnesia* and a one- sided approach towards the common socialist history, mostly charged with strong nationalist feeling from one side or pure nostalgia, from the other. About the features of the so called “post communist discourse” (Boris Buden) that provoked such a “memory crisis”, there will be words in the following chapters.

Speaking of the post-war Croatian society, Dean Duda, professor at the Cultural Studies Department of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, claims that the contemporary Croatian socio- political situation is very specific; Croatia came out of the country with specific model of socialism (SFRY), and then faced regressive modernism as a following phase, with an experience of the war (1991-1995) and raising nationalism, and then found itself in neo-capitalist surroundings. He stresses that the big problem lays in the fact that this complex situation of contemporary Croatian society and culture (constructed of elements of ex Yugoslav socialist tradition, nationalist retrograde intervention and neo-capitalist tendencies) was left out of serious and continuous scientific research.³¹

Due to the rising nationalism and engineered parochialism, there is a tendency in most of ex Yugoslav countries to neglect the significant part of the common socialist history and

³⁰ Although political elites in Yugoslavia did not favor creation of unique Yugoslav culture and decision making concerning cultural issues in SFRY was put on the level of the republics, there are opinions that Yugoslav culture *de facto* started to develop, paralelly and independently from all cultural projects of Communist Party of Yugoslavia, as a sort of resistance to the system. See more in an interview with Dejan Jović published at <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kulturoskop/340/>

³¹ In the interview in Croatian dayly papers Novi list, 14.09.2003.

culture that was actually marked as progressive in some aspects. Serbian film director Želimir Žilnik says: “If we take a look back on artistic practice of the 1960s, we can conclude that in this period the most relevant and the most interesting achievements in the arts of the peoples living in Yugoslavia happened right in that decade or decade and a half. What has been achieved within the domains of literature, publishing, theatre and film since the beginning of the 1960 till the beginning of 1970s remains unsurpassed even today. What is interesting is the fact that in the countries of ex SFRY these practices were extremely rarely the focus of serious analyses and research. But sometimes the praise and recognition comes from the outside.”³²

The study of the parts of the neglected or one-sided approach to art and cultural history of the socialist period, has recently been a focus of interest of several regional independent artistic and cultural initiatives (curatorial collective *WHW* from Zagreb, Belgrade based *Prelom collective*, Sarajevo *Center for Contemporary Art, kuda.org* from Novi Sad)³³. Their joint project “Political practices in (post) Yugoslav art” is dedicated to re-discovering and questioning of the political context of cultural, artistic and intellectual production in former Yugoslavia. In opposition to the prevailing, one-sided approach to this particular period, this initiative aims to review it critically and extract positive and valuable aspects of those practices. The focus is on the possibility for the re-establishment of the creative and progressive experiences that existed on cultural, artistic and intellectual scene of the former Yugoslavia. The usual post-socialist discourse affirms dominant neo-liberal view on socialist Yugoslav modernism as exclusively totalitarian and authoritarian. This attitude share local nationalist and chauvinist discourses presenting the Yugoslav socialism as nothing but the mean of communist tyranny and dictatorship. This is the point where both post-socialist neo-liberal (global) and nationalist discourses (local) meet, as the project initiators claim.

³² Želimir Žilnik in a debate « Missed history » held on November 18, 2005, as a parallel event within the exhibition « Lasting moment of art; Novi Sad neo-avantgarde of the 1960 es and 1970s. », extract taken from NOVINE, no.09/11. Gallery NOVA, January/July, Zagreb 2006.

³³ Political practices of (post)-Yugoslav art project, see more at <http://kuda.org/sr/node/512>

2.3. Mechanisms of Post-Communist Normalization

The term “post-comunism” is colloquially used as a signifier of the period that started with the year 1989, after the fall of Berlin wall. The term so frequently used within everyday’s political, social and cultural discourse contains certain ambiguities.

The term “post-communism” when applied to the countries that made up former Yugoslavia can produce misunderstandings, according to Branimir Dimitrijević who says that communism could have been the desired content of a socialist society, but was not lived out. After the Second World War, communism stayed on as a pure vision that had to be filled with images. Even if communism as a classless society was never achieved in practice, one can maintain, like Ivaylo Ditchev (Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Sofia University), that communism is a “state of mind” and socialism is a “state of facts”. For this reason, Dimitrijević speaks of “post-communism” in connection with a particular way of thinking, and not as a historical phenomenon. In relation to a utopian promise, the term “post-communism” is an ideological invention that proclaims the end of all universal projects, a sign of some post-historical or post-ideological situation. Yet, this notion of a post-ideological realm has already crumbled.³⁴

In his essay “In the shoes of communism”, theorist Boris Buden³⁵ deals with “mechanisms of post-communist normalization”, posing a question what is a post-communist discourse really about? Central to Buden's writing is the concept of a culturally-politically divided Europe: post-communist Eastern Europe is regarded as an outsider and "bastard" of the European Union. In its exclusion, however, Buden sees the chance to define anew the universal appeal of west-European culture. Speaking of post-Communist discourse, Buden introduces the term “normalization” as its important component. Normalization makes part of the other notions that follow and describe the condition after the fall of communism, as their implicate effect: notions of

³⁴ <http://www.kontakt.erstebankgroup.net>

³⁵ Born in Croatia in 1958 Boris Buden studied classical and modern philosophy in Klagenfurt, Zagreb, and Ljubljana. Since 1984 he has worked as a free-lance journalist and writer. Buden regularly publishes essays in German, English and French on philosophical, political, and cultural subjects.

democratisation, privatisation and above all- transition.³⁶ In short the term “normalization” refers to the adaptation of ex- communist countries to the prevailing, hegemonial standard of liberal- democracy and capitalist system. If the term “normalization” presupposes ideal of democratic society, non- conflictual society, society of tolerance, absence of violence, social peace, partnership etc, the process of normalization is completely legitimate. However within the post-communist discourse, the notion of normalization goes beyond this description and becomes one of its most important mechanisms. How does that mechanism works? From the standpoint of post-communist subject, the attitude and “the knowledge” about communism is formed in accordance with the existing political normativity, meaning that this attitude is necessarily anti-communist. In accordance with existing political normativity, we are convinced in advance that communism was the name for really failed utopian project that never have had a chance to be realized, that socialism is social system which is strange to the true human nature, and because of that, not even one normal human being lived in that system by his own choice and that only authoritarian regime was able to force him to live in that kind of system...

Boris Buden states: “If something such is post-communist discourse exists at all, its key element must include its own relation to the communist past. To understand this relation, to reveal its real nature and discover its significance, that would be the first step in answering the question: what is post-communism.”³⁷

Critical reflection of the post communist condition can be developed just in opposition with what Buden marked as “post-communist discourse”. Critical reflection must never mix communist past with the cultural Other and at the same time hoping that it will be able to find the promise of the better future in cultural residues of the communism.

“Benjamin warned us that the future- as the change towards better- can be born just from our past, only after we fulfilled that past with the present, meaning only after we discovered the sameness between our present and our own past.”³⁸ Re- achieving

³⁶ According to Boris Buden : « In the shoes of communism », <http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=veranstaltungen&subkat=kongrpro&lang=en>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid

continuity with the past serves the purpose of critical positioning towards the actual present.

If we presume that culture is a battlefield between diverse ideologies that try to establish their own hegemony, through political interventions, we can conclude that during the 1990s, in the territory of former SFRY, with the creation of new nation- based states, right- wing, conservative, nationalist cultural hegemony prevailed in all newly established states. This also meant a prevailing “post-Comunist discourse” in Buden’s sense of the word, along with many anomalies that followed and provoked a sort of *collective amnesia*. The period of socialist Yugoslavia was condemned and demonized, the history books literally changed along with the attempts of forging one’s own memory on the collective and, consequently, on the individual level.

2.4. The Institutional Critique within the Art Field in Yugoslavia of the 1970s and its Cultural Heritage

If we look back at the period of the last forty years on the territory of ex Yugoslavia, we can follow a specific line of institutional dissatisfaction. Problems with institutions (within the local frames) generated different sorts of critic (art) practices, critical attitude towards existing institutions, and finally creation of the new institutional forms. While in the 1970s artists critique was directed at the political system and prevailing ideology of the Socialist Yugoslavia (through criticizing institutions), in the 1990s the new generation of cultural workers appeared, and continued politicizing cultural field, expressing resistance to the dominant system of values embodied in nationalist, self- sufficient, xenophobic culture of that time. The following text will examine the institutional critique within the art field in Yugoslavia of the 1970s and its cultural heritage, in the sense of cultural capital.³⁹ By examining two essays, referring to possibilities and practices of institutional critique in Croatia and Serbia, at the time federal units of the same political

³⁹ The term *Cultural capital* refers to non-financial assets that involve educational, social, and intellectual knowledge. Cultural capital (*le capital culturel*) is a sociological concept that has gained widespread popularity since it was first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu

entity- Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, we will be able to see two interpretations, two standpoints on the issue by Ana Dević (Zagreb based curator) and Stevan Vuković (Belgrade based theoretician). In their texts, they are also analyzing the relation of the socialist state towards “critical art practices”.

2.4.1. Reflections on the Institutional Critique in Croatia⁴⁰

From the end of the sixties onwards we can trace a distinct line within the Croatian artistic and cultural scene, which while searching for alternative means of production and presentation of the artwork, has redefined the status of art and modes of mediation between artist and audience. It has achieved this by asking radical questions about the ‘autonomy’ of the system of museums and galleries and about the role and operation of social institutions. This way it has inaugurated a participative, collectivist model of operation with a tactical deployment of media.

As Ana Dević says, the critical work of the artists in the region of former Yugoslavia during this period was not directly focused on the system of museums and galleries. Rather, it was directed at the political and ideological context, as well as the issue of directly creating a more autonomous system of production and distribution of art.

Originally initiated within conceptual art, the practice of institutional critique has affirmed a site specific approach, in which the very space of realisation assumes vital importance, as it is itself viewed as a complex, heterogeneous cultural and political place, framed by the institutions of art, suffused by contradictions and suppressed tensions. Ana Dević emphasizes that parallel to the broadening of the fields and languages of art, the redefinition of artwork, alterations of artistic conventions and the distribution of roles in the art world, the institutional frame has also experienced its own trials and

⁴⁰ According to essay by Ana Dević : « To criticize, charge for services rendered, and be thanked » published at <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0208>.

Ana Dević is art historian and a curator active within curatorial collective WHW, based in Zagreb, Croatia.

transformations. It has proven to be not only an ossified structure but also a dynamic frame prone to reconfigurations, adaptations and continuous redefinitions.

As inevitable points of reference for the different hybrid forms of contemporary artistic practices Dević includes the heritage of feminist art, a series of anti-commercial artistic approaches developed throughout the sixties and seventies that accentuated the context of a specific location and related it to the conditions of production, presentation and the reception of art, as well as different public art practices focused on activism and social issues, and the community based projects developed throughout the eighties. All of these have also greatly contributed to the redefinitions of the artistic framework.

The tension and complex dynamics between the artistic critique of cultural institutions (which necessarily implicitly or explicitly includes the critique of social institutions) on the one hand, and the institutional encouragement of artistic practices on the other, have resulted in contradictory, ambivalent effects. These effects encourage and dumb down the potential for critical action at the same time. In short, it is precisely the success of ‘artist critique’ that has led to its being co-opted by its adversary and losing so much of its poignancy

Historically situated in the 19th century as one of the forms of resistances to the new industrial, capitalist and bourgeois society, the term ‘artist critique’ is used as an umbrella term that implicitly includes different forms of critical social aspirations and which, unlike numerous related terms, accentuates the fact that the artistic position and the values that the respective lifestyle embodies detaches itself from its surroundings by pointing out the seemingly immanent differences between artistic creativity and the imperative of profit.

However, critical position is not a ‘privilege’ related solely to artistic positions. One of the important changes indirectly caused in the contemporary context by artistic critical activities is the catalysis of the increasing appearance of innovative models of curatorial practice, as well as the appearance of a whole new ‘creative class’ of cultural workers.

In relation to the said dynamics, Ana Dević states that in the contemporary Croatian context one can speak of a kind of relevant cultural continuity. The activities of the earlier generations, primarily related to the field of arts, have lately been intensified through the phenomenon of a self-organised and extra-institutional scene that is not strictly related to arts. Due to its progressive potential, however, it does focus on cooperation and social engagement, assimilating this heritage as the initial cultural capital, whilst redefining the issue of the production of critical discourse and critical positions.

Whilst the dulling of the critical edge within the institutional context of the (former) West is a side effect of the assimilation of critical practices, the related critical phenomena in the Croatian context are still not a part of the 'official' narratives of the local art history. The reason for this Dević sees in the identity-based cultural politics and the dysfunctional operation of the central official institutions whose (in)activities have for decades been inertial and have actively ignored the needs of the local scene.

The systematic lack of institutional engagement in the field of museum collections, theoretical interpretations, archives and the knowledge-base concerning contemporary art has brought about the appearance of numerous flexible initiatives (based on NGO-type organisations) that have started constructing various hybrid micro-institutional forms.

“In the constellation of two equally problematic models of traditional institutions - the conservative, dysfunctional, nationally oriented model, and its antipode in the form of the populist, global ideal of the 'enterprise' cultural institution in the making - we can follow the emergence of new cultural protagonists over the last seven years.”⁴¹ These are informal, self-organised, networked organisations, whose gradual institutionalisation takes place in the unstable and oscillating conditions of institutional 'interspaces'. Alongside this, Dević points out that within the international context, the neo-avant-garde and conceptual artistic practice of the sixties and seventies is recognised and integrated. But what she sees as a problem in her own milieu is the fact that the activities of the

⁴¹ Ibid. (The essay by Ana Dević is written in November 2007.)

recent self-organised cultural scene, the experiences of the previous generation on the local level are still not institutionally evaluated and recognised as relevant.

Although internationally recognised artists, such as Sanja Iveković or Mladen Stilinović, for example, are by no means dissidents within their own milieu, just as the numerous 'microinstitutions' do not function in the so-called space of alternative culture, the fact remains that the local cultural institutions do not construct their identity on critical experiences. Whilst in the West the emancipative potentials of critical practices are being built into the constitution of artistic institutions, thus contributing involuntarily to the process of the formation of cultural influences and the hegemony of a certain norm, the related tendencies in the local context have first and foremost encouraged the creation of the 'parallel system' of cultural action and the circulation of art.

The seventies in Croatia were marked by the artists who took a politically active and critical artistic stance and whose activities often included a large number of participants, functioning as 'autonomous spaces' parallel to the art system. The existing system was thus indirectly criticised, almost as a side effect of the creation of a more autonomous mode of artistic production and distribution.

Although exhibiting in the public and alternative spaces did not represent a confrontation with the galleries, but was an outcome of a desire to directly communicate with the surroundings, this kind of strategy was in fact an implicit, and yet bitter, critique of the institutions and a clear reflection of the need to realise the political potential of art in the specific timeframe and social context out of which the given artwork arose. This was preferred to the several years it would probably take to include the given artwork in the official institutional system. Alongside the implicit criticism of the institutions, the critical dimension of this generation's activities is most clearly expressed in the confrontation with the ideology and drastic merging of the public and the private.

In confrontations with the framework of museum institution the artists, as a rule, do not size up their opponent, but question their own artistic position within the system with plenty of strategic irony. The artists of this generation, however, went to even greater

lengths in social critique through confronting the ideological apparatus in the context of public space. As the key example Dević points out to the *Triangle* performance by Sanja Iveković, in which the artist, during President Tito's official visit on 10th May 1979, simulated masturbation on her balcony as the presidential motorcade moved down the street below. After a few minutes a policeman from the official security detail interrupted 'the performance' saying "all objects and persons must be removed from the balcony".

The common ground of these and other artists, such as *Group of Six Artists* or Antonio Gotovac Lauer (a.k.a. Tomislav Gotovac, whose radical performances and provocative artistic expressions in the public space have often been interrupted by the police) is the testing of the boundaries of public space within the socialist state and its repressive mechanisms. "We are left with an impression that at the time, those in power did not pay much attention to what was going on in the contemporary art scene, regarding it as marginal in relation to e. g. film, literature or public memorial sculpture, which were recognised as representative and influential means of artistic expression."⁴²

The system within which this art circle implemented their projects was part of a project of a social state, inclusive of the institutions willing to exhibit without censorship, but rarely encouraging or producing them. This created fertile ground for the development of conceptual, 'non-expensive' art and the ideas of creating 'artistic communities' clustered around self-organised spaces or smaller galleries, which in turn lead to the rise of alternative spaces for the production, exhibition and distribution of artwork.

Both of the above described phenomena – the artistic activities of the seventies and the recent forms of self-organised critical practices – can be interpreted as "two waves of collectivity, which have positioned themselves, though in different social and political circumstances and with different aspirations, in relation to the official institutions."⁴³

Numerous experiences of collective action in the culture and art of the Eastern European countries have resulted in 'parallel universes' and affirmations of different aspects of the

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

collective work. But it would be wrong to interpret their continuity as an inherent, 'atavistic' property of the post-communist societies, as Ana Dević claims.

Although the opposition between the 'official' and the 'unofficial' artistic system is not as sharply polarised in the case of socialist Yugoslavia as in the case of the countries of the Eastern block, within the Croatian scene it is possible to follow the continuity of the development and co-existence of the parallel culture systems from the late Sixties and Seventies to the present day. The conception of art and its role in society is drastically stratified and disjointed in these parallel systems. Though what is at stake is a conflict of visions, as well as (eventually) of drastically different versions of history and art history, this tension did not result in a 'culture war', as might have been expected, but in a more or less 'peaceful coexistence' of both concepts of culture.

The independent culture scene has been equated with so-called 'alternative' culture for decades, but the term 'alternative' is not entirely functional in the present conditions. Although the self-organised scene represents a rare visible alternative to repressive cultural policies with a national slant on the one hand and the neoliberal market on the other, this is by no means an 'alternative' culture or subculture. For instead of becoming integrated into mainstream culture, the alternative culture developed throughout the seventies and the eighties has undergone a sudden disintegration in the nineties. The ethnocentric and nationalistic climate of the time threatened and suppressed different forms of critical action. The development of civil society in Croatia has been hampered by the fact that the parliamentary act concerning NGOs was adopted as late as 1997, and its restrictions revised only in 2001. It was at this later stage that reduced bureaucratic procedures for the registration of formal collectives (NGOs) encouraged their widespread formation.

A large part of the recent cultural production comes from the hybrid 'progressive international mainstream', which discusses the open local issues that emerge around specific infrastructural, locational and relational coordinates. Clustered around confrontation with the dominant models of representation and the parallel development of

innovative models of cultural policy and inter-disciplinary cooperation, this scene has peaked in the last few years in terms of collaboration.

Although these self-established organisations sprang up all over Croatia, the activities of the scene remain particularly intense in Zagreb. The key role in the case of the Zagreb scene has been played by two ‘spin-offs’ of the *Open Society Institute Croatia* projects: the establishment of the *CDU – Centre for Drama Art* in 1995 and the *Multimedia Institute mi2* in 1999. These have become the key protagonists and active participants in the second phase of the development of the cultural scene. Ever since 2000 one can observe the rapid increase in the number of collaborative organisations, mutually networked and working on the transformation and articulation of a series of problems related to the institutional framework through cooperative programmes and examining cultural policy and the status of public space.

2.4.2. *Reflections on the Institutional Critique in Serbia*⁴⁴

Stevan Vuković starts his reflection on institutional critique in Serbia pointing at one of the seminal works of Belgrade conceptual art in mid seventies, Raša Todosijević’s *Edinburgh statement*, with a parallel title: *Who makes a profit from art, and who makes a honest living from it*. It was published as a poster on the 21st of April 1975 listing all *art profiteers*, including various social parasites and *red bourgeoisie*. Among others, it listed the following: “the factories that produce materials necessary to artists, the firms that sell materials necessary to artists, their workers, clerks, sales personnel, agents, etc [...], sales galleries and their staff, non-profit galleries, gallery owners, gallery administration, gallery curators and their personal secretaries and friends, the subsidized gallery council, the voluntary gallery council which collects money because they are not paid [...], the photographer who shoots the pictures for the catalogue, the catalogue publisher, the catalogue editor, the printing firm responsible for printing the catalogue and invitations,

⁴⁴ According to Stevan Vuković’s essay : «Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will (Institutional Critique in Serbia and its Lack of Organic references), published on <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0208/vukovic/en>. Stevan Vuković is Belgrade based theoretician and curator.

the workers who set the print, bind the catalogue and the invitation [...], the insurance companies and their personnel, the night guards of museums, galleries, collections, and this and that type of compilations or legacies, the organizers of symposia, meetings and art festivals [...], organizers granting scholarships for study abroad that are usually granted to the children of high government officials, to the children of the masked and hidden bourgeoisie in socialism [...], camouflaged ideologists, demagogues and reactionaries in institutions, schools of higher learning, universities and academies who have a greater interest in power and influence in the art world than in education and culture, which don't offer any kind of profit, and all those who cover their decadent, dated, reactionary chauvinist and bourgeois models of art and culture with verbal liberalism, in order to attain positions outside the art world, outside of culture, thus being both above and beyond art and culture [...]" There were about two hundred items on the list, including the author of the text himself, with the explanation that "the author wrote this text in order to profit from the good and bad in art."⁴⁵

Vuković also mentions the art work, in the form of a poster by Zoran Popović, an artist from the same generation and a member of the same informal group of six experimental artists, gathered around *SKC Gallery* and belonging to what Ješa Denegri has called *The Other Line*. The title of that poster, which was also text based, was *For the Self-Management Art*, and it advocated the politization of art against red bourgeoisie and state bureaucracy, which he regarded, in the aftermath of 1968 events, "the class enemy of the proletariat". It's important to mention that these posters as well as the whole project of new political art with experimental premises, for the society in transition towards more horizontal manner of self-management practices in all areas of social life, was conducted in *SKC*, under the directorship of Dunja Blažević, art historian, and former curator of the *SKC Gallery*, who has actually connected these artists and fostered their collaboration. Two years before this project, which was publicised within the framework of the *October '75* exhibition in *SKC Gallery*, an interesting textbook appeared, printed by the *Publishing Center "Komunist"* from Belgrade, presenting a compilation of texts related to the struggle against *capitalist restoration* and *bureaucratic and technocratic*

⁴⁵ Ibid.

monopolies, with the goal to overcome the fact that *workers self-management* was instituted in Yugoslavia by the *League of Communists*, and to find a way a way for it to become truly grass-roots managed, and that the working class would really appropriate the conditions and the results of its work. The title of the book was *Self-management and the Workers Movement*, and it comprised three very extensive parts, the first entitled *Theoretical Bases and Historical Experiences*, the second one *Revolutionary Abolishment of Capitalism* and the third *Socialism*. It was a kind of a response to the students' movements of 1968, both the May unrests in Paris and the June unrests in Belgrade. Here Stevan Vuković explains that in order to accomodate those demands put forward by active leftist youth, the system had to come up with solutions, one of them being the very foundation of *SKC*, a former police cultural center, to be a *Students Cultural Center* for experiments in art, as well as in various cultural and social practices. Another, more ambitious project, was to produce theoretical and ideological foundations for the full inclusion of all the progressive and emancipatory groups in the decision-making process within the range of the present social system, even if this should require considerable alterations to the system's mode of operations. Texts from Marx to Gramsci, from Rosa Luxemburg to Bakunin, and so on, were to help by providing a set of tools to cope with that task, which *Tito* himself, a life long president of the country, president of the *League of Communists of Yugoslavia* and the supreme commander of the *Yugoslav Peoples Army*, promoted in one of his speeches.

The whole issue is not specific to the present state of affairs only, Vuković continues. "The institutional logic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, especially in the sector that played the role of *civil society* (consisting, in the jargon of socialist self-management, of *socio-political organizations* and *socio-political communities*) was based on the principle which Antonio Gramsci (borrowing from Benedetto Croce) called *trasformismo*, whereby actual and potential leaders and initiatives coming from the subordinate groups were constantly being incorporated into the dominant project, in order to prevent the formation of counter-hegemony."⁴⁶ That counted for the youth organizations, student organizations, unions of artists, writers and other cultural

⁴⁶ Ibid.

producers, cultural communities based on common ethnic, religious and other grounds, as well as different self-organized sub-cultural groups. Even the so called *dissident* intellectuals were in fact provided with ways to be safe in their activities (without being sent to some Gulag), for that showed the difference between the political system they were questioning and the proper Stalinist system, Vuković says.

With his text, he points out that in the times of former Yugoslavia; there was no *outside* of the system. All initiatives were sooner or later appropriated by official institutions, and the spaces that seemed to be small autonomous zones beyond the reach of dominant social and cultural paradigms were actually recruitment centers for future leaders of the joint Yugoslavian community. Vuković claims that it was clear that “the structures of institutions are not merely imposed on the otherwise freely existing practices”, but that “all practices are always part of some institutional structure beyond which no practice, no critique, no speech is possible.”⁴⁷

In that sense, Todosijević’s act of listing himself among the ones profiting from art by criticizing all those that profit from it, points to a very interesting feature of his work that opened paths for the next waves of local institutional critique. Namely, his *standpoint of active cynicism* (a coin made by Ješa Denegri) adds to the point that whatever he does in his work, he does it while abandoning the sovereignty of the position of the artist as producer, a sole creative source of the work, putting himself into the position of critically reflecting the desire of the system he is entangled in.

Further on, in his text, Stevan Vuković continues to speak about the development of civil society of the 1990-es marked “by the aggressive presence of different international institutions, which have taken upon themselves the role of the former state institutions in dominating the civil sector. (...) Specifically in the region of former Yugoslavia, a vast number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and grassroots organizations (GROs) received support as long as they demonstrated commitment to the promotion of liberal

⁴⁷ Ibid.

democracy and economic liberalism.”⁴⁸ This sort of critique emerged recently in Croatia and Serbia, among the very protagonists of the local independent cultural scenes.

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By reading the two essays on institutional critique in two former republics of SFRY by Ana Dević and Stevan Vuković, and having in mind that they come from countries with similar historical and social background (joint experience of SFRY followed by nationalist climate of the 1990s) and transitional present in the neo-liberal surroundings, one can still notice rather different focuses of the two authors. While Ana Dević was dealing more with the problems with the institutions (almost as a historical continuity), she sees the *parallel system of art* initiated by the activities of the artists in 1970s faced with the passivity of the public institutions, and the independent cultural scene in Zagreb of the 1990’s, as positive matter, as a value, Vuković is rather skeptical. In the activities of the Student Cultural Center (SKC) in Belgrade of the 1970s, basically an official state-constituted cultural institution, he sees the strategies of the state to contain, pacify and institutionalize student or youth culture as an “organized alternative” especially after 1968 events. He observes this “state care” for the existence of marginal but active “alternative centers” as a part of the correlation between art and official politics representing dominant ideology. Some artists active around SKC in the 1970s were also reacting to this “relation between the state and the New Artistic Practice”, by *active cynicism* or the withdrawal (Raša Todosijević, Goran Đorđević etc). In the other words, Stevan Vuković minimises or neutralizes the “real effect of critic art related to state founded institutions” and re-launches his doubt and criticism in respect with the new civil society organisations emerging in Serbia in the 1990s.

Vuković’s standpoint as well as the opinions of several other authors can lead us to possible consideration that an institution of culture strategically present and operative in the contemporary post-Yugoslavian condition is actually a complex field of so-called “cultural practices” and the ways in which they are incorporated into the political

⁴⁸ Ibid.

mechanisms of contemporary peripheral capitalism. When talking about the activities of the independent cultural scene (as the *developing third sector*), surely there is a need of posing the questions of how the neo-liberal constellation influences cultural practices produced within its framework.

3. Independent Cultural Sector Development in Croatia

According to some theorists, for the majority of western democratic societies the independent sector development represents a common achievement. There, the independent sector has been nourished and inherited as one of the non-contestable civilisational achievements, as a common value. In the countries such are the Netherlands, Great Britain, USA, France and many others these achievements constitute a part of general political culture. As it was already mentioned, the expression “Third sector” referring to the field in between the market and the state has been in use in America⁴⁹ and the Western Europe since 1970s, while the interest for this field in the Eastern Europe has been rising within the last twenty years.

In the beginning of the period called democratic transition, all the basic values that are generally attributed to this sector in the west (civil and individual rights protection, freedom of speech, media independence, the right to cultural autonomy) became the key elements by which “the new democracies” of post- socialist Europe were judged. They were used as a criterion for estimating the level of democracy in those countries, their adaptation and integration to the western world of developed, “high democracies”. The situation in the majority of the newly formed countries of the South-eastern Europe, especially in the 1990-es, was extremely discouraging regarding investment in the non-profit sector development, particularly regarding the values it promotes. In this sense, it could be said that Croatia was at the very bottom of the list, in the wider European context.

⁴⁹ In America the Third sector includes thousands of non governmental and non profit institutions. These institutions include the majority of America's hospitals, a very large part of the schools, and an even larger percentage of colleges and universities. They include large international philanthropic organizations and very large domestic ones like the American Red Cross, the enormous diversity of churches etc. These institutions are paid mainly by fees and voluntary donations rather than tax dollars. They are nominally independent and governed by their own volunteer boards. The third sector is actually the country's largest employer, though neither its work force nor the output it produces show up in the statistics. One out of every two adult Americans - a total of 90 million people - are estimated to work as volunteers in the third sector, most of them in addition to holding a paid job. These institutions, today, increasingly talk of the "independent sector" rather than the "third sector." See more at http://www.thesocialcontract.com/artman2/publish/tsc0102/article_16.shtml

It should also be stated that this period is characterised by significant social layering and pauperisation. On one side, various social groups (such as workers, public servants, pensioners) retreat from the public domain, while on the other, some new, enriched group takes it over almost “overnight”, augmenting its own economical power on a daily base, without any social mechanism of control. In this situation, cultural production of the public sector rapidly diminishes; the consumption is transformed, while the atmosphere of general confusion and desorientation takes over all segments of the society.⁵⁰

The “NGO scene” made its appearance in the post-Yugoslavian space during the 1990s and formed an oppositional movement to the prevailing nationalist leaderships of the ex-Yugoslavian republics. These “civil society initiatives” were supported by various foreign funds for actions such as anti-war campaigns, education for democracy programs, campaigns for human rights, etc.

However, civic initiatives in the countries of ex Yugoslavia are not imported or imposed by international organizations which supported them in the 1990s, as some might claim. They existed before, including social or citizens associations active during socialism. Milena Dragičević Šešić mentions the Law on “temporary and permanent art workers societies” existing from the end of the 1970s, established on the wave of liberalization and democratization of the cultural policy in SFRY. This law enabled certain *artistic entrepreneurship* within the civil society, particularly in the domain of film.⁵¹ Dea Vidović and Sanjin Dragojević point out towards the civic initiatives active in the 1980s and promoting ecological, feminist, human rights issues.⁵² When the foreign foundations entered Croatia in the 1990s, their development surely becomes more evident. One of the first was the Soros foundation, which opened its Croatian branch in 1993 under the name The Open Society Institute- Croatia.

⁵⁰ Sanjin Dragojević, Dea Vidović : “Development of cultural non-profit and independent sector in Croatia from 1990 till nowadays” published at <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kultrapunkt>

⁵¹ In the article *In spite of the cultural policy and beside it : practice and strategies of the Third and the Fourth sector in Vienna and Belgrade* by Martina Böse, Brigitte Busch and Milena Dragičević-Šešić in « TRANSCULTURAL EUROPE, Cultural Policy in a Changing Europe », edited by Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou, CLIO, 2008.

⁵² <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kultrapunkt/8/?pid=31>

3.1. Atlas Croatia: General Facts and Recent Socio- Political Framework⁵³

Capital: Zagreb, 779,145 inhabitants (2001), in 1991: 930,800 inhabitants

Population: 4,437,460 (2001)

Ethnic composition: 89.6 percent Croatians (1991: 78.1 percent), 4.5 percent Serbs (1991: 12.2 percent), 5.9 percent other minorities (2001)

Area: 56,542 square kilometers

Gross Domestic Product: 28,810 million US dollars (2003)

GDP per Capita: 6,498 US dollars (2003)⁵⁴

Croatia from the 1990 Onwards

The first free elections in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1990 marked the beginning of the crucial phase of the disintegration of the state. As in Slovenia, the aim of the oppositional forces in Croatia was autonomy. Many of the protagonists had been involved in the Croatian Spring, the nationalist movement in Croatia from the early 1970s whose goal was greater autonomy within SFRY. The Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), a nationalist coalition movement, developed into the most important force and under the leadership of former general Franjo Tuđman the party came to power in the spring of 1990. “Ideologically the HDZ stemmed from very heterogeneous political traditions, ranging from the national struggle for liberation during World War Two to the Ustaša regime”⁵⁵. The May 9, 1991, referendum was a clear declaration in favor of secession, and on June 25, 1991, Croatia declared its independence.

Initially the political and territorial integrity of the country proved to be fragile. In contrast to the relative ethnic homogeneity of Slovenia, Croatia had a large Serbian population, and the representatives of this minority group reacted to Croatian secession efforts by creating their own state structures. The consolidation of the new republic,

⁵³ The main source for this chapter (3.1) was the article Atlas Croatia published at <http://www.projekt-relations.de/en/explore/zagreb/laenderatlas.php>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

however, also proceeded at a slow pace because the HDZ-propagated project of ethnic nation-state formation strove for unification with the Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, the country was in a state of war with the Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitary units that lasted for years, during which not only entire sections of population were displaced, but the development of democratic structures was blocked by the growing authority of the military and security forces. This coalescence of system change, state formation, and war constituted a conflict-filled constellation that shaped the political dynamic of the Croatian people for an entire decade. In addition, Tuđman himself was a significant force; he was elected the first president and thanks to his constitutional powers wielded extraordinary authority. Ultimately, the Catholic clergy played, and still plays, an important role; it has traditionally shown a strong affinity to Croatian nationalism.

Following the army's success in almost fully retaking the Serbian-controlled areas of Croatia, the HDZ achieved electoral victory once more, in the early parliamentary vote in October 1995. All the same, in the years that followed, general dissatisfaction with economic and political circumstances was on the rise. Cases of corruption, a liquidity crisis affecting both the state and private enterprises, and internal conflicts profoundly damaged the reputation of the governing party. Moreover, the obstruction of the return of 300,000 Serbian refugees, the support of nationalistic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the failure to punish war crimes isolated the country with regard to foreign affairs.

Thus the HDZ suffered a bitter defeat in the elections held at the beginning of 2000 and a coalition led by the postcommunist Social Democratic Party (SDP) determined the government's course for four years. At almost the same time, Stipe Mesić, a member of the liberal Croatian People's Party (HNS), had been elected to the highest public office after Tuđman's death. By means of a constitutional amendment, parliament abolished the semipresidential system but retained the office of a directly elected president. Under the center-left government Mesić began to break some of the taboos left over from the Tuđman era. He tried to normalize relations with Serbia, ended support for the Croatian separatists in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and promulgated a heightened readiness to cooperate

vis-à-vis the Criminal Court in The Hague. Thanks to his conciliatory position Mesić was reelected president in January 2005.

Even so, the fragile social-liberal coalition was unable to keep its key pre-election promises. Despite a neoliberal economic program both the foreign trade deficit and the national debt continued to increase. Likewise, fundamental reform of the corrupt judicial system did not occur. The Croatian Democratic Union distinguished itself, however, in the opposition as the guardians of national dignity and undermined the purported cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. At the same time, the HDZ, under the leadership of former Tuđman confidant Ivo Sanader, developed into a modern conservative party that also declared its support for integration into NATO and the European Union.

Since the beginning of 2004 a center-right minority coalition government led by the HDZ has been in power. The new Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader, secured the Croatian Serbs' SDSS party's parliamentary support with an agreement that promises the Serbs an end to the prevailing policies of discrimination and pledges the return of refugees. An important step toward Croatia's accession into the European Union was thereby also taken.

In 2000 the European Council classified the five countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, and Macedonia as potential candidates for EU membership. The Stabilization and Association Process serves as an instrument of integration; its most important goal is to bring the "western Balkans"—the official term of the European Commission—to the European Union. An essential component of the process consists of implementing principles such as democracy, the rule of law, and the protection of minorities, as well as fulfillment of the Dayton Agreement and cooperation with the War Crimes Tribunal. Moreover, the Copenhagen criteria must be met before accession into the EU. In turn the Stabilization and Association Process offers an opportunity for contractual relations with the EU in the form of Stabilization and Association Agreements. To date, only two countries in the region have been able to conclude such an agreement: Croatia (October 2001) and Macedonia (April 2001). On February 21, 2003, the Croatian government formally applied for EU membership even though not all of the member states had ratified its agreement. Nevertheless, the

European Council granted Croatia candidate status in June 2004. Inadequate cooperation with the Criminal Court in The Hague constituted a significant obstacle to the commencing of accession negotiations. But the rejection of the European constitution in France and in the Netherlands as well as the collapse of the EU summit in Brussels also contributed to the postponement of accession talks. For this reason, the Croatian government's option—to still conclude negotiations with the European Union in 2007—seemed unrealistic. However, Austria's conservative government has succeeded in making its consent to EU accession negotiations with Turkey contingent upon the initiation of these processes with Croatia. Surprisingly, at the beginning of October 2005 Carla Del Ponte, former chief prosecutor of the Hague Tribunal, confirmed Zagreb's full cooperation in the search for war criminals.

*Growing Trade and Productivity Deficits*⁵⁶

Before its independence, Croatia was one of the more economically developed of the federal republics. The country's economy was strongly geared toward intra-Yugoslav trade and the eastern European market. The collapse of the "Socialist camp" and the subsequent war of secession led to an extensive loss of markets. The war destroyed one quarter of the country's production capacities. Tourism, one of Croatia's most important sources of revenue, practically came to a standstill. The rate of inflation increased to over 1,500% in 1993; gross domestic product came to a mere 60 percent of its prewar level.

Hyperinflation was successfully combated, however, by means of a stabilization program. Though the Croatian economy has not yet been able to regain its 1989 level, per capita GDP in 2003 was at 6,489 US dollars, higher than that of Romania, Bulgaria, and Poland. Contributing to the generation of GDP were the service sector, at 62 percent of net product, industry at 30 percent, and agriculture at 8 percent (2003). Growth rates can mainly be traced to investments in infrastructure for transportation and tourism as well as to a strong private demand for high-quality consumer goods. These expenditures were financed via international borrowing and bank loans. Accordingly foreign indebtedness has increased since 1999 from 14 billion US dollars to around 25 billion US dollars. At

⁵⁶ Ibid.

82 percent of GDP, Croatia's level of indebtedness is higher than in most other postsocialist countries. The dangerously increasing foreign trade deficit can also be seen as a cause of this. Currently Croatia is conducting more than 70 percent of its foreign trade with the expanded European Union (EU-25). While Croatian exports into the EU have barely increased since 1990, imports from the EU have tripled. Overall the balance of trade deficit reached a preliminary all-time high in 2003 at 7.9 billion US dollars.

Leading representatives of the European Union and international financial institutions hold the sluggish progress being made in the movement toward privatization responsible for the Croatian economy's lack of competitiveness. In Croatia's case, however, it must also be borne in mind that in contrast to other socialist countries, the means of production in Yugoslavia were not state-owned but, in accordance with Yugoslav "self-managed socialism," belonged to the employees of business enterprises. In a first step taken in 1991 the collectives' hitherto existing rights of ownership were abolished and businesses were made the property of the state. The second phase consisted in an attempt to sell production facilities by means of public invitations to tender and auctions. Similar to the other Yugoslav successor states the Croatian government propagated the model of turning former employees into shareholders through a process of "insider privatization." Soon, however, HDZ party supporters, thanks to their political connections, were able to buy up businesses cheaply. Conglomerates of companies started to appear whose owners were more interested in short-term profits than in modernizing production facilities. In comparison to most of the other postsocialist countries, the Croatian economy was subject to far less restructuring at the microeconomic level. The country still produces 50 percent of its GDP in nationalized enterprises running high deficits. Thus, at the end of 2004 the International Monetary Fund made the allocation of further credit contingent upon a comprehensive rehabilitation program: in addition to wage cuts in the civil services and more flexibility in labor relations a forced privatization and a closing down of state-run enterprises are to be implemented.

Croatia's weak export numbers prompted the country to resume former trade relationships. After concluding a free trade agreement with Serbia-Montenegro and Albania (2002), Croatia now has treaties of this sort with all the states in the region.

Nevertheless, the scale of Croatia's current trade with the former Yugoslav republics is still far below what it was in the 1980s.

In recent years Croatia has been able to increase the influx of direct foreign investments. These come largely from the European Union, particularly Austria and Germany, which next to Italy, are Croatia's most important trading partners. International capital flows primarily into the areas of telecommunications, financial services, and the tourism industry. Though Germany has become less important as a trading partner in past years, it continues to hold second place; at the same time, Croatia plays only a marginal role in German foreign trade.

Impoverishment of Croatian Society

Privatization has led to a heightened contrast between a small group of "tycoons" and the wider public. For many years Croatia has had a high rate of unemployment; in 2003 it stood officially at 19.4 percent. It must be borne in mind, however, that between 25 and 40 percent of Croatian net product is generated by the shadow economy. Estimates reveal that currently between 15 and 18 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Moreover, as economic investment is predominantly concentrated in the capital of Zagreb and its adjoining regions, a growing regional imbalance with regard to prosperity and employment has arisen. Since Croatia became independent, half a million people have left the country and only a meager 250,000 have returned. The largest Croatian minority population in Western Europe still lives in Germany (circa 231,000 people).

Deindustrialization and high unemployment rates are also undermining the pension system. In 1980, with 1.8 million employed and 450,000 retirees, the relation between the two was still relatively good. Today one million net contributors have to pay for a million pensioners, and the numbers of the latter increased partially because the government forced the unemployed into early retirement. In addition, many Croats who had lived in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia-Montenegro before independence immigrated to Croatia and the state must now bear the costs of their rights to a pension as well.

The Decline of Censorship

Freedom of information was restricted during the 1990s in many ways. The HDZ had also exploited privatization to buy up three of the ten existing daily newspapers, aligning them politically following a clear with-us-or-against-us scheme. Likewise extensive use was made of a legal provision that made it a punishable offense to defame the five most important government representatives (the president, prime minister, and the presidents of the parliament, the constitutional court, and the supreme court). Hundreds of trials with high compensation claims were initiated by people associated with the HDZ in order to intimidate irksome journalists. Above all, the state-run Croatian radio and television station, HRT, which is also one of the most important media groups, played a central role in forcing the public to toe the line. The statutory regulation that allowed members of the station council to be elected by parliament enabled the HDZ, with its majority, to transform the state-run television into an organ that adhered to the government line. Admittedly in 2003 the center-left government changed the selection criteria and the composition of the committee and converted the station into a public service venture. In addition, the disparagement clause was toned down.

In the late 1990s foreign businesses entered Croatia's media market as well. To cite a few examples: the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung newspaper group has a 50 percent share in Europapress Holding, one of the biggest newspaper publishing companies in Croatia, and the third channel of Croatian television was, after its privatization, sold to the RTL group, which within a short time was able to capture a large share of the market.

3.2. Development of the Independent Cultural Scene in Croatia (1990 - 2002)

In the year 2007, on the occasion of celebrating five years of "Clubture", an extensive independent culture network gathering organizations from Croatia and the Region of ex Yugoslavia, functioning as a collaborative platform for programme exchange, the book

“CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007”⁵⁷ was published. This publication represents one of the first more extensive attempts to look back and summarize and (to certain extent) evaluate the development of the phenomenon called “the independent cultural scene” in Croatia by several of its protagonists. The book has been used as a guideline for a study of development of the Croatian independent cultural scene in this thesis.

Before starting, it is important to mention that it has been shown that the leadership within the non- profit sector has been of the extreme importance and that the whole sector hardly can replace the loss or departure of the key person⁵⁸. It can be said that today’s dynamics and position of the independent cultural scene, especially in the negotiations with the city authorities, advocacy, public actions and its structural organization, owes a great deal to the several key protagonists that could be marked as leaders. They act as managers or spokesmen of the scene and take positions within the current organizational structure (directors, coordinators of the certain NGOs or of the recently established Center for the Independent Culture and Youth). Their strong presence, as well as their actual engagement and achievements within the last decade, has been occasionally subjected to critics coming from different sides. Thus, the scene is sometimes observed as a closed structure, cultural organisation run by several professionals, already representing a sort of institution with quite visible hierarchy. From the other side, many observers consider that the strong and comitted leadership is crucial element of the scenes’ success today.

The independent cultural scene in Croatia begins its formation in the first half of 1990s. From the start it represents a sort of parallel world in relation to existing dominant, institutionalized, mainstream culture. The independent cultural scene consists of self-established organizations that are not owned by the state, the city or some other, 3rd subject. They independently decide and manage the organizational structure, they do not

⁵⁷ CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007 (edited by Dea Vidović).

⁵⁸ Dea Vidović and Sanjin Dragojević speak about this at <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kultrapunkt/8/?pid=31> <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr/i/kultrapunkt/8/?pid=31>

depend on only one source of financing and make their own decisions how they will spread the finances within their programme and project activities unlike the majority of established cultural institutions (theatres, museums, galleries, cultural centres), which are owned by the state or the city and influenced by them. Culture policies during the 1990s, through today has not changed much, having been reduced to the single level of financing and control of the leading positions within public cultural institutions, and “political credibility” is one of the main criterion for appointing people to these positions. Besides, independent cultural actors are fighting for the public space and raising conscience about the importance of culture in public social and political life. They are the ones opting for the transformation of the existing cultural system, unlike established cultural institutions that stopped on the legacy from the socialist era and they are not able to conduct a structural transition.⁵⁹

In the following chapters, the process of formation and development of the independent cultural scene will be presented.

3.2.1. The World is changing

The abovementioned book starts with a general overview of the changed global conditions that lead towards the creation of new social and cultural formations and structures, together with a new operative frame creating new types of cross cultural communication and exchange.

Technological transformations based on information technology in the United States of America during the 1970s, according to Manuel Castells, lead towards the establishment of an interaction between the society and the global economy and world geopolitics, whose consequences are displayed in new manners of production, communication and living.⁶⁰ This technological change was the base for the socio- economic transformations during 1980s and 1990s. Management flexibility, new and cheap labour force,

⁵⁹ According to Dea Vidović in an interview published at <http://robertradamantco.wordpress.com/2008/04/30/dea-vidovic-kako-je-organizirana-nezavisna-kulturna-scena-u-hrvatskoj/>, April 30, 2008.

⁶⁰ Manuel Castells: *Informacijsko doba: Ekonomija, društvo I kultura. Svezak 1: Uspon umreženog društva*. Zagreb: Golden Marketing, 2000.

decentralization and the expansions of networks of companies, higher and higher degree of industrialisation, as well as the emergence of flexible “working places” instigated numerous re-organizations in companies but also engendered numerous dramatic effects in technological, political, economic, social and cultural life.⁶¹ Standardization processes take over the field of culture and in those conditions American culture easily takes the leading position globally and begins dominating local cultures. The response to this is a growing care for the local and the regional, increasingly and more intensively promoted by the European cultural policies as well.

3.2.2. Networks and Collectives

The 1990s brought another phenomenon in the field of culture: the frequent formation of cultural networks that became a very popular organizational infrastructure in Europe, on the national levels and beyond. They were established to enable flexible forms of collaboration and meetings between their members, sharing similar problems and common interests. They ensured diverse channels of communication and cooperation through the exchange of information via mailing lists, regular meetings on conferences, seminars and workshops, through a common work on projects etc. This trend was followed by the countries in transition, which also established and got involved in numerous networks.

In the considering of the political, the collectives take up a significant role, and specifically the role representing the political answer to globalisation. For this reason, programmes for the collective and its preservation are established, in opposition to the focus on that which is individual, as propagated by the new global system.

Within such a system, local initiatives, which expanded from the middle of the 1990s, represented an open and uninhibited space for social, artistic and cultural experiments, a step forward and an answer to the existing cultural offer. Dea Vidović in her article quotes theorist Charles Esche and says that although artists and cultural workers who promote such fields of activity are placed within the political and economic hegemony of

⁶¹ According to Dea Vidović’s essay : THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CROATIAN INDEPENDENT CULTURAL SCENE (1990-2002) OR WHAT PRECEDED THE CLUBTURE NETWORK ; A glimpse outside the yard ; CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007, p.13

capitalism which basically endangers their position, at the same time it is the justification for different types of their activities. Their projects, claims Vidović, can work as engaged and independent elements which, even though they are within the system, are entitled to other rules because their instruments are primarily artistic and cultural. By reaching out for different and diverse approaches and relations, these projects “have warned us that the culture of nation, spectacles and consumptions is not the only possible option.”⁶²

In the context of Croatia, of the beginning of the 1990s, the independent cultural organizations were the ones that appeared as exponents of the new possibilities, a new way of thinking, developed by new technologies and social conditions, challenging the existing cultural paysage which remained passive and silent towards the changing reality, demanding a new, open and independent point of view.

3.2.3. Parallel Cultural Systems

How did it all start happening, this process of organizing and slowly establishing the “parallel system of culture”, later known as the independent cultural scene? Dea Vidović starts with the description of “the picture frame”, meaning conditions in which the story begins. In the beginning of the processes of the so called democratic transition, after the fall of Yugoslavia and the multi-party elections, Croatia also faces the war destructions that slows down the whole process but at the same time becomes the justification for all the accompanying negative manifestations of transition. The war and the economic recession jointly lead to a significant social stratification and impoverishment.

With the end of the war and the integration of the remaining territory, Croatia enters a new phase of its transitional history, orienting itself towards economic and cultural development, according to Vjeran Katunarić.⁶³ But the reality was somewhat different, in spite of noble declarations. Privatisation and corruption, as well as clientelist networks in public institutions and companies shaped the country. Such a situation did not favour the de- monopolization of media, restructuring of the judiciary and the creation of a civic culture- all of these ensuring the development of democracy, as Vidović states.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

One of the results of the circumstances is a specific return to traditional culture, which has its shelter in political, social and cultural construction that was in power in Croatia. The Croatian culture was at the time evaluated as a national and closed one; urban culture and youth culture were neglected and decision making in the field of culture was not public and transparent.⁶⁴ Andrea Zlatar defines the culture of the 1990s as ethnocentric, neo-conservative, past oriented, auto-referential, autistic and xenophobic and she emphasizes that such culture is the result of the Croatian Democratic Unity (Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ), at the time the ruling political party in Croatia.⁶⁵ Although cultural activities decreased, the cultural heritage was neglected, and the reconstruction of cultural infrastructure was not implemented, we can state that Croatia, unlike some other transitional countries of South-East Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania), managed to preserve its “cultural engine”. Cultural institutions managed to survive, and the majority of cultural objects in Croatia (excluding for examples cinemas) were not privatized, but remained in the ownership of the state or cities, which preserved its public, cultural function. This partially favoured the formation of the independent cultural scene: the out of dated system of culture motivated and mobilized the newly established cultural and artistic organizations to act by introducing new ways of organizing and functioning, as well as by promoting different and more open cultural and artistic products.

3.2.4. Nepotism Instead of Cultural Policy

The society, economy and politics in the transitional Croatia at the beginning of the 1990s, did not find its reflection in the culture of that time. The cultural field was not stimulated to creativity neither transformation towards a more diversified production and aesthetics.

During the war years the return to the identification model that equates a state, a nation and a culture was evident in the field of culture, while cultural policy was implicit and least radically changed. One could state that there was a complete lack of cultural policy

⁶⁴ Cvjetičanin Biserka and Katunarić Vjeran (Eds) (2001) *Hrvatska u 21. stoljeću. Kultura*. Ured za strategiju razvitka Republike Hrvatske, Zagreb.

⁶⁵ According to Andrea Zlatar in CLUBTURE, *Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007*, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007.

at the time. The state took care of culture on the level of financing and control of management positions within public institutions in culture in accordance with political suitability and nepotism, and it directed all its efforts towards the return to traditional culture, the support of the culture with a national signature and historical spectacles. The care for the “others” and minorities was lacking, international cooperation was not seen as desirable or needed, and the lack of dialogue and openness towards users was common.

The central point of administration and decision making was the Ministry of culture of the Republic of Croatia. By introducing so called « model of public needs » in 1993, one year public calls were opened to which institutions, individuals and groups could apply with their programs. The Commission appointed by the Ministry of Culture then decided on them based on the principle of what is in the best interest of the Republic of Croatia. The decisions were made in accordance with an ideological key and method, which approved that which served to promote « the national ».

3.2.5. International Support as an Alternative

Due to the impossibility of receiving financing through the national and local level, numerous actors on the cultural and artistic scene oriented themselves towards international foundations. This point represented a new phase in the developments of culture in all post- communist countries, especially linked to the activities of one of the leading foundation that significantly marked the whole period of the 1990s in them- the Open Society Institute (so called Soros foundation). In the isolationist climate, charged with strong national impulses and significant xenophobic atmosphere, all those who received support from the Open Society Institute- Croatia were marked as unfit and dangerous for the state. « In spite of such etiquette, they managed to ensure their recognition in the community through offering the alternative type of cultural and artistic practice, thus connecting Croatia with contemporary global trends on the cultural and artistic scene. »⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Dea Vidović's essay : THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CROATIAN INDEPENDENT CULTURAL SCENE (1990-2002) OR WHAT PRECEDED THE CLUBTURE NETWORK ; A glimpse outside the

In addition to ideologically conditioned financing, there were and continue to exist, principles according to which, only in the case of those who do not belong to the public cultural sector, solely programmes can be financed, and not their basic costs of infrastructure, so called «cold engine ». Only institutions which are in public ownership can receive financing of these costs and 75% of the total budget goes to them. The small part that remains is available for cultural and artistic programmes for which both cultural institutions and all of those belonging to the private or civil sector in the field of culture compete. Hence, the survival of the latter organizations is constantly put in question.

Dea Vidović also mentions the privatization process in the field of culture as another important issue in the transitional period. Privatization that marked economy was transferred in the field of cultural production in an equally non-transparent, non-systematic manner and with devastating consequences. Thus, the majority of countries started to sell the cultural institutions, which used to be in the ownership of the state, to the private sector, and the area caught within this process was primarily the cultural industry. The process of privatization differs among the transitional countries only in terms of standardization and the speed of its implementation. In Croatia privatization was mostly felt in the publishing, music and film industry.

3.2.6. Freedom of Association

One of the preconditions for democracy and the grant of its functioning is civil society development. The freedom of association is its fundamental part. Changes caused by the transition had direct consequences on the development and the role of civil society, which takes on an increasingly important role in the political, economic and social development of Croatia. It becomes a serious mediator of citizens' social interests and thus becomes the competition to the existing system.

Civil society in the transitional countries encounters numerous problems which can mostly be seen in the realm of political culture, which did not ensure development of this sector. In Croatia, the heritage from socialist time, war destruction, humanitarian and

yard ; CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007, p.18.

economic crises affected its development and status, not forgetting the ambiance of the authoritarian political regime, in which it started to develop. At that time, the associations oriented towards the development of human rights, democratization, humanitarian issues, were formed. Although supported by international organizations, the state and public institutions did not accept the cooperation with this sector, even more the NGO's were stigmatized as subjects advocating non- Croatian interests. The activities of the associations were under the constant state control and the possibility of prohibition of their work represented a constant threat. The development of civil society was slowed down by the inefficient legislature, which only adopted the Act on Associations in 1997. The first important step forward in relations to civil society can be tracked back to 1998. when the Office for NGO Cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Croatia was set up, aiming to ensure the financing of associations according to a three-year plan. Nevertheless, a more significant shift was noticed only after 2000. when international donors withdrew but also when new forms of financing were simultaneously opening on both the state (the Parliament passed the Act on Cultural Councils at the Ministry of culture) and the local levels (The Commission for Urban and Youth culture (now the Council) was activated at the City of Zagreb Office for Culture. It had an advisory role on decision making regarding programme financing of NGO's active in the field of culture. Other Croatian cities established the Councils only in 2004. with the adoption of the Act on the Establishment of Cultural Councils of the Counties and Cities which have more than Thirty Thousand Inhabitants.

3.2.7. The Parallel World

The Parallel World is how Dea Vidović names (and positions) the independent cultural scene and its activities in Croatia from the 1990s on, in opposition to dominant aesthetic, ideological and political concepts and ideas of that time. A group of organizations that were forming the scene brought a fresh perspective into the Croatian society, with new creative forces of artistic, cultural and social engagement. These were self-established organizations that were not in the ownership of the state, city or some third subject, in which members and founders independently decided on the running of the organization, and which were not exclusively financially dependent on one source of financing but

independently decided upon them. Their organizational structure is most commonly set up horizontally, and they are moving the borders and questioning and reflecting on culture, arts, society, economics and politics with their new principles. Furthermore, they are open to participation, are dynamic and flexible in their work and activities, and are oriented towards the local communities. Their enthusiasm and very often voluntary work mark their advantage.⁶⁷

The independent cultural scene was for a long time connected to the alternative culture. Numerous authors, when talking about it, particularly during the 1990s use the term “alternative”. For example Andrea Zlatar⁶⁸, when talking about culture of that respective period, uses the term “alternative” to refer to the area of all those cultural and artistic initiatives which mutually unconnected managed to survive without the state financing and support. These projects do not have a common ground in a poetic, aesthetic or ideological manner, she continues. On the other hand, Dejan Kršić believes that alternative culture underwent several phases.⁶⁹ At the beginning it was a continuation of the 1970s and 1980s, and at that time challenged the dominant, elite, traditional and high culture, and insisted on the radical (without ensured financial support on city or state level). The second phase starts when it becomes marginal and a form of subculture, finding its own foundation in ethical, advocating non- violence, the fight against discrimination etc. Kršić believes that real alternative and sub- cultural organizations emerged only at the end of the 1990s (when ATTACK or Mi2 were formed). Further on, he explains that alternative culture appears only there where we can discuss dualism not diversity, so that at the beginning of 2000, in his opinion there is no alternative culture: within the environment of the free market, when an individual can freely choose, every “avant-garde”, “subversion” is absorbed as a fashion, as a solely cultural alternative, in the period of culturalization of everything that exists.

⁶⁷ According to Dea Vidović in CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dejan Kršić, „Alter-Native“, Reč, časopis za književnost, kulturu i društvena pitanja. 62/8:208-217.

In addition to the term “alternative culture”, terms such as “youth culture, “urban culture”, “under- culture”, “sub-culture” are very often related to this scene, but each of these terms refers only to one aspect of activities and social function that organizations of the independent scene have. They do not describe adequately the manners of functioning of the independent cultural scene, which applies the principle of constant correlation and negotiations with the authorities.

3.2.8. Formation of the Scene (The First Free Association Based Cultural Organizations in Croatia)

Although a historical overview of the formation of first independent cultural organizations in Croatia lacks information (still no gathered data), Dea Vidović states that during the first years, diverse organizations covering almost all forms of contemporary art and culture were established. During the 1990’s those organizations were primarily oriented towards themselves and their programme development, initiating new, more contemporary forms of cultural and artistic production. They were organizing exhibitions, theatre and dance plays, concerts, talks, workshops. Many of them got engaged around social issues, in the specific socio- political and cultural surroundings of the Croatian 1990s.⁷⁰

One of the oldest organizations is Art radionica Lazareti- ARL in Dubrovnik, established as an artistic initiative in 1988 aiming to gather artist, philosophers, writers and others to reflect on contemporary arts, culture and society. The organization entered one part of Lazareti complex, in the old part of Dubrovnik in 1993. In the year 1991, the Labin Art Express (LAE) was established in Istria region, they started an independent radio and few years later they got the space of a former mine from the City of Labin, and soon they established the independent Cultural Center Lamparna. The other similar initiatives started to happen all across Croatia: in Pula, Split, Rijeka, Zadar, although in the capital city of Zagreb the concentration of NGO’s dealing with culture was definitely the highest. The Soros foundation, as in the other countries in transition, opened in Croatia

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the Institute for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) in 1993, which continued its work as an independent organization during the 1990s. The SCCA was one of the five spin-off organizations of the Institute Open Society- Croatia, among which are two particularly important organizations for the independent cultural scene: the Centre for Drama Arts and Multimedia Institute. The CDA started with its work in 1995 and two fields were formed within it- one oriented towards performing arts (magazine *Frakcija*, book collection *Akcija*) and one promoting and producing documentary films (*FACTUM*). The Multimedia Institute was established in 1999. Its activities became significant in the beginning of the new century. The Institute Open Society Croatia played an important role in all these organizations because it ensured their initial resources on a multiyear level, claims Vidović.⁷¹

In 1995, still as a non-formal initiative, Udruženje za razvoj kulture- URK (the Association for Cultural Development), started to organize various, mostly musical events, in collaborations with some other organizations. Since at that time URK did not have its own space, concerts took place in clubs, deserted cinemas, fire homes and open spaces all around Zagreb, as well as other cities and smaller towns.

This entrance into diverse spaces all throughout cities was not only characteristic of the URK, but also of the Autonomous Factory of Culture (*ATTACK!*), which was active since 1997 on several locations in Zagreb, conquering public open spaces and using them as a polygon for their activism. *ATTACK!* Initiated the Festival of Alternative Theatre Expression and numerous other projects, out of which some, like *Fade in*, later became independent and continued their work as autonomous subjects.

3.2.9. Towards Wider Recognition of the Independent Cultural Scene

It is possible to locate several moments and events in the recent history of the last ten years that according to Dea Vidović⁷² demonstrate how the independent cultural scene enters into our common reality. It seems that the potential of it was primarily recognized within the visual arts fields since several independent organizations (*ARL*, *URA*, *GPA*

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

and 21 Proljeće and ATTACK!) were invited by 25th Youth Saloon (public biennial exhibition of visual arts) to propose artists and organize the exhibitions, projects and actions. The 25th Youth Saloon started with the premise that the artistic activities of the time were determined by certain content, context, artistic media and socio-political environment, which brought them closer to non-artistic life. The abovementioned organizations were chosen as they were interconnected through their similarity in the selection of themes and their reflection on identity and questions which were globally pressing the adults in the 1990s.⁷³ According to some authors, this was their early recognition in the official circles.

Another moment of their public visibility refers to artistic performance and several artistic actions united within the project “Book and the Society- 22%” by visual artist Igor Grubić and members of ATTACK!. On this occasion around 30 artists of all generations and several organizations joined their forces to publicly protest against 22% of value added tax introduced on books. The protest took form of street performances and actions through which the cultural, economical, social and political reality was put in question. Marko Golub, art critic, emphasizes that this happening gathered all future relevant participants of Zagreb’s urban scene, and reminds us that many see this as the beginning of activities of independent cultural scene in the capital city.⁷⁴

For the formation and the enhancement of the scene, yet another year is important and is related to Zagreb. A former factory of gas station machines “was conquered” in 1999. with the action “The Storm on Jedinstvo”. On that occasion ATTACK! and URK entered the factory and opened their clubs (club ATTACK! and club Močvara/The Swamp) within the factory premises. The factory hosted few more initiatives and this was the first time that a space, which was to be recognized as the space of urban and independent culture scene was ensured.

The first important step forward in the financing, which left a significant mark on the development of the independent cultural scene, can be traced in 2001 when the Act on

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Cultural Councils was adopted and based on which cultural councils were formed and began deciding on the financing of public needs in the field of culture. This represented an important step forward which showed that the state finally started to acknowledge the independent cultural scene. More specifically, the Council for Media Culture (later the Council for New Media Cultures) was formed, its focus being the activities of the independent culture and new forms it produces and promotes.

However, other Councils which cover so called “traditional activities” (theatre, film, music etc) do not recognize these organizations, and if they apply to them, usually treated worse than public institutions. This means that the independent culture, although it seems represented by “its own council”, still is not treated as equal. The support given to it is only on the level of programme and one- year financing. Problems such is evaluation of programmes and the problem of space resources for programme realization still existed.

Still, many new organizations started to appear at the beginning of 2000, all around Croatia. In time, they also started to join their forces in the fight for the articulation of common interests and to gather around collaborative networks (Movement of student initiatives in Zagreb in 2000 aiming to remove the manager of the Student Center, or Coalition of Youth Associations in Split in 2001, several organizations getting together in fight for space for continual implementation of their programme).

In addition to these co- operations aimed at achieving common goals, the independent organizations in the field of culture started collaborative practices n particular projects. Among them it is important to single out the international exhibition WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM (Što, kako i za koga) which was prepared in occasion of 152nd anniversary of Marx and Engel’s publishing of the Communist Manifesto. It was the result of collaboration of several subjects. A year later, the 26th Youth Salon was held which settled in the 5th Pavillion of Zagreb fair and which was carried in 52 containers functioning as the framework for the works of artists and groups. The Saloon is important, as Dea Vidović states, because it introduced some of the organizations and projects from the previous Salon, but had also presented many other new ones. Both exhibitions resulted in the constitution of two new organizations, curatorial collective WHW and Kontejner, contemporary art practices bureau.

3.2.10. Collaborations and Networking as a System Corrective

In her text, Dea Vidović states that one can differ two phases in the development of the independent cultural scene between the year 1992 and 2002; the initial phase of the formation of an atomized field of independent culture and second phase, around 2000, when one can notice increasing number of participants and programmes and growing number of connections. At that time, on the national level, there were no practices of collaboration and common activities aiming to transform the institutional framework in order to enhance the conditions for their activities.

It should be noticed that in the year 2000 a significant political change happens in Croatia. The nationalist regime (with HDZ - Croatian Democratic Unity as a party in power) is defeated by the Coalition of Central and Left political parties. This marks a significant change on the symbolical and practical level, bringing a new wave of liberalization in the country. At this point, slowly, the climate begins to change and that makes possible new initiatives to emerge, especially those which up to that moment were not able to express their impulses, interests and needs freely and publicly. Certain minority groups, which were almost invisible before the year 2000, started to form organizations and to initiate cultural production.⁷⁵

3.3. Development of the Croatian Independent Cultural Scene from 2002 onwards

Having conscious of insufficient recognition of the independent scene by the establishment, and in situation when international funds started to withdraw, it became more evident that the exponents of institutional culture as well as cultural authorities both on the national and on the local level will not be those who will initiate the transformation of a complete cultural system, which would favour dynamism and sustainable development of the complete cultural field. It became clear that this role

⁷⁵ This mostly refers to sexual minority groups. The first Gay Pride was organized in Zagreb in June 2002 and Queer Zagreb festival started its activities in spring 2003. Queer Zagreb today considers itself to be « one of the most visible segments of the independent cultural scene » and participates in CLUBTURE network, exchanging its programme with several organizations in other parts of Croatia.

would need to be overtaken by the protagonists of the independent cultural scene. So they did it: they initiated collaborative practices and networking on the national level and once they got the visibility they started to connect on the local level as well. With the formation of the Clubture network, the independent cultural scene created its own framework for collaboration and fight for the correction of the system that would favour its stable and sustainable development. New mechanisms and institutions for collaboration, exchange and collective creativity started to develop.

3.3.1. Practices of Collective Production

Speaking of changes happening in the sphere of cultural production, especially referring to local context of Zagreb and Croatia in the recent years, theorist and professor at The Philosophical Faculty of Zagreb Andrea Zlatar points towards practices of *collective production*, “a production that places a group in the position of the subject, from one side, and from the other replacing its constitutive identity by (successive) interconnections or simultaneous actions of various subjects which, however, do not lose their individual subjectivity.”⁷⁶ By tackling very important question of the author’s position, i.e. modalities of its transformation, Zlatar focuses on functioning of art/theory collective practices stressing that they are not based on clearly formulated common (pre)supposition. Instead of having constitutive idea and expecting the clear result as the final aim or purpose, they insist on processuality of the production which constantly reflects upon itself, questions, discusses, destabilize, transforms. The causes that bring them together may vary, from individual impulses to common theoretical preoccupations and interests, or political standpoints. They do not usually have hierarchical structure. The other characteristics that Andrea Zlatar points out are the abolishment of the borders between art (as a protected, isolated, autoreferential domain) and everyday life, as well as the constant tension between private and collective, personal and collective, from which

⁷⁶ Andrea Zlatar in her essay „Heterotopijski Zagreb“, published at <http://www.zarez.hr/179/esej1.htm>, in May 2006. The text was originally written for the publication *Leap into the City. Chisinau, Sofia, Pristina, Sarajevo, Warsaw, Zagreb, Ljubljana. Cultural Positions, Political Conditions. Seven Scenes from Europe*. The book is published within the Project Relations, initiated by German Federal Trust for Culture; edited by Katrin Klingan & Ines Kappert, published by Du Mont Literatur & Kunst Verlag, 2006.

the contemporary type of collectivity is being created. Personal investment is not being lost by entering the group and taking over some of the possible “collective identities”, no matter how it may appear that we are entering the group just to be protected from our own uncertainty. All of these characteristics, artistic and reflective overflow, art and everyday activities overlap, personal and collective coexistence- they are all variations of the basic feature creating new types of artistic/theoretical collectivities, which form their inherent activism, political in its essence.

Networking of the NGO's in Croatia started at the end of the 1990s when the first projects of that type (such is Clubture project) were supported by Open Society Institute-Croatia. In the beginning Clubture looked like a new type of the distribution network and exchange platform of the independently made programmes and productions (that included several Croatian cities with Zagreb as a key protagonist), but only at the first glance. From the very beginning, it contained all the lines connecting different, at the time disintegrated disciplines, as well as calculated auto- reflective and auto- evaluative moment, as Andrea Zlatar claims.

3.3.2 .*CLUBTURE Network*

The *Clubture network* gathers organizations of the independent cultural scene in Croatia and functions as a collaborative platform within which they exchange programmes, i.e. directly collaborate on specific projects. By connecting protagonists which are mostly oriented towards their local communities, as well as those who are opening towards a regional and wider international collaboration, by being based on the exchange of cultural contents between various cities and smaller places in Croatia, through permanently working on the visibility of the independent scene and communication with the public, by further developing projects of capacity strengthening and knowledge accumulation, and by insisting on a wider participation in cultural policies, Clubture is significantly adding to the development of cultural democracy and is an important participant in the total cultural development.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Emina Višnić, The Clubture Network, in CLUBTURE: culture as the process of exchange 2002-2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007, p.33

Explaining the nature of the Clubture network, Emina Višnić, one of its founders and leaders says that culture as the process of exchange (which is stated in the title of the before-mentioned book) is a fundamental idea around the network is formed. In its base we find precisely defined model of cooperation and programme exchange, which makes it primarily a programme platform. The only criteria for accepting some organization into the network is its programme activity. Direct cooperation between the organizations is the mode of exchange, and they choose their partners completely independently- regardless of whether these organizations have previously been members of Clubture or not. “Cooperation is defined by previously set up structural model that stimulates further development of existing collaborations in the same time enabling their stabilization.”⁷⁸

Further on, explaining how the network functions, Višnić stresses participatory decision making and high level of decentralization within the network. The formal body of decision making is the Assembly, constituted of the representatives of member organizations. Membership is built on an open model of participation and inclusion, so that two types of member status are recognized: full members of the network (the initiator and implementator of the programme) and associate network members (organizations that host the programme). Every organization, members and associates, simultaneously evaluate all of the networks programmes. Like that the selection of the programmes as well as decision on their financing from a mutual budget is being made. Programmes recognized as socially and culturally important within the network are selected (by criteria of socio-cultural capital).

The Assembly that meets twice a year and, besides its formal functions, discusses new directions of network activities. “They are primarily forums, gathering a relevant number of protagonists of the independent cultural scene in Croatia, on which particular and common problems and needs are discussed. Similarly, during such forums, the key goals for the development of the sector are formulated. These goals shape the specific guidelines on the basis of which the activities and programmes Clubture implements are

⁷⁸ Ibid.

defined. Thus the network has, alongside the described form of direct collaboration, developed other activities (in the field of advocacy, education, media), (...)"⁷⁹

As far as programme activities of the CLUBTURE network are concerned, besides programme cooperation on the national level (in Croatia), Clubture's Regional Initiative was started at the end of the year 2004, beginning of 2005, connecting organizations from Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. The network and its members also initiated Kultura Aktiva programme, basically educational platform and programme through which organizations from different parts of the country have acquired the basic knowledge of cultural policies, lobbying, advocacy and monitoring of public policies (urban policies, policies of spatial management and youth policies).

As a response to the insufficient and low-profile media coverage of the independent cultural production, Clubture also initiated web portal Kulturpunkt.hr and the magazine 04, magazine for reality hacking. The magazine did not survive, but the web portal stays as a significant info point, covering broad range of independent scene activities and information related to new forms of cultural production and exchange.

From the very beginning educational programmes and capacity building, presented a high priority issue for the Network, first of all a transfer of knowledge and experience. Through these efforts, a large number of organizations were equipped for strategic planning of their own organizational and programme development, which was planned to enable them to strengthen their stability and further progressing, paralelly contributing to the strengthening of the scene as a whole.

*How did it all start?*⁸⁰

As a reaction to the general cultural situation in the country, "passive" culture production by public institutions, non recognized alternative cultural activities, non existence of networking and exchange, the Multimedia Institute (Mama) initiated a programme

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ According to CLUBTURE, Culture as the process of exchange 2002- 2007, The Association of NGOs Clubture, Zagreb, November 2007.

platform of independent NGOs dealing with culture in 2001. That was the moment of creation of the base from which the Clubture project will emerge. During trips across Croatia, the organizations behind Zagreb clubs (Mama, Močvara, ATTACK! And KSET) gathered in the Initial team and got in touch with the organizations in other cities, wanting to establish a network of clubs that would exchange programmes (That is where the Clubture name comes from). The whole process was lead from “bellow”, starting with a first circle of fifteen stable organizations. The three years action plan was established and the whole project was supported by Open Society Institute- Croatia. The first collaborative projects were established in February 2002, and few months later the first formal Assembly meeting of the network was held and a legal subject was established under the name the Association of NGOs Clubture. Significant efforts were made to expand the network regionally.

The second phase of the Clubture development started with the year 2003 in which the Network was gaining visibility and presence of its activities in public sphere. The same year they got directly involved in the work of the platform POLICY_FORUM, a non-formal group made of NGOs and individuals who gathered in order to follow, examine, monitor public policies affecting development of the independent culture, on all levels, advocating changes in relevant institutional framework.

** Zagreb- Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000*

Somewhere around this period, it is important to mention one more project seeking to strengthen collaboration between independent initiatives, in the situation when independent cultural scene already flourishes. *Zagreb – cultural kapital of Europe 3000 (ZKK 3000)* defined as a collaboration platform that emerged as a joint project by four Zagreb based independent organizations (Center for Drama Art-CDU, Multimedia Institute- Mama, Platform 9,81 and WHW)⁸¹. In the face of increasing privatization, centralization, and the logic of official representation in the area of culture, the joint platform presents new working forms and collective strategies of cultural production with

⁸¹ Four other organizations joined the project later on (BLOK, Kontejner, Shadow Casters and Community Art).

the aim of enhancing the presence of independent Croatian culture. The platform *Zagreb-Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000* has set itself the goal of strengthening collaboration between independent cultural initiatives which investigate the changed conditions of cultural and social praxis arising from the increasingly regional significance of ever-extending economic and communicational exchanges. In this context these initiatives had the aim to work on reforming the institutional structures with the aim of increasing the presence of and fostering opportunities for independent culture. « Just as it fosters collaboration, so too the platform is keenly interested in investigating and extending the conditions and possibilities of "collaboration" itself, for "cultural capital" no longer refers to infrastructures, but rather collaborations: indeed, collaboration is its infrastructure. »⁸² According to some opinions, this type of collective action characterized by inherent connection between art and theory, erasing borders between creation and reflection, brought to active cultural memory the forms of collectivism and collectivist movements that marked the local culture from the 1930s to 1970s, movements created on manifest traditions of the Avantgarde or left political options, as well as on the autochtone aesthetical projects of the closed systems.

The project ZKK 3000 was the base for extensive cultural production : conferences, art festivals, exhibitions, workshops, lectures, publications, media productions. The project was developed with the german partner 'Project Relations', supported by Kulturstiftung des Bundes and it ran paralelly with the *Clubture* activities.

The network *Clubture* achieved its greatest success in 2004, when the Croatian Ministry of Culture wanted to change the existing law on cultural councils in a very traditional direction in accordance with the change of power. There were plans to dissolve the council, which had been responsible for new forms of cultural production. The network reacted very quickly by assembling a critical mass of protesters from all over the country in front of the parliament building in Zagreb, and by organizing a public discussion to develop a counter-proposal to the government plans. The protest was successful; the cultural Council for New Media Cultures remained part of the new structure of the

⁸² <http://www.kulturnikapital.org/>

ministry. In addition, prominent members of NGOs are now involved in the work of this council and take responsibility in the process of defining tasks and criteria for evaluation.

The third phase refers to the widening of the field of activities of the Network and its transitional phase, between 2005 and 2007 when it became clear that organizational capacities are under-developed to such an extent that they can not be changed only through enhanced programme activities. The other problem turned out to be the lack of interested public in other cities. Thus, the need for bigger and more stable organizations to share their programme outside of Croatia came across very early. Also, the lack of short- term and long- term planning was noticed, as was the lack of strategic planning related to organizational and programme development. At the beginning of 2005, the Network introduced some changes in its activities and started the transition process. Several directions were put as a priority: enhancing public visibility with starting a monthly magazine 04 and an internet portal kulturpunkt.hr. “Since the institutional framework remained almost silent towards development of the independent cultural sector, the selection of strategy of public engagement and changes in the public space was almost inevitable decision.”⁸³ Clubture, as a platform that gathers organizations that present mostly younger population, joined Croatian Youth Network, and started active participation in the work of the Council for Youth of the Government of the Republic of Croatia. The programme Education for Strategic Cultural Management was introduced, as a need and reaction towards the changes in the inner dynamics, new relations in culture, trends in city development etc. A three year strategic plan was created for the Network.

Clubture- Future Perspectives

When speaking about future of the network, Emina Višnić, the first president of the Association Clubture and afterwards the first director of the center for Independent Culture and the Youth, says that the key directions of Clubture development are

⁸³ Ibid.

determined by the recommendations based upon the research of the independent cultural sector carried out in 2006, in cooperation with external experts.

Two types of the goals were set: sector development goals (capacity building, public presence and visibility, better positioning within general cultural field) and network development goals, development of programmes and organizations (stabilization of resources, international and intersectorial partnership development). Thus, Clubture three years strategic plan includes work on stabilization and improving of the three existing, key programmes (Clubture-HR, Clubture- regional initiative, Kulturpunkt.hr web site) as well as creation and development of the new ones (those are primarily educational programmes and programmes of international cooperation through partnerships with the EU organizations).

3.4. Politics of Space

Dynamics of living, closely followed by construction dynamics, has shown to be much faster than the (urban) planning dynamics, the one that should be aware and contain a whole range of development strategies, among which is the plan for the development of public and social activities, says architect Miranda Veljačić, in her text about strategies and principles of commercial, educational, religious, sport and other similar activities, conquering the space.⁸⁴ Further on, she emphasizes that public and social activities sector, especially culture, has not been recognized enough by the society, so that it has not succeeded to conquer adequate part of the space. While spatial development of the other sectors has been growing (by direct investments), culture stays behind them, being ignored by those who have power to decide about the city space.

⁸⁴ Miranda Veljačić in her essay « Objects of culture have « right to exist/work », 04, magazine for reality hacking, p. 20, no.17, year III, November 2007.

Miranda Veljačić is a member of Platforma 9,81, architect collective actively involved in the activities of Independent cultural scene in Zagreb and one of its prominent member organizations

The politics of space has been one of the top issues on the Independent Cultural Scene agenda in Croatia, within the last four years. Under the motto “Right to the city”, since spring 2005, the organizations of independent culture, have mobilized thousands of citizens in rebellion against a private investor’s interest supported by City authorities in conquering the public space. The public space in Croatia has become a scene for an open conflict between citizens and institutional politics.⁸⁵

When speaking about spatial politics, it is generally known that the contemporary politics takes over conceptual and functional forms taken from marketing, claims Zagreb based architect and theorist Maroje Mrduljaš. “Political programs are defined according to public opinion research, while the social republic and left winged idea that are supposed to present the public interests have been finished off precisely through the activity of parties that were progressive by their tradition.”⁸⁶ In these conditions, the sphere of the public, in political, as well as in its widest sense, is more and more shrinking or reshaping. The consequences of those processes can be seen clearly in urban transformations and construction that Saskia Sassen describes as “the mark of the capital in space”.⁸⁷

Not so long ago, the newer Croatian history practically did not know about the city as a direct field of making a statement about the (political) issue but recent events like the one with Cvjetni trg (Flower Square)⁸⁸, have testified the increasing interest for spatial politics in Croatia, and “urban interventions are becoming one of the important neuralgic points reflecting the brutality of political and economic order in transitional context”⁸⁹.

⁸⁵ For more details see Srećko Horvat: *Znakovi postmodernog grada, Jesenski i Turk*, Zagreb, 2007.

⁸⁶ Maroje Mrduljaš in the essay „Politics of space“, *Život umjetnosti*, magazine for contemporary visual arts, p.45, no.83, year XLII, 2008.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Cvjetni trg is second important square in the Zagreb city centre, walking and leisure zone, an emblematic place, the cause and the scene of the „Right to the city“ manifestations.

⁸⁹ Maroje Mrduljaš in the essay „Politics of space“, *Život umjetnosti*, magazine for contemporary visual arts, p. 46, no.83, year XLII, 2008.

3.4.1. *The Invisible Zagreb*

Platforma 9,81 is an NGO founded by a group of architecture students unsatisfied with static visions of architecture and urbanism offered by the Architecture school in Zagreb, provoked by lack of awareness of the fast transformations of the city and impossibility of the profession to respond to it. As active member of the Independent Scene in Croatia, dealing with urbanism and social aspects of the architecture, around the year 2003, they started the project of mapping abandoned, neglected industrial or other sites (factories, shelters) in the city of Zagreb. They named it “The Invisible Zagreb (the squotters guide)”. It was conceived as a three year long project that explores the potentials of deserted city spaces for innovative forms of public and cultures, providing organizational support to non- institutionalized initiatives to temporary inhabit those spaces. Platforma 9, 81 has been also emphasizing the need of influencing city urban and cultural policies, through collaboration with city offices for urban planning, culture and property. “Before all, we had a need to mark empty and programmatically undefined spaces of the city. It was also interesting to observe new spatial phenomenons that are left out of the architectural profession’s definition. In a way, those are the invisible spaces of Zagreb, which appeared in the former industrial zones, between the big traffic infrastructures, or those that went through significant change due to the transition processes (...) Here we talk about the spaces that go from hand to hand quicqly and will be left to the private interests in the end, and then their potential will be lost. We are interested in researching the potential of their public use that could be economically sustainable.”⁹⁰ All the marked spaces were put into the Guide, a sort of interactive city map, with information how to reach them and how to use them temporarily.

In this project “the existing city, the network of real and fixed is counteracted by the network of virtual and possible”, the spaces of potential. The Visible Zagreb is faced with “The Invisible One”. Basically it is an architectural-urbanistic project which “discovers” or points out the under-used spaces of the city (often city spaces in the terms of ownership as well, i.e. owned by the city) and through various actions aims at informing

⁹⁰ Marko Sančanin in an interview published at <http://www.matica.hr/Vijenac/vijenac253.nsf/AllWebDocs/Osoba>

and educating the citizens about their existence, giving examples of how the city could have a different appearance if those abandoned sites were “active”, if they functioned as public good, accessible to anyone. “That, different Zagreb, invisible to the innocent passer by, Zagreb out of the city maps, known only to flaneurs- experts, “professional walkers”, who discover it from the archives and history books, this “other Zagreb”, offers the possibility for different reflection upon its own future.”⁹¹ This project offering different readings of the city, a sort of *heterotopic Zagreb*⁹², created a factual base for reflections upon the politics of space, within the local framework. In this case, the squatters are not homeless people but non-institutionalized culture producers that had no adequate presentation or production premises. “The Invisible Zagreb” naturally leaned on the independent urban scene, which gathered new generations of cultural producers with the whole range of new skills and knowledges gained mostly through self-education and active positioning towards the social issues in their immediate surroundings.

3.4.2. *Fighting for Space- Operation: City (2005)*

Throughout the spring of 2005, organizations of independent culture along with youth organizations started to prepare the ground for the “Right to the city” campaign, by organizing a series of public discussions that were dealing with the status and problems of these two significant sectors, relation between city cultural policy and independent (and youth) culture, and possible solutions. Discussions were organized in the pre-elections time, to get the appropriate attention for one of the burning problems of the local cultural scene. Problems of space were the core of the discussions, as they were identified as a basic precondition for cultural production development. The discussions were quite complicated as they were revealing completely opposite perspectives of the participants, culture producers on one side, and the city authorities, on the other. What

⁹¹ Andrea Zlatar in the essay „Heterotopijski Zagreb“, published at <http://www.zarez.hr/179/esej1.htm>, in May 2006.

⁹² Heterotopia is a term introduced by french philosopher Michel Foucault, referring to the sorts of *achieved utopias*, localized in our every day life („The power of heterotopia“, as Andrea Zlatar says, „is to provoke reality, to confront it, erasing it...“). For more details see Michel Foucault : Des espaces autres (1967), Heterotopies, <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.fr.html>

has become obvious was the fact that the key link between the abstract of the city and the abstract of culture is the existence of a cultural public space, as a public space par excellence that enables one of the key functions of the city- communication. These extensive discussions were aimed at a common agreement about the need to provide the space for the normal functioning of independent culture and youth organizations, and a formal declaration was signed by all leading political parties, including the current major of the city of Zagreb. Through this Declaration the independent scene activists expressed their needs and demands, but also proposed a whole range of measures for their implementation.

As the time was passing and none of what had been promised was actually done, the independent cultural scene protagonists continued along the line, using different approaches pointed at raising awareness of the public towards the existing problem, starting a sort of “visibility campaign”. In September 2005, they organized a 10 days cultural manifestation, in the premises of the old factory “Badel”, in the city center. The project was named “Operation: The city.”⁹³ «The aim of our project is to show to the public that it has the right to reclaim the city, that the citizens are the final users of the city, and that they have the right to use it creatively.» as Marko Sančanin explained.⁹⁴ According to the organizers, the abandoned factory “Badel” was an ideal location for a polyvalent cultural center that would host a large number of cultural and youth organizations.

3.4.3. *Right to the City, 2006-2008.*

The development and the consequences of the *Operation: City* brought new dynamics into the scene, leading to an expansion of the battle field. In 2006 the initiative *Pravo na grad* (The Right to the City) was launched. In addition to the organizations in the cultural field that were already active, this initiative also brings together many inhabitants of the

⁹³ The original project proposal can be found in the Appendix, at the end of this thesis.

⁹⁴ Marko Sančanin in the article „Nevidljivi Zagreb“ published at <http://www.deutschewelle.de/dw/article/0,,2282374,00.html>

city, who are not satisfied with the work of the city authorities and the predominant political programs. *Pravo na grad* also stimulated new networks, since the initiative entered into a partnership with the largest environmental protection organization – Zelena akcija (Green Action) – and with the prominent organization GONG, which encourages citizens to actively take part in political processes. Several actions were carried within the framework of the initiative, which had a strong presence in the media and resulted in a strong public echo. The largest and longest lasting action was the protest against the building of exclusive flats and businesses in the protected city center; over 50,000 signatures were collected for the petition “End the Destruction of Cvjetni trg (Flower Square) and the Lower City”.

“*Pravo na grad*/The Right to the city” initiative strongly marked the cultural and civil society scene, within the last few years in Zagreb and became a sort of iconic campaign, connecting almost aestheticized, performative public protests (orchestrated by cultural managers), civil disobedience, and the use of so called “social marketing”⁹⁵ for producing events and conquering media space. “The actions by the initiative *Pravo na grad* are usually accompanied by elaborate advertising campaigns, which have become the most common forms of political action in the last two years. The actions by the initiative *Pravo na grad* use the methods of classical marketing (flyers, posters, postcards, etc.) and have a strong media impact, because they conduct spectacular installations in public space, guerilla actions, etc. »⁹⁶ Consequently, great public interest in the initiative emerged, which has led to a large number of city district initiatives and disgruntled residents joining together in the fight against city politics.

The course of events

It all started when the City government ignoring demands of the independent cultural scene and youth organizations, expressed in the aforementioned Declaration and signed by (after elected) city officials in 2005, mostly referring to the problems of spaces for the

⁹⁵ The term used by Teodor Celakoski, one of the leaders of *Pravo na grad* initiative, in an interview published in *Nevidljivi Zagreb*, fanzin za arhitekturu, December 2007.

⁹⁶ Vesna Vuković in an essay „The Landscape of Post-transformation Institutions in Zagreb and their Political Impact“ with Leonardo Kovačević published at <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0208>

cultural production. This provoked several public actions and protests against « incapability of Zagreb city management, its inefficiency and inconsistency in managing public policies». Around the same time, in the beginning of 2006, the « Flower square case » emerges when the city officials decide to sell several city owned buildings surrounding the square (ex cinema Zagreb, ex printing house « Borba » etc.) to a private investor (HOTO group) who under the pretext of revitalization of Lower City blocs, on this attractive location plans to build a shopping/lifestyle center/ « Passage Flower Square ». « The Right to the city » activists contestate the whole project because of several reasons : the HOTO project foresees too wide range of construction in the bloc, demolition of two buildings in the protected historical center, annulation of the pedestrian zone part of which would be replaced by the parking lot ramp, construction of underground garage that would contribute to creation of traffic chaos in the city center as well as the construction of inappropriate commercial contents that are meant for luxurious offices, shopping and habitation units. The activists and citizens agree that more public contents should be realized on this location. They also resent the City officials for not using their position to negotiate in the interest of the public, but instead of that they go « hand in hand » with the investor. By hanging huge transparent on the facade of one of the Flower Square buildings, initiative « Right to the city » expressed the protest against devastation of the square and urban nucleus of the City. « *Totalna rasprodaja*/TOTAL SALE » were the words written on the transparent, referring to the irresponsibility of the City in protecting public interests. The citizens of Zagreb and significant number of independent experts recognized the initiative as a carrier of the message that incites the civil participation in urban planning. In February 2007, the initiative organized the signing of the petition « Let's stop devastation of Flower Square and Lower City » containing the whole range of carefully formulated demands with an aim of protecting the public space. During next three months, the petition was signed by 54 000 citizens.



“Total Sale”, public action, December 6, 2006.

Within this period and on, several public discussions, media events and actions were organized. One of them was the action “Reclaim the street” action, when the pedestrian zone was extended or when the whole bloc was surrounded by tens thousands of postcards, signed by the citizens.

In the same time, the proposal for changes of the General Urbanistic Plan of the city of Zagreb was put on public discussion. Special plans for arranging 17 Lower City blocs were proposed. The “Green Action” activists handed over the objections to this proposal to City Office for Spatial Planning, as well as a law suit regarding irregularities in the process of decision making when adopting amendments to the city master plan, to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Soon after, the Ministry’s inspection finds irregularities in this case, and the master plan implementation was put on hold. The City Assembly discusses the master plan amendments; “The Right to the city” organizes protests, press conferences, public discussions and actions.



Public action of renaming the square: Square of Petar Preradovi (Flower Square) was renamed to Square of the victims of Milan Bandi , the mayor of the city of Zagreb, due to the neglecting numerous problems in the city, including houses implosion, problems with the water-supply network and Flower Square treatment (October 20, 2007). The authors of the action were "The Green Action" and "The Right to the City".

In November 2007, the National Forum for Space was founded. It is a platform gathering civil initiatives, experts, NGO's and public figures around the problem of spatial development in Croatia.

In the beginning of 2008, a new line of protest actions followed: a simulation of a pedestrian zone shrinking on behalf of parking lot ramp, the construction of which is supported by the city authorities. The other one was a "warning protest" that gathered around 5000 citizens who sent a message "GIVE UP/Odustanite!" (Give up the Flower Square project).



Give up/Odustanite! Zagreb, public action, January 26, 2008.

3.4.4. Operation City 2008: The Neoliberal Frontline

In the summer of 2008, around buildings of the Flower Square the scaffoldings emerged. The HOTO group started demolitions, although they did not have all the necessary legal permissions. As a response, Crisis Management Comitee was established on the initiative of « The Right to the City » and « Green Action ». They tried to react and warn the public of what has been going on through press conferences, public calls for civil disobedience and symbolical actions. One of the more significant was the one in which the activists surrounded the Ministry of environment and Spatial planning, wrapping it with the yellow tape saying: THE PLACE OF CRIME/MJESTO ZLOČINA.



The Place of Crime, action, Zagreb, November 2008.

The state and city officials did not react, as citizens' response was not that high. In November, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning turned down all of the citizens' complaints and issued the licence for a parking lot ramp construction in the pedestrian zone, which was marked as « an institutional presedan since the Ministry for the first time in history enabled a private investor to take away a part of the public space to build a ramp as a part of a private busines center. »⁹⁷

⁹⁷ <http://pravonagrad.org/>

At a first glance one would say that « The Right to the city » initiative did not succeed in their mission of defending public space as a common good, and that capital defeated citizen's will. The HOTO center has just been built and the last local elections (in May 2009) showed significant support of the current city mayor, the one that is often blamed directly for non transparent decision making and the current state of affairs in Zagreb.

As a sort of general conclusion or a summary of the year that was marked by civil struggles for the public space, a five days conference “The Neoliberal Frontline: Urban Struggles in Post-Socialist Societies” took place in December 2008 in Zagreb within a large space reclamation event *Operation: City 2008*.⁹⁸ A host of urban scholars, architects, urbanists and activists from across the Balkans and from around the world discussed issues of neoliberalism, urban development, ideology and governance.

Operation: City 2008 was a series of events that summarized joint activities of Zagreb's independent cultural scene in fields of cultural production, urban development, spatial policy, cultural policy and citizen participation. Unlike the first two manifestations (*Operation City 2005* and *Operation City :Jedinstvo 2007*) that were discussing the questions of status and development of the independent culture in Zagreb, as well as the issue of re-use of abandoned spaces of industrial heritage, this year's focus was broader issue of city development. The main venue of *Operation:City 2008* was the Community Center Mosor, former cinema and one of the spaces currently given to independent organization Platforma 9,81.

3.4.5. Center for Independent Culture and Youth (Institutionalization) - 2008/2009.

Since the year 2005 and the famous “Declaration: Independent culture and youth in the development of the city of Zagreb”, signed by almost all political parties before the elections (including current mayor of Zagreb), negotiations with the aim of establishing

⁹⁸ See more at <http://www.operacijagrad.org/en/>

Center for the independent culture and the youth have been running. The flourishing cultural scene, made of numerous NGO's with dynamic cultural production at the time had neither working nor presentation spaces or were working in unsuitable spaces. For this reason, the decision was made within the framework of the already established *Clubture network* to demand the founding of an independent cultural center for young people. At the time, however, space was not all that had to be demanded. The requisite financial infrastructure was also to be provided specifically through the establishment of a special foundation for independent culture. The members of the network thus entered into negotiations with the city authorities. In September of the same year, 26 organizations and initiatives from the independent cultural scene "occupied" abandoned and vacant spaces of the factory complex Badel-Gorica. The occupation, which became known as *Operacija:grad* (Operation:City), lasted for ten days; during this time an intensive and broadly developed program – the product of joint programming by all the participating organizations and initiatives – was offered, which was used in the negotiations with the city authorities as the main argument for the demand for spaces and financial infrastructure. Important elements of the argument were the quantity and quality of productions, the numbers of visitors and the organization of collective programming. The promises of the city authorities – like the symbolic "opening" of the occupation with a speech by the mayor and the cultural chairman of the city of Zagreb – remained no more than promises, however. The factory space itself was leased to a commercial enterprise in record time, so that the critical objection could be raised that the occupation had merely raised the visibility and attractiveness of the area and thus saved it from demolition. However, these goals – increasing the visibility of non-institutional cultural production and starting negotiations with the city authorities on founding an independent center – were achieved.

Some of the analysts, independent culture protagonists, today at this point see the beginning of the « pragmatic phase » of the scene development. Vesna Vuković claims that « General questions about public space or tactics for producing cracks in standardized urban spaces or even questions about organizational models and the openness of these organizations were left aside and completely neglected in favor of a

highly pragmatic way of thinking. »⁹⁹ From this point on, clear lines of political discourse can be traced ; some of the Clubture key figures emerged as active tribunes for the whole scene, acting from the stand point of « public policies », articulating clear points of their agenda (visibility, politics of spaces, system of financing) and methodology (social marketing, strong and constant media presence). « The Right to the City » initiative was established soon after and the battle (described in previous chapters) was about to begin. The relation with the city authorities in the period after the first « Operation: City » action became problematic, as the City totally ignored its obligation laid down in the Declaration. The problem of solving spaces for the youth and independent culture was not on the agenda.

The Model of the Center/ New (Type) of Cultural Institution

The initiative board for establishment of the Independent Culture Center was founded during the Badel factory event, in September 2005, and it consisted of 13 members' representatives of organizations that stand for three sectors involved: independent culture, non profit clubs and the youth sector.

The campaign continued in November 2005, within the program entitled “What kind of cultural institutions do we need?” when the model of the new Center was presented. The idea was to put the proposal of the model on public discussion before making its final version that would be addressed to City Administration as a formal proposal. According to the presented model, the Center is supposed to be based on four principles:

1. Public- civil- social partnership
2. Partnership of sectors of independent culture and youth
3. Center as a poli-locational system of spaces
4. Center as a sustainable system, a base of social & economical development of the city

⁹⁹ See more in her essay „The Landscape of Post-transformation Institutions in Zagreb and their Political Impact“ with Leonardo Kovačević published at <http://transform.eipecp.net/transversal/0208>

In further elaboration, the Initiative Board explains the advantages of the proposed “mixed type” of the institution based on public- civil social partnership as a long term solution. It would provide an adequate proportion of stable institutional framework and necessary participation of the interested subject on all the levels. The idea of independent culture/youth partnership is logical as both sectors have complementary interests on several levels. One of them is the establishment of the Macroregional Center for the Youth that would be placed within the structure of the Independent Culture Center. The model brings an innovation when proposing poli- locational Center, which would be partially commercialized due to the demand for self-sustainability.

“What kind of institutions do we need?” continued to be the key question during the next year. It had been discussed on several occasions, with participation of international subjects. During summer of 2006, another symbolical action was made within the Badel complex, when around 60 independent scene activists demonstrated that they do not give up their demand for the Independent Culture Center with the motto “Our patience has come to an end!”

Temporary illegal center for culture and youth/Operation the city: JEDINSTVO¹⁰⁰

.....

The newly founded Alliance for Center of Independent Culture and Youth, in spring 2007 announced the squatting, occupying the abandoned Jedinstvo factory, the space that has been already used for independent culture activities but its legal status had not been solved yet and was put on hold. The space was renovated by the efforts of the organizations to host Temporary Illegal Center for Culture and Youth. Unsatisfied with their communication with the city administration that did not fulfill its obligations laid down in the 2005 Declaration, the youth and cultural workers decided to enter one of the spaces that they considered as suitable for certain type of cultural program (music and performing arts). This center was called temporary as Jedinstvo space was not appropriate to fulfill all the needs of the scene, and illegal- as contracts between the owner (City of Zagreb) and the user (Independent cultural scene) have not been solved.

¹⁰⁰ Jedinstvo/*Unity*, the name of the abandoned factory squatted by the cultural initiatives

The manifestation of the opening of temporary center was called Operation the City: Jedinstvo, it lasted four days during which 16 organisations were presented through 25 events (exhibitions, performances, film projections, workshops, big music event). The manifestation was to prove the quality and quantity of the independent scene participants. After the initial opening event, the Jedinstvo space was to continue with its regular program, as the independent scene was there to stay.

The reactions from the City Administration to this course of events can be illustrated by the claim that The City Mayor exposed during a City Assembly meeting. He accused the independent scene for gaining illegal profit from this action, saying that “Jedinstvo case” is a “business under the masque of urban culture”.

The Alliance for the Center reacted instantly with a press release explaining every action that has been undertaken within Jedinstvo space, including commercial renting of the space that noone was appointed to take care of and whose status was vague, for the sake of its adaptation/accommodation to Illegal Center For culture. This was the introduction to *the battle* with the City administration.

Closing of Močvara club, symbol of the independent culture

In the beginning of 2008, the *Comission for Supervision of Locations Owned by the City of Zagreb* published the report in which it accuses some of the independent culture organizations for illegal usage of locations owned by the city for commercial purposes. The users of the city locations accused the City officials for its selective approach and missinterpretation of documents. They stated that the Comission published the whole range of unfounded claims and this way removed the responsibility from the City (for the inadequate treatment/negligence of its own spaces), to the users of those locations-independent cultural workers. The Alliance for the Center demanded the new report from the Comission and the continuation of the communication with the City about the spaces for independent culture, but at the time being, the City officials remained silent.

However, a few months after, Močvara club, a symbol of independent culture, announced its closure due to the unwillingness of the city authorities (owner of the location) to resolve the contract on using the locations in its ownership, of which Močvara was the one.



Močvara developed specific visual language/design that marks its cultural production

Močvara was established in 1999 as one of the first alternative culture clubs in Zagreb. Its program was supporting non-commercial art forms, aiming at different sub-culture and alternative groups. The club, with its program profile, addresses financially still dependent population of adolescents, which resists the commercialization and is interested in the artistic forms that need systematic support of public institutions, to survive.

In the year 2000, it gets the space of Jedinstvo factory from the city, to use it for its programs, but since 2003, the agreement with the City, somehow cannot be achieved, as they do not get the contract with terms on using the space. Every year the City office for education, culture and sport demands the prolongation of this contract and regulation of this relation, but the Proposal fails to enter the agenda of the City Government.

According to some observers, there has been a conflict between expert opinions of the respective City offices and political will of the City. In the other words, the city authorities do not recognize the importance of cultural and symbolical capital, but reflects on this issue with an eye exclusively to the economical capital, and since Močvara cannot

compete on the market, the city authorities do not treat it as a relevant subject. By keeping the status of this club unresolved, the city uses the “tactics of exhausting the enemy”, keeping this club in eternal precariousness. By keeping the independent culture dependent on the political caprices, the existing models of administering keep the independent cultural workers in permanently inappropriate conditions that do not enable continuous and quality program activities.

Some of the experts, like Andrea Zlatar, blame the official Croatian cultural policy for this course of events, as it does not consider the necessity of the crucial changes in the way the cultural machinery has been organized and financed. The unchanged system of state support for culture is to blame for gradual exhaustion of the independent culture in the country.

However, the independent scene continues its fight for the goals defined in 2005. In an open letter to the City Mayor in May 2008, they express their wish to start a constructive communication with the City, in solving the problem of the space for independent culture. After this action and a whole range of other public pressures, the City of Zagreb started to change its politics. The fact that the new elections were on the horizon, was surely important for the further course of events.

The Center, finally?

After three years of public actions and negotiations between the City and representatives of Zagreb independent cultural scene, in November 2008, the Agreement on the Founding of the Center for Independent Culture and Youth was adopted by the Zagreb City Assembly. Soon after, on December 16, a contract was signed by which the Center was formally established. All the basic principles of the model, previously elaborated by the independent scene organizations, were adopted: the center is established as a public-civil partnership (an innovative model, mixed type of the establishment!); it is supposed

to be placed on several locations; it is meant to contain a multifunctional center for independent culture and macro-regional center for the youth.

By this decision, a new type of the institution was established whose running would be participative; it would be administrated by numerous organization involved. The establishment would be created, which will administrate the locations within the Center, but the users will be the ones who will have the power of programming and decision making. Users are basically organizations joint in the *Alliance for Center*, and they will be able to use the locations as a polygon for their programs.

In the other words, what is certain is that the decision making will not be in the hands of a single person- director of the Center, what is usual practice in public institutions. In the case of the Center for independent culture, a program council will be defined. All the organizations who will be using the locations within the Center will be able to eter *Alliance for Center*, and will be able to participate in a decision making process.

Why the mixed type of the institution? Emina Višnić explains that it was very important to cancel usual logic of functioning of city institutions, where the City is the only owner and administrator. “We wanted to bring a shift in our cultural system. Therefore, this is very important step on the policy level. It was important to open the way for a new type of cultural institution. We all know too well that the public sector often enters the routine, inertion, and that it is under the control of one and the only founder, which often means a political control. That is why we insisted on the partnership between the City of Zagreb and civil society organizations.”¹⁰¹ She points out that the organizations bring along the characteristics such are: dynamics, ability to react quickly, program innovation and diversity, inclusion in international cultural and artistic currents etc.

The center is supposed to include three locations: the administration of the Center that is placed in Zagreb City Center (Kneza Mislava Street), Jedinstvo factory and former Oil

¹⁰¹ Emina Višnić in an interview published at www.kulturpunkt.hr , January 29, 2009.

factory (Uljara). It was insisted on the idea of a poli- locational Center, so that the potential ghetoization of the scene is avoided. This also enables its presence in the very tissue of the City. All the locations are situated in the wider city center. All the needs for the spaces are not completely fulfilled, but the base has been created and Zagreb got a unique model of the cultural institution of the new type. Some of the representative examples of the industrial heritage were to be transformed in the spaces of contemporary culture.¹⁰²



Industrial heritage for contemporary culture

The city of Zagreb will ensure the space and technical conditions for program realization of the independent culture and youth organizations, but it will not influence the contents realized within the Center, nor the administrative politics of the Center. It is important to emphasize that the Center, as an institution, will not produce new cultural contents, but will take care of the space administration, technical conditions and will be dealing with the informal education and serve as information punct. The institution will not be financed only by the City of Zagreb; the Alliance for Center will fundraise from the other

¹⁰² Uljara/former Oil factory is protected monument of culture.

sources, to ensure financial differentiation. The establishment of the Centre can be observed as an example of the successful initiative “from below” as Višnić explains.

This new type of institution will have networked and international collaboration as one of its priorities and it will surely contribute to the further inclusion of Zagreb art scene within the European programs of collaboration and exchange.

A Long Way to the Center: The Center without Real Spaces?

The elections that were scheduled for May 2009 are considered to be a trigger for a sudden preoccupation of the city administration for the problems of independent culture.¹⁰³ Along this line, the contracts were signed and the Center was established. However, there was a long way from theory to practice: from the undertaken obligations and their realization. The City of Zagreb was supposed to finish revitalization of the Jedinstvo factory and to become the formal owner of the old Oil factory that would be given to the Center, by the end of February 2009, but even a hundred days after signing the agreement, that did not happen. The Center only entered the office spaces downtown.

This kind of attitude of the City towards the independent culture provoked another set of public actions and discussions. Emina Višnić, who was previously elected for Director of the Center, described this relation in these words: “First there are promises, followed by the phase of ignoring and obstruction. Then, once it’s seen that there is no giving up, and that the problem has been treated publicly, the ungrounded accusations start aimed at destroying “the enemy”. When even that does not bring results, then the City changes the

¹⁰³ Squatting of the deserted spaces in Zagreb is not a rare case, within last several years. The city usually does not have understanding for this sort of practices. In the case of former medicine factory MEDIKA, recently squatted space in the center of Zagreb, the city authorities again showed its own inconsistency. The space was squatted by ATTACK, independent culture organization and at first it was thrown out, but soon after, that space was given to them, to be used for cultural production until the moment the Congress center building (planned there) starts.

tactics; agreements and partial solutions arrive. However, the key element that would enable the real changes- relevant infrastructure- that is something they do not give.”¹⁰⁴

In the eve of the elections in May 2009, a public discussion with a theme “Independent culture and the youth in Zagreb City development- four years after” was organized in Zagreb. The conference was reflecting the relation of the current political structure towards the independent culture and the youth. Two candidates for the City mayor were present, and they showed inadequate knowledge about independent scene issues.

Within the last ten years, independent culture and youth scene developed to the extent that it overtook the burden from the back of the City office for education, culture and sport, as this office functions slowly and inefficiently, but in spite of this the independent cultural protagonists were never really treated as partners by the City structures, said Andreea Zlatar at the conference.¹⁰⁵ The City failed to recognize this new type of culture and youth, as a field of public interest. Another problem lies in the fact that the politicians are interested in culture only on a symbolical level, as Nenad Romić from Multimedial Institute noticed. Culture has to be understood as a field of new models and ways of administration that goes beyond the symbolical level, opening the space for dialogue and discussion, which are, in fact, the basic characteristics of the independent cultural scene.¹⁰⁶ As long as the independent and youth culture is treated without this shift in understanding what the new type of cultural production is, it is hard to expect that the politics will treat protagonists of the respective scenes as partners. Facing this challenge is the way of approaching Zagreb to contemporary creative reflections on the cities, and cultural policies based on citizen participation.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Emina Višnić in an article „Nepotkupljivost na djelu”, published on www.kulturpunkt.hr, May 2009, on the occasion of the public discussion “ Independent culture and the youth in Zagreb city development- four years after”, held in May 2009.

¹⁰⁵ In an article „Nepotkupljivost na djelu”, published on www.kulturpunkt.hr, May 2009, on the occasion of the public discussion “ Independent culture and the youth in Zagreb city development- four years after”, held in May 2009.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Jordi Pascual , Corina Suteu , Sanjin Dragojevic , Philipp Dietachmair (2007) Guide to Citizen Participation in Local Cultural Policy Development for European Cities, ECF, Amsterdam; ECUMEST, Bucharest.

3.5. Critique of the independent scene and its current development

The independent cultural scene, (the name was coined by its protagonists, participants in cultural production that was once called alternative and today is known as independent), in Croatia became almost unquestionable, unifying title that marks new type of cultural production. The name became the signifier of the crossover cultural/activist scene that emerged in the 1990s as opposition to nationalist culture, promoting values that could be called values of western liberal democracies, but at the same time examining social models specific for (Yugoslavian) socialist past, such are: self-management, solidarity, collectiveness etc. It could be said that the scene developed aware of its own social context, examining socialist heritage as a position of resistance, developing critical position towards the neo- liberalist wave arriving, nourishing the ideas of the political left, developing socially aware projects, taking active political position towards concrete social reality.

Structurally, the scene is composed of the non governmental organizations, which were starting to emerge in the 1990s. At the time, the NGO's were the clear opposition to dominant nationalist discourse in Croatia, representing (marginalized) critical public, promoting anti-nationalism, anti- war activism. The vast number of the organizations survived thanks to donations by the Open Society Institute (Soros' foundation), and because of that were stigmatized as "foreign agents", "imperialist agents", in the local context, and were never supported financially by state financial mechanisms.

After 2000, when a political change occurred in Croatia bringing the wave of liberal streamings in the country, many foreign foundations withdrew, including the Open Society Institute. This did not cause the NGO system collapsing, on the contrary, their activities were even growing and developing. The law on establishing cultural councils composed of the independent experts was introduced. The regular open calls for public subsidies were established, on the state and city level. New financing schemes significantly considered non-institutional cultural workers. NGO's take a new position on socio- cultural map, and this change demanded their stabilization and professionalization.

Although large number of the independent scene organizations has diversified financial sources, the question of their independence emerges, considering the fact that the significant amounts come from the city and the state. However, in Croatia the scene is well organized, the organizations are interconnected through several networks (Clubture, Youth network, Alliance for the Center for independent culture), its development self-contextualized, so that their independence, (social, cultural, political) influence, real critical stance in changed social and political conditions (after 2000) is rarely a subject of serious critical analyses.

On the other hand, some of the critiques come from the protagonists, or people close to the activities of the scene. Vesna Vuković from Zagreb based BLOK organization, in her essay “Landscape of Post-transformation Institutions in Zagreb and their Political Impact”¹⁰⁸ analyses the topic of how the configuration of newly emerged NGOs shapes a non-institutional political situation in and through its actions.

Vuković states that the local NGOs present themselves as legitimate actors in the cultural field; they take an active position and insist on the change and deregulation of the system. The new networking strategies that have prevailed in the NGO scene could thus be regarded as actually shaping political fronts. The main characteristics of the new forms of networking are the expansion of the field of cultural action and the development of new, collaborative production models.

The network *Clubture* was founded in 2002 with the idea of introducing a program exchange among the members and thus a decentralization of cultural production. In the five years of its existence the network has brought together more than eighty organizations and initiatives from all over Croatia in this way. In addition, *Clubture* has led to a greater recognition for cultural initiatives among a wider audience, thus supporting the network members in building up their financial structures and activating official cultural policies.

¹⁰⁸ Vesna Vuković and Leonardo Kovačević, The Landscape of Post-transformation Institutions in Zagreb and their Political Impact, <http://transform.eicpc.net/transversal/0208>

By organizing training seminars, from the beginning, but most intensively since 2005, *Clubture* has impelled an organization and stabilization of the entire scene. First and foremost, they attempt to forestall instability by means of professionalization by adopting the Anglo-Saxon model of cultural management that operates with methods of strategic planning and organizational development.

In one of the founding documents of this collaborative platform, it says: *“In the context of the transformation processes, cultural capital realizes the question of social action. If this transformation process has two meanings, subjecting oneself to the market on the one hand and abandoning social projects – or rather regarding society as a project – on the other, then the most conspicuous effect is that private interests participating in the shaping of the public sphere elude control and are no longer transparent. The obvious lack of social legitimation is evident in the wasting of public funding. Our fossilized institutional culture and its accompanying system of public funding make it clear that maintaining the status quo can only succeed by taking the lead in the aforementioned transition process. And whereas the only dynamic of change in the relationship between state and state-funded institutions – despite differently stated strategies in terms of cultural development – is currently the dynamic of individual interests, agents that are independent – in the societal sense and in the sense of development – are especially important, as they understand cultural activities as social action and social activities as critical culture.”*¹⁰⁹ The most important research themes of *Cultural Kapital* were: new group dynamics, new collective strategies, new forms of operating in cultural production, copyright legislation, control of productivity, and protection of public property against increasing privatization, etc. The most important concerns, however, were the battle over spaces and the battle for recognition of the platform as a relevant social agent. Particularly these very pragmatic demands strongly influenced the platform and all its activities and consequently overshadowed all the other themes.

Vesna Vuković also notices that increasing the visibility of non-institutional cultural production and negotiations with the city authorities about founding an independent center – were the only interpretation of the events of September 2005, when the battle for

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the space was at its peak *Operacija:grad* (Operation:City). “General questions about public space or tactics for producing cracks in standardized urban spaces or even questions about organizational models and the openness of these organizations were left aside and completely neglected in favor of a highly pragmatic way of thinking”¹¹⁰, Vuković says.

She also comments on the other big initiative launched by the independent scene participants: the initiative *Pravo na grad* (The Right to the City) started in 2006. This initiative also brought together many inhabitants of the city and stimulated new networks (with Green action, organization dealing with ecology, and GONG which encourages citizens to actively take part in political processes). Several actions were carried out within the framework of the initiative, which had a strong presence in the media and resulted in a strong public echo. “Unlike *Cultural Kapital*, which makes use of the language of cultural production by organizing conferences, art festivals, exhibitions, workshops, lectures and publication, the actions by the initiative *Pravo na grad* are usually accompanied by elaborate advertising campaigns, which have become the most common forms of political action in the last two years. The actions by the initiative *Pravo na grad* use the methods of classical marketing (flyers, posters, postcards, etc.) and have a strong media impact, because they represent spectacular installations in public space, guerilla actions, etc.”

On the other hand, within the same text¹¹¹ Leonardo Kovačević focuses on the „challenges of ultra professionalism“ in relation to the independent cultural scene development, which he considers to be a supplement to state politics. By ultra-professionalism he means the transformation of free and independent initiatives into rigid organisational structures that adopts processes of radical hierarchization and the enclosure of its external limits. Claiming that he is not supporting the idea of the eternal nomadism and voluntarism from the people whose initiatives have founded a stronger and more coherent civil society scene, he simply uses the concept of ultra-professionalism for reconsidering the limits of professionalisation and to ask questions

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

like: Should the civil society institutions be mirrored by state institutions or even by companies? Where does the hierarchization of NGO institutions stop? “In the platforms and institutions concerned we are witnessing a process of decision-making that is limited to a very small and privileged group of people. The largest portion of the members, associates and collaborators have no influence in the same institutions they work in. And often no change occurs in the leadership position since those institutions were founded. In my view, the reason for this is nothing but ultra-professionalism, which doesn't tolerate the basic democratization of the organisation,”¹¹² Kovačević claims.

He also considers that the other important and direct result of the ultra-professionalization process is pragmatic politics of the Independent culture leaders. “Even if these platforms have succeeded with many of their intentions – from successfully gaining social visibility, gathering and binding institutions with similar profiles, to public manifestations like “Operation City” and “Right on the City” – the balance sheet will still show a very pragmatic range of themes”, he claims. Kovačević further supports his statement with several examples. He sees an imposed struggle for public space more like a strategic move in a struggle for providing space for the activities of the same institutions, for the big Cultural Center that was planned by the networks concerned. He sees the problem in the scene's impossibility of linking the action with a public interest or articulating these actions in a more complex way, so that it could go beyond their pragmatic core, what places these networks and institutions in the realm of pure self-interest. He specially emphasizes the persistent absence of any class, workers or poverty issues in their agenda. “Although “Operation:City” revived and occupied an old factory and pointed out the natural capitalist development that consists in gradually replacing factory workers with cultural workers, only a few months later the same networks didn't recognize problems in a real factory (a tobacco factory in Zagreb), which was occupied by women working there, trying establish their own production. (...)And although this was the biggest opportunity to press ahead with social issues, the event was too much beyond the direct interest of the elite of civil management. This showed very clearly that the issues chosen by the networks in question were always those through which these institutions could be

¹¹² Ibid.

recognized as a “reasonable” political factor. But this also means they will never ask for something “impossible”.¹¹³

Leonardo Kovačević concludes that the rigid hierarchization and political pragmatism, in this case excludes more vital social issues (although the independent scene institutions present themselves as politically enlightened and deeply conscious of the “real” problems). At the end he poses some questions trying to sum up the effects of the scene’s recent activities: What degree of “menace” to public opinion or mainstream politics is developed by these networks and platforms? Do they represent a relevant political factor that goes beyond the colonization of social space that was opened in the nineties?

Without questioning the power of the platforms and networks established on the independent scene, Kovačević observes that they (the independent scene leaders) can organize strong civil activity at any time in any social field, because they have a good infrastructure for that. But, here also lies a problem: the citizens are being reactivated by all too convenient and non ambitious issues. The networks occupied a large social space, by Kovačević’s opinion, but this space is fully mirrored by official political representation, meaning that they have learned the art of leading a peaceful cohabitation with the state. “What else does this mean, if not a supplement of the state by means of civil society?” he concludes.¹¹⁴

The independent culture is considered as an important exponent of the critical culture, especially in the city of Zagreb. However, the notions such are *the independence or criticism*, should be constantly questioned, especially for the reasons of relatively long existence of the scene and the persistence of its protagonists. The key could be in the new openness, by enabling new generations to take places within the scene and question even the notion of the *scene* itself.

The “third sector” is supposed to play the role of a catalyst for the process of replacing the retreating “second sector” (the state) and fostering the growth of the still insufficiently developed “first sector” (the market). The logic of the contemporary usage

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

of “culture” is evident in the neo-liberal strategy of the *culturalization* of political relations – as Boris Buden has called it.¹¹⁵ The term refers to the transformation of the “political sphere” in its modern sense. The articulation of political struggles and social antagonisms have moved from the “classical” domain of the state apparatuses such as political parties, the parliamentary system and the procedures of the Rule of Law to the dispersed field of competing “cultural options”. Yet culturalization exceeds the simple translation of political issues to cultural ones. Culturalization is also a “school of culture”: the education, cultivation, and breeding of subjects for the dominant culture. “Culture” is, therefore, only one moment in the ideological education or, better yet, formation of the “popular masses”. An institution is less a particular building populated by an administration and upheld by a hierarchy of positions with a top-down structure of decisions, but more an institutionalized – power-structured and socially sanctioned – behaviour or conduct.

Culturalization has an important function within today’s neoliberal capitalist system – the function of the pacification and neutralization of contemporary social antagonisms. The similarity of contemporary condition of culture seems quite similar to what Stevan Vuković describes in his text referring to “state controlled/organized critic/alternative art” in the socialist Yugoslavia of the 1970s.

In the text „The Neoliberal Institution of Culture and the Critique of Culturalization“, Jelena Vesić and Dušan Grlja, members of the Prelom kolektiv from Belgrade suggest to *de-culturalize* those political issues out of their culturalized form. What they are collectively striving for is a re-politicization in the sense of a certain and definite *partisanship* in theory and in practice that aims for an effective materialist critique. This critique is dedicated to showing and revealing how politics always-already functions within culture, art and theory. It is dedicated to finding out how this presence of politics could be directed in a way that opposes its usage by the capitalist system. “Critique – a veritable materialist critique – in order to be efficient, i.e. to produce effects in the material reality of social exchange, must be practical; it must intervene within and strive

¹¹⁵ Boris Buden, “The Pit of Babel or The Society that Mistook Culture for Politics” and “Translation is Impossible. Let’s Do It!” available on <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1206/buden/en>;

to tackle the existing and ongoing social practices. This kind of criticism entails a self-criticism whereby one reflects upon his/her own role as well as the effects and the repercussions of one's own actions."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0208/prelom/en>

Conclusion

The independent cultural scene consists of self-established organizations that are not owned by the state, the city or some other, third subject. They independently decide and manage the organizational structure, they do not depend on only one source of financing and make their own decisions how they will spread the finances within their programme and project activities unlike the majority of established cultural institutions (theatres, museums, galleries, cultural centres), which are owned by the state or the city and influenced by them. Besides, independent cultural actors are the ones opting for the transformation of the existing cultural system, unlike established cultural institutions that stopped on the legacy from the socialist era and seem like they are not able to conduct a structural transition.

The *Independent Cultural Sector* is a relatively new phenomenon in the South Eastern, *Post- Socialist* Europe. It started to develop in the beginning of the 1990s within specific circumstances on the local and the global level. It signifies the cultural action, various cultural practices placed in between public and the private cultural sector, having in mind that the latter is in the Croatian case still underdeveloped. Thus, the independent sector is often marked as the Third Sector.

The Third Sector appeared at the end of the 1960s and beginning of 1970s in America and Western Europe in the situation when the State more and more withdraws from cultural field leaving it to the commercial sector. The third sector emerged as the answer to this tendency, attempting to respond to the civil cultural needs. Its role was seen as the one of the corrective in between public and the private field. However, the third sector discussions today imply various interpretations, critical reflections and ideological stances.

In so called Post Socialist Europe, the Third Sector (in culture) starts to develop along with the appearance of the civil society, often being a part of it.¹¹⁷ It is supported by the international community within the various financing schemes, mostly through the programs of democratization, human rights protection, civil emancipation, civil society building etc. Since the public opinion in those countries has developed extremely firm attitudes towards the NGO sector, taking positions on the issue cannot be avoided, ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative attitudes. In this research I tried to take the critical position to be able to examine the field from different perspectives.

As it was emphasized at the beginning of the thesis, this research tried to position the development of the independent scene in Zagreb and Croatia within the wider historical, socio- political and cultural context. By introducing the issue of cultural capital¹¹⁸ “inherited” from the self-organized, critical artistic practices in Croatia of the 1970s (at the time part of Yugoslavia), I wanted to mark the beginning of the building of a “parallel system of art”, existing along with the official system of institutions, the process that continued in the 1990s with the formation of the independent cultural scene. However, this entailed numerous opinions about the relation of the alternative/ independent cultural practices with the dominant ideological framework that I tackled in my research. One of the issues I was dealing with is described by Boris Buden’s theory of *culturalization*¹¹⁹, understood as a form of depoliticization, meaning not only simple translation of political issues to cultural ones, but the education, cultivation, and breeding of subjects for the dominant (western) culture. According to him, *culturalization* has an important function within today’s neoliberal capitalist system – the function of the pacification and neutralization of contemporary social antagonisms. The similarity of contemporary condition of culture seen through the prism of *culturalization* seem close to the principle called *transformismo* coined by Antonio Gramsci and used by Stevan Vuković in his analysis of the New Artistic Practices of the 1970s around Student Cultural Center (SKC)

¹¹⁷ Although, in the case of the SFRY, the civic initiatives, in some range, existed before 1990s, including *social or citizens associations*. Dea Vidović and Sanjin Dragojević point out the civic initiatives active in the 1980s which were promoting ecological, feminist and human rights issues.

¹¹⁸ The term *Cultural capital* refers to non-financial assets that involve educational, social, and intellectual knowledge. Cultural capital (*le capital culturel*) is a sociological concept that has gained widespread popularity since it was first articulated by Pierre Bourdieu

¹¹⁹ <http://translate.eipcp.net/strands/01/buden-strands01en>

in Belgrade. He explains the institutional logic of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, especially in the sector that played the role of *civil society* (consisting, in the jargon of socialist self-management, of *socio-political organizations* and *socio-political communities*) by this principle saying that “actual and potential leaders and initiatives coming from the subordinate groups were constantly being incorporated into the dominant project, in order to prevent the formation of counter-hegemony.”¹²⁰ That counted for the youth organizations, student organizations, unions of artists, writers and other cultural producers, cultural communities based on common ethnic, religious and other grounds, as well as different self-organized sub-cultural groups.

However, in this thesis, the phenomenon of the *independent culture*, particularly the one in Zagreb/Croatia, that I have focused on, is also seen as a value. This claim is based on my own experience of witnessing its development, and considering the new dynamics it brought in the field of culture starting from the mid 1990s, which is described in this thesis.

What marks the Independent Croatian cultural scene, from the very beginning of the establishment of the first self-organized initiatives, is its strong opposition to the dominant nationalist political and cultural climate of that period. The independent organizations appear in “turbulent circumstances”¹²¹ of disintegration of one political system and the establishment of the other, in the situation of war, economical crises, corruption, and general pauperization. In this situation the field of culture was unprepared for changes and adaptation to the new circumstances. The consequences included the lack of systematic cultural policy, diminution of cultural participation, cultural consumption, and international cultural exchange. The cultural institutions have been in deep crisis along with their social role, the nepotism was practiced instead of cultural policy, with the general decrease of the professional standards. In short, the situation reflected tangible absence of social legitimization mirrored in the mismanagement of public resources. The

¹²⁰ <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0208/vukovic/en>

¹²¹ Milena Dragičević-Šešić, Sanjin Dragojević (2005) *Arts management in turbulent times*. Adaptable Quality Management. Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, Boekmanstudies

ossified institutional culture and the system of public support dependent on it demonstrated how maintaining the status quo can sometimes amount to leading the way in this process of privatization of public interest. In this context the independent (cultural) actors appeared. They understood and re-articulated cultural activities as social action and social activities in terms of critical culture. They started to investigate the changed conditions of cultural and social praxis, and started to reflect on reforming the institutional structures with the aim of increasing the presence of and fostering opportunities for independent culture.

The year 2002 marked a significant turning point for the scene; a collaborative platform for program exchange was initiated under the name *Clubture*, as an attempt to create more stable system of cultural collaboration, production and financing. The Clubture network was a reaction to the inability of the official Croatian cultural policy to envisage and incite the crucial changes in the models of organizing and financing of the cultural machinery. This model of networking goes beyond the usual functions of knowledge and experience exchange. In this case, networking also became the lobbying, with clearly formulated lines of actions and campaigns. The model of networking of the independent culture basically presents a direct challenge to the totality of the existing cultural reality. In 2003, the Network started to gain visibility in wider public sphere. The same year it got directly involved in the work of the platform POLICY_FORUM, a non- formal group made up of NGOs and individuals, who gathered in order to follow, examine, monitor public policies affecting development of the independent culture, on all levels, and which advocates changes in relevant institutional framework. The network's biggest success was in 2004 when the independent cultural actors joint in Clubture network organized a protest against the announced (quite regressive) structural changes within Croatian Ministry of Culture, demanding that Council for New Media Cultures remains part of the new structure of the ministry. The protest succeeded and this action symbolically brought recognition to independent cultural scene as relevant player in cultural policy discussion.

After the first three years the network expands its strategic goals and the sphere of action, towards cultural cooperation within other countries in the Region. Regional Clubture

initiative was established, connecting organizations from Croatia with similar initiatives in Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia, through culture as a process (and mode) of exchange.

What characterizes Croatian (mostly Zagreb) independent scene within the last five years and presents one of its most visible campaigns is “the battle for space.” Croatia is one of the rare countries in South Eastern Europe that preserved its cultural machinery of public institutions and the majority of these spaces (except cinema halls) were not put on sale. However, till recently, the state did not assure spaces for new emerging forms of cultural production coming primarily from independent cultural scene. The battle for space came to a peak in 2005, when 26 organizations and initiatives from the independent cultural scene “occupied” abandoned and vacant spaces of the factory complex Badel-Gorica. The occupation became known as *Operacija: grad* (Operation: City). After more than three years of public actions and negotiations between the City and representatives of Zagreb independent cultural scene, in November 2008, the agreement on founding of the Center for Independent Culture and Youth was adopted by the Zagreb City Assembly and soon after the Center was formally established. The Center is established as an innovative model of public- civil partnership, it is supposed to be placed on several locations; it is meant to contain a multifunctional center for independent culture and macro-regional center for the youth. Not all the promised buildings were given up to the Center up to this day. An innovative model of administration of the Center was also proposed and currently it has been put on test with the first initiatives using its premises.

With the establishment of the Center, an important step is made towards the stabilization of the cultural activities of the Independent sector. However, the long-term sustainability and advancement of programmes and organizational proficiency, and consequently, the development of international competitiveness, cannot be achieved without relevant interventions both within a national cultural model and within the implementation of local cultural public policies.

Here are some of the instruments that should be considered for the future development of the Independent sector in culture in Croatia:

- Ensuring adequate (space) infrastructure on the local level
- Ensuring adequate institutional/organizational form of management of such a spaces
- Establishment of the inter-sectorial partnership on the local level
- Founding a separate institution for continuous monitoring of the civil sector development in the field of culture (on the national level) that would be engaged for creating development strategies for more systematic stimulation of its further development, especially in segments, in which, within the current cultural model there are no relevant cultural policy instruments. The institution would have to deal with enhancing its production and organizational capacities, to set up the needed infrastructure, raise the level of professionalism through education, stimulate new models of cooperation on the national, regional and international level.

These are considered to be the basic instruments that can be useful for the sector, although the problem is in the currently existing cultural model in Croatia which is primarily directed towards the needs of public cultural institutions and that needs to be adapted. The only cultural policy instrument that refers to the Independent Cultural Sector is the short term (one year long) financing of the individual projects both on the national and the local level. Any other sort of financing (the institutional support, for example) is completely missing. The problem of stable financing of the Independent sector has been a topic of the numerous discussions within the last five years and more. There were proposals to establish a Foundation for independent culture, and lately, there have been some initial attempts to advocate for establishing a sort of National Lottery program/National Lottery Fund for Independent Culture as a possible solution.

At the present moment, the Independent Cultural Sector in Croatia, especially in Zagreb, is undergoing significant transformations related to the institutionalization process. Thus, it faces numerous challenges, some of which are described in this work. However, through this analysis I have demonstrated that the independent actors, in the time of crucial social and political changes, managed to understand that the communication exchange on a worldwide basis has radically changed the political economy of cultural representation and in this sense re-articulated cultural activities as social action and politicized the cultural sphere « It is no longer a matter of presenting a representative, predominant culture produced within the borders of a nation-state to an abstract consumer of culture. Rather, individual subjects are connected with one another in specifically practical and theoretical fields, acting within the common context of global economic production. »¹²²

At the end, it is important to mention that the phenomenon of the *independent cultural sector* has to be further observed in the wider context of the *third sector* development with many questions arising concerning its relation to the state, to the private sector, its ideological positions and organizational aspects.

¹²² From the project statement Zagreb Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, <http://www.culturalkapital.org/>

Résumé

La scène culturelle indépendante est composée des organisations autogérées, qui ne sont pas la propriété de l'Etat, de la ville ou de l'autre, 3^{ème} entité. Ces organisations décident et gèrent la structure organisationnelle indépendamment, ne dépendent pas d'une (n'ont pas qu'une source) seule source de financement et décident librement (indépendamment) comment répartir les finances pour leurs programmes et activités du projet, contrairement à la majorité des institutions culturelles établies (théâtres, musées, galeries, centres culturels) qui sont la propriété de l'Etat ou ville et influencés par eux. Les politiques culturelles en Croatie n'ont pas beaucoup changé depuis les années 1990 et, jusqu'à présent, elles ont été réduites à qu'un seul niveau de financement et à la contrôle des positions responsables au sein des institutions culturelles publiques. La "crédibilité politique" semble être le critère principal pour la nomination aux postes titulaires. D'ailleurs, les acteurs culturels indépendants sont ceux qui optent pour la transformation du système culturel existant, contrairement aux institutions culturelles établies qui se sont arrêtées sur l'héritage de l'ère socialiste et ils ne sont vraisemblablement pas encore en mesure d'effectuer une transition structurelle.

Le secteur culturel indépendant est un phénomène relativement nouveau en Europe du Sud-Est (*post-socialiste*). Il a commencé à se développer au début des années 1990 du fait des conditions à la fois locales et globales. Il désigne l'action culturelle et des pratiques culturelles diverses et se positionne entre les secteurs public et privé de la culture. Il faut noter que ce dernier est sous-développé en Croatie. Ainsi, le secteur indépendant est souvent qualifié de « troisième secteur ».

Le « troisième secteur » s'est exprimé aux États-Unis et en Europe de l'Ouest à la fin des années 1960 et au début des années 1970, en réponse au retrait de l'Etat du champ culturel au profit du secteur commercial. Le « troisième secteur » a tenté de répondre aux besoins culturels civiques. Son rôle a été perçu comme celui d'un correcteur, se plaçant entre les champs public et privé. Pourtant, les discussions offrent des interprétations, réflexions critiques et positions idéologiques variées.

Dans les anciens pays socialistes d'Europe, le « troisième secteur » dans la culture se développe avec l'émergence de la société civile, qui en est souvent une partie intégrante. Il est soutenu par la Communauté Internationale à travers les programmes de financements divers ; principalement ceux visant la démocratisation, la protection des droits de l'homme, l'émancipation civile, la création de la société civile, etc. Comme l'opinion publique dans ces pays a donné lieu à des positionnements très fermes, ces questionnements, variant de très positifs aux très négatifs, sont pris en compte par cette recherche.

Dans l'introduction de ce mémoire, le but de mon étude est de placer la scène indépendante zagréboise et croate dans un contexte historique, sociopolitique et culturel plus large. J'y introduis la question du *capital culturel*, héritée des pratiques artistiques critiques et autogérée des années 1970, quand la Croatie faisait partie de Yougoslavie. Ceci me permet de souligner la constitution d'un système parallèle de l'art co-existant avec le système institutionnel officiel. Aussi, il m'était important de tracer sa continuité jusqu'aux années 1990 et jusqu'à la formation de la scène culturelle indépendante. Cependant, cette question du capital culturel a ouvert la voie aux nombreuses opinions critiques sur le rapport entre les pratiques culturelles alternatives / indépendantes et la structure idéologique, élaborée dans ma recherche. L'une des problématiques que j'ai exposé a été décrite par Boris Buden dans sa théorie de *culturalisation*¹²³, par laquelle l'auteur élabore une forme de dépolitisation. D'après lui, la *culturalisation* veut dire non seulement la simple traduction des questions politiques dans les questions culturelles, mais aussi l'éducation et l'*élevage* d'un sujet pour la culture dominante (de l'ouest). Pour Buden la *culturalisation* a une fonction importante dans le système capitaliste néolibéral - la fonction de pacification et de neutralisation des antagonismes de la société contemporaine. Analogiquement, la condition contemporaine de la culture observé sous l'angle de la *culturalisation*, semble s'approcher du principe de *Transformismo* proposé par Antonio Gramsci et utilisé par Stevan Vuković dans son analyse des pratiques artistiques novatrices des années 70 émergeant autour du Centre Culturel Universitaire

¹²³ <http://translate.eipcp.net/strands/01/buden-strands01en>

(SKC) de Belgrade. Il explique la logique institutionnelle de la République fédérale socialiste de Yougoslavie, en donnant l'exemple du secteur qui a joué le rôle de la *société civile* à l'époque (le secteur autogéré, dans le jargon socialiste, comprenant les *organisations sociopolitiques* et les *communautés sociopolitiques*). Pour Vukovic, "les dirigeants actuels et potentiels, de même que les initiatives venant des groupes subordonnés, ont été systématiquement incorporés dans le projet dominant, avec l'idée de prévenir la formation de la contre-hégémonie."¹²⁴ Ce principe s'appliquait aux organisations de la jeunesse, celles des étudiants, aux unions d'artistes, aux écrivains et autres producteurs culturels, ainsi qu'aux associations communautaires culturelles réunies pour des raisons ethniques, religieuses, et autres, de même qu'aux différents groupes culturels autogérés.

Cependant, dans cette thèse, le phénomène de la *culture indépendante*, auquel je me focalise avec un accent mis sur Zagreb/Croatie, est aussi perçu comme une valeur, un capital. Cette revendication se base sur mon expérience personnelle, celle d'un témoin de son développement, et mon étude prend en compte les nouvelles dynamiques que le phénomène a apporté dans le champ culturel à partir des années 1990.

Ce que marque la scène culturelle indépendante croate, dès les premières fondations des initiatives autogérées, c'est sa forte opposition au climat politique et culturel nationaliste dominant la période. Les organisations indépendantes naissent dans les "circonstances turbulentes"¹²⁵ de la désintégration d'un système politique et de l'établissement d'un autre, dans la situation de guerre, la crise économique, la corruption et la paupérisation générale ». Dans un tel contexte, le champ culturel n'a pas été prêt à changer ni à s'adapter aux nouvelles circonstances. Les conséquences étaient visibles dans l'inexistence de la politique culturelle consistante, diminution de la participation culturelle, la consommation culturelle, et la coopération culturelle internationale. Les institutions culturelles étaient dans une crise profonde, qui allait de paire avec la crise de

¹²⁴ <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0208/vukovic/en>

¹²⁵ Milena Dragičević-Šešić, Sanjin Dragojević (2005) Arts management in turbulent times. Adaptable Quality Management. Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, Boekmanstudies

leur rôle social. Le népotisme était pratiqué à la place de la politique culturelle, et les standards professionnels avaient diminué. En bref, la situation reflétait l'absence tangible de la légitimation sociale qui se reflétait dans la mauvaise gestion des ressources publiques. La culture institutionnelle ossifiée et le système du soutien public qui en dépendait, démontraient comment maintenance du *statut quo* peut parfois ouvrir le chemin à la privatisation de l'intérêt public. Dans ce contexte, les acteurs indépendants (culturels) ont apparu. Ils ont envisagé et re-articulé les activités culturelles en tant que l'action sociale et activité sociale et dans des termes de la culture critique. Ils ont réfléchi à la réforme des institutions afin d'augmenter la présence et les possibilité de la culture indépendante.

L'Année 2002 a marqué le point tournant pour la scène – *Clubture*, la plateforme collaborative pour l'échange des programmes a été initiée, tentant d'élaborer un système plus stable de la collaboration culturelle, de la production et du financement. Le réseau de *Clubture* s'est dressé en réaction à l'incapacité de la politique culturelle officielle d'envisager et d'inciter les changements cruciaux des modèles d'organisation et du financement de la machinerie culturelle. Ce modèle de mise en réseau va au-delà de la fonction habituelle de l'échange du savoir et de l'expérience. Dans ce cas précis, la mise en réseau est devenu une arme de négociation, de *lobbying*, suivant les lignes de l'action et des campagnes clairement formulées. Le modèle du réseau de la culture indépendante était un défi direct pour la réalité culturelle existante. En 2003, le Réseau a obtenu la visibilité dans un plus large espace public. La même année, la plateforme *POLICY_FORUM* a été initiée. Il s'agissait d'un groupe de travail non formel, composé des ONG et des individus. Ils se réunissaient pour suivre, interroger et contrôler les politiques publiques à l'égard du développement de la culture indépendante, à tous les niveaux, et pour surveiller les changements importants dans le cadre institutionnel.

La plus grande réussite du réseau avait lieu en 2004 quand le secteur indépendant culturel réuni en réseau de *Clubture* a organisé une manifestation contre les changements structurels annoncés au sein du Ministère de la culture de Croatie, jugés bien régressifs. Les manifestants revendiquaient que le Conseil pour les cultures des nouveaux medias

reste la partie de la nouvelle restructuration ministérielle. La manifestation a été réussie, et cette action a profité de la reconnaissance symbolique à la scène culturelle indépendante, devenue un acteur important dans les discussions sur les politiques culturelles.

Après les trois premières années de son existence, le réseau a élargi ses objectifs stratégiques et son champ d'action, plus particulièrement à l'égard de la coopération culturelle avec les autres pays de la région. L'initiative régionale de *Clubture* a été établie, liant les associations de la Croatie avec les organisations similaires de la Serbie, de la Slovénie, de la Bosnie et Herzégovine et de la Macédoine. La culture était le processus (et le mode) d'échange.

Ce qui caractérise le plus la scène indépendante croate (surtout zagreboise) ces dernières cinq années se résume par, entre autres, la campagne intitulée la "bataille pour l'espace"; soit la plus visible dans l'espace public.

Croatie est l'une des rares pays de l'Europe du sud-est qui a préservé sa machinerie culturelle et ses institutions publiques. La majorité des espaces culturels (à l'exception des salles du cinéma) n'ont pas été vendus. Pourtant, jusqu'à présent, l'état n'a pas assuré les espaces pour les nouvelles formes émergentes de la production culturelle, issues de la scène culturelle indépendante principalement. La bataille pour l'espace était à son sommet en 2005, quand les 26 organisations et initiatives du secteur culturel indépendant ont occupé les locaux abandonnés et vides du complexe industriel Badel-Gorica. Cette occupation portait le nom de *Operacija: grad* (Opération : Ville). Après plus de trois ans d'action publique et des négociations entre la Ville de Zagreb et les représentants de la scène culturelle indépendante, en novembre 2008, un accord a été signé, marquant le fondement du Centre de la Culture Indépendante et de la Jeunesse. Il a ensuite été adopté par l'Assemblée Générale de la Ville de Zagreb et peu de temps après, le Centre s'est formellement établi. Ce Centre se base sur le modèle novateur du Partenariat Public-Privé, qui s'appliquerait aux maints locaux. Il se compose d'un centre polyvalent pour la culture indépendante et du centre macro-régional pour la jeunesse. Jusqu'à présent, le

Centre n'a pas encore obtenu tous les locaux promis. Le modèle novateur d'administrer le Centre a été proposé et à l'heure actuelle il est testé par les premières associations utilisant ses services.

En établissant le Centre, les activités culturelles du secteur indépendant ont franchi le pas vers la plus importante stabilité. Cependant, il n'est pas possible d'atteindre le développement durable, améliorer les programmes, la compétence professionnelle, et par conséquent, développer la compétitivité internationale, sans faire une intervention d'ampleur dans la modèle culturelle nationale, d'une part, et dans l'implémentation des politiques culturelles locales, d'autre part. Il s'agit de présenter ici quelques outils qui devraient être pris en considération quant au développement futur du secteur indépendant en Croatie :

- Garantir l'infrastructure adéquate (les locaux) sur le plan local
- Garantir la forme institutionnelle/organisationnelle de gestion de ces mêmes locaux/espaces
- Etablir le partenariat entre les secteurs sur le plan local
- Soutenir financièrement l'institution autonome visant à contrôler le développement du secteur civil dans la culture (au niveau national) et qui pourrait créer plus tard des stratégies contribuant à stimuler systématiquement le développement futur du secteur, surtout dans les aspects omis par le présent modèle culturel de la politique culturelle. L'institution devrait améliorer l'efficacité de ses capacités d'organisation et de production, dresser l'infrastructure nécessaire, booster le niveau professionnel grâce à l'éducation et stimuler les nouveaux modèles de coopération aux niveaux national, régional et international.

Ces instruments, considérés comme les outils de base pour le secteur, suscitent simultanément le problème du modèle culturel actuel en Croatie, servant principalement aux besoins des institutions culturelles publiques, et nécessitant une adaptation. Le seul

outil dont dispose la politique culturelle qui se réfère au secteur culturel indépendant demeure le système de financement à court terme (annuel) des projets singuliers sur les plans local et national. Par contre, il n'y a pas une autre alternative de financement, entre autres, le soutien institutionnel inexistant. Le problème de financement stable du secteur indépendant a été le sujet des nombreuses discussions durant les cinq dernières années. Une proposition concernait l'établissement de la Fondation pour la culture indépendante, et récemment plusieurs solutions ont été formulées sous forme d'un programme de loterie nationale / de loterie nationale pour la culture indépendante.

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Actuellement, le secteur culturel indépendant subit des transformations significatives liées à « l'institutionnalisation » inévitable, surtout à Zagreb. Ainsi, il fait face aux nombreux défis, évoqués dans ce travail. Cependant, cette analyse a tenté de démontrer que les acteurs indépendants, au moment des changements politiques et sociaux de grande ampleur, ont réussi à comprendre que les modes de communication ont radicalement changé l'économie politique de la représentation culturelle, et dans ce sens ont restauré l'activité culturelle comme l'action sociale et ont politisé le champ de la culture. « Il ne s'agit plus de présenter la culture prédominante et représentative produite au sein des frontières de l'Etat-nation au consommateur culturel abstrait. Plutôt, les individus tissent les liens dans les champs spécifiques de la théorie et de la pratique et agissent dans un cadre commun de la production économique globale. »¹²⁶

Pour conclure, il s'agit bien de mentionner que le phénomène du secteur culturel indépendant en Croatie, n'a pas, jusqu'à présent, été mis dans le contexte plus large du développement du « troisième secteur », ainsi ouvrant les questions de sa relation avec l'Etat et le secteur privé, représentant ses positions idéologiques et aspects organisationnelles.

¹²⁶ Tire de la déclaration du projet Zagreb Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, <http://www.culturalkapital.org/>

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- <http://www.postcommunist.de/home/index.php?kat=veranstaltungen&subkat=kongrpro&lang=en>
- http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/CCS/what_is_civil_society.htm.
- <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/TSEP/faqs.htm>
- <http://www.kontakt.erstebankgroup.net>
- <http://www.policiesforculture.org/index.php>
- <http://www.kulturpunkt.hr>
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<http://www.eurocult.org/uploads/docs/577.pdf>
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Appendix

Operacija: grad/ Operation: City. Project proposal¹²⁷

Brief description

Operation: city is a ten-day event in Zagreb, Croatia, featuring a variety of cultural activities that took place in an abandoned industrial complex in the city.

<http://www.operacijagrad.org>

Significant features

Operation:city was an experiment through which organisers wanted to see how different subjects from the cultural scene can function in the same space; they wanted to explore how different programmes, different audiences and different needs for space can be combined.

Context & scenario

Operation:City builds upon the project Invisible Zagreb, which Platforma 9,81 initiated in 2003. The goal was to identify the potential to experiment with new typologies of public spaces in places that have lost their primary function and are neglected by urban policies. Invisible Zagreb has also indicated the transitional transformations that left their spatial mark on the city and therefore demand urban strategies that alter the habitual planning models and places them in a wider developmental perspective. The most radical transformations took place in the industrial zones and in the areas of rapid infrastructure development which, although located in a wider centre of the city, remain unused and left to decay.

¹²⁷ The project proposal is put online and can be found at <http://www.labforculture.org/en/content/view/full/18051>

The temporary appropriation of these spaces through various cultural programmes can close the void left in the transition process and catalyse the vision of development by considering the specific character of each location. Through the transformation of unused spaces into dynamic urban zones, culture becomes a catalyst of change.

If we leave aside the spatial aspects, and consider the development of the independent culture as a whole, which is best demonstrated by the independent scene in Zagreb, we can conclude that a significant change of context took place. After a period of growth and relevant national and international achievements, what becomes increasingly manifest is the basic need for structural transformations that should provide the stability for independent initiatives and their activities through new financing models and better conditions for production.

This agenda was publicly discussed in spring 2005, when the organisations in the project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, clubs Mochvara, Attack! and mama, and Croatian Youth Network initiated a process of public debate, in which the issues of independent culture and youth in Zagreb were discussed in the context of the city's development. Lack of space for activities was identified as the fundamental problem for independent culture and youth initiatives.

The advocacy process resulted in a declaration signed by all the relevant political parties. One of the key demands was the adaptation for use of one of the existing spaces in central Zagreb and the establishment of a joint multifunctional centre for independent culture and a macro-regional centre for youth that could accommodate specific spatial demands for joint activities of independent cultural and youth organisations. In this sense, Operation:City contributes to further public discussion of the issues and works on the promotion of partnership between the independent cultural sector and youth sector in the city of Zagreb.

Project description

The organisation of the temporary settlement was a collaboration by [BLOK] – Local Base for Refreshment of Culture and Platforma 9, 81. The programme and activities were the product of a collaboration between all major initiatives and organisations active in

Zagreb's broader independent cultural scene that moved all their activities to those locations in September 2005.

Some 50 events, organised by 25 cultural organisations, artist organisations and initiatives, took place throughout the ten days of the Operation:City. The venue was opened for members of the public (both during the day and the evening) offering various activities and functioning as a new meeting place. Two festivals took place in the framework of the Operation:City – Touch Me and the Urban Festival.

Here you can find programme of the Operation:City: <http://www.operacijagrad.org/en>

Operation:City was planned as a ten-day, whole-day manifestation. The venue was open to the public from 11am to 11pm. Organisers created a programme that followed this framework. They organised four living rooms with workshops and reading areas. Some people were working there on a new issue of a magazine. Exhibitions were open during the day. The idea was that the whole Badel factory complex would function as a parallel city - a place where it would be possible to transfer the cultural life and entertainment of the city.

BLOK and Platforma 9,81 provided funds for promotion, technical aspects and equipment, as well as providing an organisational team and assistants, security, cleaning and adapting of space.

Donors included: Ministry of Culture of Republic of Croatia, City of Zagreb – City Office for Culture, INA – Oil Industry Inc., Čistoća d.o.o., Zagrebačke Veletržnice d.d., Hrvatska elektroprivreda d.d.

The project was supported by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) with funds from the US Agency for International Development.

The Operation: City was part of the project Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe.

Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 took place in the framework of Relations (<http://www.projekt-relations.de>) - a project initiated by the German Federal Cultural Foundation.

Kontakt. The Arts and Civil Society Program of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe (<http://www.kontakt.erstebankgroup.net>)

Sponsors: ARTO – Advertising Billboards, Hotel LAGUNA, EVISTAS, TOI TOI, Securitas ZOLOTA, Vodatel/e-tv, AGIT d.o.o., EUROKRAN, Natura Croatica.
Partners provided funds for their programmes (travel costs, accommodation and per diems for artists, additional equipment for projects etc.).

Approximate budget: 200,000 EUR.



The Badel Factory Building, Zagreb, 2005.

Vita

Nataša Bodrožić (Split, 1978) is a free lance curator and journalist. She graduated from the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb (BA in Journalism) in 2004. In 2008 she finished the program *Laboratory of the Curatorial Practices/ World of Art School* at Center for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) in Ljubljana, Slovenia. She is a MA candidate at The University of Arts in Belgrade/UNESCO Chair for Cultural Management and Cultural Policy in the Balkans.

Since 2009, she is the head of the organization “Loose Associations, contemporary art practices” (founded with Ivana Meštrović and Tonka Maleković) dealing with critical research on contemporary art practices, and art as production of the social. So far she co-curated several exhibitions and public space projects in Croatia and abroad: *Future was Yesterday: self-organized artistic practices from Ukraine* (Zagreb), *CHIOSC* (Zagreb), *Possibility of the city* (Chisinau, Moldova), *Interventions3: Artistic interventions in public space* (Chisinau, Moldova); *Something in common?* (Chisinau, Moldova), *Google Tourist* (Ljubljana, Slovenia) etc. She co-moderated more than fifteen interdisciplinary discussions on contemporary art in the course of the program *Slobodne veze/ Loose Associations* that has been running in Zagreb since 2007.

From 2004 to 2008 she collaborated with Queer Zagreb festival as a production associate. She was the initiator of the regional literary project *Queer Stories* and co-editor of the book *Po queerene priče* (Domino, Zagreb 2004).

So far she has been awarded with several scholarships and grants: CEC Artslink, French Government scholarships, Soros Supplementary Grant and Gulliver connect/ Kulturkontakt grant.

She collaborates with several magazines and internet portals.
Currently lives and works in Zagreb.