

THE MODEL OF THE NEW CENTRE AND FOUNDATION IN ZAGREB, CROATIA

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The particularisation of the institutional cultural framework is still going on. Everywhere in the East and the West new specialized institutions are arising. In most of these new institutions artistic forms match the programming and the programming matches the infrastructure. All of a sudden, most of the new centres are realising that the hybridisation of artistic forms is creating the necessity for hybridisation of the artistic institutions, and not only in terms of programming. The new relational character of artistic and cultural practices seems to demand a new type of governance and capacity of the institution.

Let us take the example of dance centres alone. In Zagreb a new dance centre will soon be established in an old cinema. In Bucharest the National Dance Centre acquired two floors of the National Theatre's foyer. In Belgrade the network *Station* is fighting for a space of its own. In Tallinn they have had such a space for years. In Ljubljana artists obtained an old power plant and cinema. Models for these new centres are taken from already existing similar

institutions in Europe, like the Tanzquartier Wien, CND Paris etc.

What is the relational character between all these smaller and bigger institutions, which are trying to communicate the independency of individual artists or collectives and which are, at the same time, under constant scrutiny from funding and ruling bodies? The relational character of those institutions that are "presenting production" and "producing presentation" is, of course, the most visible where the political level is thematicised. Those who argument the necessity of the local dance centre before the political structures, most often describe dance as a perfect neo-liberal art form: a language without borders, mobility, representational adequacy... Dance perfectly serves to represent the openness of the cultural context towards the other and therefore any investment in dance equals an investment in democracy. Let us forget the distinct, but in itself obscure language of dance, let us forget the abstract concreteness and translational potentiality of movement...

On the other hand, established and well-supported dance houses are opting for even the most progressive political thinking, but they never reflect the changes in the whole, because they are not open to the whole, not open to the world. Their given function, already dictated by presentability, cannot even take advantage of internal self-reflection, because the forms of research required for such a process (conducted by curators or by artists) must have performative outcomes. This resembles asking a scientist to present the outcomes of his research by repeating the experiment.

So, what kind of institutions do we need? Do we need advanced institutions for advanced practices? Do we have to institutionalise habits of networking, mapping, tracking, research, guided tours, interdisciplinary coaching, incubation, collaborative practices... what everybody is already doing? It seems - yes, because the movement needs to relay to social visibility, to power. Movement is translation in space – each time there is a translation of parts in space, there is also a qualitative change in the whole. The acknowledgment of qualitative change in the whole is a minimal critical function of these new relays, or the hybridised old ones.

The independent cultural scene in Zagreb has already taken some steps towards cooperating with already existing cultural institutions, by becoming a partner in knowledge sharing with local cultural centres and by giving visibility to those institutions that are trying to articulate their shift towards hybridisation. However, this dynamic cultural

development has not met with an adequate response in cultural policy, urban planning and political decision-making that defines the development of the city. At the same time, youth initiatives are facing problems in the early stages of implementation of the city's youth action plan. These are the reasons why representatives of the local independent culture and youth scene have initiated a public debate on the position of independent culture and youth in the city of Zagreb. By organizing three discussion rounds that took place throughout April and May 2005, a process got under way to debate, propose and advocate a set of measures that should secure the development of independent culture and youth in the city's development. With representatives of the independent culture and youth sector, representatives of public administration and representatives of different political parties, the process produced a declaration entitled "Independent Culture and Youth in the Development of City of Zagreb" that was, shortly before the local elections in May, signed by most parties and coalitions. The declaration includes 9 measures, including the city's commitment to establish a multifunctional centre for independent culture and a macro-regional youth centre in one of the city's abandoned industrial buildings, to open the existing cultural institutions to independent programmes, to establish and solve lease problems and the long-term contracts of existing independent culture and youth venues, to participate in the establishment of a foundation for the institutional development of independent culture, to implement and finance the city's youth action plan.

In September 2005 two local organizations, [BLOK] - Local Base for Refreshment of Culture and Platforma 9,81 organized Operation:city, a ten day event in Zagreb featuring a variety of cultural activities (theatre and dance performances, art installations, exhibitions, performance art, film screenings, music events, workshops, lectures and others) that temporarily occupied the premises of an abandoned industrial complex of the former factory "Badel" and, partly, former city slaughterhouse. The programme and activities were the product of a collaboration of major initiatives and organizations active in Zagreb's broader independent cultural scene, which moved their activities to those locations for the period September 8th-17th. Some 70 events, organized by 26 organizations and initiatives, took place. Furthermore, two international festivals took place in the framework of the project - Touch Me and the Urban Festival. 8.000 m² of exterior and 5.200 m² of interior abandoned space were temporarily occupied by culture. The project was part of the project Zagreb - Cultural Capital of Europe 3000, but arose from the activities of Policy_Forum – a policy platform bringing together actors in the independent cultural sector in Croatia. Operation:city contributed to the process of publicly advocating the interests of the independent cultural and youth sectors, which was initiated by organizations grouped around the project Zagreb - Cultural Capital of Europe 3000 – the clubs Močvara, Attack and MAMA and the Croatian Youth Network. The advocacy process resulted in the above mentioned declaration where one of the key

demands was the adaptation of one of the existing locations in downtown Zagreb for 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 organizations. Operation:city functioned as an interface, presenting a part of the diversity of programmes the future centre could offer. The project was realized in cooperation with the City of Zagreb, and had the direct support of the City's Mayor, Mr. Milan Bandic, who opened the manifestation. The Mayor was accompanied by Mr. Dusko Ljustina, the City's "Minister" for culture. Both of them were impressed by the number and quality of art works that they had seen, and primarily by the size of the attending audience (around 3.000 people at the opening event). In that sense Operation:city moved the City's key representatives' perception of independent culture from seeing it as "alternative", marginalized cultural activity towards viewing it as powerful and important social and cultural vehicle. Both expressed (publicly and during the informal conversation) their full support for the project and establishment of the future centre. During the manifestation one Policy_Forum discussion was organized, which resulted in the establishment of a Founding Board to establish the Centre for independent culture and youth. Beside that, Operation:city secured substantial public visibility in media (radio, television, internet, newspaper) and the event site was one of the most popular places in the city during those ten days. Namely, around 15.000 people daily visited the manifestation. These were mostly young people, but

also the traditional cultural audience, neighbours, families with children, former-factory workers etc. After several meetings of representatives of the Founding Board with the representatives of the City of Zagreb, the Founding Board proposed a draft model for the new Centre for independent culture and youth, which is based on the four framing premises:

1. Public – civil – social partnership

This implies partnership between the City of Zagreb with the locally self-organized, civil, social cultural and youth sector. The example of this partnership would be a heterogeneous public institution founded by two legal entities: the City of Zagreb and an association of NGO's from the two sectors, which are already assembled in two national networks and some fifteen organizations which are not. This model guarantees long-term sustainability for the centre because it creates a balanced presence on all levels of both the stable institutional framework and the necessary participation of interested shareholders.

2. Partnership of independent cultural and youth sectors;

The social interests of youth and independent culture in Zagreb are two complementary and corresponding interests which manifest themselves through:

- a) complementary needs and interests which overlap in the self-organization, active participation in the programmes, education, mobility, volunteering etc.,

- b) common activities, initiatives and organizations which in fact constitute the field of youth culture,
- c) pro-active programme-creators, participants, users and audiences, which in both sectors are primarily the youth population.

For these reasons the most adequate solution for the youth sector is to establish a macro-regional centre for youth within the framework of the Centre for independent culture and youth.

3. The centre as a framework comprising venues situated at different locations

The idea of merging the management of several spaces into one institution arose as the most efficient long-term solution for the problem of space, needed for the realization of both independent cultural and youth activities. The number of such venues will necessarily depend on how much space will be allocated to the acknowledged needs of independent culture and youth.

4. The centre as a sustainable structure and an agent of social and economical development of the city

The Centre should guarantee some level of sustainability through commercialisation of a part of its activities (with the emphasis on cultural industries), but also through the private-public partnership in the part of its other activities, that are important for the development of the Centre's programme (for example, a youth hostel which would also serve for the residence programmes).

Those activities should stimulate the social and economical development of the city.

Together with this initiative there is an open debate and lobbying for the establishment of *Foundation for Independent Culture* that would be founded by the City of Zagreb and Ministry of Culture and funded by Croatian Lottery funds, intended for civil society activities.

The aims of this Foundation are:

- to support institutional capacity building, strategic development and education
- to support platforms and collaboration on local, regional and international levels
- to support structural investments into independent cultural sector
- to support partnership between different sectors (independent – public institutions, other civil sectors)
- to match European funds (5% or co-financing)

In November 2005 we started a "continuous symposium" with the title "What kind of institutions do we need?" Throughout the next several months we are planning to embark on an international debate around the following questions:

How do we problematise and discuss the role of today's cultural institutions? Do the cultural institutions reflect the changes in the field of artistic production and the changes in the whole of society? What is the critical potential of cultural institutions? Is there any further role of the institution beyond presenting production and reproducing presentability? Do we have to institutionalise habits

of mapping, tracking, research, guided tours, interdisciplinary coaching, incubation, collaborative practice, etc.? Do we need advanced institutions for advanced practices? Could we imagine different (con) temporality of institutions? This symposium should serve as a measuring instrument which would follow the dynamics of thinking on the institutions which are in time to come, but as all measuring instruments also would be inherent to the movement as translation in the whole, in this case the whole of Croatian cultural scene.

(This text is based on the draft documents of ZCK 3000 platform.)

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