The Corporate and Market Strategies for Contemporary Art in Eastern Europe in the 1990s

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The purpose of this article is to analyse the processes and mechanisms of transformation that influenced the contemporary art scene in the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe in the 1990s. I will describe how the shift from a centrally planned art life to one influenced by the market economy changed art institutions. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Eastern Europe took what was regarded as being the only possible development direction. The process of "normalisation" equalled "catching up" with the West by adopting its paradigm of "universal civilisation".[1] Simultaneously, the East was supposed to reject the hitherto socialist culture of art management.

I will use the example of the activities of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) Network to illustrate how the corporate-like management model activated the processes of "branding", "strategic essentialism" and "fashionable otherness" in local art practice. It was fuelled by the conviction that the Western art world had been expecting a phantasmatic "Eastern European essence" of art to appear from the formerly socialist Eastern Europe. The chain of non-governmental organisations exercised a corporate management model over the local art scene to stimulate its development into "contemporaneity", which included the condition of being in time with the West.[2] Therefore, the SCCA favoured young artists, new media art and those who had an interest in postmodernist discourse, while it discriminated against artists from older generations who worked with traditional media like painting, sculpture or drawing.

I will address dependency theories that reflect a theoretical bimodal world-system, where the core and its art express universal normative values, whereas periphery and its art represent the particular. Additionally, I will refer to the concept of symbolic

[1] See *From Modernization to Globalization: Perspectives on Development and Social Change*. Eds. T. Roberts and A. Hite. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.
[2] See B. Hock, "Introduction – Globalizing East European Art Histories. The Legacy of Piotr Piotrowski and a Conference," *Globalizing Eastern European Art Histories: Past and Present*. Eds. B. Hock and A. Allas, New York, London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 2–22.

compensation and argue that institutionalised cultural capital used to balance the deficit of economic capital in the semi-periphery.

In my article I make some generalisations in examining the experiences common to all countries in the region. I also describe certain common tendencies and strategies for the SCCA Network, though not the particulars of local branches.

In 1987–1988, the process of establishing political and economic independence together with the market economy began with radical reforms in most former socialist Eastern European countries.[3] It led to the liberalisation and democratisation of economic and social spheres with the aim of developing and redefining states and nations as part of a democratic Europe. The transformation from a centrally planned economy to a market economy caused a serious recession and structural crisis, which in the cultural field led to drastic under-financing and eventually to the downfall of the pre-existing support system model for art and artists. Furthermore, the existing art infrastructure was centrally controlled; hence, it required demonopolisation and the development of bottom-up structures in its place. This was one of the reasons why The Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) Network, an international non-governmental organisation, was established in 1991.[4] Several of its branches were opened in the same year. Within a few subsequent years, the SCCA Network opened a chain of offices in 18 Eastern European countries, in the following cities: Almaty, Belgrade, Bratislava, Budapest, Bucharest, Chișinău, Kyiv, Ljubljana, Moscow, Odessa, Prague, Riga, Saint Petersburg, Sarajevo, Sofia, Skopje, Tallinn, Warsaw, Vilnius and Zagreb. Until 1999, the Network functioned as an operating programme of the Open Society Foundations. However, its founder, the American business magnate George Soros, decided to end the programme in 1996. Soros argued that the processes of democratisation had advanced enough and that the local contemporary art scenes had already diversified their funding sources; therefore, the centres had to survive without his further support.[5]

The SCCA Network evolved from the Soros Foundation Fine Art Documentation Center, which was established by art historian Susan Weber Soros in Budapest in 1984.[6] The Network was initiated by curator and artist Suzanne Mészöly, an Australian of Hungarian descent, who sought to create a chain of identical centres for contemporary arts that would act in a unified way and operate in similar professional-looking modern

[3] H. Martinson, "Transformation of the R&D System," *From System Transformation to European Integration: Science and Technology in Central and Eastern Europe at the Beginning of the 21st Century.* Ed. W. Meske. Munster: LIT Verlag, 2004, pp. 135–149, here p. 135.

[4] See also K. Nagy, "From Fringe Interest to Hegemony: The Emergence of the Soros Network in Eastern Europe," *Globalizing Eastern European Art Histories*, pp. 53–63.

[5] M. Hlavajova, "Towards the Normal: Negotiating the 'Former East'," *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe.* [Catalogue.] Eds. B. Vanderlinden and E. Filipovic. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005, pp. 153–165, here p. 155.

[6] S. Weber Soros, "[The Soros Foundation …]," *Modern and Contemporary Hungarian Art. Bulletin 1985–1990.* Budapest: Soros Foundation Fine Art Documentation Center – Műcsarnok, 1991, p. 7.

offices. While developing the network, Mészöly combined her experience from the Australian capitalist art market with the Hungarian socialist art system she became familiar with in the second half of the 1980s.

Mészöly and the SCCA Network introduced a new style of art management to the Eastern European art field that was based on a model favoured by multinational corporations. The Network made an attempt to standardise the culture with the aim of synchronising the two divisions of Europe and to "build bridges".[7] It offered extensive financial support for Eastern European art institutions and local initiatives in order to guarantee them a real partnership with their Western counterparts – a partnership that was not only based on cultural or artistic exchange, but also on the wealth equality and compatibility of communication technology and know-how.

The aim of the Network was to synchronise the art worlds of the former East and West, establish new art canons in order to re-write the history of art and re-position Eastern European art as an indispensable part of mainstream art history. In addition, it was sought to replicate Western-style institutional structures and boost the art market in postsocialist countries. Eventually, the SCCA Network set the example for a modern art institution, in Max Webber terms, by the bureaucratisation, formalisation and professionalisation of its administration. The Network's standard practices and procedures were meticulously described in an internal fully comprehensive document entitled *The Soros Foundations / Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts Network Procedures Manual* (known to employees as "the bible" for short).[8] It was distributed to each office within the chain and everyone was obliged to strictly adhere to its recommendations. The SCCA's main goals were: 1) to document the local contemporary art scene in *Visual Arts Comprehensive Documentation* and in the digital *Visual Arts Artists' File*; 2) to organise an Annual Exhibition to promote new artists, media and discourses. The SCCA Network was further obliged to organise an all-country open call for artists and curators that were selected by the jury and later accepted by the board. "The bible" included an unspecified suggestion that "the selection process must be democratic".[9] All artworks were commissioned. "The bible" also dictated that each SCCA Network's administer financial support for young artists and young curators; provide information for foreign curators, artists, gallerists, critics and art historians; and nominate artists for international art events such as the Venice Biennale, Manifesta and others. Each SCCA Network's office faced the need to support artistic production according to the following two conditions: 1) reconstruction of the

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[7] O. Bouman, "Synchronizing Europe," *Who If Not We Should at Least Try to Imagine the Future of All This?* [Catalogue.] Eds. M. Hlavajova and J. Winder. Amsterdam: Artimo, 2004, pp. 151–162.

[8] N. Czegledy, A. Szekeres, "Agents for Change: The Contemporary Art Centres of the Soros Foundation and C3," *Media Arts: Practice, Institutions and Histories, Third Text* 23 (3), 2009, pp. 251–260, here p. 256.

[9] "SCCA Activities & Programs – Annual Exhibition: SCCA Network Procedures Manual," *The Soros Foundations / Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts Network Procedures Manual.* Internal document of the the Open Society Foundations, 1991, p. 52.

country and its culture under new political, economic and social conditions; 2) readjustment from the peripheral position to the core.

The SCCA Network introduced "modernising" practices and programmes on different levels. It started with a structural modernisation of an art institution: from the model of a "socialist" office culture to a highly professionalised so-called American office culture where work is organised by clear, transparent and standardised procedures with the aim of maximising efficiency. The SCCA manual set strict rules about the design of the modern working space, which should be equipped with innovative office devices, such as computers, printers, photocopiers, a tele-fax, an answering machine and a coffee maker. Additionally, "the bible" set working hours and an instruction for employees regarding proper behaviour: for example, they were expected to answer all incoming phone calls during the working day.[10] The office culture of the previous period, which can be aptly described by the Polish saying "tea/coffee culture" (referring to a space cluttered with shabby furniture, outdated devices, rachitic potted plants, coffee steeped in glass mugs with metal holders) symbolised a bygone era and unprofessionalism. Unorganised working hours resulted a thriving social life around noon when people usually visited their rooms briefly. As most of the SCCA Networks rented their offices from art institutions, academies or universities, it enhanced the discrepancy between two working attitudes, two worlds. Ewa Toniak, an academic who was transferred from the outdated Institute of Arts of the Polish Academy of Sciences to the SCCA Network's office downstairs in the same building, described her experience of a cultural clash with a corporate office culture. She wrote: "It was a different reality. Institute *à rebours*. Youth, constant movement and the murmur of working computers. At noon, lunch was delivered to the office from a Chinese restaurant."[11] The Network was not only to redesign the space and furnish it with symbols of modernity and progress that represented a "better" world. The Center "civilised" the local working culture and adapted it to the requirements and standards cultivated by Western art institutions. The process of "modernisation" reflected the dominant narrative of the 1990s, which asserted that the West, its values and liberal capitalism won, and Eastern Europe became a beneficiary of its universal values through the "catching up" ideology. In consequence, the transformation processes were frequently perceived as "normalisation", with all the values, standards and codes coming as a universal model from the core. The know-how was believed to only have one direction of transfer: from the West to the East; from the world of professionalism to the unprofessional. What mattered in the centre was talent, skills and the willingness for hard, competent work, and not social background, whereas Eastern Europe was perceived as obsessively clinging to its historical, cultural and social traditions.[12]

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[10] "SCCA General Administration – Office Hours, Stationery," *The Soros Foundations*, p. 46.
[11] E. Toniak, "Miłość od pierwszej kalorii. Krótki kurs kapitalizmu," *Odra* 5, 1995, pp. 22–25, here p. 22 (author's translation).
[12] T. Zarycki, "An Interdisciplinary Model of Centre-Periphery Relations: A Theoretical Proposition," *Regional and Local Studies: Special Issue*, 2007, pp. 110–130, here p. 126.

The archetype formula of corporate management policy in the arts was originally introduced by America's largest nongovernmental patron of the arts, the Ford Foundation, in the 1950s and developed by Paul Hoffman and Wilson McNeil Lowry, the executive and director of the foundation, respectively.[13] Therefore, Ford not only became famous for introducing the modern assembly line, franchise, the maximisation of profit and optimisation effectiveness, but also for the implementation of corporate style management into non-governmental organisations and art institutions. Ford's system is considered to be the most effective and efficient and has been applied by many foundations worldwide, among them the SCCA Networks. As a consequence, the Network acquired a dominant position in the region in the mid-1990s, and the power to establish a new elite of curators, artists and art critics.[14] The organisation adopted language from the corporate system as well as a three-level management model: a board presided over by a chairman, a director and his/her staff.[15] The board set goals, rules and formulated strategies for the foundation. Additionally, the board was in charge of appointing, monitoring and dismissing the director who acted as chief executive officer and whose task it was to achieve the outcomes related to the organisation's mission, as well as responsibilities related to decision-making on strategy and other key policy issues. Various branches of the chain and staff in each office were connected through regular communication, meetings and organised processes thoroughly formulated in "the bible". Furthermore, the SCCA Network followed Ford's complex grant system based on matching funds, leverage methods and cash reserve grants in order to diversify finance sources and thus encourage other organisations and governmental institutions to support contemporary art. The Network invested in human capital by funding expenditures on education (in particular, scholarships at the Central European University in Prague established by Open Society Fund Prague and George Soros; for many art historians from the region, it was their first course on new theories and critical methodologies of art history). The chain subsidised exhibitions, events and travel expenses for artists and curators. Last but not least, it financed courses on writing a CV, an agreement and a grant application, creating a portfolio, designing a personal card, and using a computer, the internet and graphic programmes, and it taught basic public relation rules. Consequently, the SCCA Network helped artists to acquire hard skills that facilitated success in the new market economy, while the state didn't continue to support artists through various social funds and state contracts that had previously been granted to all members of the national unions of artists. Instead, the artists needed to strive actively for participation in competitive reality by responding to open calls, applying for residencies and grants, etc.

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[13] F. Martel, *De la culture en Amérique*. Paris: Gallimard, 2006, p. 322.

[14] V. Misiano, "Curator Without a System (1998)," *After the Wall: Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*. [Catalogue.] Eds. B. Pejić and D. Elliott. Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999, p. 137.

[15] "The SCCA Structures," *The Soros Foundations*, pp. 11–35.

Moreover, the SCCA Network acquired corporate management control and evaluated its efficiency through regular reviews, feedback and reports. Due to its character and undeniable effectiveness, Ford's model of art management acquired the moniker "coercive philanthropy", a term introduced by Robert Brustein.[16] Brustein and other opponents of Soros argued that the foundation acted as a commercial company that effectively managed resources. In his view, it steered artists towards adapt themselves and their art to requirements in terms of style, technics and embodied ideology in order to participate in the foundation's programmes. In fact, the system of grant distribution and the agenda for the Annual Exhibition allowed the SCCA to control its target group of artists and curators. After all, the SCCA Network was founded to act like a democratic institution based on the assumption that it is fair to everyone and represents the interests of all groups. However, the organisation invested money in artists who represented approved ideas and used preferable artistic media. In exchange, the patron was assured that the chosen artistic production would correspond with the image of "moderniser" and would promote the SCCA's values. Last but not least, the name of the funder was mostly used instead of the organisation's name, so it became customary to see Soros Centers or simply 'Soros' for both SCCA and the Soros Foundation in reference to the local chains of the Open Society Institute that often operated under local names. Nevertheless, the mounting criticism of George Soros (nicknamed "the man who broke the Bank of England" by the media),[17] his business and philanthropic activity also mirrored in criticism of 'Soroses'.

The liberal ideology that George Soros promoted in postsocialist countries was instrumental in the strengthening and enhancing of "modernisation" through the chosen artistic policy, the variety of artworks and the preferable group of artists. Thus, this model fitted Soros's agenda and it correlated with the idea of open society and the Open Society Foundation democratic agenda, which aimed for decentralisation of the postsocialist world by strengthening grass-roots initiatives. George Soros adopted Karl Popper's concept of open society and Three Worlds. Popper argued that artistic production leads to critical thinking and constant re-evaluation of normative standards. Therefore, it is within the capacity of the arts to transform societies and, according to Popper, free creativity provides critical thinking and consequently enables transformative self-improvement, which leads to the liberalisation of societies.[18] On the one hand, the SCCA offered a model of artistic space that was equally open to artistic freedom and diversity. The SCCA was a

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[16] R. Brustein, "Coercive philanthropy," *The Politics of Culture: Policy Perspectives for Individuals, Institutions and Communities.* Eds. G. Bradford, M. Gary and G. Wallach. New York: New Press, 2000, pp. 218–224.

[17] L. Debter, "How George Soros Became One of America's Biggest Philanthropists and A Right-Wing Target," *Forbes*, 23 October 2018. Available: https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurengensler/2018/10/23/how-george-soros-became-one-of-americas-biggest-philanthropists-and-a-right-wing-target/ (accessed 15.09.2019).

[18] A. Naraniecki, "Karl Popper on the Unknown Logic of Artistic Production and Creative Discovery," *Culture and Dialogue* 4, 2016, pp. 263–268.

supporter of various critical ideologies and encouraged discussion on critical narratives, such as feminism, ethnic and sexual minorities, AIDS, violence, discrimination, disabilities and others.[19] The 'Soroses' invested in this kind of art as it matched the overall policy as well as the accompanying image of being a democracy builder and "moderniser", and it established universal values in the peripheries. In fact, in this case the nongovernmental organisation acted more like a business-oriented company than *pro bono publico*.[20]

In 1992, when the SCCA Network had been established, all the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe had art halls, city galleries and other spaces that belonged to local Artists' Unions. Most of them provided their members with the opportunity to exhibit, who waited patiently for their turn. Despite the fact that those spaces exhibited current art, they were seen as old-fashioned and outdated due to a lack of funding, skills and facilities. Therefore, none of them was accepted as an equal and competent partner to their Western counterparts. In order to boost the transformation within the art field, Suzanne Mészöly introduced the concept of a chain of centres for contemporary arts that resembled the IKEA-like semi do-it-yourself model. There were given elements and the meticulous instruction: "the bible". Accordingly, each country was supposed to create a replica of the original SCCA Budapest in order to promote variety and pluralism in art and to represent local contemporary art abroad.

The SCCA Network was based on the myth of a binary art world: contemporary and exemplary – the West, belated and unprofessional – the East; both of them were seen as homogenous organisms. Even though one strict model of an art institution was not eligible for each country, the Network became an efficient catalyst for the restructuring of local art worlds. In 1992–1996, the Network was able to achieve a dominant position due to its unusual economic power. At that time, the cultural sector was underfinanced in most of the so-called new European countries. The SCCA Network's budget was greater than that which the local ministries of culture provided for contemporary arts.[21] Nevertheless, for the directors of the centres it was guess work as to how an art institution should function within a capitalism system, and each centre had to adapt its strategy to the local circumstances.

As a result, each SCCA Network had its unique set of circumstances, with the SCCA in Warsaw being a good example. In 1992, Poland already had a great number of state, city and private galleries for contemporary art spread all over the country. The most influential and active was the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in

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[19] L. Muravska, "Assessment/Mapping Activities of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts," *The Soros Foundations*. Internal report of the Open Society Institute, Budapest, 2002, p. 3.

[20] R. Myer, "The Australian Art of Giving: Having Found the Way, Have We Lost the Will?" *Contemporary Art + Philanthropy. Public Space / Private Funding: Foundations for Contemporary Art.* Ed. T. Smith. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2007, pp. 56–71, here p. 62.

[21] S. Helme, "The Soros Center for Contemporary Arts: Estonia in the Extreme Decimal," *Nosy Nineties: Problems, Themes and Meanings in Estonian Art on 1990s.* Eds. S. Helme and J. Saar. Tallinn: Kaasaegse Kunsti Eesti Keskus, 2001, pp. 35–52, here p. 39.

Warsaw, with an outstanding programme that focused on the alternative art scene, critical art, new media and young artists. Additionally, it operated the Laboratory for creative thinking, arts, film, dance and theatre, educational programmes on contemporary arts for children and adults, a library with a wide selection of Western art magazines and books, a documentation centre, its own large exhibition space and had established contacts with Western contemporary art galleries and museums. Therefore, the SCCA Network's goals matched with the artistic policy of Ujazdowski Castle CCA. Moreover, the state institution predominated in terms of resources and sustainability. As a result, in 1994, after it operated for a year and a half, the SCCA in Warsaw transformed into a grant programme of the local Soros Foundation: the Stefan Batory Foundation. It limited its activity to "making others do something" and thus supporting pluralisation of the art scene. Money was disbursed to curators, artists, art critics, academics, state institutions and private initiatives for arts projects, exhibitions, research trips and travel expenses for artists who participated in international projects.[22] Undeniably, the most important aspect of the SCCA Network's activities in Poland was the intense exchange with other Eastern European countries and extended financial support for networking with colleagues from the region. The SCCA Network stimulated this shift through strict grant management: there were funds dedicated only to East-East encounters. Importantly, it was the networking that was regarded by the SCCA Network critics as the most positive and long-term outcome of its activity.[23]

Ukraine was perhaps the most interesting unique example. There, the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts opened branches in Odessa and Kyiv, with the latter establishing its own permanent gallery space.[24] It was the very first exhibition space in the country that presented contemporary art and the only gallery run by the SCCA Network. Both the SCCA Kyiv and its gallery became the most successful parts of the chain.[25] It was its first director and curator Marta Kuźma, an American of Ukrainian descent, who organised the first annual exhibition *Alchemic Surrender* on the nuclear battleship *Slavutych* of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimean Sevastopol in 1994.[26] In 1996, the SCCA transformed

[22] *Statut Fundacji im. Stefana Batorego, z dnia 7 v 1988 roku*. Warszawa: Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, 1988, p. 2.

[23] See "How a European Biennial of Contemporary Art Began: Interview with René Block, Hedwig Fijen, Henry Meyric Hughes and Katalin Néray," *The Manifesta Decade*, pp. 189–200, here p. 191; R. Fleck, "Art after Communism?," *Manifesta 2: European Biennial of Contemporary Art / Luxembourg*. [Catalogue.] Luxembourg: Agence luxembourgeoise d'action culturelle, 1998, pp. 193–197, here p. 197; L. J. Hoptman, "Acknowledgments," *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East Central Europe*. [Catalogue.] Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995, pp. 8–9, here p. 8.

[24] M. Kuźma, "Soros-funded Gallery Promotes Visual Culture," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 17 March 1996, p. 10.

[25] L. Muravska, "Assessment/Mapping Activities of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts," p. 20.

[26] J. Barshay, "Artists Commandeer a Ukrainian Battleship," *The New York Times,* 14 August 1994. Available: https://www.nytimes.com/1994/08/14/arts/artists-commandeer-a-ukrainian-battleship.html (accessed 15.09.2019).

into the Центр Сучасного Мистецтва при НаУКМА – an independent foundation that remained financially supported by the local 'Soros': International Renaissance Foundation. Its new director, Jerzy "Yuri" Onuch, a Polish artist and curator, developed the Center into a space of encounter open to everyone,[27] which had a significant impact on the Ukrainian art scene. For example, a new term emerged in the Ukrainian language – *contemporary* or the slightly ironic *kontemporari* (always written in the Latin alphabet) – like a Western interpolation in Eastern European culture. Larisa Muravska, who evaluated the entire period of the Network's activity in an internal report entitled "Assessment / Mapping Activities of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts" (which was created for the Open Society Institute in 2002) noted that Kyiv was the most outstanding branch of the Network. Muravska also stated that the centre and its director Jerzy Onuch encouraged broad public interest in contemporary art. This was reflected in the high numbers of visitors at exhibitions on a daily basis, as well as the large number of local celebrities attending openings, along with President Leonid Kuchma.[28] All the exhibitions were met with critical acclaim, all were reviewed favourably in the most prominent newspapers and all received extensive coverage in society and culture magazines. The activity of the Center along with Onuch's "diplomatic" and media arrangements encouraged the local government to embrace contemporary art as a part of Ukrainian culture, which resulted in funds designated to support it.[29]

The SCCA Network's activities were rooted in transformation ideology constructed on the Modernist dream of *tabula rasa*, which was based on the idea of a New Beginning and identified with the collapse of the socialist system in Eastern Europe. Hasso Krull, an Estonian theoretician of culture, coined the term "culture of interruption" – meaning nihilistic and anarchistic art strategies, with a tendency to actively deny all that is related to the recent past.[30] This suggests a kind of "point zero" at which the former traditions are expected to be abandoned by both artists and art institutions. These institutions were supposed to transform – through the act of radical revolution – into modern, capitalist organisations. The SCCA Network adopted the paradigm of modernisation literally, by prioritising new technologies and new media art, which was identified with the disruption of traditions and symbolised international art, far from the pressure from national art schools. Painting, which had traditionally been perceived as the most prestigious in the art hierarchy, became a symbol of all that was old-fashioned, conservative and outdated.[31]

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[27] Onuch rebuilt the gates to the gallery, in order to make the Center more visible from the street and to encourage viewers to enter.

[28] I. Koznarska Casanova, "Kyiv Exhibit Explores the 'Ukrainian Brand'," *The Ukrainian Weekly*, 10 February 2002, p. 6.

[29] L. Muravska, "Assessment/Mapping Activities of the Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts," p. 11.

[30] H. Krull, *Katkestuse kultuur*. Tallinn: Vagabund, 1996, p. 7.

[31] H. Treier, "Freedom of Choice: A Perspective on Estonian Art of the 1990s," *Freedom of Choice: A Perspective on Estonian Art of the 1990s.* [Catalogue.] Eds. A. Liivak and H. Treier. Tallinn: Tallinna Kunstihoone Fond, 1999, pp. 120–135, here p. 126.

Painting's crown was taken by installation and video art. Eha Komissarov, an Estonian art critic and curator, noted that the history of new media in Eastern Europe was often seen as "the history of invasion and adaptation, in which the context of local needs is secondary. The adaptation of art to the new reality is very much akin to the socialisation of average citizens in transition societies that underwent shock therapies".[32] Very often those processes proved unviable. The SCCA favoured those who adopted the new conditions. Therefore, it mostly supported young artists and so-called young art, whereas artists from older generations were excluded unless they "modernised" their art, and transformed it from "socialist" to "capitalist". They were additionally affected by the transformation processes, which forced a withdrawal of state funding from the art field.[33] Many professionals accused the Network of prioritising Western cultural forms, seen as "universal", as the "core" was expected to send out impulses for positive development. This process was labelled the "synchronisation of Europe", which was rooted in the hierarchical ideology that dominated during the transformation period. It originated in the belief of the "backwardness of the East" and in the need to "catch up with the West".[34]

The SCCA Network's ideas of repositioning Eastern European art were based on the following theoretical framework: (1) Classic economic theories that include Immanuel Wallerstein's world-system theory, according to which the world is dominated by developed capitalist countries at the core, while the peripheries are striving to improve their relative position by using the binary code of various forms of capital. The core takes a dominant position in economics and politics capital.[35] (2) The theory of symbolic compensation by Polish sociologist Tomasz Zarycki.[36] His concept was based on the Lyotardian knowledge / power nexus and Pierre Bourdieu's idea of symbolic forms of capital: political, economic, social and cultural. Zarycki suggested: "the liberalisation of the communist systems, followed by their collapse, may be described as a replacing of the role of political capital by economic capital. The role of the latter became particularly important after liberal economic reforms had been implemented in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe."[37] Zarycki emphasised the particularly privileged role of cultural capital in the countries of Central Europe. He proposed a thesis that in the case of Eastern Europe, "cultural capital constitutes its key resources, which are supposed to compensate for the peripheral status of the country and its deficit of economic capital in relation to the centre, coupled with the parallel weakness of political capital resources."[38]

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[32] E. Komissarov, "Of the Estonian Painting of the 1990s," *Nosy Nineties*, pp. 87–102, here p. 88.

[33] A. Härm, H. Soans, "We Are Glad It's All Over," *Refleksija*, 2002, http://web.archive.org/web/20070214094958/http:/www.balticart.org/essays_hs.html.

[34] B. Hock, "Introduction – Globalizing East European Art Histories."

[35] I. Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*. New York: Academic Press, 1974.

[36] T. Zarycki, "An Interdisciplinary Model," pp. 110–130.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[38] *Ibid*., p. 115.

Additionally, Zarycki argued that, "the peripheries often use the strategy of compensation for their weaknesses to offset their dependence on the centre."[39] His thesis seems to fit well with the ideology of serving the centre, which was strongly rooted in the system of SCCA Network's policy, and in its ambition to "modernise" the periphery. It also correlated with the concept that Eastern Europe had a strong tradition of intelligence, and intellectual elites played a vital role in the region's social and political life. Therefore, it was the cultural capital that became a resource for the global market. This rule was accompanied by global art market needs. After the recession in the early 1980s the world economy rapidly expanded, therefore encouraging the expansion of the art market, which needed new supplies and resources. For its part, this precipitated an interest in art from the margins. In the 1990s, the world art market demanded a representation of "fashionable otherness" and supported the concept of the phantasmatic "Eastern European essence" of art. To satisfy this demand, a series of exhibitions emerged in the art field entitled *New Art from …* – any country of New Europe – or blockbusters of so-called Soros "Family Shows",[40] such as *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm, 1999), or *The Second Half of Europe* (*L'Autre moitié de l'Europe*, Paris, 2000) or *Manifesta*, which received the title of "high international second league" show. Jerzy Onuch noted that corporate-like art management produced the brand "new art from the former East", or "brand East".[41] Onuch insisted that this concept should be used as a trademark. He described it as a product of the capitalist market, which was influenced by contemporary trends in art and culture, as well as by social interest in phenomena such as identity, sexuality, ethnic minorities, death, ethics and politics. It corresponded well with another famous trademark of the global art scene at the time – the Young British Artists (YBA).

The Network faced accusations of supporting Western fantasies of folklorist art produced in new media – a "former East style" that reflected Eastern European nature and identity, and appeared to be "archaic", "irrational", "wild" and "naive". It was criticised for encouraging art uniformity that was mainly oriented towards satisfying the requirements of Western professionals, who expected artistic product with certain qualities: 1) "universal" artistic language, and 2) "Eastern European" artistic specificity. Cultural relationships and cultural capital had a crucial role in this essentialised identities as a significant factor in post-modern nation-birth. Ekaterina Degot famously described the position of an Eastern European artist of the time: "Being a contemporary artist from the former East meant representing Western culture in your home country, whereas in the West, an Eastern European artist inevitably had to represent the East."[42]

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[39] *Ibid*.

[40] Bojana Pejić borrows this term from Iara Boubnova. See P. Pejić, "The Dialectics of Normality," *After the Wall*, pp. 16–28, here p. 19.

[41] O. Ostrovska, "Brand 'Ukrainian': A Brief History of the Exhibition," *Brand Ukrainian*. [Catalogue.] Kyiv: Novyj druk, 2002, pp. 45–46.

[42] E. Degot, "The Revenge of the Background," *Primary Documents. A Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s*. Eds. L. Hoptman and T. Pospiszyl. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002, pp. 340–343, here p. 341.

The appearance of "trans-nationally emancipated *local art* on the international scene"[43] from entirely different, sometimes even incomparable, cultures was branded by Robert Fleck as "international style"[44] or as "similar new art."[45] "Visoka internacionalna druga liga"[46] and most famously "Soros Realism"[47] were terms coined by Miško Šuvaković, a Serbian artist and art theoretician. Šuvaković ironically referred to the renewed political funding of art that censors not by forbidding, but by financing. The ontology of Soros Realist artwork attains a recognisable morphology: (a) new media (trans-national) + (b) local (regional) themes = (c) presentation of erased traces of culture.[48] However, this formula of *soft* and *subtle* uniformisation and standardisation of "similar new art" probably wasn't planned in advance; rather it was rooted in a belief in the binary code that terrorised the periphery with slogans calling for total subordination to the art from the centre and to the Western art world. Thus, the validation of Eastern European contemporary art had been made via the West.

Jerzy Onuch reflected on the SCCA Network's activity as a history of invasion and adaptation of "civilised" standards, which were later acquired by others: "I created the Center with the naive romantic belief of a revolutionary, who is convinced that he can only do good. Subsequently, however, on the foundation that we built, there appeared the phenomenon of Victor Pinchuk, who, *nota bene*, was first exposed to the latest Ukrainian art at the *Brand "Ukrainian"* exhibition at the Soros CCA in 2000. With the help of western PR experts, Pinchuk modelled himself as a real European, one who is concerned with the things that should occupy the most powerful Europeans: the establishment of charitable foundations interested in art. In the case of Pinchuk, he became focused on modern art, which is known in Ukrainian by its English title of "contemporary art". But the art that interested this enlightened oligarch was from the ten or twenty most well known and most famous names variously associated with the "top 10". He put an enormous PR machine into motion towards this end. This was the flywheel that created the present interest, and was relatively easy to do.[49] Eventually Victor Pinchuk established a powerful contemporary art institution that took over the Ukrainian national Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

Tomasz Zarycki suggested in his concept of symbolic compensation of capital that orientation towards the centre during the transformation period was pragmatic above all

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[43] M. Šuvaković, "Ideologija izložbe: o ideologijama Manifeste," *Platforma SCCA 3.* [Catalogue]. Ljubljana: Center for Contemporary Art, 2002, pp. 11–18, here p. 11.
[44] R. Fleck, "Art after Communism?" p. 197.
[45] M. Šuvaković, "Ideologija izložbe."
[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] *Ibid*. See also M. Šuvaković, *Critical Contemporary Forms and a Desire for Democracy*. [Manuscript.] https://msl.org.pl/en/eventsms/archive-events/art-and-knowledge,988.html.
[49] Zofia Bluszcz in conversation with Jerzy Onuch. See "'The Steppes of Europe' to 'Ukrainian News'," *Obieg*, 15 March 2013. Available: http://archiwum-obieg.u-jazdowski.pl/english/28184 (accessed 15.09.2019).

else. Therefore, it was "largely based on the principles of rational choice and on comparing the benefits and advantages connected with central areas, whose organisation logic is the dominant point of reference for the periphery."[50] The SCCA Network provided help for artists in the transition period from a state-organised, centralised art world to the art market, which required learning a new set of rules. This process brought along "normalisation" through bureaucratisation, and the practices of exclusion and marginalisation of artistic production that didn't fit the Network's understanding of contemporary art.

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[50] T. Zarycki, "An Interdisciplinary Model," p. 120.

1.,2. Miklós Pinke
Näitus puu- ja juurviljapoes
1993. Interaktiivne installatisoon
Osa näituseprojektist „Polyphony" Budapestis
C³: Center for Culture & Communication
Foundationi loal

Miklós Pinke
Exhibition at the Greengrocery
1993. Interactive installation
Part of the exhibition project Polyphony *in*
Budapest Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture &
Communication Foundation

3. Balàzs Beöthy
   Pood poes
   1993. Installatsioon
   Osa näituseprojektist „Polyphony" Budapestis
   C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundationi loal

Balàzs Beöthy
Shop within the Shop
1993. Installation
Part of the exhibition project Polyphony *in Budapest*
Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture &
Communication Foundation

4. János Sugár
   Elektrooniline reklaamtahvel
   1993. Installatsioon
   Osa näituseprojektist „Polyphony" Budapestis
   C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundationi loal

   János Sugár
   Electronic Billboard
   1993. Installation
   Part of the exhibition project Polyphony *in Budapest*
   Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture &
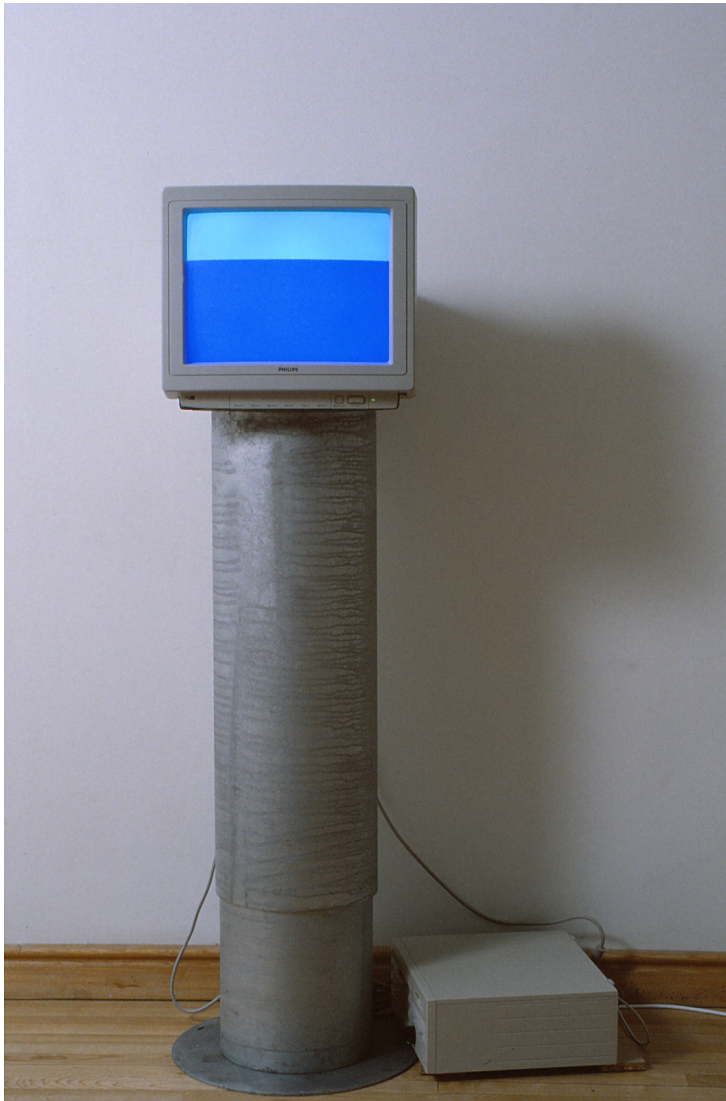   *Communication Foundation*

5. József Tillmann
   Teaduse seadus – õitsev ventilatsioon
   1993. Installatsioon
   Osa näituseprojektist „Polyphony" Budapestis
   C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundationi loal

József Tillmann
The Law(n) of Science – Flourishing Ventilation 1993.
Installation
Part of the exhibition project Polyphony *in Budapest*
Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture & Communication
Foundation

6. Näituse „Liblikaefekt – käesolevad koordinaadid" vaade Budapestis, 1996. C³: Center for Culture & Communication Foundationi loal
Foto: Miklós Sulyok

View of the exhibition Butterfly Effect – Current Coordinates *in Budapest, 1996. Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture & Communication Foundation*
Photo: Miklós Sulyok

7. Richard Kriesche
   Igavene horisont
   1995–1996. Installatsioon
   Näitus „Liblikaefekt" Budapestis, 1996
   C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundationi loal

   Richard Kriesche
   Eternal Horizon
   1995–1996. Installation
   Exhibition Butterfly Effect *in Budapest, 1996*
   Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundation

8. Peter Forgács
Pre-Pro-Sec-Tura
1996. Installatsioon, video
Näitus „Liblikaefekt" Budapestis, 1996
C³: Center for Culture & Communication
Foundationi loal

Peter Forgács
Pre-Pro-Sec-Tura
1996. Installation, video
Exhibition Butterfly Effect *in Budapest, 1996*
Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture &
Communication Foundation

9. László László Révész
   Triumfikaar
   1995–1996. Installatsioon, video
   Näitus „Liblikaefekt" Budapestis, 1996
   C³: Center for Culture & Communication
   Foundationi loal

László László Révész
Triumphal Arch
1995–1996. Installation, video
Exhibition Butterfly Effect *in Budapest, 1996*
Courtesy of C³: Center for Culture &
Communication Foundation