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'We all came from Soros'

Continuities and Discontinuities in the Croatian Visual Arts Scene in the 1990s and 2000s

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Introduction

One of the big stories in the visual arts scene of the 1990s is undoubtedly the formation of the network of Soros Centres of Contemporary Art (SCCA), initiated by the American philanthropist and investor of Hungarian descent, George Soros. The establishment of a Documentation Centre in Budapest in 1985 laid the foundations of the network,[1] which started growing at the beginning of the 1990s and by 1998 consisted of twenty centres in eighteen countries, predominantly in post-communist Eastern Europe. The basic structure of national offices, as well as their general mission and working models, were prescribed in the *SCCA Procedures Manual*, and are well known in the field.[2] However, although the working models were largely predetermined, each SCCA had to adapt to a different, specific context and find ways to adjust the prescribed guidelines to the local situation. If the context of the establishment and functioning of each centre is framed in this way, then each of them inevitably occupies a different position in the visual arts network on a global, regional and local scale. In other words, when we approach the interpretation of their role and influence, we must consider the described differences in their spatio-temporal positionality.

In this article we are primarily concerned with positioning the role of the Soros Foundation in Croatia, both in relation to the general structure of the visual arts scene in the country, and to the meanings that the scene's actors attributed to it. Until now, research on the SCCA network has largely focused on exhibition histories,[3] the so-called 'Soros realism' phenomenon and the centres' role in introducing 'Eastern European

1 For further information on the SCCA-Budapest, and the formation of the SCCA network, refer to: Nina Czegledy and Andrea Szekeres, 'Agents of Change. The Contemporary Art Centres of the Soros Foundation and C3', *Third Text* 98, vol 23, issue 3, May 2009, special issue, Sean Cubitt, José-Carlos Mariátegui and Gunalan Nadarajan, eds, 'Social Formations of Global Media Art, pp 217–228. pp 251–259; Kristóf Nagy, 'From Fringe Interest to Hegemony: The Emergence of the Soros Network in Eastern Europe', in Beáta Hock and Anu Allas, eds, *Globalising East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, Routledge, London and New York, 2018, pp 53–63.

2 Each office had three to four employees and a board composed of esteemed, mostly local, curators, art critics and art historians. The SCCA was meant to serve as a cultural centre of the local Open Society Foundation, and was to be adjoined – in cases in which this was possible – to an existing

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art' to the global art markets,[4] or their role in the development of free-market relations in post-socialist artworlds, and the formation of cultural elites through the network.[5] While building on previous scholarship, this research is characterised by a change in perspective – its starting points are not the characteristics of the imposed model, but an emphasis on the complexities of a specific time-place, and the agency of local actors in the processes of its negotiation and translation. How did the local actors perceive the influence of the Soros Foundation and its spin-offs? Did these organisations produce a radical rupture in the structure of the visual arts scene in Croatia? What was, if any, the Soros Foundation's role in the development of the independent cultural scene as the emergent organisational field in the visual arts at the turn of the millennium?

The above-mentioned complexities of a specific space-time encompass the inter-relationship of a multitude of different actors, including multiple Soros Foundation organisations, as well as already existing and newly developed structures, ties and meanings. To grasp this intricate and multiplex network, we developed a mixed-method approach that represents a theoretical and methodological innovation to previous research on the Soros network. The first section of the article provides a conceptual framework for understanding the role of these organisations through the notions of network and complexity. After the data and methods section, the main part of the article presents findings from the quantitative and qualitative analysis, which are then discussed in the final section.

A Relational Approach to the Soros Network

The art field in general can be regarded as a complex network of social relations, through which identities and meanings are shared, and value is produced. It is complex because it incorporates a multitude of different individual and collective, human and non-human, actors, connected through a multiplicity of always-changing direct and indirect ties, shared or diverging stories. In addition, it is complex because it is characterised by 'emergence', meaning that the interaction of different agents produces entities with properties not present in any of its parts.[6]

Approaching the Soros Foundation and its spin-offs through the notions of network and complexity allows us to consider it from multiple perspectives. An obvious possibility is, for example, to think about it through the identification of rules that were imposed top-down ('guidelines'), with the intention of analysing how they were translated into different local contexts. Such an approach could reveal specificities of a given 'national culture', differences that existed between the countries in adopting the prescribed models, and ultimately provide a greater understanding of the model itself. While it could be claimed that this approach is centred on the 'model', another approach, which is our starting point in this article, is to focus on the complex network of relations already in place at a given space-time, when the model was introduced. The implementation of the model to a specific local context plays an important role here as well, the difference being that such a perspective emphasises the agency of a variety of actors,[7] whose interactions made up the structure of the field in question, and who influenced the translation processes whether or not they were directly involved with them.

modern or contemporary art institution. Its activities were centred on grant-giving, documentation, annual exhibitions, and networks and exchange. See *SCCA Procedures Manual*, https://monoskop.org/images/d/db/SCCA_Procedures_Manual_1994.pdf, accessed 9 November 2023.

3 Željka Tonković and Sanja Sekelj, 'Annual Exhibitions of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art Zagreb as a Place of Networking', *Život umjetnosti* 99, December 2016, pp 78–93; Amila Puzić, 'Izložba kao socijalna intervencija – godišnje izložbe SCCA-Sarajevo: Meeting-Point (1997), Beyond the Mirror (1998), Under Construction (1999)' (Exhibition as Social Intervention: Annual SCCA-Sarajevo Exhibitions: Meeting-Point (1997), Beyond the Mirror (1998), Under Construction (1999))', *Peristil*, vol 59, no 1, 2016, pp 137–145; Izabel Galliera, *Socially Engaged Art After Socialism: Art and Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe*, IB Tauris, London and New York, 2017, pp 81–111; Octavian Esanu, 'CarbonART 96 and The 6th Kilometer, SCCA Chişinău 1996', in Octavian Esanu, ed, *Contemporary Art and Capitalist Modernization: A Transregional Perspective*, Routledge, London and New York, 2021, pp 184–205; Amila Puzić, 'Meeting Point, SCCA Sarajevo, 1997', in Octavian Esanu, ed, *Contemporary Art and Capitalist Modernization*, op cit, pp 206–221

4 Miško Šuvaković, 'The Ideology of Exhibition: On the Ideologies of Manifesta', *PlatformaSCCA* 3, January 2002, http://www.ljudmila.org/scca/platforma3/suvakoviceng.htm, accessed 6 November 2023; Georg Schöllhammer, 'Art in the Era of Globalization. Some Remarks on the Period of Soros-Realisms', *Art-e-Fact* 4, 2005, http://web.archive.org/web/20070613072100/artefact.mi2.hr/_a04/lang_

Our goal here is to describe one such specific complex constellation, namely the institutional structure of the visual arts scene in Croatia, and to determine the position of Soros Foundation organisations within it. This structure comprises a variety of actors in terms of their longevity, scale, mission, ideological and aesthetic preferences, and – consequently – in terms of the way they view the role of art in society. Apart from this institutional structure, the network is also affected by 'cultural structures', cultural 'idioms or mixture of idioms [that are] available to be drawn upon by different groups' at certain space-times.[8] Although it could be claimed that both of these 'types of structure' enable and limit the activities of its actors, social actors have 'the capacity… to transform as well as to reproduce long-standing structures, frameworks, and networks of interaction'.[9] Since all of the mentioned network elements are in constant flux, our focus is on the quality of the process, temporality and the dynamics of this network over a longer period of time.

This interplay of structure, agency, and socio-political and cultural context can be productively approached through the prism of the network on a methodological level as well, by combining well-established methods in art history with those developed in social network analysis and relational sociology. In other words, a network approach in this sense entails using both quantitative and qualitative methods.[10] While the former contributes to our understanding of the structure of the visual arts scene in Croatia, the latter helps us to understand the influence of the context on this structure, the circulations and exchanges of meanings, as well as the judgements and decisions of the actors who participated in the network, their actions and/or inactions.[11] In this way, the visual structure of the arts scene is used as the backdrop to reflect on the position of the Soros Foundation organisations within it.

Data and Methods

To analyse the institutional structure of the visual arts scene, we used data on exhibitions, extracted from art criticism published in four cultural periodicals in Croatia (*Arkzin*, *Kontura*, *Vijenac*, *Zarez*).[12] From the art criticism, we extracted data on institutions that were organisers of contemporary art events (exhibitions, screenings, performances, festivals). Since the periodicals vary in terms of editorial policy and thematic focus (ie each of them represents a symbolic gathering place of a specific social circle on the scene),[13] the data sample includes a greater variety of different events and institutions. In other words, it moves away from basing the analysis on only a couple of 'consecrated' actors.

From the dataset we constructed a set of unimodal networks[14] in which two organisations are connected if they are mentioned in the same art critique.[15] Since an art critique typically revolves around a single art event, a mention in the same contribution indicates that the mentioned institutions collaborated in its organisation. The entire dataset was extracted from a total of 4497 art critiques, published in the period between 1994 and 2006, and it included 817 unique institutions. Of these, 380 are based in Croatia, while the remaining 437 are international (based mostly in Europe and the United States). Although we are focused on the analysis of the institutional structure of

en/theory_schollhammer_en.htm, accessed 6 November 2023; Mária Hlavajová, 'Towards the Normal: Negotiating the "Former East"', in Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic, eds, *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, pp 153–165; Anthony Gardner, 'Politically Unbecoming: Critiques of 'Democracy' and Postsocialist Art From Europe', doctoral dissertation, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2008, pp 163–171

5 Paul Stubbs, 'Flex Actors and Philanthropy in (Post-) Conflict Arenas: Soros' Open Society Foundations in the Post-Yugoslav Space', *Croatian Political Science Review*, vol 50, no 5, 2013, pp 114–138; Hlavajová, 'Towards the Normal', op cit; Octavian Esanu, 'What Was Contemporary Art?', *ARTMargins*, vol 1, no 1, May 2012, pp 5–28

6 For more on emergence as the key characteristic of complex systems see John H Holland, *Complexity: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, pp 49–58.

7 The term 'agency' is used according to Mustafa Emirbayer and John Goodwin: 'Human agency… entails the capacity of socially embedded actors to appropriate, reproduce, and, potentially, to innovate upon received cultural categories and conditions of actions in accordance with their personal and collective ideals, interests, and commitments.' See Mustafa Emirbayer and John Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol 99, no 6, May 1994, pp 1442–1443.

8 Ibid, p 1440. Understood in this way, the specific space-time in question could be called a 'conjuncture'. See Stubbs, 'Flex Actors and

the visual arts scene in Croatia, this information indicates from the very beginning that the art geography we are focusing on is by no means limited by national borders.

The qualitative part of the research encompassed twenty-nine narrative semi-structured interviews, conducted with key protagonists of the visual arts scene during the time period in question.[16] The profile of the interviewed actors included curators, artists, producers and cultural policy experts, out of which approximately one third was more directly involved with the Soros Foundation organisations, either as employees in different spin-offs or as board members.[17] The protagonists were asked about their networking practices during this period, to describe the structure of the scene, its main actors and the quality of their ties, about the values disseminated through the network, and about the influence of the socio-political and cultural contexts on their networking practices. Following a qualitative structural analysis approach,[18] a structure-focused, an actor-focused and a tie-focused analysis of the interviews was applied, with a particular emphasis on the Soros Foundation organisations. The narrative dataset served as a basis for the development and interpretation of analytic concepts, with the help of 'thematic coding'.[19] The results of both the quantitative and qualitative research were further interpreted through findings from the Croatian State Archives.[20]

The decision to situate the timeframe of the research between 1994 and 2006 is based on broader developments in the art field in Croatia, but also on the dynamics of the Soros Foundation's Croatia-based organisations. The bulk of the analysis is concentrated on the Open Society Institute – Croatia (OSI-Croatia), founded in 1992, and the SCCA-Zagreb, established in 1993. However, it also takes into account other Soros spin-offs that relate to the visual arts scene, such as the Centre for Dramatic Art (CDA), established in 1995,[21] and the Multimedia Institute (mi2/MaMa), a nongovernmental organisation, established in 1999, that works at the intersection of culture, art, technology and activism, and that grew out of the internet section of OSI-Croatia. Although the SCCA-Zagreb started its activities in 1993, its first annual exhibition was mounted in 1994. Furthermore, while it awarded its first grants in the year it was founded, most of them were intended for programmes happening in 1994. OSI-Croatia assisted a couple of cultural projects in the first two years of its existence, however this help was marginal, as it was primarily focused on humanitarian aid in war-affected areas. Apart from OSI-Croatia, which closed in 2006,[22] all the other Soros spin-offs still exist today.[23]

The Structure of the Visual Arts Scene in Croatia

To understand the position and potential rupture that Soros Foundation organisations made in the structure of the visual arts scene, it is first and foremost important to recognise the 'historical configurations of action that shape[d] and transform[ed] pregiven social structures in the first place'.[24] In this specific case, the well-known position that Yugoslavia held during the Cold War is worth recalling, as is the lively cultural activity that it gave rise to. Zagreb possessed an adequately developed

Philanthropy in (Post-) Conflict Arenas', op cit, p 116.

9 Emirbayer and Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture, and the Problem of Agency', op cit, p 1442

10 A more recent development of network theory, as exemplified in the work of Jan Fuhse, Ann Mische, Nick Crossley, Elisa Bellotti and others, departs from the more formalist approach of network analysis in favour of the idea that social relations are shaped and reshaped by subjective dispositions of social actors and their interpretations of reality. In this regard, mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative and qualitative methods are important as they enable deeper understanding of the relational nature of the social world. Mixed-methods strategies are especially valuable in the research of 'cultural structures', as is the case in our study of the Soros network.

11 By way of using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this research falls within the fields of digital humanities and digital art history, which rely on 'analytic techniques enabled by computational technology'. Johnna Drucker, 'Is There a "Digital" Art History?', *Visual Resources*, vol 29, nos 1–2, March 2013, p 7. See also Kathryn Brown, ed, *The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History*, Routledge, London and New York, 2020.

12 *Arkzin* (1991–1998) started out as a fanzine of the Anti-War Campaign in Croatia, but eventually turned into a hybrid magazine for culture, politics, and new media; *Kontura* (1991–) is focused almost exclusively on the visual arts and is connected to a homonymous commercial gallery and auction house; *Vijenac* (1993–) is a bi-monthly published by Matica hrvatska, one of the oldest cultural institutions in

Croatia, founded in the nineteenth century as part of the national revival movement; *Zarez* (1999–2006) was a bi-monthly more connected with the independent cultural scene, which presented a more critical stance toward contemporary cultural phenomena. Both *Vijenac* and *Zarez* followed contemporary art events in a number of different artistic fields, from visual arts to theatre, dance, literature and music. For more information on these periodicals refer to Sanja Sekelj, 'Digitalna povijest umjetnosti i umjetničke mreže u Hrvatskoj 1990-ih i 2000-ih, doktorska disertacija (Digital Art History and Artists' Networks in Croatia of the 1990s and 2000s, doctoral dissertation)', University of Zadar, Zadar, 2021, pp 79–115.

13 For a thorough analysis of these periodicals as cohesive social circles, refer to Sekelj, 'Digital Art History', 2021.

14 Unlike two-mode networks, which consist of two sets of actors (eg, people and events), unimodal (or one-mode) networks include only one type of actor. For more see Christina Prell, *Social Network Analysis: History, Theory & Methodology*, Sage, London, 2012.

15 The data was structured in the CAN_IS database, developed at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb, while the visualisations were made with the help of the open-source platform Gephi. All of the visualisations were made by the corresponding author of the article. See: ARTNET, https://www.art-net-ipu.org/#:~:text=artnet%20is%20a%20research%20project,modern%20and%20contemporary%20artist%20networks. The data that support the findings of this research, and the network visualisations with all of the node labels, that are presented in this article

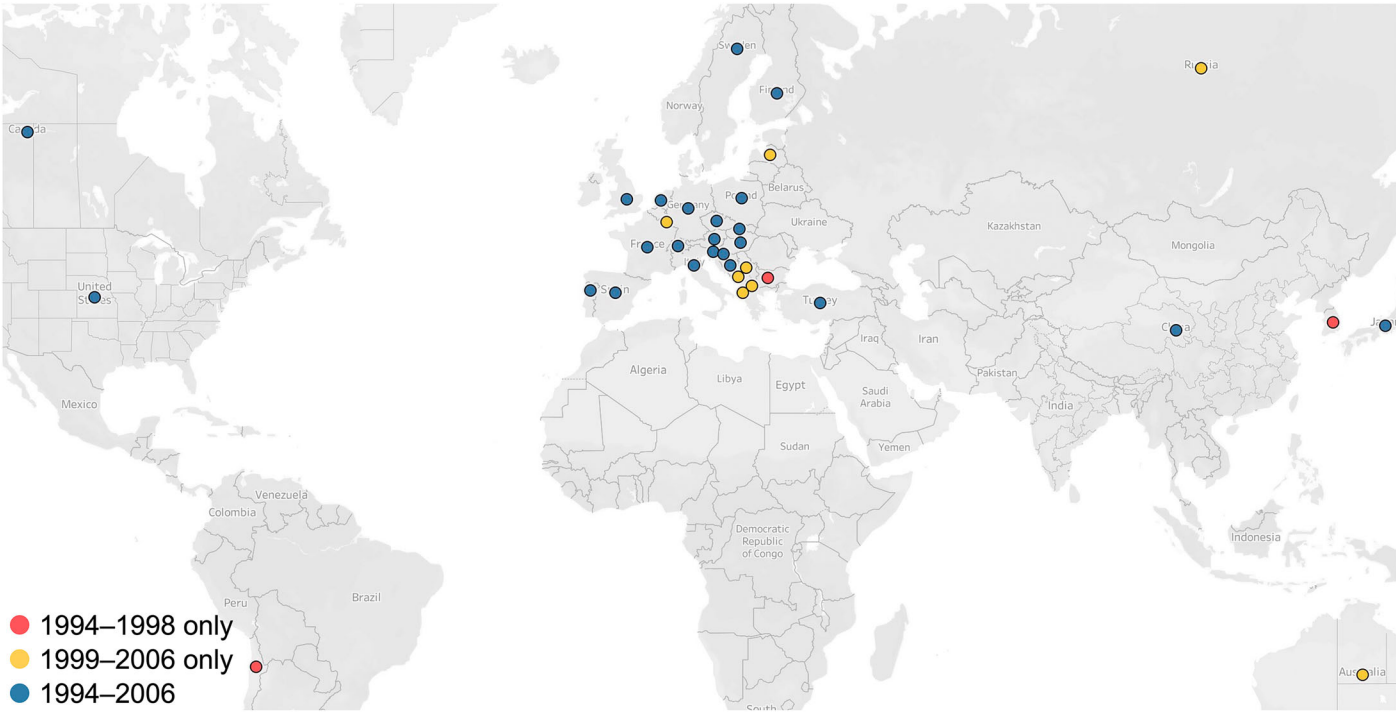
Table 1. General characteristics of one-mode networks

	1994–1998	*1999–2006*
Number of nodes	355	621
Number of edges	737	1559
Number of components	43	75
Giant component	55.8%	62.9%
Network diameter	10	10
Average clustering coefficient	0.789	0.727
Average path length	4.5	3.709

cultural infrastructure, including contemporary art institutions and galleries, and a rich history of international cultural exchange.[25] Consequently, what functioned as a point of reference in art production in the 1990s was not 'the trauma of communism', but the 'trauma of war', as rightly observed by Piotr Piotrowski.[26] An added traumatic aspect was the instrumentalisation of culture by the dominant factions in society, which was supposed to legitimise the 'centuries old' national cultural identity. Contemporary art and its institutions were condemned, or neglected at best, since the avant-garde tendencies were seen as part of a common Yugoslav heritage.[27]

These 'historical configurations of action' are an important factor when interpreting the structure of the visual arts scene in the post-socialist period. Basic structural characteristics of the two complete networks (Table 1), representing institutional collaboration in two different time periods (1994–1998, 1999–2006), show the exponential growth of the scene in terms of nodes and established relations over time, but they also demonstrate some similar structural characteristics: most of the network is composed of a well-connected giant component and a number of isolated components, with no links to the 'centre' of the scene.[28]

Although the majority of the structure is made up of institutions based in Croatia, the map reveals that the immediate structure of the Croatian visual arts scene is international. The percentage of Croatian institutions in the network decreases over time, indicating a widening of the artistic geography present on the Croatian visual arts scene, a fact which is further strengthened by an ever-wider list of included countries.[29] Most of the network is made up of institutions based in Europe, and only a couple of them are consistently better represented.[30] Nonetheless, the relatively short average path length and the high clustering coefficient point to the fact that the visual arts scene can be described in terms of a 'small world',[31] ie that national boundaries or geographical distance do not play a determining role in establishing ties or that they hinder processes of circulation, transfer and mobility. Theoretically, each organisation is only about four steps away from any other node in the network. However, not every agent is able or even willing to establish connections with any other node. The agents in the network have diverging values and goals, and they use different strategies to obtain them.



Map 1, spatial distribution of institutions in the networks, 1994–2006

are openly available in the PODEST Repository: https://podest.ipu.hr/islandora/object/ipu:220, reference urn:nbn:hr:254:923971.

16 The interviews were conducted within the ARTNET project between 2015 and 2017, funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (ARTNET, HRZZ 6270, Institute of Art History, 2014–2018). A number of team members participated in this part of the research: Sanja Horvatinčić, Ivana Meštrov, Dalibor Prančević, Sanja Sekelj and Željka Tonković.

17 Participation in the study was voluntary and all participants were guaranteed anonymity and data confidentiality. The interviews were transcribed and archived in the documentation department of the Institute of Art History in Zagreb.

It is reasonable, therefore, to approach the structure of the scene through the identification and visualisation of different social circles simultaneously active within the scene, which gives a broader context to the position of Soros Foundation organisations in Croatia.[32] When examining the two visualisations (relating to 1994–1998 and 1999–2006), it is apparent that the structure of the visual arts scene displays some continuities, as well as discontinuities. Although the network has a greater number of communities after 1999 (twenty-five compared to thirteen until 1998), the continuities are visible first and foremost in the perseverance of a number of central and peripheral clusters, their similar positions and the mechanisms that form the basis of this cohesion. In most cases, organisations are usually well connected within their own community, with only one or a couple of nodes performing a bridging role between them. Communities are mostly formed around central organisations, based on spatial proximity, or both. In some cases, it is possible to identify similar values and interests as the basis for community cohesion.[33] However, changes are also visible: the appearance of new communities, changing alliances or disappearance of some organisations.

The continuity of structure is possibly best represented by the persistence of three clusters organised around some of the most representative contemporary art institutions in Croatia, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), the Klovićevi dvori Gallery (GKD), as well as cultural institutions with a tradition going back to the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Art Pavilion or the Croatian Association of Artists

(HDLU), all of them located in Zagreb. Their position of power within the network is demonstrated with both high immediate connectivity and their bridging position between communities. It could be claimed that they represent the symbolic centre of the scene, and that their position points to the fact that the scene is extremely centralised around the capital city. Furthermore, similarities between periods are visible in the persistence of a couple of strong regional communities on the Croatian coast (such as Split or Rijeka), the structural position of SCCA, or the relatively high presence of Slovenian institutions, which oftentimes also play a bridging role toward other international communities. While the structural position of the Art Pavilion and the HDLU remains similar in both time periods, in the sense of a balanced division of power,[34] the same does not hold true for MCA and GKD. Although they remained some of the most powerful actors in the scene after 1999, the visualisation shows that both of them, by basically forming their own clusters, have a slightly distanced relationship to other communities.

A major change in the network after 1999 is the emergence of one completely new central community – the independent scene cluster, located in direct proximity to the MCA and the Zagreb galleries clusters. Its defining feature is the fact that it ties together NGOs which share similar organisational, aesthetic, political and ideological values.[35] It includes a great number of newly established actors, whose proliferation around the year 2000 was enabled by the changed legislative framework,[36] as well as a number of organisations that were initiated during the 1990s, and that previously occupied positions within the Zagreb galleries community. Compared to the three already-mentioned central communities, the independent scene cluster is specific in the sense that one of its defining characteristics is the existence of horizontal relations between its members, with no actor being able to completely seize control of the information flow within the cluster. All of the nodes are of similar size, even though the community incorporates some of the most powerful actors in the entire network when it comes to their betweenness centrality, and the number of directly established relations (such as mi2 or the curatorial collective What, How and for Whom/WHW). Another new feature in the network after 1999 is the growing importance of cultural programmes of Austrian institutions, as well as a greater accessibility to institutions in the United States and Western Europe. Access to these is mostly granted through connections with the Slovenian scene, especially after the 2000 edition of the Manifesta biennial, held in Ljubljana. It is important to note, however, that the independent scene cluster incorporates a number of Austrian and Slovenian actors, with whom they established direct ties.[37]

The Position and Influence of Soros Foundation Organisations In The Visual Arts Scene

The basic structural characteristics of the visual arts scene, the interrelationship of its central communities, and their change over time are an important starting point to determine the position and influence of Soros Foundation organisations in the Croatian context. Here,

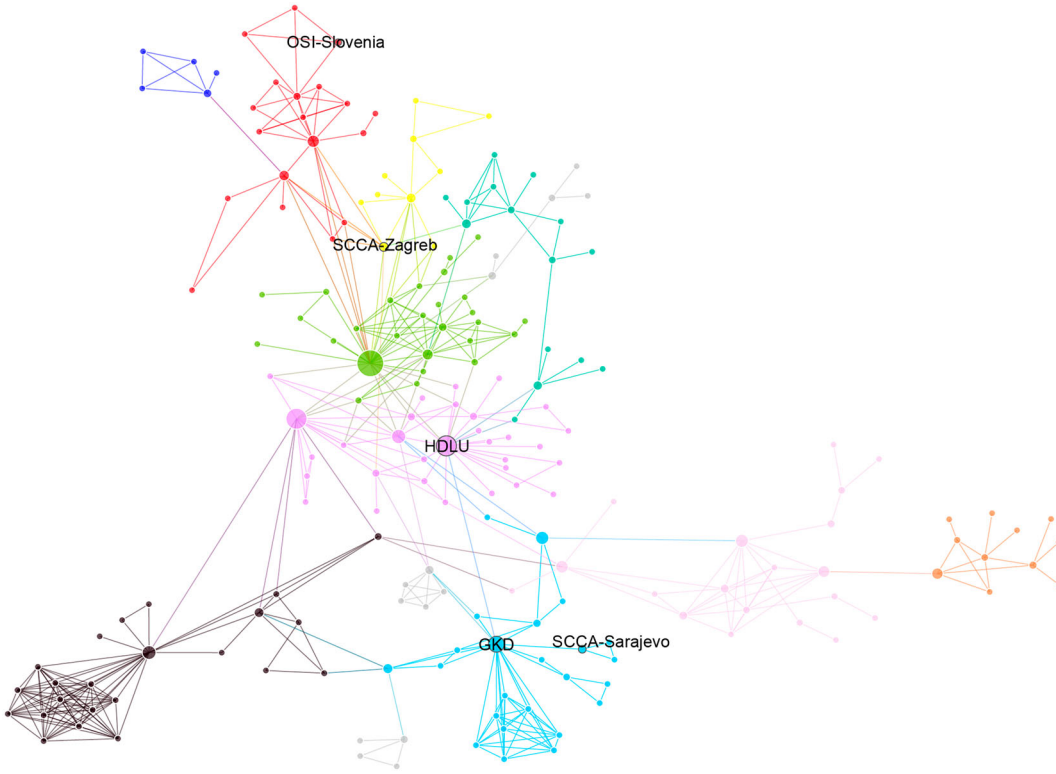
18 See Andreas Herz, Luisa Peters and Inga Truschkat, 'How to Do Qualitative Structural Analysis: The Qualitative Interpretation of Network Maps and Narrative Interviews', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol 16, no 1, January 2015

19 Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, London and New Delhi, 2006

20 Croatian State Archives, Open Society Institute – Croatia, Fund no. HR-HDA-1931, 1–5

21 CDA had a similar role in performing arts as SCCA had in the visual arts, in the sense that it was a grant-giving institution. The difference was that its establishment was initiated locally, hence it was not part of a bigger network of similar institutions. Its role in the visual arts structure was minimal during the 1990s, however it is included in the analysis since it was part of the independent cultural scene at the turn of the millennium.

22 OSI-Croatia still financed some cultural projects in the very beginning of the 2000s, but it changed direction and completely backed out of the culture sector in 2004. One of the reasons for the gradual withdrawal was the change in government in 2000, which was more open to contemporary art practices. From that point onwards, OSI-Croatia saw itself more as a partner to the government that would help change existing cultural policies, than as a lifeline to 'inappropriate' practices. The conclusion is based on OSI-Croatia's strategies from the beginning of the 2000s. See Croatian State Archives, Open Society



Visualisation 1, communities in the visual arts scene 1994–1998 (giant component), nodes belonging to the same community are grouped by colour; their size corresponds to the value of betweenness centrality, the list of communities can be found in Table 2

Institute – Croatia, Fund no. HR-HDA-1931-3.

23 Institute of Contemporary Art–SCCA, http://www.institute.hr/en/homepage/; Centre for Dramatic Art, https://cdu.home.blog/; Multimedia Institute, https://mi2.hr/en/

24 Emirbayer and Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency', op cit, p 1425

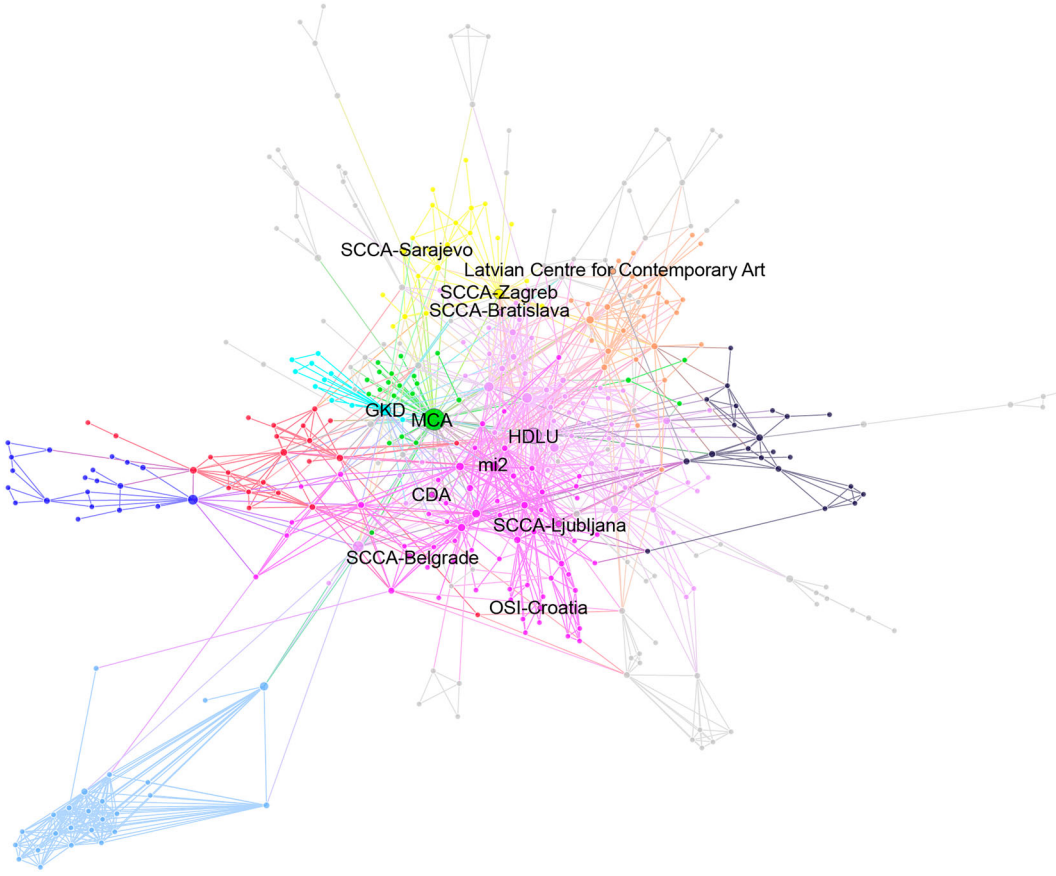
25 Ljiljana Kolešnik, 'Decade of Freedom, Hope and Lost Illusions. Yugoslav Society in the 1960s as a Framework for New Tendencies', *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 34, 2010, pp 211–224. For further information on contemporary art practices in Zagreb during socialism see, for example, Armin Medosch, 'Cutting the Networks in Former Yugoslavia: From New Tendencies to the New Art Practice', *Third Text* 153, vol 32, issue 4, July 2018, special issue, Guest Editor, Reuben Fowkes, 'Actually Existing Artworlds of Socialism', pp 546–561; Ivana Bago, 'The City as a Space of Plastic Happening: From Grand Proposals to Exceptional Gestures in the Art of the 1970s in Zagreb', *Journal of Urban History*, vol 44, no 1, 2018, pp 26–53; Ivana Bago, 'Dematerialization and Politicisation of the Exhibition: Curation as Institutional Critique in Yugoslavia during the 1960s and 1970s', *Museum and Curatorial Studies Review*, vol 2, no 1, spring 2014, pp 7–37. It is worth mentioning in this context that practices in art documentation were also established during socialism: apart from the Gallery (today Museum) of Contemporary Art, Zagreb had a specialised institution for collecting documentation on artists and exhibitions (the Archive of Fine Arts of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), as well as a developed museum

Table 2. List of clusters obtained by the Girwan-Newman method for the period 1994–1998 (Vis. 1)

Cluster	*Name of cluster*	*Percentage of members in the network*	*Representative nodes*
1 [bright mauve]	Zagreb Galleries	15.7	Croatian Association of Fine Artists (HDLU), Art Pavilion, Matica hrvatska Gallery
2 [bright green]	Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) cluster	13.6	Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb
3 [light blue]	Gallery Klovićevi dvori (GKD) cluster	12.1	Museum and Gallery Centre
4 [black]	Traditional arts scene in Split	11.6	Gallery Brešan, City Museum Split
5 [red]	Slovenian and Italian cluster	9.6	Modern Gallery in Ljubljana, Venice Biennial
6 [pink]	Regional cluster	9.6	Vjekoslav Karas Gallery in Karlovac, Museum of Međimurje in Čakovec, Gallery Galženica in Velika Gorica
7 [teal]	Dubrovnik cluster	7.6	Art Workshop Lazareti
8 [orange]	Rijeka cluster	5.6	Filodrammatica, Modern Gallery
9 [yellow]	SCCA cluster	5.1	SCCA
10 [grey]	Gallery Kapelica cluster	2.5	Gallery Kapelica in Ljubljana
11 [grey]	New arts scene in Split	2.5	The Cellars of Diocletian's Palace, Gripe Fortress
12 [dark blue]	documenta cluster	2.5	documenta
13 [grey]	Gallery Forum cluster	2.0	Gallery Forum

however, we are also interested in the meanings the cultural actors attributed to them.

The network for the period until 1998 (Vis 1) includes three institutions directly related to the Soros network, only one of which is based in Croatia – the SCCA-Zagreb, while the other two are the Open Society Foundation-Slovenia (OSF-Slovenia) and the SCCA-Sarajevo. The organisation of exhibitions and other arts events was but one smaller part of the SCCA activities,[38] hence it is not surprising that SCCA-Zagreb has a much smaller number of established co-operations than the most central nodes in the network, such as the MCA or the HDLU.[39] It is important to note, however, that its immediate connectivity is still higher than most of the other institutions in the network. The position of SCCA-Zagreb in the visualisation could still be seen as represen-



Visualisation 2, communities in the visual arts scene 1999–2006 (giant component), nodes belonging to the same community are grouped by colour; their size corresponds to the value of betweenness centrality, the list of communities can be found in Table 3

network supported by the Museum Documentation Centre.

26 Piotr Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, Anna Brzyski, trans, Reaktion Books, London, 2012, p 175

27 See footnote 29 in Tonković and Sekelj, 'Annual Exhibitions of the Soros Center for Contemporary Art Zagreb as a Place of Networking', op cit, p 92. For a short description of changes in the culture sector from the late 1980s to the early 2000s see, for example, Tomislav Medak, 'Culture as a Common Good', in Ivana Pejić and Matija Mrakovčić, eds, *Culture as a Factor in Democratisation: Practices, Collaborations and Models of Work on the Independent Cultural Scene*, Kurziv, Zagreb, 2021, pp 42–59.

28 The giant component is a connected component of a network, containing a significant proportion of all of the nodes.

29 The percentage of institutions based in Croatia amounted to around 53 per cent in the 1990s, and around 45 per cent in the 2000s.

30 Institutions in neighbouring countries such as Slovenia, in the USA or Western European countries, such as Germany.

31 The average path length corresponds to the average number of intermediaries needed to connect two nodes in the network. The clustering coefficient can be defined as a measure of local density, or the extent to which the nearest neighbours of a node were connected with one another. As proposed by Watts and Strogatz in 1998, small world networks are those with a high clustering coefficient and a small average shortest path length. In

Table 3. List of clusters obtained by the Girwan-Newman method for the period 1999–2006[70] (Vis. 2)

Cluster	*Name of cluster*	*Percentage of members in the network*	*Representative nodes*
1 [magenta]	Independent scene	16.1	WHW, mi2, Labin Art Express, Art Workshop Lazareti
2 [mauve]	Zagreb Galleries	15.6	Croatian Association of Fine Artists (HDLU), Art Pavilion, Gallery Miroslav Kraljević, Glyptotheque
3 [orange]	Rijeka cluster	6.9	Modern Gallery, Multimedia Center Palach, Filodrammatica
4 [bright green]	Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) cluster	5.9	Museum of Contemporary Art
5 [red]	Slovenian and German cluster	5.9	Modern Gallery in Ljubljana, documenta, Manifesta
6 [light blue]	Austrian Cluster	6.4	Camera Austria, rotor, Steirischer Herbst
7 [yellow]	ICA (SCCA) cluster	5.6	ICA
8 [black]	Split cluster	5.5	Museum of Fine Art, Art Academy
9 [dark blue]	International cluster	5.1	Kunsthalle Wien, Tate Modern, Solomon R Guggenheim Museum
10 [grey]	North Croatian cluster	3.6	City Museum Varaždin, Gallery Centre Varaždin
11 [grey]	Slovenian independent scene	3.1	Gallery Kapelica, Kiberpipa, Tovarna Rog
12 [cyan]	Gallery Klovićevi dvori (GKD) cluster	2.8	Gallery Klovićevi dvori
13 [grey]	Private galleries	2.6	Gallery Beck, Gallery Arteria, Gallery Adris
14 [grey]	Film and TV cluster	2.6	Croatian Film Association, Croatian Radiotelevision
15 [grey]	Photography cluster	2.1	Fotogallery Lang in Samobor, Fotofo festival, Central European House of Photography
16 [grey]	Regional cluster	2.1	Gallery Koprivnica, Gallery Waldinger in Osijek, Centre for Culture Čakovec

70 The table includes clusters that have a percentage of two or higher. There are twenty-five clusters in total; the ones that are not named in the table have from two to four community members, with each of them occupying less than 1 per cent of the network.

tative of its role in the visual arts scene. With a relatively high betweenness centrality, it acts as a gatekeeper to a specific community which would otherwise be very poorly connected to the rest of the scene. It is positioned between several different communities of cultural organisations, hence its role can be described as bridging. In particular, it finds itself in direct proximity to the most powerful actors in the scene (such as the MCA), serving as a bridge between Zagreb, regional clusters and the international cluster, represented mostly by actors from Slovenia and Italy.

The position of the OSF-Slovenia and SCCA-Sarajevo in the visualisation is the result of art critics following and writing about only a handful of events organised in their immediate surroundings, which is why there are no direct connections between them and the SCCA-Zagreb, even though in reality the SCCA-Zagreb and SCCA-Sarajevo collaborated frequently and intensively.[40] Apart from the Sarajevo branch, the former SCCA-Zagreb employees recall strong ties with centres in other ex-Yugoslav republics and the Baltic states, as well as the ones in Russia, Ukraine, Hungary and the Czech Republic.[41] However, the network opened communication channels between all of the centres: through annual meetings, informal gatherings during the openings of large-scale international exhibitions, and a short-lived joint magazine entitled *Quarterly*, while information-sharing and collaboration through the SCARP programme were greatly facilitated as a result of the development of new communication technologies. As stated by one of the former SCCA-Zagreb employees, 'our job was to communicate within the network, so that's what we did. All of us communicated.'[42] In fact, the network-building potential of the SCCA is often highlighted in the Croatian context as one of its most important effects. 'Soros's idea to strengthen, promote and develop contemporary art and art history was welcome in our case, but in the sense of improvement and opening of these contacts,'[43] since Croatia was a milieu with an adequately developed cultural infrastructure. Furthermore, the SCCA employees, most of whom had started their careers within the complex of 'new artistic practice' in Zagreb and Belgrade, emphasise that their space of action was 'never local, or national. It was always international.'[44] This space of action went through a radical reduction in the beginning of the 1990s, which is why this network-building impulse, provided by SCCA, is almost exclusively seen in a positive way:

> this really played a crucial role in the dark 1990s, when all of the excellent professional ties of the MCA were cut off. It was a catastrophe, everything was disappearing and falling apart, this Tuđman-like darkness took root with the idea of national art… No matter how small we were, only a few people, we had the money, we could act.[45]

Most of the scene's actors agree that the establishment of SCCA-Zagreb was a milestone in the development of their transnational networks. It seems, however, that their awareness of the entire structure of the SCCA network was only partial, which is why some of them understood the SCCA role more in the sense of 'producing, documenting and archiv-

other words, small world networks are simultaneously characterised by dense social circles and relations that span across the network. This type of network structure appears frequently in different contexts, and is typical of collaborative networks in the artistic field. See Brian Uzzi, Luis AN Amaral, Felix Reed-Tsochas, 'Small-world Networks and Management Science Research: A Review', *European Management Review* 4, 2007, pp 77–91; Brian Uzzi and Jarrett Spiro, 'Collaboration and Creativity: The Small World Problem', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol 111, no 2, 2005, pp 447–504. See also Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: The New Science of Networks*, Perseus Publishing, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2002.

32 The social circles within the giant components in both time periods were determined with the help of the Girwan-Newman method – a procedure that relies on betweenness centrality to detect different communities in the overall network structure. Betweenness centrality is used to detect nodes that act as gatekeepers or bridges in network structure, ie that potentially control information flow or connect communities that otherwise would not have any or many connections. Nodes with the highest betweenness act as community boundaries when applying the Girwan-Newman method. See Stephen P Borgatti, Martin G Everett and Jeffrey C Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*, Sage, London, 2013, pp 233–239.

33 It is important to note that naming a cluster based on spatial proximity does not signify that all of the nodes within a community have the same location, but that the community encompasses such a

ing an art practice that was neglected' in the 1990s, then as people that were 'actively working on networks and exchanges',[46] even though the same actors often also profited from SCCA exchanges. As for the participants who perceived the SCCA mostly through their annual exhibitions and publishing activities,[47] their opinions differ. While some of them highlight the importance of exhibitions that revived the interest in new artistic practice, thus establishing continuity with the socialist period, some believe that their policy was conservative: 'they filled in the gaps in art history. And, OK, somebody needed to fill them in, to institutionalise conceptual art of the 1970s, but I would have been much happier if another institution did this, and they occupied themselves more with the network, which was their primary task.'[48]

Apart from SCCA-Zagreb, the other local Soros Foundation organisations are not present in the network visualisation until 1998. While mi2 was established only in 1999, on the basis of this visualisation alone it could be concluded that the other two organisations – OSI-Croatia and CDA – did not have a paramount impact on the visual arts scene. However, since their principal role during the 1990s was not focused on the organisation of art events, this is misleading, as is the impact of the SCCA itself. Although all of these institutions performed multiple roles, their impact on the local scene was mostly felt through international programme coordination, as well as financial and infrastructural support to already-existing and newly established institutions. If we take into account connections established through grant-giving,[49] the immediate network of OSI and SCCA takes on a different scale and meaning, because there is basically not a single community in the network without the presence of the Soros Foundation organisations.

The SCCA-Zagreb supported newly emerging groups, such as the Society for the Improvement of the Quality of Life or the Gripe Art Project, which were or would organise themselves as nongovernmental organisations, as well as a small number of private galleries. However, a significant amount of its funds went toward programmes being held in public cultural institutions, often those that were for decades the backbone of artistic culture in Zagreb and Croatia, as well as to artists and/or institutions participating in or organising presentations within large-scale international exhibitions, such as the Venice Biennial. Although most of its support went to Zagreb-based institutions, it is nevertheless obvious that it worked toward supporting smaller regional centres in Croatia. This was a deliberate policy, as they saw their 'mission in decentralising [their] activities as much as possible', and perceived themselves as a centre 'representing the entire country'.[50] Furthermore, according to the *SCCA Procedures Manual*, which was nicknamed 'the Talmud' in Zagreb, the grants were intended for independent initiatives. However, 'since the independent scene did not exist, and we were at war so there wasn't much chance it would blossom, we were given permission to give grants to state institutions. This wasn't forbidden, but the support to the independent scene was preferred.'[51]

The role of OSI-Croatia in the network is smaller than the one performed by SCCA. Most of the organisations supported through various OSI programmes (media, publishing, civil society program, education) were primarily not working in the visual arts field, but in environment

number of nodes that the spatial determination becomes one of its most obvious features.

34 Apart from a balanced division of power, they also allowed for the emergence of other influential actors within the cluster, before and after 1999 (such as the Matica hrvatska Gallery or the Miroslav Kraljević Gallery).

35 For more information on the independent cultural scene, its development, main actors, and specific organisational mechanisms, refer to: Željka Tonković and Sanja Sekelj, 'Duality of Culture and Structure: A Network Perspective on the Independent Cultural Scene in Zagreb and the Formation of the WHW Curatorial Collective', in Ljiljana Kolešnik, Sanja Horvatinčić, eds, *Modern and Contemporary Artists' Networks: An Inquiry into Digital History of Art and Architecture*, Institute of Art History, Zagreb, 2018, pp 166–213; Sepp Eckenhaussen, *Scenes of Independence: Cultural Ruptures in Zagreb (1991–2019)*, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2019; Željka Tonković, 'Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow: The Independent Cultural Scene From Its Actors Perspective', in Ivana Pejić and Matija Mrakovčić, eds, *Culture as a Factor in Democratisation: Practices, Collaborations and Models of Work on the Independent Cultural Scene*, Kurziv, Zagreb, pp 110–129; Dea Vidović, 'Tactical Practices in Approaching Local Cultural Policies in Zagreb', *Život umjetnosti* 86, June 2010, pp 22–33; Marko Golub, 'A Story Told in Reverse: Patterns in the Urban Scene of Zagreb', *Život umjetnosti* 73, December 2004, pp 30–39.

36 For more information on changes in the culture sector around the new millennium refer to:

protection (Green Action), women's rights (B.a.B.e.), human rights (Amnesty International), or media and publishing (Arkzin, Bookstore Moderna vremena). However, both OSI and SCCA continuously supported newly established organisations, defined as working in alternative culture: Art Workshop Lazareti in Dubrovnik, Labin Art Express in Labin and the Autonomous Cultural Factory/Attack! in Zagreb.[52]

Although the grant amounts were not high, the participants in the scene mostly have a positive relationship to it: 'it was chump change, but it meant a lot, I have to say'.[53] The support was often seen as institutional encouragement, allowing for the mere possibility of something to happen, which oftentimes opened the doors for other initiatives and projects. Because of the war and fraudulent privatisation processes, in the 1990s there was 'a complete shortage of resources, people were completely impoverished', and most of the art projects 'wouldn't have been possible without this support, no matter how small or marginal it was'.[54] There were, however, those with a more critical stance toward the Soros Foundation's financing policy, hinting that they acted merely as replacement institutions to those that the nationalist ruling party took over: 'They were supporting projects and trying to occupy this place which the nationalist cultural policy forgot, rejected, didn't want to support… On the one hand, this is extremely important, on the other hand I always say it is not enough.'[55]

The visualisation encompassing collaborations in the beginning of the new millennium includes a greater number of institutions directly related to the Soros network (Vis 2). It includes all of the Croatia-based organisations (SCCA-Zagreb, CDA, OSI-Croatia and mi2), as well as five other SCCAs (Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Bratislava and Riga). They are mostly grouped in two distinct communities on the visual arts scene: the SCCA cluster and the independent scene cluster.

A better presence of international SCCAs in the visualisation could be seen as a sign of strength of personal and professional ties developed during the 1990s, testifying to the fact that parts of the SCCA network persisted, and took on different shapes and meanings, even after the official SCCA network ceased to exist. All of the actors emphasise that the personal contacts were most important in terms of network-building, and they still actively take advantage of ties formed back in the 1990s: 'If you use a network as a tool, then most often you establish a personal contact with someone and it remains long-term.'[56] Based on the data, it could be claimed that the presence of the SCCA network was more palpable on the local scene after it officially stopped existing. The use of these personal contacts was not, of course, limited to SCCA employees, but to everyone who participated in Soros-related exchanges, a fact that explains the division of international SCCAs in two different communities.

The SCCA-Zagreb, which registered as a nongovernmental organisation – the Institute of Contemporary Art-SCCA – in April 1998, holds a similar position within the topology of the network to that which it held during the 1990s, in the sense that it still acts as a gatekeeper and bridge between different communities in the visual arts scene. This holds true especially when it comes to its role of connecting the central Zagreb institutions with peripheral locations within Croatia. Its position in the topology could be seen as a sign of continuity of relations established during the 1990s, while the much higher degree of centrality reflects its

Medak, 'Culture as a Common Good', op cit; Tonković and Sekelj, 'Duality of Structure and Culture', op cit; Eckenhaussen, *Scenes of Independence*, op cit, pp 95–98.

37 It is interesting to note that this cluster also includes collaborative ties with institutions based in Serbia, whereas they were not present at all in the previous period.

38 For more information on the annual exhibitions of SCCA-Zagreb, refer to Tonković and Sekelj, 'Annual Exhibitions of the Soros Centre for Contemporary Art Zagreb as a Place of Networking', op cit.

39 For example, the weighted degree of SCCA-Zagreb is 13, while for the MCA it equals 51. The weighted degree signifies the number of established relations, which takes into account the edge weight, the value of which depends on the number of collaborations between two institutions.

40 Dunja Blažević, the director of SCCA-Sarajevo, was a frequent guest in Zagreb, where she had established a number of close personal and professional relationships since the 1970s. The SCCA-Zagreb supported the establishment of the Sarajevo branch in 1996, and the two institutions also ventured toward joint organisation of programmes at the end of the 1990s, such as the curatorial workshop for young art historians, entitled 'Museums and Galleries of Contemporary Art After the War' in 1999. Lectures held within the workshop in Dubrovnik by art historians and curators, such as Martha Wilson, Dunja Blažević or Konstantin Akinsha, are available online: Institute of Contemporary Art-SCCA, http://www.

different position in the scene after 1998. This means, primarily, that it was not a grant-giving institution anymore, a fact that placed it in a similar position to other newly established organisations. Furthermore, it adjusted its working models to the changed circumstances: it continued to develop its documentation, but most of its programme was directed toward establishing a new tightly knit collaborative network through joint organisation of programmes.

All the other Croatia-based organisations that are directly connected to the Soros network find themselves in the independent scene cluster. Since they are not organisations working primarily in the field of visual arts, the immediate network surroundings of OSI-Croatia and CDA are modest. More interesting than their direct ties is precisely their position within the network topology. This community, to which the participants often attribute names such as the 'parallel scene',[57] could be described as a result of deployment of the mechanism of value homophily,[58] whereby ties are formed based on similar interests and working ethics, and transitivity,[59] which contribute to a certain level of homogenisation of the cluster. While SCCA-Zagreb developed ties with a number of different institutional actors, it is visible that OSI-Croatia leaned exclusively toward those that were considered as providing an alternative to the regular programmes of public institutions.

The mi2 could be considered as the embodiment of the described characteristics of the independent cultural scene: it is one of the most connected organisations in the network, and – based on its position – it has the opportunity to control the information flow between different communities in the visual arts scene. However, because the power relations within the independent scene cluster are more evenly distributed, it could be claimed, based on the network characteristics, that mi2's formation of relations within the arts scene was based more on the impulse of sharing information than on establishing a position of encumbered power. The actors working within the framework of mi2 often describe themselves, at least in this earliest period, as a 'community organisation', emphasising that they were organising their activities around the notion that the 'basic infrastructure of culture are not objects and finances, but collaboration'.[60] Mi2 and their club MaMa in the centre of Zagreb became a hub for gatherings and collaboration, an origin point for a great deal of cultural projects of the independent scene in the beginning of the new millennium. As stated by one of the younger participants of the scene,

> they were the first place that had this kind of social propulsivity, where people gathered, and the first place that we could use free of charge, based on friendly relations… it was a place of our generation, a public space, a place where you would come to check your email, drink coffee from a machine, hang around.[61]

A general lack of resources steered a great deal of mi2's activities toward the establishment of an adequate context for cultural production: from sharing their own resources with others, such as their working space, to forming networks between like-minded organisations, which would serve to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and programmes, make their precarious position more visible, and give them a stronger bargain-

institute.hr/video-dokumentacija-90ih/.

41 Interview 1 (curator, SCCA); Interview 4 (curator, SCCA); Interview 6 (curator, SCCA); Interview 7 (curator, SCCA)

42 Interview 1 (curator, SCCA)

43 Interview 6 (curator, SCCA)

44 Interview 7 (curator, SCCA)

45 Interview 4 (curator, SCCA)

46 Interview 16 (curator, independent scene)

47 Apart from prescribed activities, SCCA-Zagreb put a special emphasis on publishing by initiating the *Visual Arts Library* programme in 1997. See the SCCA annual report in Croatian State Archives, Open Society Institute – Croatia, Fund no. HR-HDA-1931-2.

48 Interview 2 (artist, curator)

49 For a complete list of grants, refer to OSI-Croatia's annual reports: Croatian State Archives, Open Society Institute – Croatia, Fund no. HR-HDA-1931-2 and HR-HDA-1931-3.

50 Interview 1 (curator, SCCA)

51 Ibid

52 A handful of cultural institutions with longer traditions profited from OSI-Croatia's support mainly in the very beginning of the 1990s, before the foundation and full operation of SCCA-Zagreb's activities.

53 Interview 2 (artist, curator)

54 Interview 16 (curator, independent scene). It is important to emphasise that the grants provided by Soros were not large, but that they were available pretty early in the decade, whereas state funding was limited and mostly intended for cultural

ing position to influence new cultural policy. Mi2 was one of the initiators of both the *Clubture* and the *Zagreb – European Cultural Kapital 3000* networks, which were focused on sharing and exchange, and the decentralisation of cultural programmes, and were intended to function as platforms for collective action. CDA was also a member of both networks, while OSI-Croatia funded the foundation of the *Clubture* network.[62]

The establishment of mi2 as a hub of the independent scene was mostly initiated by a younger generation of cultural workers (albeit with the support of OSI-Croatia board members and internet programme coordinators) who started actively participating in the field at the end of the 1990s. However, their focus on collaboration, networks, cultural policy and the imagining of alternative institutional models stems directly from their experience of the 1990s. As stated by one of the actors affiliated with CDA, 'you have this generation of the 1990s that tried to start working on something, but didn't have anywhere until they made up their own organisations'.[63] Namely, the nationalist rhetoric of the beginning of the decade was accompanied by an 'alienation' from public positions of everyone considered a threat to the nationalist regime. A number of intellectuals emigrated from the country, some retreated from public life, while others found ways to articulate social and cultural alternatives. It is questionable whether this would have been possible without the Soros Foundation: 'I think Soros was important because, in the moment of collapse, he gave sanctuary to all these people that were pushed out of the system or didn't feel like they could survive in it. In this sense I think he greatly contributed to some continuity.'[64] The significance of Soros Foundation support, especially to independent initiatives and newly founded organisations, is perhaps best articulated by one of the actors of the independent scene: 'We all came from Soros!'[65]

Concluding Remarks

As pointed out in the introduction, the main theoretical contribution of this article is reflected in the construction of an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that relies on (digital) art history and relational sociology. In line with more recent developments in network theory, which tries to explain the cultural, contextual and subjective embeddedness of social relationships, our analysis included both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this perspective, communities detected by a network analysis algorithm are not only clusters of collaborating institutions in the network, but also occupy different parts of the art field, whose actions and interactions aim to conserve or to transform the field, as is clear in the case of the independent-scene cluster.

The mixed-method approach used to analyse the position of Soros Foundation's organisations in the visual arts scene revealed that OSI-Croatia and all its spin-offs had different trajectories and strategies, and that they occupied varying roles in the local visual arts network. By way of comparing distinct organisations and time periods, the complexities of the 'translation process' of the imposed model into a specific space-time become apparent. It could be claimed in general that during the 1990s Soros Foundation's organisations in Croatia contributed

projects legitimising the aforementioned 'centuries old' national identity.

55 Interview 17 (designer, independent scene)

56 Interview 5 (curator, public institution)

57 Interview 4 (curator, SCCA)

58 Homophily is one of the most important network mechanisms, which explains the higher probability of tie formation between actors with similar characteristics (eg shared social background, values or interests). This principle has been confirmed in numerous empirical studies and social contexts, including networks in the art field. See Nikita Basov, 'The Ambivalence of Cultural Homophily: Field Positions, Semantic Similarities, and Social Network Ties in Creative Collectives', *Poetics* 78, February 2020, 101353.

59 Transitivity refers to the tendency to form ties with one's relations' relations, which in turn results in dense clusters in the network. Following this rule, we may expect that if A is connected to B and B is connected to C, there is a great probability that A and C would form a relationship. This is a common characteristic of social networks, unlike randomly generated networks. See Borgatti, Everett and Johnson, *Analyzing Social Networks*, op cit, pp 155–159.

60 Interview 12 (theoretician, mi2)

61 Interview 18 (curator, independent scene)

62 The *Clubture* network still exists, while the *Cultural Kapital* network was of a more temporary nature. It did, however, establish enduring ties on the independent cultural scene. See: Clubture, https://www.clubture.org/. For more information on both

more to maintaining continuity with the socialist period, than to introducing new values or new types of artistic production. In addition to SCCA's grant-giving strategy and local programmes, this is also evidenced in the structure of the visual arts scene, where the central and most powerful positions are retained by actors with long traditions, such as the Gallery (today Museum) of Contemporary Art, founded in 1954. Real structural change in the scene becomes apparent only after 1999, when it is possible to detect a deliberate strategy to change the ways the art system reproduces itself. The change the independent actors aspired to was, nonetheless, only partial: their activities did not change the entire system, but they did manage to introduce an alternative to the way collaborative practices within the field usually functioned.

Needless to say, an important characteristic of the SCCA is that it already possessed a large amount of symbolic capital at the exact moment of its foundation. The economic and symbolic support to continuities notwithstanding, it could be claimed that all of its activities were programmed in a manner to better its own position within the field. It was always a middleman between other cultural actors, profiting perhaps from the fact that it helped others establish connections. Furthermore, the analysis makes it clear that the support granted locally was project-based, meaning that it could have generated enduring ties that lead to the establishment of local organised networks, but that this was not strategically planned. The strategies of mi2 were the exact opposite, aimed at forming sustainable networks within the scene. However, it is a matter of further research to establish whether they eventually, intentionally or unintentionally, led to it becoming more of a gatekeeper than a bridge between other actors. In other words, future research could entail the examination of whether, and to what extent, the more connected actors within the independent scene cluster took on the role of 'controlling the boundaries' of the community.

The claim that Soros mostly served to maintain continuity in the 1990s is, however, not as straightforward. An important factor when discussing the question of continuities and discontinuities are the generational differences of actors profiting from this support and programmes. While it is fairly easy for someone who actively participated in the visual arts scene in the 1970s and 1980s to declare that the Soros Foundation mostly 'filled in the gaps in art history', their programmes often represented the first encounter with these traditions for the younger generations, which were just starting their professional activities at the end of the 1990s.[66] Furthermore, the fact that the structures supporting international exchanges during socialism collapsed, and the new ones were still not functioning in a systematic manner, would have made international networking all the more inaccessible to younger generations, were it not for the Soros Foundation.[67] However, the art geography of the period in which they were starting their careers changed drastically, because of which their reinterpretations of new artistic practice, or the way they established international networks, cannot be viewed as a direct continuity of practices from the socialist period. In other words, the changes in the scene after 1999 could be seen, at least partially, as the Soros Foundation's contribution to discontinuities.

networks refer to: Emina Višnić, ed, *A Bottom-up Approach to Cultural Policy Making: Independent Culture and New Collaborative Practices in Croatia*, Policies for Culture, Amsterdam, Bucharest and Zagreb, 2008; Katarina Pavić, 'Clubture as a Process of Exchange', in Ivana Pejić and Matija Mrakovčić, eds, *Culture as a Factor in Democratisation: Practices, Collaborations and Models of Work on the Independent Cultural Scene*, Kurziv, Zagreb, 2021, pp 72–90; Tonković and Sekelj, 'Duality of Structure and Culture', op cit, pp 173–175.

63 Interview 20 (artist, CDA)

64 Interview 12 (theoretician, mi2)

65 Ibid

66 Because of the war, the museum collections were stored in depots in the beginning of the 1990s, and remained inaccessible throughout the decade.

67 As recalled by the scene's actors, it is important to note that the Soros Foundation was not the only one financing and facilitating international exchanges. However, access to support from the Soros Foundation was easier and its presence was more strongly felt because of the existence of national offices.

By taking into account both structural changes in the visual arts network, raised to a level of empirical research, and the meanings the actors themselves attribute to them, it is possible to grasp multiple different positions coexisting within a specific context. Such an approach moves the research agenda away from universalist assumptions about what the Soros Foundation and its spin-offs were supposed to be, to a more embedded understanding of what they actually were in a specific space-time. It helps to reconstruct and understand, to use Bourdieusian terms, 'the space of original possibles which, because they were part of the self-evident givens of the situation, remained unmarked'.[68] The perspective provided in this article thus puts a focus on the agency and intentionality of different actors within the local art scene, and opens up the possibility of a non-linear and non-deterministic approach in the interpretation of historical events. The next step in this line of investigation will need to take into account both the subjective dispositions of social actors and their interpretations of reality, and the specificities of relation- and value-formation within the art field. Because of lack of space, these questions were only hinted at, but were left largely unexplored.[69] However, the visualisations provided in this article could prove a useful first step, since the different network communities also showcase a different level of involvement with the global contemporary artworld. This leaves certain communities and actors on the periphery of the network; however, at least for some of them, their peripheral position is the result of an active choice. In conclusion, and returning to the question of translation of the 'imposed model', a systematic adoption of the proposed research perspective could, in the long run, enable us to answer the question not only of how the model was translated into a given culture, but also how the different local constellations of structure, power relations, agency and meaning influenced the Soros network on a transnational level.

68 Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed', in Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Randal Johnson, ed, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p 30

69 This primarily concerns intertwining the network perspective with questions relating to the institutionalisation of contemporary art in Eastern Europe, changing conditions of cultural production after the collapse of socialism, the processes of rewriting art histories after 1989, and their relation to the international market. For more on these topics, as they relate to the Soros network, see footnotes 5 and 6.

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