NEW PUBLIC
SPACES:

DISSENSUAL POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC PRACTICES IN THE POST—YUGOSLAV CONTEXT

Gašper Kralj:
New Public Spaces

Neoliberalism extended social borders far beyond the police-protected frontiers of newly constituted states. Denational-ization masked not only privatisation and social segregation but also the unilateral appropriation and commodification of memories, languages, identities, lifestyles. Refugees and migrants travelling from "south" to "north" and from "east" to "west" were subordinated to the paternalistic protector-ate of governments and civil society (in Slovenia already in the 1980s and 1990s). Meanwhile, internationally sponsored academic, artistic and political projects were reduced to speculative rediscoveries of the Western Balkans as the last resort of "distant nearness" even while they were opened to economic and military interventions. The dissolution of traditional public spaces was the result of a process of tran-sition from bureaucratic socialism to neoliberal capitalism. In sociological terms: the result of the transition from wel-fare-state to workfare-states with highly mobile and flexible forms of biopolitical exploitation and alienation. Spaces of encounters seemed to disappear.

The experience of Radical Education grew from this situation. Radical Education was initiated by a group of cu-rators at the Ljubljana Museum of Modern Arts as a proj-ect/exhibition that would produce a kind of 'progressive' micropolitical space within the institution: a critical anti-pole to both conservative and neoliberal tendencies domi-nating cultural production. Its potential was actually per-ceived as an "initiative that has nothing to do with either the arts or the academy". However, limited by the gallery exhi-bition format, the project was in itself a practice of 'capture' of its anticipated 'radical' subjectivity. This problem began to unfold in conversations with militant researchers and social activists. They raised questions such as: In what way are we governed not by restrictions or rules "from above"

but by individual self-control and self-domination within diverse institutions? How and to what degree has self-employment and self-management of projects captured some of the most sensitive minds that nurture the concepts and practices of anti-capitalist and alterglobalisation struggles?

In response to this new situation, the Radical Education Collective[1] was created. The aim was to overcome the dichotomy between institutions and movements and to reflect on the openings that this conflictual relation provides. The idea was not only to "learn from" institutions, but to pass on the knowledge to movements and collectives; to invent new conceptual, expressive and organisational tools in order to empower the "will not to be governed this way".

Although it seems that public spaces have disappeared, there is a fertile realm of social and political experimentation that is reappropriating the meaning of public space through practice. Emerging new public spaces presuppose the transversal collaboration between individuals, collectives and movements "outside the consensus" of both transnational capital and institutions of governance (including parties, universities, unions, museums, non-governmental organisations, etc.).[2] Importantly, they are not just imagined "alternative" communities. They are *potencia* that act as counter-powers to the dominant production of knowledge and subjectivity.

The history of this reader begins in the midst of numerous encounters and inspiring conversations that we had with activists, artists, critical thinkers, curators, militant researchers and writers from Belgrade, Helsinki, Istanbul, Ljubljana, London, Priština and Prizren from 21 April until 13 May 2008 at the Ljubljana-based Rog social centre and the AKC Metelkova mesto. These encounters challenged not only the distinction between 'serious' discussions and 'infor-

mal' debates (that instantly reproduce linear time and hierarchical space) but also our mutual ability to listen, talk and share experiences (instead of consuming information).

In the following months, we asked participants to write articles or simply e-mail us elaborated notes for publication. We have decided to publish them in full, with only minor editorial interventions, which has resulted in a book divided in two sections. The first section consists of articles that derive from reflections on rebellious "spatial knowledge" acquired through militant research and political action. The second section contains articles that explore the potential of arts in "re-inventing" new public spaces, including first-hand insights into the history of the contemporary art scene in Kosovo at the margins of the particular situation of "state-building".

In the opening article Darij Zadnikar accentuates the importance of re-elaborating the community. He places the emergent communities into "no-go zones", outside of the "political sadness". By highlighting the traps of the seductive language of liberal intellectuals, party leaders or professional activists, he redefines the notion of dialectics and positions it at the core of militant epistemology.

The three articles that follow are each based on *case studies*, starting with that of the 'occupation' of the former bicycle factory Rog[3]. The occupation of this abandoned factory was conceptualised as a "temporal alteration of its purposes" both to facilitate the legitimacy of the occupation and to rekindle the critique of privatisation and gentrification of public spaces in general. Andrej Kurnik and Barbara Beznec articulate this event politically. They define the Rog community as the "community on the border", and the border as the "territory of movements". Yet, the broader question remains of how to prevent this singular new public

space from closing down due to direct threats by the munic-
ipality, or transforming irrevocably given the more subtle
menace to its organisational form presented by the profit-
oriented "cultural alternatives" taking place within it.

The contribution by Polona Mozetič takes us to the
inner structure of the Workers' Dormitory. Her article is
based on long-term co-research by activists and migrant
workers whose first objective was to disclose and undermine
the systemic violence embedded in these institutions. She
poses the following question for further inquiry: How can
new public spaces (assemblies and public tribunes within
the Workers' Dormitories) empower common notions such
as "self-organisation" and "self-emancipation", not only to
cause ruptures which might bring about new visibility, but
also to develop new perceptions and new devices to prevent
the co-optation of the emergent community (in this case, of
the Invisible Workers of the World) by representative trade
unions, conservative "site-specific" art projects, et cetera?

Tjaša Pureber reflects on Autonomous Tribune (an ini-
tiative developed through a collaboration between univer-
sity students and the local A-Infoshop[4]), divesting the mean-
ing of the term "revolution" of its historical state-centric
disillusions and investing it with the hopes of alter-global-
ization movements. Gal Kirn and Antonis Vradis intervene
with critical commentary on disjunctions between theory
and practice, arguing that these unwelcome breaks have
brought the social effervescence of alterglobalisation move-
ments into a state of crisis. They also provide proposals for
their further experimental cohabitation.

The section concludes with the joint art project by
Andreja Kulunčić, Osman Pezić, Said Mujić and Ibrahim
Čurić. The process behind this visual self-representation
(the last three artists are also the migrant construction

workers on the posters) of the migrant worker structure of
precariousness (visa-work-residence-food-family separa-
tion) deserves far more than a brief observation.

The second section opens with an article by Bojana
Piškur on art as the "act of creation" and politics as the "act
of translation" and notions such as "ridiculousness", "lazi-
ness" and the "right to do nothing" as preconditions for Art.
Although these notions still await political translation, they
are resisting the capitalistic valorisation and commodifica-
tion of arts. The inside story of the TEMP group, written
by its members and their supporters, illustrates this contra-
diction. They not only provide a critical supplement to the
article about the occupied Rog factory, but also partially
answer the question of how artists and architects perceived
Rog – once it was occupied – as an empty, not a political,
space. Janna Graham draws from her own "border" ex-
perience of being both artist and activist at the same time,
tracing in her article micropolitical transformations, de-
codifying and re-codifying the position of art in the move-
ments and drawing on the example of the Ultra-Red sound
collective from the UK.

Mehmet Behluli and Dren Maliqi elucidate on how po-
litical isolation and social segregation in Kosovo in the 1990s
motivated the "re-invention" of public space through urban
clandestine webs of private homes and cafes, and how these
webs were constitutive of the emergence and development
of the contemporary art scene in Kosovo. Sezgin Boynik is
not only interested in the development of the art scene in
Kosovo but also in how contemporary art in general oper-
ates within representations of the ruling ideologies. The ex-
amples in the presentation by Marjetica Potrč draw on the
neoliberal multicultural values; they are problematic since
they evoke an image of the "artist on a mission", fascinated

by local achievements of capitalistic development. Minna Henriksson challenges the normality of the prevailing (nationalistic) homogenisation of public spaces embedded in national symbols that have become so present they have turned almost invisible.

The reader is therefore an inquiry into questions that have been circulating in our recent conversations; a transcript of the common desire to disturb, distract and subvert new forms of governance and to empower new public spaces; a collective contribution to critical thought that facilitates our *walk*.

1. Cf. http://radical.temp.si/

2. Cf. Colectivo Situaciones, "Politicizing Sadness", http://www.situaciones.org/

3. Cf. http://tovarna.org/

4. Cf. http://a-infoshop.blogspot.com/

Darij Zadnikar:
Places of Rebellion and
Empty Space

0. Lost in Space

It is not obvious how to revolutionise modern capitalism or from which point of departure. Modern capitalism is globalised and omnipresent to such a degree that it is needless to even mention it. It makes the overcoming of capitalism unimaginable and consequently 'impossible'. We are not even allowed to use this word any longer. We can cunningly use the words "contemporary economic order" and related expressions but when we mention "capitalism" we are running the risk of being intellectually excommunicated. It is an omnipresent taboo, an unspeakable presence. The unlimited presence without content is *the infinite space*. All the aspirations of nano-life in this infinite space are meaningless.

Is there any discontinuity that allows us to reshape the world? Any experience that sets us free from blind normality and helps us regain human dignity?

1. Reaching the Point-Less

It seems that we are living in a time of closing spaces, of lost horizons. The beginning of modernity was characterised by the crumbling of feudal walls and by the opening up of modern subjectivity. The emerging mind was primarily naval: bold enough to cross the skylines. Space was not opened up by seamen only – Columbus sailed westwards –, but also by the astronomers and philosophers, who conceived an infinite universe. They were not frightened by the stakes nor did they feel anguish when pondering the vastness. Ruthlessly everything was destroyed that prevented taking the way leading beyond safety and certainty. Not in the least and not by chance the accumulation of capital too is marked by the same logic of seemingly endless and ruthless progress.

The astrophysics of the twentieth century refuted the image of an evenly and endlessly extended universe. The universe has its beginning in a time when there was no space. Then a bang occurred, a really big bang, 13.7 billions years ago. There is a strong possibility that time as we know it will some day come to an end. Nowadays there are no stakes awaiting the scientists who radically changed the vision of the universe. At least: not yet. The connection between Giordano Bruno's vision of the universe and its social and cultural implications for the period was clear. Bruno marginalised God's creation and gave it some remote place in the universe's periphery. Would God create a sequestered suburban? Such a strong cultural claim is doubtlessly a blasphemy and its author has deserved the flames of the Inquisition. Whatever happened to indignation nowadays? Does such an emphatic scientific truth have any cultural and social implications?

Of course, there's no absolute truth nowadays and the 'eternal' institutions are as they were half a millennium ago. Through determination and bloodshed modernity has conquered horizons and opened up space for plurality and tolerance. There was enough space to share and to fight for. Sometimes the situation got out of hand we found ourselves at the edge of calamity. There were crises, revolutions and global wars. Nevertheless space was opened up, filled with ideas and colonised by countries. In fact it became crowded. There is no place to mark out and there is no returning point. Everything seems point-less.

It must be stressed that the dissolution of the ancient world simultaneously saw the birth of abstraction. The hierarchy of spheres, which constructed the Christian 'universe', were different in quality, similar to the unbridgeable hierarchy of feudal social ranks.[1] In this sense we can understand the emanation and deep connection of the term "revolution". The spheres were shattered. In the century in which Giordano Bruno and Isaac Newton lived, to invent the universe meant to postulate space and time as abstract, as a total absence of quality, as something that could be conveyed only through quantity.

But the use of this abstract concept has been feasible only by daily experiencing the emerging modern times and the rule of this abstract and totally empty thing. The thing that in modern times and in everyday life conveys its meaning only through quantity is money. With this real abstraction we have reached point-less existence.

2. Violence

It is not the only real abstraction. The process extends itself from abstract community in the form of the political state to the singular void of the liberal subject. The communities have become dissolved in the emancipatory processes. The patriarchal family has been transformed into modern nuclear forms of cohabitation between same and different sexes and generations in which everybody is free to participate in wage labour. We have lost a sense of homeliness in the typical suburbs. Our dwellings are similar and our conversations predictable. We are somewhere, but not really at home; we are part of the crowd, but thoroughly lonely. We are caught in the abstraction that is thawing our qualities for the benefit of its incarnations, be they recognised as the Nation, State, Market, Capital, Idea, Industry, Art, Spectacle, Matrix, Power, System, Security, or Comfort.

Empty space has been filled with objects and consequently people have to be converted. But is not the objectivisation of man at the heart of violence? Could we find

any other notion of violence, directed towards either body or soul? The uniqueness of the human being has turned into an alienated subjectivity. And as we are part of endless time and space, there's always the ultimate threat of total unification with endlessness through death. Or apathy.

So it is natural to preserve humanity by avoiding objectivity. The shattered background loses its obviousness and the crockery could re-attain some worthy quality. This re-appropriation means destroying systemic violence and in some perverted sense it is also a form of violence.

We are not plotting a rebellion against the systemic powers, as negation in itself consists in the constituent conditions of subjection in the form of objectivisation. Resistance outlines some-thing from the abstractness of space and time. Just like gravity. Being (through doing) is substantially negative.

But our space is social, more precisely: anti-social. And our time is Fukuyama's desolated History.

3. Counter-Movement

Is it possible to prevent the objectivisation and dissolution in the abstract world? Is it possible taking into account the past century's failed social and cultural revolutions? The fighters were defeated mainly because they confronted themselves on the battlegrounds of empty space – the State – and endless time – abstract work. The revolutions were not transgressive enough and they just filled the gaps of lost Modernity. People, stuffed in the 'socialistic' state, were sacrificed to linear escaped Future. In some sense, we witnessed the regression to the rigid feudal hierarchy, but this time round the possibility of social mobility (albeit restricted)

was not granted through serving the Church, but through obtaining Party membership.

In my opinion the cracks in history and genuine re-appropriations of human dignity could be experienced while steering clear of frontal clashes with seemingly 'alternative' systems that do not threaten the nature of the abstract background. There has to be an overlooked rebellious realm within the system. It is better for it to be overlooked, ignored or underestimated, as the alternative is just to be normalised, pacified or destroyed by the systemic powers.

Only fast-moving, nomadic and guerrilla-trained rebels survived. They appear suddenly as a creative alternative, a steampunker's technological hack, social invention, insurrection, subculture, ecstatic encounter, artistic fancy, migrating small-scale utopias – they were and are present in countless cases and forms. But where can they plant their temporary roots and avoid being uprooted by vigilant keepers of order?

I must stress again that nor the seizure of state-power, nor the Party membership in the name of libertarian Utopia can beat the formless Empire. Its gluttony aimed to add content to endless abstraction is boundless. Even the so-called 'socialistic revolutions', which refrained from rebuilding communities, were mere mimicries of the advancing rule of abstraction. The proletariat, the class reduced to the realm of abstract labour (i.e. senseless work), has been deceived in its striving for humanity and has been subjected to inhuman conditions in the name of an evasive Future. So the class that could constitute itself only through struggle has become disposable through a fixation on sociological statistics. The epic frontal clash with the world of the Capital seems to be unlikely, suicidal and fruitless. The life-threatening nature

of Capital does not mean that it is not organic. After all, it is just another side of labour. It is a cancer. Its success causes collapse and the hasty progress is a way to flee its disastrous nature.

So, where to build rebellious strongholds? They should be concealed enough lest they are destroyed or colonised by boring normality, and accessible enough to enable swift outbreaks.

4. No-Go Zone

Hakim Bey has written about no-go zones.[2] He has predicted that in the following decades portions of 'America' will vanish from the maps as they will no longer produce, consume or be the object of governmental management: "These areas (economic/social/geographic) will cease to exist for all practical purposes of control. The consuming classes will leave these areas and move 'elsewhere', either socially or geographically or both simultaneously." These words are reminding us of the Zapatista indigenous who realised that for them actual globalised neoliberal power holds no value: they are not producing, they are not buying or selling and therefore they do not exist for the 'outer' world.

More and more people will be excluded and abandoned by the commodified brave new world: "The cracks in the monolith will widen, and a lot of 'us' will miss that last helicopter out of town." The wealthy and 'developed' North will disappear into Cyberspace, "leaving the other part deserted and bereft, no-go zones, cracks in the monolith". And the South will interpenetrate the North like mycelia in a loaf of bread: "The holes and cracks in the North will become more Southern, more African, more Latino, more Asiatic, more Islamic."

Hakim Bey is posing the crucial question of the libertarian potentiality of no-go zones. The rebirth of the social needs some place outside of the wasteland of abstract space, but away through realising 'ideal' kingdoms-on-earth. The no-go zones have to be fulfilled through actual freedom in everyday life. The recuperated sociability depends on an economy that we believe will arise through informal ways of survival from the disasters that happened on the other side of fence the non-hierarchic and self-organised webs of communication, the 'black work' (including service, production and exchange) on the basis of 'alternative', not necessarily hi-tech technology (hardware hacks, improvisations, recycling and so on).

We are not dealing here with alternative 'models'. More exactly, the word is about unpretentious experiments within the frame of a utopian minimum, which are testing "a melange of whatever works within a very broad framework of organic non-authoritarianism".

After the century of ideological debacles, which are in Europe comparable only to precedent religious wars, we should not risk our lives for the sake of Ideas. The no-go zone should become a place to build a home, even though it is just a nomadic tent.

5. Community

Recuperating the community should be at the centre of the struggle for humanity. Individual human dignity cannot exist outside of liberated and transformed community. Emancipation is a collective process, not an individual escape route. These premises are opposed to the liberal common sense that considers the community part of the political state. As a state is just an illusory community (Marx),

an abstract state, it could not be the place of common life. Therefore we situated the rebirth of the community into the no-go zone and outside of all liberal abstract containers.

The liberal emancipators have problems with the community, as they directly connect it with patriarchal sociability and traditional interpersonal bounds. They bet on the individual and on the open public space of liberal-democratic state. Such a subject is like a free skater on the skate rink. This kind of freedom can be understood as somehow infantile: as a possibility to do anything. Of course such an infantilism presupposes the exclusion of everybody else. The skaters shouldn't collide. That is the birthplace of the Law to which all the individuals must subject themselves. Consequently, it is the oxymoron of the modern subject.

Yes, there are some basic universal rules placed at the heart of the possibility of speech, as Habermas put it. But they are here only because we need to bargain for all the remaining rules. It is the productive social experimentation, our *Lebenswelt*, for which we are taking responsibility. It is close to Sartre's notion of freedom as a burden of being responsible for one's actions.

As the modern subject is narcissistic, it does not want to take responsibility; it is lazy and cowardly (according to Kant) and has to hand over rational competence to the class of lawmaking rulers. Subjected individuals have the phantasmal freedom of periodical political choice and the continuous consumption leftovers. And when the 'free' individual is confronted with lawless circumstances, with the urge of communication, with situations in which selfishness has to be abandoned, he proves to be incapable of any moral act. The morality arises from communicative situations and from disobeying orders.

The conquest of power by either 'democratic' or 'revolutionary' means in order to have controlling instruments to change society results in the objectivisation of humanity and its decomposition into individuals. Their grief has to be consoled with new religions (liberalism, communism, patriotism, consumerism, and the like) and their emptiness filled up with the goods from hypermarkets, dissolved neighbourhoods with artificial plants and promenades where no contact is established.

The recuperation of community is a radical transformation of injured social forms – including the family – on the basis of self-contemplation and the building of affinities and affectivities. There is a possible threat of constructing the collectives on the basis of applying common ideas and building an ideological community. This is the urge of intellectual sacerdotalism that invents, poses and interprets the Truth. These are not the places of common life, but the neo-traditional patriarchal sects.

Building a community cannot be done by intellectuals who are applying ideas and reconstructing institutions. There is a need for social tinkering. Tinkering happens when you try out something you do not quite know how to do, guided by whim, imagination and curiosity. The bending of social circuits could result not only in assaults on the systemic networks, it can generate interesting results also "inside and among us". The community feeds on constant encounters and its common grounds should not be mistaken for public space, which is provided by the political state in order to give the privatised individual a chance to observe the others. Being outside of the liberal democratic *quadrillage* does not mean abandoning the politics to enclose oneself in private intimacy. It is a real politics closely related to

Aristotle's sense of politics and it should free intimacy too from the chains of patriarchy. The encounters seek temporary consent in the heat of intellectual debates (in which no intellectuals participate) and there are ritual transitions to the story-telling and ecstatic mingling.

Autonomy, horizontality and direct democracy. There's not much to add.

6. Language

The intellectuals of the political left are servants of the party leaders, pretending to be the prophets of a 'Better Future'. Their job is to legitimise the actual power or its desire to control people and nature. Therefore their language is essentially bureaucratic, boring and passionless. As they act from within the clouds of 'theories',[3] they do not need to communicate and prove themselves. They 'know' and they are like God who has created the world by naming it. They are applying the theories to reality and do not derive them from current affairs. Their interpretations have to prevail the others'. They are building the fellowships of the same-minded and irritably attack 'opponents'. They explain, interpret, explicate, in an attempt to enlighten the multitudes. They are the 'revolutionary' vanguards.[4]

Such intellectual language consists mainly of weak-connected evidences and ethnographic-like collections and is at present fashionably (Derrida, Deleuze, Negri) declinatory towards *dialectics*.

There is no need to reduce the idea of dialectics to Hegel's logic. A vast post-Hegelian re-conceptualisation of dialectics has been carried out by now. Adorno's negative dialectics is just one of the better known: "Dialectics unfolds the difference between the particular and the

universal, dictated by the universal. As the subject-object dichotomy is brought to mind it becomes inescapable for the subject, furrowing whatever the subject thinks, even objectively – but it would come to an end in reconcilement. Reconcilement would release the non-identical, would rid it of coercion, including spiritualized coercion; it would open the road to the multiplicity of different things and strip dialectics of its power over them. Reconcilement would be the thought on the many as no longer inimical, a thought that is anathema to subjective reason."[5]

We have to bear in mind the original meaning of the word *dialegein* and the need to expose the communicative dimension of dialectics in relation to its logical meaning. In the absence of the dialogical/dialectical component, there is only the residue of shattered and unconnected monologues. We can enjoy their poststructuralist wittiness, but there is no need to take a stand, since we can, in the supermarket of ideas, just change them, as we do used clothes or the channels on TV. It is not the reconciliation of and in differences – it is just the sheer ignoring of them. In this respect we can critically point at the professional activists and the activists by mission, the new-age missionaries, who are like medieval Franciscan monks wandering through the networks of resistance.

What I am proposing is a notion of *dialectics as micrological dialegein*. It is not just about approaching things but also reconstructing and restructuring them: it is in-spiralling and out-spiralling, listening and acting. The manipulative language of intellectuals has to be overcome through militant and dialogical inquiries. We have witnessed it in the Latin American *enquentrismo* of Zapatistas, Brazilian landlessness, the Aymar insurgents and Argentinean *piqueteros* and now we recognise it in social movements and collectives

worldwide. The recuperation of the community presupposes the abandonment of prophets.

00. The Revolution

The 49th hexagram is *Ge*,[6] meaning "Revolution" or "Radical Change". The bottom trigram is *Li* or "Fire" and the upper is *Dui* or "Lake". Water and fire overcome each other. This phenomenon suggests a picture of revolution that abolishes the old.
The Decision says:

> Proper day.
> Upon it obtain confidence from people.
> Supremely prosperous and smooth.
> Favourable to being steadfast and upright.
> Regret vanishes.

Confucius' commentary on Decision is: "When the revolutionary tempest breaks out, faith will accord with it. Enlightened intelligence makes people joyful. Great success comes through justice. Since revolution is proper, all regret disappears. Heaven and Earth abolish the old and bring about the new, then the four seasons complete their changes. Tang and Wu … brought about the new. They obeyed the will of Heaven in accord with the wishes of the people. The time and meaning of abolishing the old is truly great!"

But each of the six lines can change and not all the changes are favourable.[7]

1. There were no concepts such as "man" or "citizen" in the feudal world. Possibly one could come upon them through migrating in the spheres beyond the grave, facing one's first original copy. In short, equality only came through Death.

2. Hakim Bey, NoGoZone, http://www.hermetic.com/bey/nogozone.html.

3. They are rather ideologies.

4. Darij Zadnikar, "Neo-Vanguardism and the Politics of the Rejection of Dialectics", in: John Holloway, Fernando Matamoros, Sergio Tischler (eds.), *Negativity and Revolution, Adorno and Political Activism*. Pluto Press, London, 2008.

5. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, University of Minnesota, London and New York, 2005, p. 6.

6. *The Complete I Ching*, transl. Alfred Huang, Inner Traditions, Rochester, 1998, pp. 389-396.

7. We have to pay attention to the first and third lines and avoid mistakes.

Andrej Kurnik, Barbara Beznec
— Resident Alien:
The Rog Experience on
the Margin

At the beginning of 2006 a spatial-political intervention upset the business-as-usual routine of the city of Ljubljana. The main targets of this critique through action were the changing landscape of the city and its outskirts, the loss of the public realm through privatisation, the authoritarian management of populations and practices and the reduction of diversity all for the logic of profit. The creation of a new and open autonomous space was a response to the ever-tightening control of production and forms of use and exchange (in private as well as public institutions – religious, commercial and governmental) and thus of the production of political subjectivities. Rog aimed to become an institution of free production that could reappropriate the conditions of biopolitical production, in short, an institution of the *common.* The experiment has revealed some of the key elements of the power of spatiality, especially in the context of its recent transformations that highlight the political, social and subjective dimensions of space.

In his extraordinary study *La production de l'espace*, published in 1974, Henri Lefebvre reflects on the insufficient understanding of space as an objective, neutral background of socio-political action and production, by emphasising the increased hybridisation of what he called "perceived" and "conceived" space into a mixed but different, an-other or "lived" space: "Space is becoming the principal stake of goal-directed actions and struggles. It has of course always been the reservoir of resources, and the medium in which strategies are applied, but it has now become something more than the theater, the disinterested stage or setting, of action . . . Is space indeed a medium? A milieu? An intermediary? It is doubtless all of these, but its role is less and less neutral, more and more active, both as instrument and as goal, as means and as end" (Lefebvre 1991a: 410-11).

Deriving from Lefebvre's critique and the growing awareness of the inseparability and interdependence of the spatial and social and their immersion in the complex and ever-shifting relations of power, Soja tries to overcome rigid binaries and categorical equivalences by coining the concept *Thirdspace*. Being an accurate description for the experience of Rog and other autonomous spaces, institutions and practices, Thirdspace is never a simple summary of the First and Second, perceived and conceived space, it is always their disruption and reconstitution into "knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is . . . marked out materially and metaphorically in *spatial praxis*, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power. Power is ontologically embedded in the center-periphery relation and, hence, also in the ontology of Thirdspace" (Soja 1996: 31).

It seems that spatial knowledge and action are mostly highlighted at the front line that is being drawn by the transformations taking place in the spaces of aggregated power, in contemporary metropolises, borderlands and cities like Ljubljana, where growing uncertainty of autonomous cultural, social and political production coincides with privatisation, gentrification and normalisation of public space, with the crisis of representative politics and new forms of governability defined in institutions and modes of control over mobility and multiplicity, with new articulations of the public-private relationship, with new frontiers of exploitation, enclosure and expropriation of the common and with the crisis of the modern dichotomies that had defined political subjectivity. "The multi-sidedness of power and its relation to a cultural politics of difference and identity" constructs and maintains "modes of social and

spatial division" of class, gender, race or nationality, creating a system of authoritative management, where "'we' and 'they' are dichotomously spatialized and enclosed in an imposed territoriality of apartheids, ghettos, barrios, reservations, colonies, fortresses, metropoles, citadels, and other trappings that emanate from the center-periphery relation" (Soja 1996: 87).

The increased territorial peripherisation and subjugation of the non-hegemonic social, political, cultural practices and discourses, of the non-profitable and solidary production and exchange, of the "working poor", comprised of precarious and migrant workers, implies "two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putative positioning, their assigned 'otherness', to struggle against this power-filled imposition. These choices are inherently spatial responses, individual and collective reactions to the ordered workings of power in perceived, conceived and lived spaces" (Soja 1996: 87).

The occupation and reanimation of the former bicycle factory Rog was clearly a choice of mobilised collective resistance, a radical rupture, disruption, and subversion of the deterritorialising and reterritorrialising dispositives of power in the "Ljubljana Enterprise". Having been empty for more than a decade, several individuals and groups injected life into this new space, which was initially conceived as a short experiment with temporary use as its defining concept. The spatial-temporal intervention intended to provoke a discussion on the conditions of production of the cognitariat and to oppose the negative effects of privatisation and denationalisation (and the subsequent disappearance of public spaces) in order to articulate new cultural and social policies in the city.

Rog as Generational Event

Rog has been a generational experience. It started as an attempt to break away from the conceptual, practical and political hegemony of the generation that had been in power since the beginning of the 1980s. On both the right and the left of politics, in the inner circles of the ruling Communist party, in the growing nationalist milieu and in the new social movements, the concept of civil society had become the hegemonic concept of the 1980s. The struggle over the interpretation of this concept ended with the triumph of the bourgeois notion of civil society in the beginning of the 1990s: the separation of politics and the economy, where the rule of capitalist market logic over the economy and political autonomy were seen as a guarantee of the integration of society into the global market. This hegemony was sealed with the Hegelian order that determined the relationship between civil society and the state, where the former had become the sphere of the realisation of the idea of the latter.

The discourse about rights was based on the assumption that they have been granted and constituted once and for all, thus blocking the possibility of producing them. The production of life became impossible outside unilateral capitalist command. Alternative forms of production of life were only tolerated as exceptions. This resulted in practices of localised resistance, identity politics and verticality in relation to the state. Notions of alternative culture, lifestyles, identities and minorities were incorporated into the system of multiculturalism, which allowed for some specific expressions of difference without endangering the machine of the social reproduction of capital. The *funding* institutions of the civil society in the 1980s became the *tolerated* institutions of the leftist neoliberal multiculturalism of the 1990s. One of the

rare expressions of autonomous desire and social antagonism that survived the transition without losing its autonomy and rebellious spirit was the occupation of the former Yugoslav military barracks and consequent rapid grass-root development of AKC Metelkova in 1993. This huge complex in the centre of Ljubljana remained one of the few centres of cultural and social dissent, a factory of alternative production of subjectivities.

By the end of the 1990s, the transition had almost been accomplished, with the economy fully integrated and conflict successfully delegated. The enormous energy and self-confidence of the spectrum of subjectivities of the 1980s have scattered and faded, especially in the aftermath of the extreme, tragic consequences of the disintegration of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. On entering the European Union and NATO at the start of the new millennium, Slovenia became a territory of complete imperial articulation, deeply immersed in the global consensus about the triumph of liberal capitalism and *the end of history.* With the words of Naomi Klein: "Democracy and radical capitalism were fused not only with each other but also with modernity, progress and reform. Those who objected to the merger were not just wrong, but 'still in history', as Fukuyama put it, the equivalent of being left behind after the Rapture, since everyone else had already transcended to a celestial 'posthistorical' plane" (Klein 2008: 183). On the other hand, like in all "posthistorical" realities, also in Slovenia the development of the new biopolitical regime produced new antagonistic subjectivities that identified with new social movements for alternative globalisation. The new political generation, emerging from the global struggles, rooted in experiences like the Zapatista uprising and the Seattle and Genoa protests, could no longer lean on the institutions of the movements of the 1980s.

One of the biggest sites of confrontation of this new generation was also the specific form of biopolitical production, characteristic of former socialist countries, that is defined by the extreme difficulty to abandon the Manchestarian paradigm in which the valorisation of immaterial and cognitive work is poor or nonexistent: economic growth is based on hyper-exploitation in traditional terms (extremely long working hours and unpaid overtime) and simultaneously concentrated in the labour-intensive sectors (especially construction), dependent on authoritarian management and exploitation of migrant workers in a regime based on blackmail. The key instrument of profit extraction is restrained and controlled vertical (social) and horizontal (cross-border) mobility. Consequently, the rate of unemployment and precarisation of highly educated people is relatively high and growing. Culture is still largely considered to be a sphere for social reproduction or the sphere of the reproduction of ruling (nationalistic) ideology.

Reproduced by capital and labour representatives, the Manchester paradigm of production (in which the source of value is produced by quantified labour, that is, hours worked) and "black protectionism" (where decreased national sovereignty is compensated by control over cultural production) defined the context in which the new political generation encountered the cognitariat (facing either capitalist recuperation or repression) and migrant workers. New subjectivities, a new order, new conceptions of space and time and, above all, the new articulations of postfordist immaterial production and exploitation, demanded a new node of visibility, exchange and organisation.

Opening, Encounters and Self-Valorisation

Mass production of bicycles in the Rog factory came to a halt in the beginning of the 1990s and this soon became a symbol of the corruption of the so-called transition to the market economy. What had been social property was initially nationalised in order to be denationalised, that is, privatised. This process was conducted as a political attack against workers co-ownership and self-management, and was thus accomplished through the destruction of their political and economic power. The factory complex has been bought and sold and bought again by the municipality of Ljubljana and for reasons linked to property speculation left empty for fifteen years. The intervention of Rog opened a space that was taken from the multitude. It was an act of re-appropriation and a critique of the process of privatisation.

Rog started accidentally, as the result of wonderful encounters. The idea of opening up and revitalising the space into art galleries grew among young architects and activists – many of whom were then fighting the most brutal phase of expropriation in the 1990s, which led to 1% of the population being erased from the register of permanent residence.[1] The newly established right-wing national government tried to introduce a set of neoliberal economic reforms, mobilised against "erased" people and other minorities and tightened the grip on cultural production. This meant that the increasingly fragmented and defensive cultural and social production encountered serious problems accessing funds and infrastructure. In the city of Ljubljana power was in the hands of the left, which had no idea what to do with it except servicing the powerful real-estate lobbies. In this situation, during the "Swarming of the Multitude"[2] festival,

the opening of the former factory Rog offered a new space of encounter, *métissage* and visibility.

Immediately after the occupation, the significance of the newly-opened factory spilled beyond its physical boundaries and the boundaries of the communities directly involved in the self-management of the space. The Rog occupation became the generator and testing ground for the changing of production paradigms. For this reason, the occupation was initially supported by many arts and cultural organisations and individuals. Different concepts of the postmodern factory Rog were invested in the newly opened space. A strategy of communication with the owners was initiated. It was based on the notion of temporary use and the need for new institutions of artistic, cultural and social production, institutions for the valorisation of immaterial production: "It is not a classic occupation of space, but a temporary alteration of its purposes. The 7,000 square meter large factory has already been left to decay for 15 years. As long as MOL (City of Ljubljana) doesn't develop and begin implementing a clear strategy to solve the problem of these empty premises, we self-initiatively wish to open it to all individuals and groups engaged in the non-profit sector, for the realisation of independent production of cultural and social content" (Collective Statement, 2006). But the discourse of occupied Rog and immaterial production was simultaneously a discourse against its exploitation, based on the very organisation of the space itself. Practices of organisation and communication, such as an assembly of users and a decision-making process based on active participation, openness and self-management were set up in order to strengthen a common identity and self-valorisation. The strategy of the "temporary users of Rog" was to achieve continuity in the forms of organisation and communication

between the squatted factory (temporarily occupied Rog) and the idea of a new public institution (a kind of a centre for contemporary art, named New Rog), that was starting to be developed by the owner after the occupation: "We want to share ideas and gain knowledge on how ideas, needs for, and actualization of temporary use practices can present an important new precedent for different kind of re-use, re-generation and flexibility in contexts of cultural and production spaces in urban environments which is beneficial both for the city, their councils and underprivileged communities" (Nova 2006). This meant that temporary use was not only a tactic used in a context of extremely unfavourable power relations. It was a mechanism of defense of the public realm through its reconstruction into a common space. Therefore, the role of the assembly of temporary users was to ensure that Rog remained open (against the municipality's attempt to evict users), to organise it on the notion of "commons" (to defend it from attempts of privatisation) and to contribute to the concept of New Rog, so that the programme, activities and forms of self-management produced during the temporary use period would find continuity in the future projects of the municipality (and therefore enable the development of alternative institutions beyond bureaucratic control of the public and/or profit orientation of the private).

The project was tolerated for eight months, then municipal elections interrupted the seemingly calm development. The newly elected mayor was an independent candidate from the left who has been sacked as the chief manager of the biggest Slovene trade corporation Mercator, majority owned by the state. He promised efficiency and planned to run the city as an enterprise, carrying out projects that would allow the seemingly stagnant city of Ljubljana to make a leap forward. His team included people who prom-

ised a change in forms of production and a new style of governance that would take its strength from citizen initiatives. For a while, it seemed that the Rog project would profit from the dynamism of the new city administration. Negotiations with the city council to legalise the temporary use of the space got under way, and the project of New Rog was initially opened up to content produced by the temporary users. Then, suddenly and without warning, mayor (the role of the city council is extremely marginalised, since it was already then personalised by the mayor and the overwhelming majority of his candidates in it) unilaterally stopped all negotiations, cancelled all agreements and started a process of marginalising and ghettoising the temporary users. Rog soon became another symbol, a symbol of the degeneration of public power – the suspension of democratic, public debate, introduction of authoritarian rule and the lack of democracy in public administration. Rog has also become a paradigmatic example of the future evolution of institutions of cultural and social production in the city and in the country. The mayor's management practices from the Mercator corporation left their first traces in the municipality of Ljubljana and its administration.

Already at that stage important lessons could be drawn from the Rog experience. First, in the city of Ljubljana (a paradigmatic case of a peripheral semi-urban city) the only possible way to establish cultural and social management is by destroying the forms of organisation of collective appropriation and production of the common. Power was not able to exploit the common, so it was decided to fight it. On the second anniversary of the occupation and during the struggle against the second attempt of the mayor to evict the factory, temporary users published their understanding of his acts: "Rog is an open place, where things are done differ-

ently. The mayor obviously does not appreciate forms of creative living, uncensored expression, actual exercising of freedom of assembling, respecting human dignity and cherishing heterogeneity. Therefore he is intentionally trying to make impossible some truly autonomous and self-determined activities of individuals and groups, who reject to do exclusively what the hegemonic model of organization of social life expects them to do" (Rog Calls for Solidarity, 2008). This seems to be a very important lesson, keeping in mind the paradoxes and ambiguities that result from the nature of the peripheral economy (as in Slovenia). In peripheral capitalist economies, the struggle for development always has an ambiguous relationship with the struggle against exploitation. While in the 20th century it was possible for the struggle for development to overshadow the struggle against exploitation (with tragic consequences), this seems impossible in an age of immaterial production. Today, the struggle for development must necessarily be a struggle against exploitation. And the struggle against exploitation must be a struggle for the re-appropriation of the conditions of the production of life. Any action that seeks recuperation or integration is doomed to fail. For this reason, the idea of temporary use was at risk of sacrificing the common in favour of capitalist accumulation.

Second, the occupation of the former factory Rog has clearly raised questions about the possibility of democratising public spaces (re-making them as common spaces) and about institutions of cultural, artistic and social production in a time when public power is increasingly occupied by the logic of corporate management and the authoritarian tendencies – which are the inevitable result of this logic – are simultaneously strengthened through partnerships with private investors. This reciprocal strengthening of the authoritarian command is called private-public partnership.

The mayor's office plan of the New Rog is a plan of a contemporary art institution that was to be built in this form of 'partnership'. In this way, the council intends to impose for the first time that art institutions in the country be defined by the subordination of the public interest to corporate logic and private business interests. It is important to highlight the new scenario of class struggle that arises when immaterial (cultural, artistic and affective) labour is harnessed into the regime of capitalist accumulation. In this scenario, it becomes necessary to address issues connected with the relationship between freedom, creativity and discipline, and the relationship between eventuality, singularity and the unilateralism of capitalist valorisation. This also applies to the issue of the subjectivities of immaterial work and their relationship to institutions and public power.

And third, local political and administrative articulations of imperial rule, revealed in the case of Rog, can be similarly observed in the fields of health, social security, education and mobility. The complete integration of social life into the regime of biopolitical exploitation finds its hallmark in the process of deconstruction and reconstitution of space through borders, which are projected into urban centres where the new mechanisms of discrimination that sustain the imperial apparatus are defined. In this process of extreme segmentation we can trace a similar convergence between the public and the private, but also the emergence of an antagonist constituent common with spaces as Rog as one of its key conditions: "Autonomous spaces are essential to exercise democratic values for people, who cannot be or do not want to be a part of the established cultural, political and other social institutions" (Rog Calls for Solidarity, 2008).

From Temporary Use to Permanent Autonomy – the Experience of the Rog Social Center

The attempt to become subversively integrated into the new cycle and the new institutions of cultural, artistic and social production had perverse results: it encouraged private investment and expropriation, gentrification, and a violent attempt by the city council to restrict new productive subjectivities: "The paradox that presently confronts the city of Ljubljana is well known. With progressively deeper integration to the cultural circuits of Europe, due to the audacious brilliance of groups and individuals acting only on the strength of their own desire and their own spiritual and intellectual gifts, property values have risen. It is now mathematically 'interesting' to devote the former sites of abandonment and rust, not to further explosions of culture and philosophical freedom, but instead to the banal and mathematical increase in the values of property" (Holmes 2008). For these reasons, the Rog experience of autonomy had to spread beyond its walls and boundaries, beyond the question of a singular space and temporality. This expansion was the only possible response to the crisis, since "[p]ower, the power to maintain the relations of dependence and exploitation, does not keep to a defined 'front' at the strategic level, like a frontier on the map or a line of trenches on the ground. Power is everywhere; it is omnipresent, assigned to Being. It is everywhere *in space*. It is in everyday discourse and commonplace notions, as well as in police batons and armoured cars. It is in *objets d'art* as well as in missiles ... [P]ower has extended its domain right into the interior of each individual, to the roots of consciousness, to the 'topias' hidden in the folds of subjectivity" (Lefebvre 1976: 86-7).

The municipality's attack on Rog and the practices of free organisation pushed the temporary users of the space into the front line of the struggle against forms of domination and exploitation based on expropriation, privatisation and segmentation of populations.

A node of ideas and practices inside the Rog galaxy of initiatives, that tried to initiate this kind of process of political re-composition in the city, based on bringing to light and communicating different struggles, found its continuity and development in the concept of The Rog Social Centre. Its defining position is the constant formulation and re-formulation of spaces of alternative subjectivation and self-organised struggle. The project is based on a critique of the segmentation and verticality of the relationship between civil society and the state, identity politics and the (re)presentation of independent cultural centres as traditionally protected islands of difference. The extreme precariousness of Rog itself, which is struggling against the municipality's attempts to stifle it, offers an opportunity to understand and communicate conditions that are common to precarious statuses and institutions. The self-organised militant researchers, the erased, asylum seekers, *sans-papiers,* precarious and migrant workers who are all injecting life and struggle into the Social Center are experiencing new ways of doing politics in post-national and postfordist conditions.

In its struggle for the deconstruction and reconstitution of the traditional (nationalist) conceptualisation of the right to territory the Social Centre tries to go beyond the modern dichotomy between individualism and communitarianism that has been, at least in Slovenia, decisive for the constitution of two opposed but complementary political blocs. While the so-called left followed the path of liberal individualism and produced a discourse of rights that legitimates

privatisation and neoliberal accumulation while advocating human and minority rights as a lever for integration, the nationalist and the racist right uses the discourse of exclusive ethno-nationalist communitarianism. The movement of self-organised asylum seekers, that has been 'territorialised' in the Social Centre, called against authoritarian management and control of migration and articulated an alternative way to claim the right to territory: through enacting practices of citizenship in an attempt to build a community on the border; a border that is extrapolated in the metropolis as the border of the political and the constitution of citizenship, a border that is "physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individual shrinks with intimacy" (Anzaldúa 1987: unpaged preface).

While the hierarchically inclusive heterogeneity of citizenship presents us with the challenge of self-valorising citizenship practices as an alternative to formal citizenship, the crisis of the system of representation involving major labour and capital interests (in Slovenia it is the crisis of the neo-corporative model of overcoming conflict) offers us the opportunity to invent new forms of struggle against the political constitution of wage labour, which is moving towards an extreme form of precariousness. New forms of biosyndicalism, developed in the movement of self-organised migrant workers in and through the Social Centre, seem to offer inventive and efficient practices arising from the rejection of the paternalism of the "social partnership" and its focus on the balancing of the wage system. The network organisation with the policy of an open end towards different forms of discrimination and exploitation is discovering the joy of class struggle as a struggle for better life in general, against work

and the social reproduction of capital. The transformation of political subjectivity that is taking place in the Social Centre was thus a result of the complete re-articulation of the relationship between the social (economic) and political struggle. The struggle for control over the conditions of the production of life is both social and political. That is why representative politics can no longer claim the exclusivity of representing and organising interests. Institutions and modes of governability that criss-cross constitutional political orders have become decisive. The Social Centre is an intervention and construction against them.

Given the inherent attempt to harness spaces or forms of immaterial production into processes of normalisation and the subsequent destruction of memory and social networks, the only possible political positioning of this new space of contestation was the anti-integration stance. On the other hand, the Rog Social Centre also rejects the status of exceptionalness, which is used by the politics of difference to legitimate the existence of alternative spaces as a kind of multicultural reservoir for different minorities within society. This kind of postmodern liberal discourse and practice has also been strongly criticised by the Afro-American activist and feminist bell hooks. In her essay on "Postmodern Blackness" she strongly rejects it for its "white male exclusivity" and especially its "persistent separation" of a generalised "politics of difference" from the more specified and lived "politics of racism". In this way, the positioning of the Social Centre could be better understood through her concept of the *margin*: "I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility... We know struggle to be that which

pleasures, delights, and fulfils desire. We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world" (hooks 1990: 153). The position of the margin, as opposed to the safety of integration or exclusivity, is "a profound edge. It is not a 'safe' place. One is always at risk. One needs a community of resistance" (hooks 1990: 145, 149). It is a position of the "resident alien", "a deeply peripheral consciousness, existentially heretical and contra-centric, a spatial consciousness and geographical imagination shaped in the region of resistance beyond the established centres of power." But it is simultaneously "a consciousness and imagination peculiarly able to comprehend the innermost workings of the power centres, to know their perils an possibilities, to dwell within them with the critical ambidexterity of the ... insider who purposefully chooses to remain outside" (Soja 1996: 30). Encounter, convergence and the hybridisation of the Rog Social Centre give meaning to the new experience of autonomy inside and against the overall spectrum of imperial dominance in postfordist and postnational cities. The common spectrum of struggle and counter-power that shapes the "radical acceptance of vulnerability" (Spivak 1990) is enhancing the emancipatory potential of each singularity while at the same time strengthening the radical and multivocal space of common resistance and subjectivation.

1. For an excellent analysis of the case of the erased and their struggle, see the forthcoming English edition of Časopis za kritiko znanosti, *Once Upon An Erasure: From Citizens To Illegal Residents In the Republic of Slovenia,* **2008.**

2. The festival included a set of events, dedicated to the publishing of the Slovene translation of Hardt and Negri's *Multitude* **Časopis za kritiko znanosti, 2005). After a public presentation at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Antonio Negri officially opened the factory the next morning by attending the press conference of the festival.**

Polona Mozetič
— Workers' Dormitories:
From Private Property to Public
Forum and Back Again

Particular places invite, more or less previously defined, particular forms of behaviour, and prohibit others. In this way places reproduce dominant social relations and bodily practices. Activities that oppose expected social behaviour therefore often take the form of spatial transgressions that disturb the socio-spatial order. As such they signal processes of changing perception of how individuals, groups, and communities perceive their place in the dominant order of things. Just as power is inscribed into space, resistance also manifests itself through space.

When they provide privacy, places have emancipatory potential for individuals. As Habermas pointed out, the bourgeois public sphere was based on bracketing economic status: the bourgeois public sphere was premised on the public conversation of private individuals, a conversation between those citizens whose private property and familial intimacy produced a subjectivity that was essentially positioned outside of the public sphere. However, for the working classes the crowded, unsanitary workers' housing hardly provided the space that was a comparable scene of psychological emancipation.[1] For some workers these living conditions have not significantly changed since the epoch described by Habermas. The migrant workers' private sphere, which is materialised in the institution of the Workers' Hostel, is designed to be an additional source to experience exclusion and alienation, and consequential disempowerment.

Then again, places as venues of communication and interaction have the potential to forge communities. The public sphere allows the formation of solidarities, the public presentation of identities and new issues and the establishment of informal networks of communication.[2] Shared places have the power to integrate individuals in shared

concepts of reality. For rights like freedom of speech and freedom of association[3] to be effective and appropriate, sufficient and adequate places are required where individuals can communicate and interact. Workers' Dormitories do not provide any kind of space that invites public discourse. In fact, in dormitories the public discourse is discouraged and rendered impossible. It is forbidden and sanctioned. As a result, dormitory space makes impossible scripts of workers' encounters that can potentially challenge social and political domination.

When faced with the non-existence of shared space within the dormitories, workers also experience the disappearance of genuine public space in general. Despite the continued existence of parks, promenades, squares and other types of traditional public places, these are not the places that invite migrant workers to initiate a public discourse about migration policies. Traditional public places therefore cannot function as alternative venues to fill the lack of shared space in the Workers' Hostels. In general, the spectacular character and features of the architecture that surrounds us do not invite or encourage public discourse. Existing public space is designed mostly to facilitate commerce and recreation, rather than expression.[4] In this manner it effectively limits the types of people that gather in such places.

However, speech from the margins has not been completely silenced, since migrant workers living in hostels are gradually appropriating some sort of (temporary) collective space inside the dormitory space in the form of workers' assemblies. Workers of the World, previously invisible, are thus gaining social visibility. Their aspiration makes them face different obstacles, especially as a result of legal

considerations that emerge in consequence of the private ownership of compounds that provide housing for migrant workers.

Temporary Economic Migration in a Nutshell

The issue of temporary migration programmes is highly controversial. Some critics argue that such programmes are both unworkable and undesirable in a liberal democracy. This argument is primarily based on the fact that many of the guest-worker programmes in the past – most notably the *Bracero* programme in the United States (1942-64) and the *Gastarbeiter* programme in Germany (1955-73) – failed to meet the stated policy objectives, while generating a number of unanticipated consequences. These included the non-return and eventual settlement of many guest workers. The slogan "There is nothing more permanent than temporary foreign workers" has been a popular summary statement of the apparent failure of past guest-worker programmes.[5] As a consequence, contemporary migration policies try to develop innovative measures and institutions to avoid mistakes of the past. These measures involve the ambiguity of the migrant workers' residence status in the country where they look for work.

In Slovenia the policy of economic migration[6] is driven by the goal of alleviating labour shortages. Mechanisms for regulating the number of annual admissions of migrant workers from the so-called third countries (i.e. countries that are not members of the European Union) are based on the system of quotas. The government sets an annual quota for the number of work permits issued to migrant workers.

This system is accompanied by a labour market test that is meant to ensure that migrant workers are only admitted after employers have seriously and unsuccessfully searched for local workers to fill the existing vacancies. As a result, migrants are employed in shortage occupations only. Local workers (i.e. Slovenian citizens and citizens of the member states of the European Union) enjoy the right to preferential access to the national labour market.

Migrant workers from non-member states are admitted and employed as part of the temporary employment permit and temporary residency permit. Migrant workers whose temporary work permits, temporary residence permits, or labour contracts have expired and who have not been accorded another legal status, lose their right to reside in Slovenia and are required to leave its territory under the threat of deportation.

Migrant workers' residence and employment in Slovenia depend on different temporary work permits. Not all migrant workers coming from so-called third countries share the same formal status. Different types of work permits affect their legal situation. Some workers are admitted under *Seasonal Permits*, which are valid for less than a year. They are typically issued to address strictly temporary labour shortage. A *Work Permit* is valid for one year and is renewable for the same period of time. Such a permit requires that a migrant worker is employed by the employer specified on the work permit only. In other words, a migrant worker with a work permit cannot compete with local workers on the labour market. In order to enter the country a migrant worker must have received a job offer. Once s/he has obtained a work permit, s/he is not free to change employer if the present employment is unsatisfactory. The only alternative to unsatisfactory employment is

to return home. Some migrant workers succeeded to obtain a *Personal Work Permit*. This type of permit provides a migrant worker from a non-member state a more agreeable legal status. A worker is entitled to a personal permit after a two-year employment with the same employer. Such permit has a three-year validation and provides the right to freely change the employer. However, the legislation specifies the skill level required for the migrant to get the three-year personal work permit. In addition, workers are not well informed about the possibility and conditions to gain a personal permit. The share of migrant workers who are employed by means of personal work permits is consequently relatively small.

The described framework of legal statuses based on citizenship, work, and residence arrangements contributes to the inequalities in terms of rights, legal protection, and social entitlements among groups of migrant workers of different and between migrant workers and local workers.

The construction industry, which has become the mainstay of the Slovenian economy,[7] employs a substantial proportion of male migrant workers, especially from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Economic migrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina are filling vacancies primarily in low-skilled and labour-intensive jobs. In the construction industry migrant workers are especially welcomed, since labour shortages are likely to cause delays in building and add to the costs of construction. The strategy of importing exclusively workers for the so-called 'deficitary' occupations, that are in general not appealing to local workers, has lead to the representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a country of construction workers and other low-skilled workers ("Bosnians are good construction workers!"). Migrant workers are thus racialised as inhabitants of inferior geographical

areas. Furthermore, their status as migrant workers is often exploited to fuel fear of competition with local workers and xenophobic sentiments in general.[8]

Dormitory Labour Regime

Distinct legal statuses of workers (re)produce the segmented labour market. Some institutional mechanisms like the Workers' Hostels additionally represent migrant workers as cheap and unprotected labour forces.

Many migrant workers are living in housing provided by the employer. Since obtaining work permits is closely intertwined with granting temporary residence, employers usually provide housing for low-skilled migrant workers. Workers' Dormitories or Workers' Hostels are special institutions where many temporary migrant workers live. These dormitories are situated all over: in different parts of the cities, even in the city centres in the strictest sense, in the suburbs and in rural areas.

The Workers' Dormitories are extremely overcrowded and many of them do not meet the basic sanitary and living standards. Nevertheless, the poor living conditions of these places alone would not justify labelling them as institutions typical of the migration policy. Some additional characteristics of this housing arrangement for migrant workers make that the Workers' Hostels cannot just be considered neutral loci for the housing of migrants; they are an important factor in the scheme of the temporary employment of migrant workers in selected low-skill occupations.

Occupying dormitory space has implications for the migrant workers on the level of situating their daily lives. Living in a Workers' Dormitory implies a social positioning that affects their employment and how they experience life

in general. It is characteristic of the Workers' Dormitories that they provide different commodities for workers and their employers. Apart from housing the workers, dormitory arrangements enable the employers to organise the daily commuting of workers to the production (construction) sites in the most efficient and inexpensive manner. By doing so, the workers' time is efficiently managed in order to prolong their working time.

Dormitories do not only help extend the working day; they also increase the workers' dependency on their employers. Workers living in a dormitory are legally not considered tenants. To support the statement that a migrant worker is formally not a tenant, some characteristics of the workers' living arrangements in the hostels distinguish them from residential tenancy, especially the absence of a contractual provision for the payment of rent. Workers do not pay rent themselves. Since employers either rent these dormitories or own such premises, they effectively deduce the rent directly from the wages.[9] As a consequence, the use of dormitories lowers wages.

Furthermore, the recognition of full tenancy would have impaired the employer's ability to flexibly use the dormitory space (or more accurately: beds) until they comply with specific procedures and legal guaranties. Instead, the employer can easily move workers from one dormitory to another in order to house them in the closest proximity of the construction sites. When a worker is transferred to a different construction site, he may easily be relocated to a new Workers' Hostel, one that is in the most optimal distance of the working site.

Dormitory space embodies additional aspects of domination over migrant workers. Since dormitories provide housing for men only, they bear the pejorative name

"boarding-house for single men" (in the Slovene language: *samski dom*). This term denotes not only gender, but also the marital status of the resident. However, workers living in dormitories are often neither single nor unmarried. They often support wives and children who have stayed in the countries of origin. The term "single" therefore signifies the lower status of the migrant worker, trapped in the dormitory regime. It unfolds a migrant's inferior working identity inscribed not only within labour relations, but within sexual relations as well.

The dormitory living regime enforces the workers' return to their countries of origin once their labour is no longer needed. The dormitory regime effectively keeps the workers away from their families and friends. Formally migrant workers have the right to family reunion. However, workers living in dormitories cannot exercise this right. Besides strict formal conditions that render family reunions impossible, housing arrangements in the dormitories discourage even short-term visits of family members or friends. Sharing a room with 3 to 6 comrades is an insurmountable obstacle to inviting family members or friends. Visits cannot take place without disturbing roommates or feeling embarrassed *à propos* relatives or friends.

To conclude, the dormitory labour regime for migrant workers can be considered an informal or silent instrument of the policy of economic migration. The use of dormitories to accommodate migrant labour has become a systemic feature of the management of economic migration in low-skill occupations. Its aim is to draw on youthful migrant labour for short periods of time only. The dormitory labour regime enforces the policy of economic migration, which tries to combine the country's need to meet its labour market requirements, the aim to maximise the developmental impact

of economic migration, and concerns about the permanent settlement of migrants.

Exercise of Workers' Expressive Rights in Dormitory Space
… from private property …

Migrant workers are not only economically exploited, they are also politically neutralised. They occupy a precarious place in society. Often they do not know what their rights are. Their situation is further complicated by the fact that many do not speak the language of the country they work in. These guest workers have only a limited union tradition or legacy of labour activism to draw on. Because of the rootless nature of migrant workers' lives, it is practically impossible for them to exercise political power. Caught in a relationship with a particular employer who provides not only work but housing as well, workers' negotiating powers and their mobility rights are seriously diminished. Workers' Dormitories are an additional expression of the determination not only to exploit, isolate and exclude, but also to politically neutralise low-skilled migrant workers from the so-called third countries, who embody the "European Other".[10]

Workers' Hostels are spatial forms that presuppose certain social practices of the residents, neighbours, visitors and passers-by. The expected behaviour is partly determined by the fact that Workers' Hostels are not official state institutions, but privately owned premises. Property right gives exclusive use and enjoyment to its owner, who is allowed to exclude all others from interfering with it. If a compound has the status of private property, methods of control to some extent cannot endanger the countervail-

ing rights such as free speech and freedom of association. When the control is exercised by the state, these rights constitute at least potentially limits on control. While individuals and groups may put claim to these rights *à propos* the state only, owners of private property are not bound by them. For example, refugees may not be able to leave a government-run refugee camp, but they would have more freedom to protest against the conditions there than if they were released and staged a demonstration at the privately owned shopping mall.[11] Quite the opposite is true for the dormitory regime. Freedom to enter or leave a Workers' Hostel might not be disputed. Yet, the possibilities of migrant workers to use the dormitory space to stage protests are considerably limited.

In some Workers' Hostels the owners decide on the rules of behaviour that the residents and anyone who enters the dormitory have to stick to. In some hostels the owners claim their authority by explicitly prohibiting any political activity inside the dormitory space. Furthermore, the workers cannot partake in the shaping of the dormitory life. Even though there are no written prohibitions, political activity is implicitly rendered impossible, since hostels offer no gathering space within the dormitories. The architecture and design of these places are such that they control the environment and the activities in it and mute the residents.

While optimally integrating (trapping) migrant workers into labour relationships, the Workers' Hostels contribute to the fact that migrant workers exist beyond visibility and experience political and cultural exclusion from mainstream society. Migrant workers are expected to just work in the country, not to make social claims. The desired result is to transform the workers into mere spectators of public life and to prevent them from actively participating in it.

While this passive attitude increases the workers' labour flexibility, it also reinforces their social immobility. Migrant workers are supposed to form not only an imported proletariat that leads a marginal and cultural existence deprived of political and civil rights,[12] but also a non-integrated and volatile labour force.

… to the public forum …

However, the existing network of power relations in the dormitory labour regime is not impenetrable; it offers possibilities for resistance. Migrant workers struggle against exclusion, which is reflected in the effort to institutionalise their active participation in the everyday life and politics of the Workers' Dormitories. They have organised assemblies as a stepping stone to establishing and practising public space inside the dormitory space.

Organising an assembly emerged from the desire to (re)capture public space in the workers' dormitory, to establish and maintain a 'space' in which the workers could assert their informal collective power over managers, bosses and hostel owners. Anders Corr pictures the emancipatory and empowering potential of an assembly in his book *No Trespassing*. The author describes his earliest memory of housing struggles. His mother and he survived on welfare and lived in a low-rent district. Their landlord, Mr. Shady, wanted to evict the residents of the building, refurbish the building and raise the rent beyond their means. Corr recalls that his mother took him, a five-year-old, to the meeting with the neighbours. He describes his experience: "A Black man with an afro and a cigarette, he gestured with his fist and threatened something to the effect of, 'If he tries to evict me, he'll be shady all right.' Even now, I can feel my eyes

widening. I feel scared at the allusion to violence, but at the same time safe. Ensconced with a group of angry neighbors packed into a small room, I felt protected, and indeed I was. […] [S]o from early in life I witnessed the efficacy of solidarity against landlords."[13]

The first assembly occurred at the Workers' Hostel on Poljanska Street situated almost in the city centre of Ljubljana. It was organised in December 2007 by the workers living in this Hostel and activists of the local Social Centre.[14] Since this Workers' Hostel provided no suitable rooms, the assembly took place on the staircase. The assembly organisers, however, had to surmount some barriers that threatened the organisation of workers' assemblies at the dormitory. A dispute emerged between the assembly organisers and the hostel owner regarding the issue of social practices allowed in the dormitory.

The owner of the Workers' Hostel on Poljanska Street issued detailed house rules that among other things prohibited visits after 8.30 PM. Nevertheless, the assembly organisers insisted on starting the assembly at 8 PM sharp. The owner's house rule thus conflicted with the intention of the activists who planned to participate in the assembly but were no dormitory residents. In addition, union activists even made their presence at the assembly depend on receiving prior permission from the owner. For this reason, the owner was previously informed about the intent to organise the assembly, yet was not asked for permission. The owner did not directly prohibit the assembly. Instead, the owner suggested that the assembly be held before 8.30 PM according to the house rules.

The owner's right to maintain discipline in the dormitories and to exercise sovereignty over his property was mirrored in the house rules that regulated the behaviour of

the dormitory residents. Of course, the purpose of the house rules is to maintain order in the dormitory since many people live close to each other. Certain rules of conduct are therefore reasonable if it makes individuals who share the same living space co-exist peacefully. Restriction of visiting hours recognises the right of residents to enjoy peace and quiet at night, a time dedicated to rest and sleep. If an individual receives visitors at inappropriate hours he disturbs his comrades. In doing so, he effectively claims that his individual right to have visitors is superior to the right of his fellow-workers to rest. Such behaviour cannot be considered legitimate. However, a workers' assembly is a different matter altogether. An assembly is a gathering of the majority of workers accommodated in the Workers' Dormitory. The purpose of the assembly is to deliberate about common issues and take collective decisions. Such assemblies are convened only from time to time and are announced in advance. An additional consideration should be given to the fact that workers who live in dormitories work long hours. After work they need some time to wash, eat and rest. Therefore, 8 PM seemed to be the most appropriate time to start an assembly. At that hour the majority of workers was expected to actually be in the hostel. In addition, the appointed time was considered sufficiently early so as not to disturb the workers who did not intend to participate in the assembly. To sum up, a workers' assembly was considered an event that legitimised an exceptional departure from the house rules despite the owner's demands.

Besides the social practices permitted in the hostel, the dispute was about the symbolic meaning and values attached to the dormitory space. This experience revealed the conflict between the private property interests of the dormitory owner on the one hand and the freedom of expression

and association on the part of the workers and activists on the other. The right of expression is directly connected to the concept of "place". These rights need breathing space to survive.[15] To be effective, expressive and associative rights require ample and adequate places in which speakers and listeners can connect, communicate and perhaps even confront each other.[16] Participation and dialogue cannot materialise without space.

As a rule, property owners are not required to open their property for the sake of free speech. However, Workers' Dormitories should be considered quasi-public in nature, despite the fact that they are privately owned. It is a quasi-public space, since it operates as a self-contained community for a significant number of persons.[17] In addition, as an informal institution of the migration policy it functions as a mechanism of official control of the population of migrant workers.

Disregarding house rules and the owner's suggestion were forms of spatial transgression, a rupture in the dormitory's structure of power. In the described circumstances, acting against house rules challenged particular social inequalities of the migrant labour regime. By this means a public forum was established within the dormitory space for different actors to communicate, such as workers-residents, union representatives, political activists, journalists, and even the representatives of the hostel owner and employers. Since there are no comparable precedents, the event marked a shift in terms of political spaces. The assembly functioned as a public forum where the participating workers articulated their social positioning and questioned the dominant narrative of neoliberal migration policy.

Workers forced private property parties to show respect for free speech. By imposing a temporarily shared

space on the dormitory labour regime, they symbolically degraded its authoritarian structure. They generated a space that challenges the power relations and serves the development of resistance. They even proved to themselves and others that an alternative to the dominant relations and the hierarchical order exists.

An assembly in dormitory space can be regarded as an exercise in democracy, if democracy is identified with some notion of people collectively managing their affairs through an open and relatively egalitarian process of public discussion.[18] Workers left their rooms and gathered on the staircase, which became a locus for a distinct group of individuals who saw themselves as actors in public space. Strengthening this kind of space implies broadening the concept of democracy in order to link it with the freedom to construct spaces for recognition, the freedom to dispute given identities and the freedom to innovate at the political level.[19] The political participation of this social group in the public sphere became possible through spatial appropriation, which implied not only a practical occupation of space but also the appropriation of the image of the public forum.[20]

Such spatial transgression can further be understood as a step to reinvent citizenship, not in its legal sense of course, but as a practice and project. As Saskia Sassen pointed out, through civil and workplace struggles disadvantaged subjects fought for and gained formal rights. These struggles to remake citizenship continue.[21] Emergent political practices often involve hitherto silent or silenced population groups or organisations. Through their destabilising effects, these dynamics and actors are producing operational and rhetorical openings that allow new types of political subjects and new spatialities for politics to emerge.[22]

… and back again …

The right to assemble in and use public space is not only relatively new, but always hotly contested and only gradually granted by those in power.[23] For migrant workers, who are strongly subjected to social exclusion, it is not enough to use and thus produce available public space. Therefore, they had to actively take it.

Nevertheless, almost a year after the first workers' assembly at the Hostel on Poljanska Street it became evident how easily the idea of a public forum inside the dormitory space be overlooked. The step back unfortunately involved an artistic project that referred to the screenings of the documentary film entitled *Brotherhood and Unity* (2006) in the Workers' Hostels. Marija Mojca Pungerčar's film portrays migrant workers on a highway construction site and in the hostels or boarding houses where they live. The artist organised the screening in four selected Hostels, including the Hostel on Poljanska Street.

Pungerčar aimed to show the film to the social group that was featured in it but had not seen it yet since this group has no access to exhibitions and festivals.[24] Her argument in fact tied in with a reactionary notion of culture that corresponds with a value judgment that determines who has access to culture and who does not have access.[25]

The screenings of the film started at 8 PM. To ensure undisturbed screenings the author had asked the owners of the selected dormitories for permission. However, she did not seek any accordance with the workers who lived in the particular hostels and who – at least symbolically – already appropriated some shared space in the dormitories. This attitude was quite incomprehensible, since the screening of the documentary was part of "Museum in the Street", a

larger project of the Museum of Modern Art that aimed to challenge precisely the loss of public space.[26]

The presentation of artworks in public space can sometimes function as a mechanism for intervention and subversion of dominant conditions of certain spaces. The content of an art project as well as the manner of its presentation – if the two can be set apart – have the potential to question the existing narratives of domination and hierarchical ordering in society. However, this was not the case here. By not including the voice of the "Other" the art project did not show any sensitivity to the genealogy of the notion of public forum in the dormitory space.

Even if the artist did not intend to use art for the purpose of activism or resistance, the project could not be considered impartial. In this case art was not exhibited in a neutral locus, but in a highly contested space. In the conflict about which party controlled specific aspects of dormitory space and about the meaning of that control, the artist implicitly (though most likely unintentionally) sided with the Hostels' owners. By complying with illegitimate restrictions on free speech and the freedom of association in dormitory space, she did not only decide not to use art to challenge the authority or disturb the geometry of control, she clearly positioned herself within this geometry.

To Conclude

There is a great contrast between repulsive buildings that serve as Workers' Dormitories and modern buildings that are arising at construction sites. By exploiting migrant labour cities have been reinventing themselves with spectacular spaces of consumption at their centres in order to position themselves in the global battle. Yet this veil of ap-

pearance conceals the marked class, ethnic, and gendered polarisations. If the former probably corresponds with desires that fuel cross-border mobility, the latter reveals the actual experience of the migrants.

Appropriating public forums has the potential to change the ways in which migrants have been excluded and alienated from society on the basis of their ethnicity, class, and gender. A forum of a workers' assembly is a space that symbolically challenges the inequalities. However, it is also an actual space that provides opportunities for new ways of self-empowering and self-organising.

1. Margaret Kohn, "The Power of Place: The House of the People as Counterpublic", *Polity*, Vol. 33, 2001, p. 511.

2. Alberto Melluci and Leonardo Avritzer, "Complexity, Cultural Pluralism and Democracy: Collective Action in the Public Space", *Social Sciences Information*, Vol. 39, 2000, p. 510.

3. Expressive rights derived from the freedom of speech (freedom of expression) guarantee an individual to speak freely. Freedom of speech is closely related to, yet distinct from, the freedom of assembly and association, which is the right to come together with other individuals and collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests. Freedom of assembly is often used in the context of the right to protest. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly and association are recognised as human rights, political freedoms and civil liberties. For example, European Convention of Human Rights recognises freedom of expression (Article 10): "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers." The Convention also recognises the freedom of assembly and association (Article 11): "Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests." These freedoms are subjects to limitations.
The normative meaning and function of speech rights have its roots in the political philosophy. Neoliberalism and participatory democratic theory invoke competing philosophical assumptions about the core questions underlying determinations of speech rights. For a distinction and further elaboration on this question see Laura Stein, "Understanding Speech Rights: Defensive and Empowering Approaches to the First Amendment", *Media Culture Society*, Vol. 26, 2004, p. 104-9.

4. Timothy Zick, "Property, Place and Public Discourse", *Journal of Law & Policy*, Vol. 21, 2006, p. 173.

5. Martin Ruhs, "The Potential of Temporary Migration Programmes in Future International Migration Policy", *International Labour Review*, Vol. 145, 2006, p. 7.

6. On different models of temporary migration programmes, see Ruhs *supra* note 4.

7. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, *Gross domestic product, 2nd quarter 2008*: http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=1849. Accessed October 2008.

8. Heather Merrill and Donald Carter, "Inside and Outside Italian Political Culture: Immigrants and Diasporic politics in Turin", *GeoJournal*, Vol. 58, 2002, p. 167.

9. This is apparently not a new feature of the employer-worker relationship. The question "Does he [employer] not deduct the rent from your wages?" is one of one hundred listed in *A Workers' Inquiry*, written by Karl Marx in 1880. A complete version of *A Workers' Inquiry* can be found on the Marx and Engels Internet Archive at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/04/20.htm. Accessed October 2008.

10. Ian Ward, "Identifying the European Other", *International Journal of Refugee Law*, Vol. 14, 2002, p. 219.

11. Matthew G. Hannah, "Space and the Structuring of Disciplinary Power: An Interpretative Review", *Geografiska Annaler*, Series 79 B, 1997, p. 174.

12. André Gorz, "Immigrant Labour", *New Left Review*, Vol. 61, 1970, p. 28.

13. Andres Corr, *No Trespassing*, South End Press, Cambridge (MA), 1999, p. 6.

14. On the Social Centre Rog see Andrej Kurnik and Barbara Beznec's article "Resident Alien: The Rog Experience on the Margin" in this book.

15. Timothy Zick, "Speech and Spatial Tactics", *Texas Law Review*, Vol. 84, 2006, p. 581.

16. Zick, *supra* note 3, p. 173.

17. Frederick Kaplan, "Access to Migrant Labor Camps; Marsh v. Alabama Revisited", *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, Vol. 55, 1979, p. 285.

18. David Graeber, *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*, AK Press, 2007, p. 331.

19. Melluci, Avritzer, *supra* note 2, p. 521.

20. Bülent Batuman, "Imagination as Appropria- tion: Student Riots and the (Re)Claiming of Public Space", *Space & Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2003, p. 261.

21. Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006, p. 278.

22. Sassen, *supra* note 20, pp. 278-9.
23. Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Jus- tice and the Fight for Public Space*, Guilford Press, New York, 2003, p. 14.

24. See the project's webpage: http://www.3via. org/index.php?htm=bratstvo_in_enotnost/kinoslo- ga. Accessed October 2008.

25. Suely Rolnick, Felix Guattari, "Molecular Revolution in Brazil", *Semiotexte*, MIT press, Cambridge (MA), 2008, p. 23.

26. On the project's web page (http://www.mg-lj. si/node/189) one can read the following: "With the new global order and the subsequent different con- ceptualization of space, public space has literally disappeared. […] In the context of the Museum in the Street project, artists, theoreticians, and activists will explore and intervene in the so-called urban antagonisms, that is, those aspects of the city that are both present and at the same time invisible, marginalized, and repressed, making them in this way visible in a new, artistic context." Accessed October 2008.

Tjaša Pureber:
Problems *of* Resistance and
Problems *with* Resistance

For too long people have been hearing ultimatums from governments and neoliberal institutions like the WTO[1] and IMF,[2] attempts to persuade everyone that they possess the one single Truth, that there is no possible alternative to their Truth.[3] Numerous movements across the world are constantly proving that different realities can coexist. In consequence of critical self-evaluations by movements and activists various questions have arisen. It is not within the scope of this essay to offer ultimate answers. Rather, it is my intention to stress some thoughts about the challenges that rebellious movements are facing, which hopefully will generate a broader discussion about the political stakes at present. Besides focusing on the extension of the political, I would also like to talk about the concept of the revolution today – taking the experience of the student movement *Avtonomna tribuna* in Slovenia as a basis.[4]

It seems that after each larger revolutionary episode – the student rebellions of 1968, the fall of the Berlin wall, protests against the war in Iraq or the anti-G8 demonstrations – the time comes when the respective movements somehow lose the energy to set up new projects and make demands. To start off with, the feeling of 'power-to', the power to create different realities from the existing capitalist order, becomes much more real 'in the streets'. Revolution seems to be within hand's reach, especially when many people are concurrently fighting for a cause across the world. From this perspective it is understandable that activists feel defeated when they see time and again that the movement has been criminalised or its discourse has been incorporated into the dominant discourse, especially when they do not immediately see the results of their rebellion.

It seems that in a system that highly values productivity people want to see immediate results, also when it comes

to resisting the directive in the resistance. Radical politics, however, cannot articulate itself in terms of means and ends (Agamben 2004), just as a fundamentally different society cannot come about overnight. Revolution is a process and should not be seen as a one-time event that makes a clear cut with the previous system and from that point onward builds a society that has abolished former power relations and mutually recognises human dignity. The creation of the new society must be a long-term, constant process (Rocker 1949/1986). Even though many movements and theorists talked about this line of events, the project eventually turned out to be about taking over the power, i.e. the state power. And even though the implementation of such procedures was often seen as only one step in the social transformation,[5] it often was the most important stage of the revolution. Rather than rebellion having a negative connotation, it became something positive since it was establishing a "different" state (Holloway 2004: 19).

In the past, revolutions have left people unsatisfied because they did not truly offer a real alternative. Rebellions in the 20th century mostly focused on the issues of labour and the avant-garde taking over the power. Therefore, whoever expected that an avant-garde party or common idea of revolution would materialise, finds today's resistance much less exciting. This resistance does not arise from the centre, but from the margins of society. It is generated by exclusion and non-hierarchic ways of living. Therefore, an alternative is not something that will happen in the future, but is something that is already taking place in everyday rebellion (Zadnikar 2005: 9). Excluded, unwanted and invisible, whoever constitutes the pockets of resistance is therefore fighting against the neoliberal force that is trying to eliminate them (Marcos 2002: 54). Revolutionary resistance to

capitalism has been a typical long-term strategy of revolutionary movements; the daily creation of new realities, then, is seen as a way to a radically different society. This type of revolutionary strategy is therefore the guideline that represents the motive and gives sense to everyday experience and prevents that political decisions are postponed, which could occur without those guidelines.

Ever since the debate between Rosa Luxemburg and Eduard Bernstein the overall dominant paradigm within 20th century revolutionary circles seems to take two directions only: reform[6] or revolution.[7] The problem is that both reform and revolution are focused on the state, which is seen as an autonomous entity, whereas in fact the state has no such autonomy.[8] In the network of human relations, the state is only one more factor and as long as labour is organised on the basis of capitalist relations,[9] the state can only do things that sustain a capitalist mode of production. To put it differently, every government that significantly worked against the interests of the capital, would only provoke the capital to move away from its territory (Holloway 2004: 20), since capital, unlike people, has hardly any limits when it comes to moving on an international level. Further, the state cannot organise an 'autonomous' mode of production. Governments always depend on 'private' production through taxes, for every state needs to demonstrate its power via materialised means (army, police, welfare state, etc.). Therefore, the previous statement can even be radicalised. The state can not only *choose* to work in the interest of the capital, it always *must* work in the interest of the capital, since it is precisely the private accumulation that makes the state and its government exist as such (Offe 1985). Anarcho-syndicalists therefore suggest that governments cannot achieve a socialist order. This socialist order must be created through solidarity

and cooperation among workers in each of the production branches, where factories are taken over by the producers, i.e. the workers themselves. Different production entities are then autonomous and are producing and distributing in the interest of communities, which are constructed on the basis of a voluntary consensus (Chomsky 1972/1986: 612).[10]

Nevertheless, despite its support of capital, the state can to some extent regulate the capitalist exploitation and distribution of wealth through the mechanisms of the welfare state. In fact, as Hardt and Negri point out, no economic market can exist without political order and regulation[11] (Hardt and Negri 2005: 165). Privatising public goods certainly represents a danger to every aspect of human life; this article, then, does not put forward the argument that the state should not intervene in the economy. The article posits that when the revolution focuses on the state it cannot generate a change in the economic or general social order.

Most revolutionary struggles, having achieved some successful political actions, suspended their own progression once they faced state issues. Struggle is lost once the revolution starts focusing on the state take-over, when the logic of the power-over becomes the logic of the revolution. The struggle for a non-hierarchic anti-capitalist world suddenly changes into a struggle merely for a different regime (Holloway 2004: 23).

The emphasis on the negativity of resistance is important in every political struggle. The question of what we want is far less important than the question of what we do not want. Resistance is legitimate even without a clear vision of the future. By creating community in resistance we are already creating the society we wish to have, namely the society that is fundamentally different from the existing one – a society whose core elements will be brotherhood, solidarity

and non-hierarchic relations.[12] The negation of negating our human existence is at the same time already the basis of the humanity that is yet to come. Bakunin said that a passion for destruction is also a creative passion. Through the negativity of resistance both the subject and the form in which the subject explains the world to himself and others is created (Jeffs 1998: 39). Also, the process of negation is endless. There is no positive dialectics in the resistance, no synthesis that would resolve all the conflicts. Even if we, roughly speaking, succeed in creating a society in which no individuals exercise authoritarianism, we must still fight against the repetition of power-over. In that sense we are talking about the endless process of rebellion. Since we also create ourselves in the struggle against self-denial, the final goal should not be the safe harbour. The "final" aim must be a state of constant becoming and transforming, our liberation from negation, which is also the creation of everything that is human in the sense of fulfilling our creative potential (Holloway 2004).[13]

So the current challenge is not to think of revolution as the taking over of the state power, but to see revolution as a concept that breaks with the logic of the state. However, the concept of revolution seems to be a taboo theme even for the left and for the alterglobalisation movement. Far too frequently theorists talk about social change, reforms of capitalism, but not about the revolution and the abolishment of capitalism as such. However, as goes for the concept of revolution, the concept of the political too is limited to state boundaries. Although some suggestions, such as a universal basic income, may seem "revolutionary" in the given circumstances, they still do not do away with the idea of the state and capitalist order as such.

In these circumstances, the student movement Avtonomna tribuna,[14] as many other movements, faced an

interesting dilemma. On the one hand, its core activity has always been to resist general apathy against capitalist exploitations on every level of human existence,[15] using methods that broadly coexist with the anarchist idea and practice[16] without ever truly calling itself anarchist. But on the other hand, it also fought against the privatisation of the welfare state in Slovenia, especially against the reforms of public health services and higher educational systems – which means that it was to a certain extent acknowledging and defending the existence of the welfare state. Nevertheless, activists of AT saw such action as a temporary tactic and not as a long-term strategy.[17]

Facing this ambivalent political situation, AT raised a number of questions. How to achieve a fundamentally different society, without rejecting the existing and endangered social rights fought for by generations of workers? How to manoeuvre between formal organisations such as trade unions without getting caught in the web of reformist action?

AT's central motto is: "Rights are not given, but struggled for!" One of the movements' answers to the question of the welfare state was to support and declare one's solidarity[18] with workers and other groups that fought for better wages, public health rights and so on while retaining its critical edge by radically demanding the end of capitalism, state exploitation and militarism and taking on a critical view of the hierarchic organisational principles of the unions. This perhaps became most obvious in demonstrations organised by the unions in November 2007 when all larger unions in Slovenia and many of their international union partners[19] demanded higher wages during street protests in Ljubljana.[20] AT supported their struggle from the beginning and the movement reached its peak by forming the Autonomous Bloc (along with other resistant communities) at the demonstra-

tions. However, unions, for their own pragmatic reasons,[21] made it very clear that they had had enough of capitalism, not of the state and the government. Union leaders tried to persuade the public that the demonstrations were not a "political" event. This brings us to the meaning of the term political. The overall sense, not just referring to the revolution, but to political practice and theory in general is completely saturated with the idea of state and government, so it cannot see beyond its narrow delineations. Would you call tens of thousands people on the streets "apolitical"? As Marx put it, "Do not say that social movement excludes political. Political movement that is not at the same time also a social movement does not exist" (Marx in Ouviña 2005: 35). If we criticise capital, we must realise that the state is its central supportive agency. The principles of domination, hierarchy and exploitation of the capital and the state are intertwined. As we have already shown, state structures and capital support each other and therefore create extreme poverty of the visible and invisible workers.

Carefully avoiding endangering the composition of the workers' demonstrations, AT decided to radicalise the protests simply by expressing their views of both state and capitalism, and as such opening up space for bigger narratives. AT promoted disagreement as a principle of politics and not of class compromise as was suggested by the Unions. The process at the basis of the outward manifestation of the movements' control of the protests even intensified AT's determination to emphasise the idea of every individual being able to participate in common decision making, which after all was their first goal when they occupied the university halls. The process of creating a common theoretical platform helped to develop the principle that every community can only progress if every single member of that community

develops. The demonstrations and the variety of slogans of the Autonomous Bloc showed a wide range of issues that the people who gathered in it were dealing with. The fact that the Bloc was not able to come up with a single message[22] raised some concerns. Yet, this also showed the power of difference within the emerging political form. But it highlighted more than anything that AT never meant to be a group, movement or organisation, but first and foremost a form of political action.

Nevertheless, the question about the relationship between grassroots movements and unions still remains open. During the November 2007 demonstrations Slovene unions, with their demands and rhetoric, proved to be a conservative rather than subversive force. The unions still are in favour of class compromise and negotiations with the capital and the state. However, by taking stage with the versatile group of activists of the Autonomous Bloc, unions showed they understand the need for a more radical approach by opening up space for the articulation of different political and social practices. Another important fact is that different unions were able to cooperate for the sake of a common cause, thereby in a way forming an autonomous movement,[23] which the number of participants and the continuity of their actions testify to.

Grassroots movements, then, have to be cautious not to be entirely affected by the avant-garde mood. Even though it may seem a small victory to earn a few Euros more, such battles, especially if they are radicalised by a general critique of exploitation, are also important parts in the larger resistance against capitalism. All these attempts can be seen as a never-ending fight for self-realisation, as rebellion against repressive authoritarian subjects or institutions that perform power-over on people. As Rocker

points out, freedom in this context is not an absolute concept; it only refers to everyone's possibility to develop their abilities and talents and get rid of the bonds of capitalist exploitation and political and social slavery that derives from it (Rocker in Chomsky 1972/1986: 611). Holloway (2004) emphasises the idea of a voice inside every individual that is crying out ¡Ya basta! – against oblivion, alienation, exploitation. Even though it is not articulated in the form of an organised resistance, that scream can be belong to everyone, even if it only materialises as a small act of sabotage at work or being late at school. The scream, when articulated, is a form of small-portioned activism. We should bear in mind that revolution does not merely concern a small number of activists. Revolution can only be successful when it becomes a process common to everyone.

AT also tried to get rid of articulated academic snobbism, by which we are not trying to make everyone think that theory is not important. It is merely about the conviction that resistance is common to everyone, not just activists and academics who reside in sealed towers, disconnected from the everyday realities the rebellious communities are dealing with. If the revolution suddenly becomes wrapped up in a rhetoric that is difficult to understand, it may lead us away from the idea that everyone can take part in the revolution and towards avant-gardist practices that impose from above the way in which revolution must proceed. Theory must therefore be understood as part of the practice and vice versa. Any political act is impossible without some profound reflection about the world that surrounds us, just as political practice constantly invents new social concepts. As Althusser points out, the distinction between theory and practice is only an artificial ideological myth. "For there is not one side of theory, a pure intellectual vision without body or materi-

ality," he argues, "and another of completely material practice which 'gets its hands dirty'" (Althusser 1968/1970: 58).

There is one more issue I would like to address. Activists of the AT have often been faced with the recrimination that their resistance is not as total, all-embracing and turbulent – one may add romantic as well – as the students' revolts of the 1960s and 1970s. There is some logic in such remarks. Faced by the diversity and vitality of new social movements that are fighting against definitions, many theorists, and especially the corporate media, are still trying to squeeze those movements into the boundaries of existing forms, fully aware – or, if we give people the benefit of the doubt, oblivious of the fact – that such formulations can only be extremely violent to the very being of these movements. Contemporary political subjects are all but unified; they operate in dispersed, discontinued, unpredictable ways. If we understand the political in the realms of the state, we are still searching for a homogenised subject (Kovačič 2002: 133-134). As Marta Gregorčič (2005a) points out, people are trying to put movements into the diametric equation of movement versus neoliberalism. On one side we have the global order, be it called Empire or any other name, and on the other side people seem to have an uncontrollable desire to create a common quotient, a common platform of globally unified pockets of resistance. Contemporary movements, however, are opposing such identification. Despite their differences, the movements have similar demands and continue to 'walk beyond' the global order. Exactly these differences inspire movements to look for the specialties of their own. There is no common personalised enemy against whom movements could stand. Disparate sets of struggles, however, are happening in a similar environment of globalising capital and intensified societies of control (Day 2005: 6). Therefore

movements cannot be totalised nor reduced to a single ideology. Even though neoliberal capitalist order creates similar circumstances around the world, there is an ever-present danger that such unification would establish the perception of the movement as something that firmly exists instead of something that is in a constant process of becoming. After all, as Abbie Hoffman once said, "Revolution is not something fixed in ideology, nor is it something fashioned to a particular decade. It is a perpetual process embedded in the human spirit" (Hoffman in Bennett 2004: 128). And even though many have announced the end of the world, the apocalypse, and are now waiting for the revolution to come to their homes as a historical necessity, it is important not to forget that the revolution must be build at every step of the way. The versatile multidimensional variety of different movements is arising against the exploitation, turning peoples' invisible lives into political subjects. They are impossible to organise, or to predict. Paradoxically, politics demands organisation and a constant invention of new rebellious practices against capitalism. That creation, however, cannot be prescribed by avant-gardist leaders. It can only come from the everyday lives of individuals, spinning in endless joyful rebellion.

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Notes:

1. World Trade Organization.

2. International Monetary Fund.

3. For instance, despite the fact that public opinion greatly opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the agreement was accepted by neoliberal economists and the above-mentioned organizations as a direct way to democratize and improve people's lives. In reality NAFTA caused massive layoffs, a decrease in living conditions, factory closures and prevented any kind of union organization within factories (Chomsky 1999/2005).

4. 'Autonomous Tribune' is a student movement that came into being in Ljubljana (Slovenia) in 2007 as a direct response to both the indifference of the students regarding their lives and to governments' draft of the bill about higher education. This bill would widely privatize higher education and would thus seriously threaten the autonomy of the university. An autonomous tribune temporarily occupied several university halls, opening up a space for discussion and mobilizing students to start practicing autonomy. This autonomous tribune further demanded the right to occupy public space. During several protests its activists opposed the privatization of the public services. They also made broader demands, e.g. to remove any military subject matter from universities' curriculums, to withdraw Slovenian soldiers from Iraq. Initially, the movement faced criminalization by the police, who in one report even stated that participants at one of the protests displayed anti-governmental slogans and would consequently be prosecuted.

5. Lenin, for instance, talked not only about taking over the state, but also about establishing a state of workers.

6. Gradual transition to socialism through victory in the elections; changes from within the system.

7. A sudden take-over of power and a quick establishment of a different regime from that point onwards.

8. Such external view of the state is common to many theorists, for instance to Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Gramsci, Negri and others.

9. In capitalism production is the production of an object that is alienated from the producer (Marx in Holloway 2004: 47).

10. Between 1936 and 1938, revolutionary practices were at work. After the outburst of the revolution, many industrials and big landowners left their premises. Farmers and workers 'spontaneously' started creating communities, taking over control of the production. For further details, see Guérin (1965/1986).

11. This has again become obvious in the financial crisis that hit the world in September/October 2008, as a result of which banks were nationalized.

12. Many alternative forms of both economical and social relations arise as a result of resisting the prevailing capitalist order. Autonomous Zapatista communities in Chiapas, Mexico are a practical example. For more details about good government councils see Gregorčič (2005b).

13. By which we do not intend to talk about the black-and-white picture of human nature, nor is this taken in humanist concepts. Human nature is much more complex to simply distinguish between good and bad aspects. We must be aware of the fact that general social conditions can and do affect human behaviour.

14. 'Autonomous Tribune' – abbreviated as AT.

15. In this case, against the feeling of apathy among the students.

16. Direct action, do-it-yourself, direct democracy (especially through open meetings), autonomy, voluntarism, anti-authoritarianism, equality, etc. Also, AT remained independent of any formal organization (political parties, student organization, etc.).

17. The movement's analysis of the capitalist system clearly states that even though they are fighting against the negative effects of capitalism here and now, it is only its complete destruction that will enable people to live in a fundamentally different society.

18. If in the 20th century solidarity, as Durkheim points out, was seen within the context of social hierarchy (Durkheim 1893/1997), today's activists extended the understanding of solidarity between classes to solidarity among everyone subjected to domination (Williams 2008: 112). AT therefore did not express solidarity with the unions' elite, but with the workers themselves.

19. Estimations about the number of demonstrators vary. Unions are claiming that 70,000 people gathered in Ljubljana, while the police insist there were only 50,000 participants. Regardless of the difference in numbers, the demonstrations ranked among the most massive protests in the history of Slovenia.

20. Despite the political elite's boasting about significant economic growth, which many economists claim is mostly the product of favorable global circumstances, inflation in Slovenia has been increasing ever since Slovenia entered the Euro zone in January 2007. According to the Statistical office of Slovenia, inflation reached 5.1 percent on a yearly basis in October 2007. As noted by the National

TV of Slovenia, in only four days, the National association of consumers received 600 reports of prices having gone up after the Euro was put into effect. Despite government claims about the lower rate of unemployment, unions in Slovenia were emphasizing that many, especially young, people are having temporary jobs that offer no safety or contracts. One in every eight inhabitants of Slovenia was in the beginning of the second half of 2008 living in poverty, and the prices in some cases had risen by more than 100 percent in less than a year; wages did not increase sufficiently (or not at all) for people to get by.

21. Fear of endangering upcoming negotiations of collective contract with social partners.

22. They varied from queer, student, workers, animal rights, and other issues to anti-military issues.

23. Their organization, however, remains hierarchical and their status legal.

**Gal Kirn, Antonis Vradis:
The Alterglobalisation
Movement Today**

Introduction

Before talking about the alterglobalisation movement it would seem appropriate to begin with a disclaimer: to explain who we are and the stance that we take when we speak. We are speaking from the standpoint of the movement, not on behalf of the movement to be sure, but from within, not from an academic point of view, but from the point of view of struggles, from the point of view of the 'political subjectivities' that have arisen in recent years. These political subjectivities are in a state of a crisis – this is our central hypothesis and a rather evident one. What we seek to address here is where this crisis is rooted and its effects on the movement as a whole. It would be irrelevant, if not arrogant, to make specific suggestions with regard to an exit from this crisis. Rather, we will conclude this article with some questions, some openings that could hint toward ways in which to address the crisis within the alterglobalisation movement today, and the problematic break between theory and practice in particular. This paper is divided into four parts. The first part looks at the relationship of emancipatory thought and political practice; the second one examines the legacy of the alterglobalisation movement today; the third and the fourth parts address what elements are thought to be particularly damaging in the transformation of the alterglobalisation movement, causing it to become what will be argued a "bare movement". The conclusion is substituted by a number of questions that might suggest ways out of the crisis, always essentially taking into account theory and practice.

The Relationship between Theory and Practice – for a New Revolutionary Fusion?

We can trace one very important characteristic in the emancipatory tradition (of the revolutionary Left), the tradition connected to communism and anarchism. This characteristic is a fusion of critical thinking and emancipatory political practices of movements. For example, the rupture that is represented by Karl Marx cannot be considered outside of his engagement within the workers' class movement. This also applies to Mihail Bakunin whose critique of state cannot be thought outside the scope of his class position, his radical political stance (in the International) against the dominant order. However, that is not to say that one needs to translate their political views, their practical experiences into the theoretical realm. This operation would be a crude vulgarisation of theory and would at best lead to a direct reflection of historical reality. In that case we would talk only in terms of descriptive sociology or ideology. The theory, if it is to be distinguished from ideology, needs a certain theoretical apparatus to grasp complex historical processes with. Emancipatory theory contributed many productive concepts during the past few centuries, ranging from mutual aid, an uncompromised critique of the state ("another world is possible"), class struggle, to unlinking violence from morality? For sure, thought is not immaterial; the process of conceptualising and thinking is a material one from the beginning. Thus, we are not talking about the traditional boundary between theory and practice. We are talking about the minimal difference between the two elements.

Even though there is a discrepancy between theoretical practice and political practice, in every major event a revolutionary fusion existed of theory and practice. In

other words, true, revolutionary politics always contains two elements: thinking as a material force and as a (political) subjectivity. But what would a new, revolutionary fusion of theory and practice be like, a fusion that would not reduce one to the benefit of the other? Firstly, let us answer this question negatively. There are at least two considerable dangers or incorrect ideological fusions that are endangering and re-appropriating the fusion of theory and practice. The first is a Stalinist type of fusion, which introduced politics (by directives) to scientific research (primacy of politics in theory). The second fusion is much more dangerous because it is dominant today: a neoliberal fusion. Neoliberal reforms of privatisation, especially the reform of the higher educational system in consequence of the Bologna Declaration, are transforming the process of appropriation of knowledge. Basically, one of the most important directives is that knowledge and theory become applicable, more practical. In other words, knowledge is understood as essentially useful for commercial appropriation, as teaching how to govern populations (politics), how to distribute money (economy), how to manage and control the city (urbanism, sociology), what the deadlocks of the clashes of civilisations are (cultural studies, anthropology), how to attain a common good (ethics). All these issues are of a strategic nature for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. It is no coincidence that the Boys of Chicago School were reading Stalin. What we have today is a synthesis of Stalinism and neoliberalism. Undoubtedly, this kind of fusion does not spring to mind when we think about revolution, when we think about breaking with the dominant order. The problems with revolutionary theory appear at the moment when theory is used only for the purpose of revolutionary practice – in other words, when it gets sub-

merged in political practice. Theory cannot be anticipated; what is even more peculiar, theoretical discovery is most frequently produced unconsciously. In order to avoid a possible lapse into the neoliberalism of political activism, we suggest to radicalise the point of revolutionary fusion even more and argue that the practice of radical thinking is in itself rebellion; it is a material force.[1]

One of the biggest problems within the new realities of the alterglobalisation movement and within academia today is a double-sided one, which we touched upon in the first part of this article. On the one hand we are frequently confronted with anti-intellectualism, with an anti-theoretical attitude of some political activists, of people in the movement ("let's not theorise, let's take some action…"), while on the other hand we also meet many academics who mainly write recipes for political actions or oppose any political-practical engagement. To think is already enough for them: an armchair attitude, or an understanding that times are too obscure to undertake any action; or even, that any revolutionary action might lead to totalitarianism. At this point we should also ask ourselves: how is it possible to remain radical thinkers within academia, without performing a democratic function (one that offers illusionary freedom) within the institution?

2. Alterglobalisation Movement

Nowadays, the political agency that undermines global order, locally as well as globally, is a political and paradoxical entity (subjectivity) of the alterglobalisation movement. We have both experienced the political realities of the Seattle-movement generation, within specific local contexts, but also participated in the counter-summit organisation. We

asked ourselves one fundamental question: Has this movement produced a clear fusion of theory and practice? Generally speaking the answer is no. Apart from this failure, the alterglobalisation movement (that reached its peak in Seattle, 1999 and Genoa, 2001) is dead, or at best in a state of major crisis. Genoa signalled a radical shift: the massive violence and criminalisation was later on increased by the aftermath of 9/11. The imperial answer to the system crisis began. Yet still, for all the evident failure of the movement it remains important to talk from within. Only by thinking from within the movement intends to remain loyal to a revolutionary fusion, a tradition that was already paved two centuries ago. This is not to say that we are only directly thinking what is happening in the movement, with the movement, but we are addressing the need to develop new theoretical concepts that could help us consider historical processes, and possibly of ways in which to invest these new and old discoveries for political struggles. As mentioned before, it is necessary to work on two fronts (that are in fact one): the fronts of radical theory and practice. Thinking radical politics is already being political, but the opposite is not true. Making radical politics does not mean one is already thinking politics. That does not imply a priority in the struggle; organising the struggle and thinking of the struggle are both equally important.

Stating that the alterglobalisation movement is dead does not mean that nothing is happening at present. Another movement has arisen these past years that carries a strong legacy from the past movement. It has some similar characteristics: it orientates itself towards counter-summits, it has a network and decentralised type of organisation, it is a global movement that crosses borders and addresses local and global issues.

At this point it would be important to stress one very crucial and positive point of the alterglobalisation movement, which is its disruptive and revolutionary beginning – its character. For this purpose, Jacques Rancière's central conceptualisation in his book *Disagreement* (1998, University of Minnesota Press) will be employed. It will first be briefly explained in the following sentences. Politics according to Rancière is something rare – it is something that breaks up with the logic of the police. The logic of the police is the dominant and existing order of counting, counting the social groups that are recognised by the order. Apart from this logical function of counting, the police are connected to the partition of the sensible – what things can be seen or heard? The police are part of the order of dominant institutions – in Foucauldian terms, they are a biopolitical machinery. Opposite to the police, politics is something of a radical different order, it dismantles the logic of counting and the partition of the sensible. Rancière calls politics something that disrupts and breaks with the police (in the field of police), something that inscribes new horizons, groups, thinking into the world. It shows the existence of more worlds in one world. Politics usually emerges in the places that are not expected to be political, and by the groups that are not visible – not counted in the dominant order. One only needs think of the example of the plebeians in Roman times, or proletarians in bourgeois times, of feminists… The excluded, "part without parts" as Rancière coins it, are excluded and then included in the order. They pinpoint the radical contingency of every power. There is no (political) justification of holding the place of power. Politics happens with a symbolical act, with a certain enunciation, but what is more important is that the political procedure is egalitarian. It is addressed to everyone and not

just to that particular group. Politics is always dissensual, based on a conflict with the existing order.

Let us consider what happened at the Seattle demonstrations. Nobody, not even protesters, expected this rainbow of agents to come together; nobody expected the protests would block the summit of big international organisations. The protests radically undermined the whole organisation and the subjugation of the city-regime to the meeting of the international organisation. The movement took back the streets, it did not take any prescribed routes, it drew its own map of the city. It effectively blocked the regular meetings of the global leadership and set on the agenda issues that were not frequently heard of, especially after the proclaimed end of history. It started addressing global issues; as a result, people began to see the connection between farmers from India and steel workers in the US. In '99, on the streets of Seattle, the politics of alter-globalisation emerged. Two further important elements were characteristic of this politics. Firstly, there was the violence. As always, the media focused on the escalations of violence during the protests. We believe that the question of violence should be addressed outside its normal moral framework, arguing that violence is putting the protests in a bad light. Without violence people might never hear of a protest. But apart from this pragmatic argument, what is more important is the following. The violence showed the power of the state, but also of imperial order – of who was defending whom at the moment of the protests. In this sense, the violence actually fixated the order of the police, the dominant order that does not want to acknowledge certain groups or voices. Apart from that, the only legitimate form of violence is that directed towards forms of exploitation and hierarchies. Global institutions, the IMF, WTO and G8 are

new global centres of power that were correctly targeted by the Seattle movement. The use of violence is therefore completely legitimate. It is true though that this violence, a radical encounter with the order, should produce some political demands. Here, the political process gets complicated. Dissensus and violence are the first steps, but formulating political demands are further essential effects of political thinking and political practice. The absence of hierarchies and the decentralised framework of the movement are both its good and its bad side. The positive side can be seen in the fundamental gesture of the movement: it did not look for any compromise or dialogue with the institutions of hierarchy/exploitation. Its politics was actually to subtract from the State, it did not want to formulate its politics as part of the (etatist) order of the police.

3. The Image of the Alterglobalisation Movement

The question about the relationship between theory and practice might be answerable, and this may seem odd, through looking at the movement's relationship to the media. One should bear in mind that what caught the media's attention in Seattle was the level of violence at the protests – this attention contributed, in its turn, to the movement spreading and growing, while the violence reproduced itself at different gatherings and demonstrations across continents. The media became – largely unwillingly – a bearer of that message.

Up until Genoa, then, the alterglobalisation movement's protests were at the centre of media attention. What happened after Genoa – and perhaps more crucially, after 9/11 – is that the alterglobalisation movement put media at the centre of its own attention. With a newly-emergent spec-

tacle having superseded the spectacle of the alterglobalist demonstrations (the terrorist attacks were simply more spectacular than any black block, i.e. the most radical wing of protesters) the alterglobalisation movement struggled to fit itself once again into the media frame. The result was demonstrations of the type of the *Climate Camp* (in the UK and Germany), which seem to dominate the current demonstration landscape. Participants have to be or seem clean, educated, middle class, explicitly non-violent, campaigns need to be single-issue and hence a-political – all this in order to create an image that is as media-friendly as possible.

The question is, how do both of these tendencies (if this is the appropriate term) respond/interact with revolutionary theory? The alterglobalisation movement as it appeared in the late 1990s is, quite clearly, non-ideological (in the sense that it is against dominant/dinosaur ideologies; a primarily anti-authoritarian response both to the collapse of the Soviet ideology and the dead-end of neo-liberalism). At the same time it is of course political – and very much so. For all its diversity in tactics the then emerging movement quite clearly opposed neoliberalism, largely anti-capitalist and anti-hierarchical/anti-authoritarian in its structure and operation.

The biggest change in the alterglobalisation movement after Genoa was comprised in the fact that its nature shifted from non-ideological to non-political. The overall systemic critique that held all the different elements of the alterglobalisation movement together was replaced by a dominance of single-issue campaigns, whereby broader theoretical and political elements are muted in the name of effectiveness and maximum outreach. The danger in this tendency is fairly clear; the movement might be recuperated by Statist/reformist elements and of course might diffuse to the point where it is no longer relevant. The image of the

well-dressed climate camp demonstrator can easily sit next to that of a government official announcing "greener policies"; it can be used in supermarket posters advertising greener consumer practices.

4. Bare Movement

As a result of all this, the alterglobalisation movement has paid dearly to survive in political terms in the post-Genoa era. Its transformation could be schematically/analogically described as being equivalent to what Agamben called the passage of individuals from political life to bare life. Stripped from its broader political characteristics (i.e. complete as opposed to single-issue political formations – however diverse these might have been) what remains of the alterglobalisation movement today could be regarded as a bare movement. It still exists, and it is still represented through the media. There is very little beyond that, however. The movement's existence is understood to be bare since in its current form it has little or no potential to develop. The image-friendly action is not backed by political action. Rather than representing an existing condition or reflecting on a political identity, the image of the movement is sheer representation – representation for the sake of it. This representation, furthermore, is easily understood and decoded by the State and media, since it is set up for that very purpose. This, again, is a move in the exact opposite direction of what could be an emancipatory politics, one that would be intolerable to the State, one that would refuse to play by the media rules. In *The Coming Community*, Agamben speaks of the arrival of a movement that would allow for singularities to form "a community without affirming an identity". He posits: "What the State cannot tolerate in any way, however,

is that the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging" (1993: 86).

This might be a direction that we should be looking into: possible ways to form communities that will move beyond representational conditions of belonging; emancipatory communities that will produce enhanced, rather than bare movements. In so doing, quite naturally, the notion of dissensus could prove crucial: an understanding that would help us overcome single-issue and identitarian politics and all the traps that they entail.

Instead of a Conclusion

Our central political stake is to promote thinking politics within the alterglobalisation movement. Against the sectarianism of the left, we would label radical thought "emancipatory thought" – where differences embody an advantage and not a disadvantage of the movement, of theories. Instead of rounding off with a summary of our arguments, we would like to end this article with some questions relevant for the future of the movement:

Having confirmed the crisis of the alterglobalisation movement today, how to prevent the movement from getting trapped by identitarian politics, where each group represents its own interests? If we do not ask this question the movement will become an alternative global forum and part of the global public opinion. Is this really what we stand for?

It is true that revolutionary politics is not just about numbers. However, it is also troublesome to note that many strategies of the alterglobalisation movement and anarchist groups centre on small groups rather than on masses.

Why this loss of ambition? Is the fear of totalitarianism driving this minoritarian approach? Why not think politics that addresses the masses? How to include masses in the movement?

The movement should stick with the central elements of disruption and non-reformism. Apart from this central tendency, should we move to another level – and formulate political demands? How should we write a list of political demands? Who should do that? Who should these demands be addressed to? Without some basic organisational/political platform, we cannot expect the alter-globalisation movement to remain a subjective force and emerge from the crisis.

How to think new political subjectivities? If the alter-globalisation movement has problems with thinking up its own position, it does not spend enough time to consider other groups that are represented in large numbers: 'new proletariat' – a flexible, cognitive working force in the developed world AND excluded from the Third world – immigrants, slum-dwellers, (see Mike Davis's *Planet of Slums* or some of Slavoj Žižek's claims on the excluded).

As to the topic of violence, how to think violence today? Even though there is a strong antimilitarist tradition that has to be taken into account, one should not forget about the objective violence that is already a part of the 'normalised' system we live in. And specifically, in cases of alterglobalisation protests a state of exception and militarised zones are established by the sovereign power. This violence is 'primal', whilst the violence on the part of the protesters is a form of counter-violence. How to consider violence that is not part of the dialectic with power?

Apart from these questions, would you not agree that, today more than ever, it is necessary to imagine and to innovate new political forms that could exist outside the State?

1. This point was most lucidly elaborated on by Alain Badiou, whose fundamental tenet states that politics is a (new) mode of thinking to which the operation of producing Truth is central. See for example his *Metapolitics*, Verso, London, 2006.

**Andreja Kulunčić, Ibrahim Ćurić,
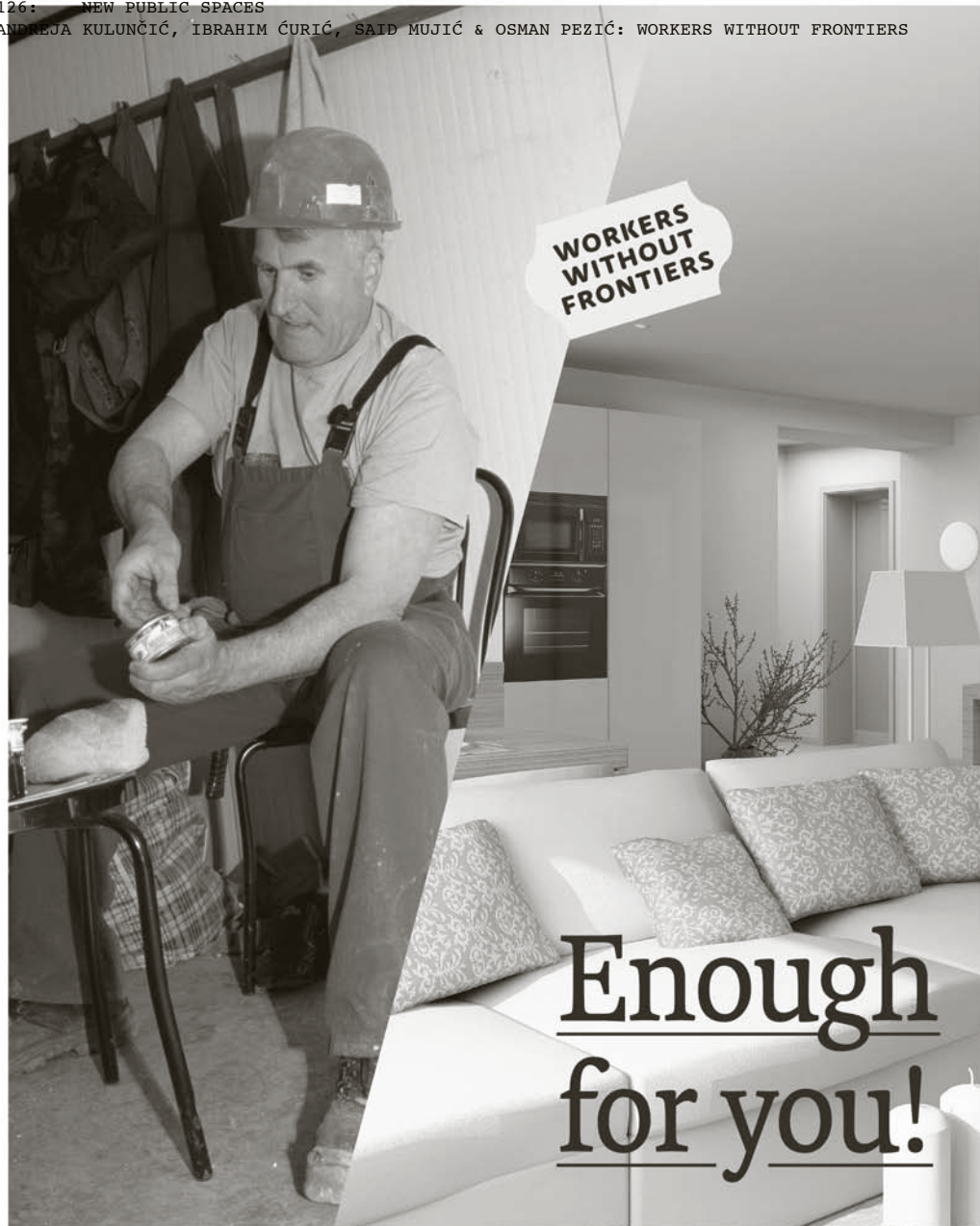Said Mujić & Osman Pezić:
Workers without Frontiers**

Keep your kids at home!
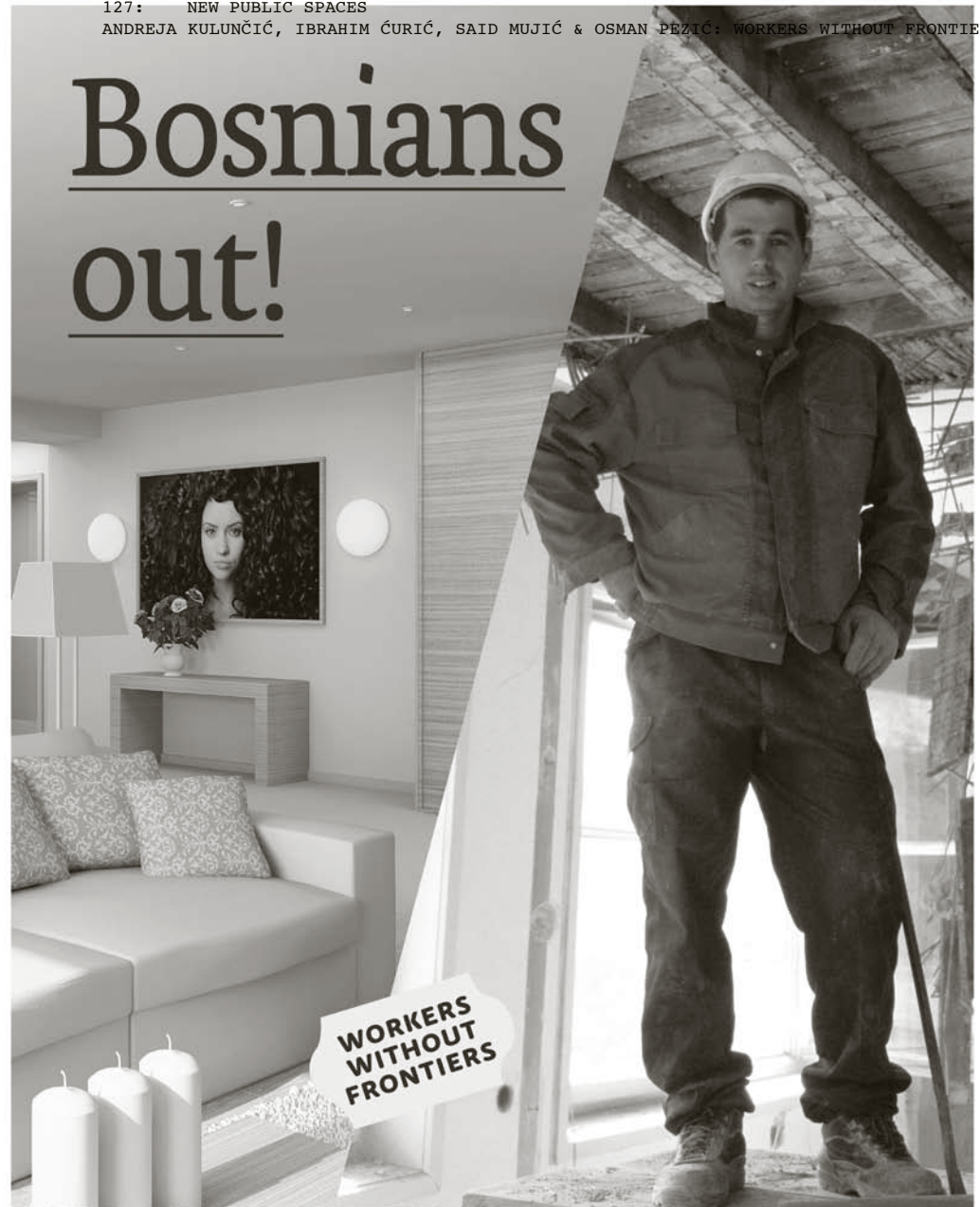
WORKERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

We'd like to bring our families from Bosnia, but it's not possible, we don't make enough money. No one here would stand for their family to suffer like ours do.

WORKERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

Enough for you!

We eat on the construction site, often in the street, in the rain, in the winter, in the hot sun. The food's always the same, and there's not much of it. We're often hungry.
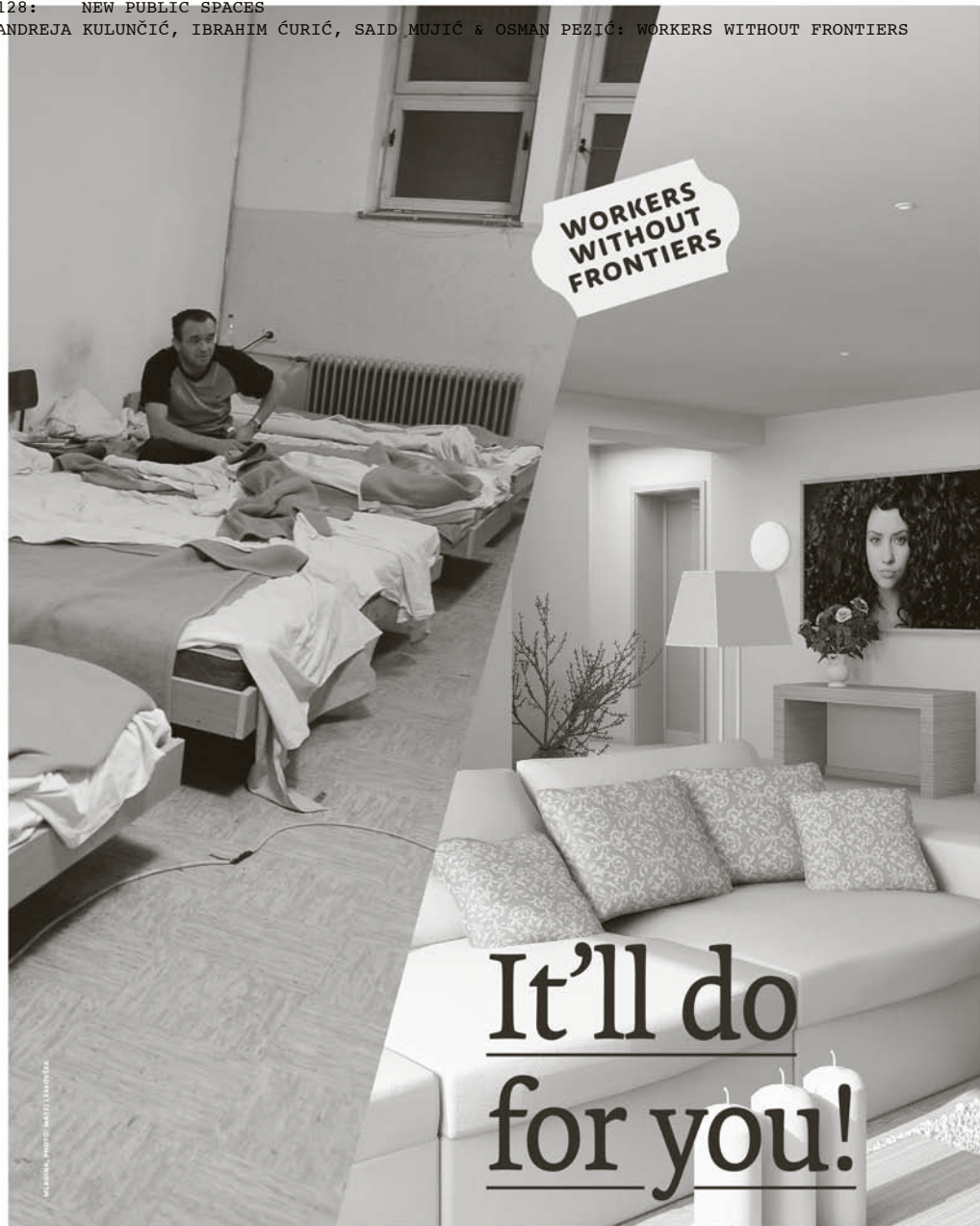
Bosnians out!

WORKERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

I gotta work, no matter what the conditions, because my work visa is sponsored by my employer. Getting fired automatically means leaving Slovenia. I can't even look for a better job.
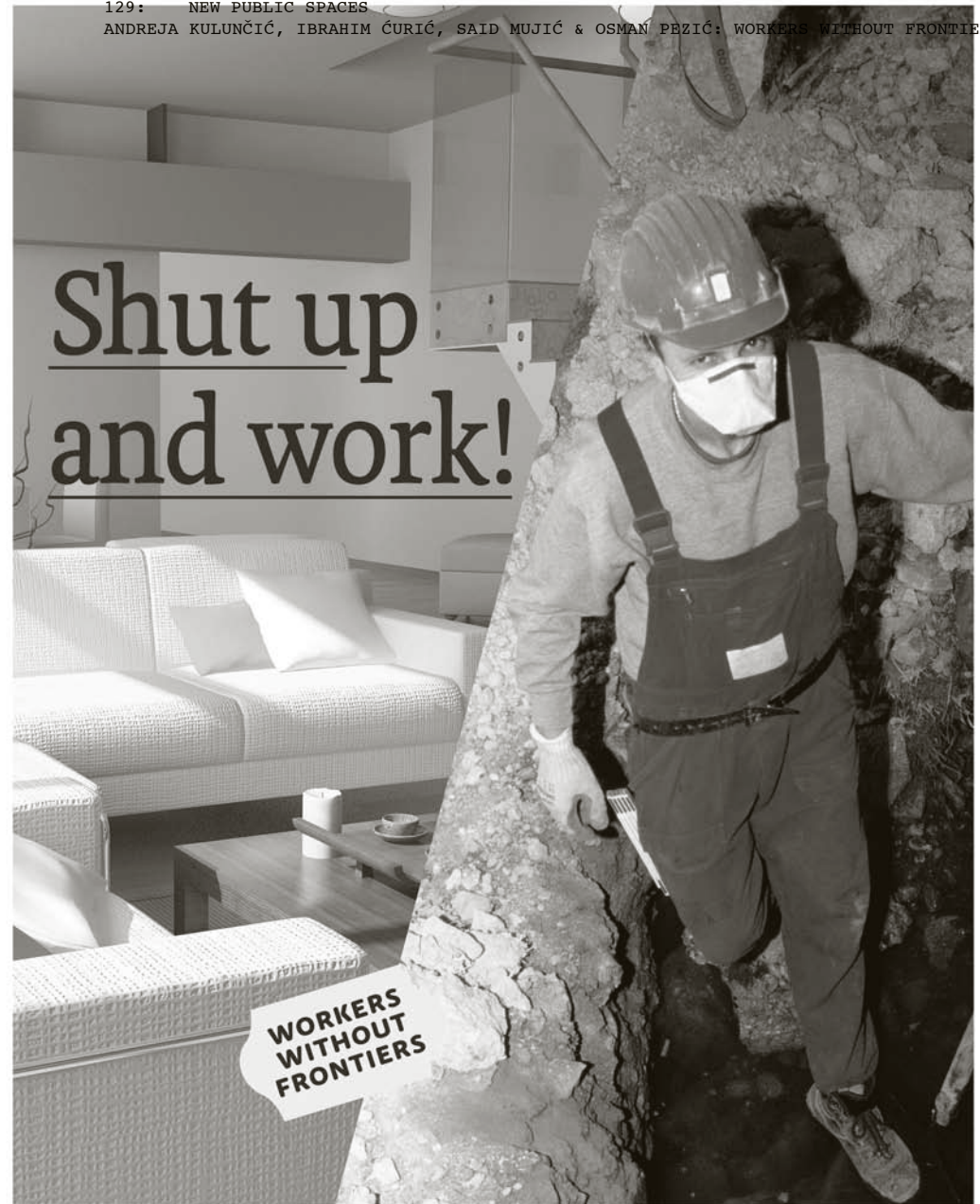
WORKERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

It'll do for you!

I've been in Slovenia a long time. I've gone from one rooming house to another, and I have yet to see one that's fit for a human being, maybe for an animal: damp, cockroaches, mice, you can't even leave your laundry out, let alone food. Toilets are a major problem, we're lucky we're not diseased.

Shut up and work!

WORKERS WITHOUT FRONTIERS

My workday starts early in the morning, and I never know when it's gonna end. Depends on the foreman; he can say I got to work late into the night, and he doesn't ask if I'm too tired to hold up. I do very hard, manual labor.

Bojana Piškur:
Art in Becoming

I would like to thank Jože Barši, friend and artist, who in numerous discussions pointed out to me the unexplored potential of ideas/concepts of stupidity, ridiculousness, laziness in art and their possibilities for subversive actions, or, in other words, their potential to create problems and tensions instead of pointing at them. This makes me optimistic and hopeful that a utopian dimension has not yet been lost in art. I'll start with some questions that could be used in the discussion later on.

What is the current discourse on engaged art practices all about? Does art today exist outside the political sphere? Has its political emancipatory potential failed or simply become commodified? Why is this kind of art so unproblematic once it enters the art system? Why has it not had any major impact on disrupting the current neoliberal ways of operating despite the fact that it is regularly on the museum's exhibition agenda? Why is it quite acceptable for these art practices to be supported by the big corporations and even to participate in the competitive market logic? Last but not least, why has this kind of art become so predictable, why has it become so boring?

The relationship between aesthetics and political engagement in contemporary art is still far from decided. There are conflicts intrinsically present in both that disclose mutual contradictions. The tension these conflicts generate remains the same but the structure keeps changing in line with the changes in social relations.[1] In 1925 George Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde wrote that art should be useful and that the criteria for artworks could only be their social impact, social usefulness and effectiveness. We are also familiar with the discussion between Benjamin and Adorno on committed art and Adorno's influential essay "Commitment" (1962) in which he claims that only autonomous art

possesses critical power. What he was saying and what we have experienced is that political and critical art can easily be appropriated and used by the power systems. Put differently, the spheres of economy and politics can easily colonise art. But does that only apply to the forms of representation? Suely Rolnik argues that neocapitalism summons and supports singular modes of subjectivation, but only to reproduce them detached from their connection with life and turn them into products. [2] Creation, she writes, has become one of the most important raw materials of the current mode of production. Even the artists' subjectivity could be emptied of its changing singularity and turned into an identity, preferably a glamourised one. The value of the artists' subjectivity is then determined by their power of seduction.

But the question remains nevertheless – can "revolutionary" ideas be freed from their social/political forms of representation? More importantly, can these ideas be freed from the limitations of the communicative medium?

One alternative way to oppose the dominant system could be to withdraw from all forms of political representation, to renounce social and political responsibility, resist the compulsion to act and instead do nothing.[3] Perhaps only in this utopian manner new foundations for a radical change can be made.

The other, more poetical way is an attempt to prolong the act of creation, which happens while crossing the border between consciousness and the social, communicating system. It is actually the very act of translating – "art in becoming" – these unmediated experiences of subjectivity that is revolutionary in nature. The principle that "leads the destiny of creation" then becomes a major claim to resistance. Analogous to this notion is a proposition by Deleuze and Guattari concerning reorganising thought that highlights some inter-

activity between the concept, object and subject and leads to a process of inventive connection. It is crossing that allows freedom of movement, a rupture in time that is not yet taken over by the (art) system. Therefore we are no longer limited by certain ways of thinking, discourses, contexts, methodologies and the like. In this new situation we are always a step ahead of the established order using the various tactics of appropriation, disappearing and appearing again by means of various unpredictable methods, forms, alliances, dislocations, interruptions, and disturbances of the dominant map.

The artists have been concerned with these issues/disturbances for a long time. In this context I would like to point out the great essay "The Praise of Laziness" by Mladen Stilinović, an artist from Zagreb, in which he claims there is no art without laziness. Laziness is the absence of movement and thought, dumb time – total amnesia. It is also indifference, staring at nothing, no activity, impotence. It is sheer stupidity, a time of pain, futile concentration.

A maxim at this point could be: "To divert the act of translation is to prolong the act of creation". I believe this notion is important because it turns away from the revolutionary potential of secondary, mediated experiences – i.e. representations/forms of art – and turns attention instead to the subjectivity.

Some Diversions Are:

Metaphysical silence; "absolute distance" is a conscious removal of all outside stimuli, liberation from the obligations of the world, including the ones of the art system. Some Czechs artists in the 1970s in their works reduced the grand narrative to one moment, thus disconnecting the automatic circuits between regularised stimuli and habitual responses.[4]

Luhman[5] attributed special communication in art that uses perception instead of language. Perception readily scans a familiar world for information without requiring a special decision on our parts to do so. When perception is liberated of mental images it does not only oppose object relations but radically cancels them.

In the same way Jan Mlčoch, as part of *Suspension - Great sleep 1974*, had himself suspended by hands and feet by means of nylon rope. His eyes were covered, his ears plugged in an attempt to be separated from space, to be in the air, not to have any reference points, to have no relation to any singular thing until the weight of his body made him experience pain.

"Perceptive processes"; these works are "non-mediated sensations", with no results and no product. Artur Barrio, in his work *4 dias 4 noites* from 1970 wandered through Rio as part of a long process. During 4 days he wore himself physically out and began having perceptions. He wanted to achieve something absolute but in the end this was a work with no result as nothing remained except the artist's experience that he could not translate to others.

Flávio de Carvalho, in one of his so-called experiments, was on a bus, saw a demonstration, got off the bus, put a green hat on and joined the demonstration. His most famous *experiencia* (experiment) was to walk the streets of São Paulo in 1956 in an eccentric outfit that consisted of a yellow-and-green striped blouse and a green short skirt worn over ballerina stockings and displaying a kind of ventilation tube under the blouse. He was just reacting to what was happening in that particular space and time. He provoked and received immediate reactions.

For the Situationists to construct situations meant to create real time and space, which was also the context in which they could begin, experimentally, to create their own immediate experiences. These environments could in return transform individual and group experiences and would be transformed themselves as a result. With their concept of "drifting", playful-constructive behaviour and awareness of psycho-geographical effects, they aimed to release play and create a new cultural "theatre of operations".

"Sensuousness"; in comparison to the reflective function of reason and understanding, these "works" enter the realm of sense perception beyond any predefined dictates of meaning. For Helio Oiticica and many other Brazilian artists, art was a supra-sensorial work, and he spoke of the necessity to have a supra-sensorial meaning of life, of transforming art processes into life feelings. The participator is shifted from his/her habitual field to a new one that awakens internal feelings rather than tries to apprehend external sensations. Body then becomes a site of resistance and is put through the ongoing process of restoration of the "sensory sensual". He also wrote about the need for a new community that would not make works of art, but something similar to the experience in real life – *vivencias* –, somehow constructing an environment for life itself based on the premise that creative energy is inherent in everyone. This principle was best described by a neologism *crelazer*, which refers to the faith in leisure that is a condition to experience creativity and pure sensations.

"Moments"[6]; eruptions of spontaneous creativity, flashes of liberation, utopian consciousness that escape the daily programming and calculation. They leave traces since they break with habits and repetitions, instances that intensify the vital productivity of everydayness (while the situation is a created and organised moment). Moments are being described as transitory, critical, creative, unpredict-

able … and they produce fractures in our subjectivity, introduce a sense of freedom from categorical thought, discipline, common structures, restraints, and the like since they have not yet become alienated time. Moments are sensations of powerful emotions such as delight, disgust, surprise, horror, outrage, and intense euphoria and as such have a revolutionary potential[7] in the sense of Laclau's concept of a *moment of reactivation* that is a process of *defixation of meaning.* It can be argued though that it is only in a specific "space-time sensorium" or a "configuration of a space as political" or "partition of the sensible" that debates about the foundations of society really take place. It is beyond the scope of this short text to go into detail about the particular space-time relationship. Perhaps a way to conclude this paragraph would be to paraphrase David Howarth's saying that the character of temporality is a condition for politics, not politics itself. In the same manner "moments" could be seen as a condition for an event of politics, which must also always have a spatial dimension.

I will end or better open up this short meditation with the suggestion that what is revolutionary in art is its very opacity, its condition of being not-yet art and subsequently a tension that this border state produces, and its reluctance of getting consumed, as such disrupting the processes of various economic, political and cultural operations intrinsic to the institutional logic. Therefore even "autonomous" art can have a political function and can function as a point of resistance. These "small revolutions" that happen on a personal and bodily awareness level are not productive in the sense that they remain only as factual and temporal distinctions and as such cannot be appropriated and used by the power systems. Of course, the important questions remain. How to prolong what psychologist Csiksentmihalyi calls

"flow experiences", which are the states of condensed exceptional moments, the most intense moments in people's lives, and how then realise these possibilities in a new actuality? How "to invent a mode of cultural production that radically breaks up the current schemes of power in this area"[8] and how to reshape through art the spaces left by the wakening of political conflict, as Rancière reminds us?

1. Some of these ideas came through conversations with my late colleague Igor Zabel. See for example his book *Eseji I : o moderni in sodobni umetnosti Založba /*cf.*, 2006

2. Suely Rolnik, *Despachos at the museum: Who knows what may happen…* at http://stretcher.org/essays/images/despachos/despachos_sr.php, accessed on 5 May 2008.

3. See Slavoj Žižek, "The Ongoing 'Soft Revolution'", *Critical Inquiry*, 30, Winter 2004, Universtiy of Chicago, p. 316. Of course it is necessary to rethink the consequences of such withdrawal for any long-term political action.

4. Petr Štembera, Jan Mlčoch, Karel Miler, Jiři Kovanda, Miloš Šejn and others.

5. Cf. Niklas Luhman, *Art as a social system*, Stanford University Press, 2000.

6. Cf. Henri Lefebvre in his writings on moments and situations.

7. I am thankful to Gal Kirn for pointing out in this context Rancière's distinction between "aesthetics of politics" and "politics of aesthetics" which can be useful in this particular debate.

8. Felix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, "Molecular revolution in Brazil", *Semiotext(e)*, English edition, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2008, p. 33.

Temp:
Temp about Temp, or a Quick and
Unsystematic Retrospective of the
Workings of One Temporary and Informal
Multidisciplinary Group

A group that had been gathering for almost two years under different names, hanging out and creating a multidisciplinary activist movement, a conglomerate of different praxis-actions, researches, concerts, parties, and the like, found itself faced with the need to write down a history of whatever it was doing. The core members of TEMP were forced into this unhappy situation by a process of mythologisation and exploiting the name of TEMP.

On this topic comrade Grega presents some thoughts.

I have been taking TEMP seriously to such a degree that I am no longer able to conceive an introspective, retrospective, historical thought… possessing/naming as any kind of iteration, i.e. property. As I understand it, our main concern was to 'make' relationships; 'space' was just the field where we lived them. Whether that space be geographical, capital, psychological or ideological, theoretical questions are solved only through praxis. Challenge as provocation in the system we pay taxes to, willingly or not, becomes an investment in the future – (yet another) policy/politics colliding with culture; theory transiting into art; and will power, evident as survival strategy. Are things simpler if you look at them from a distance? Irrelevant question; reduction is, after all, a twin of habit. A monument turns into the foundation and finishes off with the classic 'so what?'. From shouting slogans to a new temporality! A reflection of Bey's *imaginarium* in the middle of the eternal story of the collective and individuals, disappearance because of somebody else, and death because of yet another. An occasional suicide? Yes. An occasional tear? Most definitely. An occasional original idea? Of

course. Production, mother of mine! Another circle, defying resignation with a relationship, every moment and every-where. Putting it all into words is just the practice of alien-ation – from side by side to parting ways.

TEMP was just a temporary name of an informal group and its production, which marked the last period of our work, but it became a brand so the only conceptually right decision was self-destruction. It is interesting to note that in modern art and academic/curator circles concepts are so marginal and distant that many didn't even notice that TEMP stands for something that is temporary and by manifest does no longer exist. Often when we were invited at festivals, symposia, round tables, trademark TEMP ap-peared on the lists of participants. With a view to demystify-ing TEMP we accepted the invitation and assignment to try and recount our past activities.

Considering the fact that the main characters of this mystified phenomenon are actively taking part in similar 'projects' across the world, the text you are reading is not a result of numerous discussions in informal circumstances but of few email and phone exchanges. The first text that came in was from Andrejček, who as a friend has observed our activities since the beginning, commenting on supporting the work, but being too tired to take an active role himself.

Introduction

The passage of TEMP through a considerably short pe-riod of time has again shown that an existing order is put in danger every time a group of unknown individuals de-cides to live differently. TEMP was an adventure in which individuals with different trajectories and from different

scenes were brought together in continuous action. Along the way it uncovered the poses of those who under the guise of subversion are turning their mediocre careers in the fortresses of ruling consent into monuments. A theory of life surrounded by an ever-present sleep combined with a wish to build something new was the chain that linked the TEMP group internally. No wonder that soon nobody could escape its effects. Yesterday's fortresses of politics, art and other self-proclaimed authorities joined a journey they did not understand, rather than risk their downfall. Such is the power of truth spoken at the right moment.

About Theory

Step by step and from action to action TEMP was construc-tively resolving the eternal problem of the relationship be-tween theory and practice. Various theoreticians of passivity and fascination – the contemporary market of theoretical artefacts never seems to run out of them – with their acts of mental masturbation, even about TEMP, did not even no-tice this. Most of the so-called theoretical production on this topic clearly confirms this. TEMP did know what the power of the concepts that it had been defining itself could amount to when being used in political struggle and in confronta-tions with consumers, even consumers of theory. When the radical subjectivity of TEMP entered into alliance with those elements of the local environment that were also aware of the meaning of revolutionary theory and when this new alliance was realised through a unified action platform, the results clearly showed. Yet, in the margins of these manoeuvres a crowd of spectators and consumers that reproduced the roles of either fans or cynical commentators came into being. This did not stop them from pinning medals to their chests and

enjoying the glory of events they were not able to predict or participate in – except by blocking them. That's how it goes.

About the Irrelevancy of Art and the Flimsy Efforts of Those Who Make a Living through Art to Recognise as Such

TEMP has not advertised its analysis of the role of art in capitalist society. It did not write scientific papers and sacred texts, even though it could, and the moment when the art world tried to recuperate its political aspects TEMP borrowed from this world only the things it had to offer: space and other resources to develop the project of collectively producing real activities in the context of the dominant conditions of the capitalist system. When it was offered 'an exhibition' in the Škuc Gallery, TEMP did not seek to establish a new fashionable trend in contemporary art. Rather, it raised the stakes and moved its activities to the terrain of political action. No coincidence here. And no art either. Many bystanders and curators were vainly searching for art in all this. Things are arranged in such a way that, due to the inventiveness, ambition and access to resources of the people writing the articles and texts (also in publications such as this), eventually the TEMP adventure will be put under the mantle of contemporary art practices. Once again it confirms that the creativity of the eternal latecomers and coopters stretches only to their amazing ability to advance their own careers.

On Motives

With measured strokes, starting with the forced entry into the Faculty of Architecture parking lot – someone trained

in spectacular noise could recognise just an act of "questioning the usage of urbane space" – TEMP showed that even in a state of alienation and within the circumstances of contemporary capitalism it is possible to intervene from the margins and disturb the balance of political power. The actions were not taken to sell images of it on the market but to make life worth living. The stakes were indeed high, but there would be no point otherwise.

On Rog

The entrance into Rog confirmed the analysis on the basis of which the whole process was initiated. Of course the plan was not prepared in advance, but TEMP at least did not beforehand reject the possibility that things might turn out the way they have. TEMP articulated the concepts, communicated them, established new relations between individuals who did not know each other before. One thing led to another and, as the interests were set high already from the start, when the moment of opportunity to expand the battlefield came it was recognised as such. However, this was not TEMP anymore, but a new subjectivity in which people who had previous experience were brought together with those who found themselves for the first time in the middle of a political project. The mobilising potential that was being generated through the TEMP adventure created a window of opportunities to transform the various investigation techniques into a physical occupation of the space. With the entrance into Rog the TEMP experience was exhausted. A new situation emerged and new subjectivities along with it.

TEMP is also a story of concubines. Failing to recognise their importance would be short-sighted. Despite all their ignorance the faithful and the hangers-on were indeed

instrumental in constructing a myth and in convincing kin-dred spirits holding various government positions that there would be little point in confronting such a powerful crew. These people felt something big was happening but lacked the theory to truly comprehend it. *Essentially-by-products* as they were, they still played their part in sidestepping the weak-minded elements of power who were already fearing the future election defeat. Lacking ideas some were making grandiose statements on their own autonomy and artistry, while for others the ultimate outcome of the occupation of Rog was the factory's transformation into a museum of contemporary art. But who needs museums for new and meaningless artefacts whose only content is submission? Not us. The fact that "made in Rog" was soon established as a desirable fashion label should not surprise anyone. Yet resorting to cynicism and going on and on about it would be just too easy.

The lives of those who were part of this adventure testify to the fundamental truth of TEMP. Some hangers-on and worshipers now bask in the shining light of artistic achievement, symposia and colloquia. But others continue their work like they always have, through struggle in other towns, forming other structures and alliances. No secrets there. And no regrets. As revolutions must bury their dead, TEMP also must resist the temptation to blow its horn. TEMP *did* happen. Making it was easier than 'the end of history'-propagandists would like us to believe. It is an experiment whose full ramifications are not yet clear. In any case, even now it is obvious that no one completely escaped its results. A short walk in the city centre, flipping through the pages of catalogues and magazines, or browsing through the Internet, show this quite clearly.

On History

TEMP does not need an official history. The many texts and empty phrases with which the official analysts and curators paint it (in exchange of symbolic or actual fees), paint the general conditions and climate that TEMP was determined *to oppose*. The inability of official interpreters to come to terms with the weakness of their own positions clearly demonstrates how far the intellectual decay has already advanced. The pinning of medals and building of myths is precisely what it was never about. The signatures under the texts themselves will show which side everybody is on. And such lists are not to be misplaced. A wise political strategy says that it is good to count from time to time. We observe and take notes. Those who strive to understand the TEMP experience in order to further the explorations of their own lives, will definitely know how to use all these testimonies, they will know what to keep and what to throw away. The legacy of TEMP is safe with those who are already here or will come in the future and have personal interests in living beyond exploitation and class.

The importance of TEMP that Andrej has sketched stems from the organisation of the group whose final results were largely unplanned. The most important was the working method in which the 'how' actually had precedence over the 'what'. We were organised horizontally – full self-initiative and self-organisation were paramount. We gave up authorship and thereby converted personal intellectual property into public knowledge, an effective practice that had better effect through conspiracy and reduced the numbers of

c.v.-hunters in our midst. We worked as a team, but we had very different educational training and experiences. This enabled us to have a very wide spectre of production (activating spaces, organising and starting events, publishing, graphitti art, sculpture works and space installations). It was an organic and dynamic structure. We cooperated on the basis of desire, not necessity. The group was changing and expanding, which resulted in a further widening of the production spectrum, but the problems of the gap between theory and practice and the dispersion of goals became apparent. The positive side was a large human "platform" that was established when we reactivated the abandoned Rog factory. This in turn sparked the support of even more institutions and institutionalised individuals and groups… so the benefits were mostly in the area of quantity…

The core of our efforts was reduced to three or four sound-bytes. Being repeated over and over again like a broken LP lodged in the stomachs of many – they opened their mouths and sounds come out whose meaning never reached the brain. The position of TEMP began to formalise, which, together with the media response, started the inevitable decline. But the 'storytelling' aspects of TEMP were just getting started.

This is why comrade Emil contributed a text that reflects on the space between what TEMP wanted to be and what it actually was.

The group gathered in October 2004 with the objective to actualise the problem of disappearing public space in Ljubljana. Its first action was to occupy the parking lot near

the Faculty of Architecture where a temporary student gallery was established. Actions in public space continued in different forms until March 2006, when the former factory Rog was occupied.

The main goal of the group was to create an ambient conflict through constructing an event in which a debate about specific abandoned space would develop and would possibly trigger ideas about the manner to use this space in an evolutionary way. This idea was tested through several experiments in Ljubljana but it was never entirely confirmed.

Actions in public space did not manage to stimulate the townspeople into a different use of this space and did not create direct politics. The only intervention with long-term effects was the occupation of the Rog factory. This act attempted to establish a public space inside the building in which closed spaces would represent daily city space or townspeople's political space. This idea soon gave rise to creating art and a cultural centre for artists. Art as a neutral field of criticism and creation that does not represent a real threat to the existing political system has shown to be a compromising form of activity. The very moment the TEMP group was about artistic meaning instead of political it stopped to exist.

Two years later Ljubljana is experiencing the greatest privatisation wave in its existence. Current megalomaniacal projects, which are being built through public-private partnership, threaten to entirely transform the city into a market for products or goods. Now there is less public space than at the time when TEMP was still active. Every day the closing of the Rog factory seems imminent. Architects who publicly supported TEMP activities are today among the main performers of Ljubljana's 'capitalistic bloom'. From

this perspective we must consider TEMP as an experiment that failed in its concrete objections or as a short-term adventure of individuals.

We were interested in working in a bottom-up way; we took a full grassroots approach. We wanted to know to what extent we could influence the problems we identified as individuals. How strongly can we motivate the public to demand back its space? The sincerity of our position was illustrated by our reluctance to function in an academic manner. We provoked public debates with the representatives of power and used all scientific and artistic arguments available to present our position.

Comrade Urban was directly and intensely involved in civil initiative that openly opposed the building of a highway. He sent the following short comparative analysis.

TEMP as Part of Civil Society

In the decade after the great economic changes the cities of Slovenia basically stopped developing. In the new millennium there is an upsurge in civil societies due to the many large-scale projects being developed (highway sections, third dock in Koper, gas terminal, Kolizej, cement factory in Zagorje, Ljubljana marketplace, waste sites and so on) that are putting pressure on regular (often confused) urban planning. The local initiatives are gaining in relevance, strength and visibility. The TEMP group's approach is similar to that of these initiatives, so I will try to present the similarities and differences.

The civil society represents the interested public, which forms around a problem that affects the wider community.

Usually it comprises interdisciplinary, non-professional individuals who share views or beliefs. The driving force is the belief that any individual can take part in shaping the city or landscape. The organisation is often informal, to accentuate independence from centres of power (political, economical, religious and so on). Often these groups parasite on established organisations in short-term partnerships, so the energy can be spent on work rather than bureaucracy. The protagonists are usually not driven by the desire for self-promotion, even though some activists get media coverage. Because they oppose centres of power they are often – unjustly – given a political or ideological label.

Authorities or experts rarely express their support publicly; consenting with critical thought is considered almost shameful. The observers distance themselves cynically or patronisingly from the events and await the outcome. The rare moments of triumph or resolution are succeeded by waves of retroactive congratulations and support.

Despite the above-mentioned similarities, there is an important difference between other local initiatives and TEMP. Regular initiatives are predominantly conservative, inert, retrograde, orientated towards the right and romantic in their views and goals. The main reason for activity is centred on problems against which the slogan 'WE DON'T WANT TO' is used to motivate the larger population. The goals are clear: against change and the reasons for change. The focus is on protection from change for worse. The "not in my backyard"-mentality is ever-present.

TEMP, however, has shown that its actions are pro change, generated in an avant-garde and pro-active atmosphere. TEMP was to be a catalyst of change in urban space, of impulse leading to dynamic adaptation and the discovery of final goals. While civil initiatives find their jus-

tification in the care for the local environment, the basis and legitimacy of TEMP lies in the analysis of the general situation, the basic analysis of degraded urban zones, which was completed before the first actions.

The crucial difference between TEMP and the majority of other initiatives lies in its attitude towards change. All these initiatives are unquestionably legitimate, but TEMP's provocative stance has remained marginal and very rare indeed.

And here is another 'TEMP-orary' collage… probably the last of its kind. This is the form that our fanzines usually took… Most often it was a conglomerate of raw and unpolished thoughts, nothing special, really – just some pluralism with trust. I.e. without correction or censorship. The focus was on the process, not the result. We tried to keep our grassroots base and continue to actively voice our thoughts about the problems we noticed. The actions we took were designed to allow the authorities only one possibility – reaction. The rest was up to chance, spontaneously, inclusively… with all the tools at our disposal… knowledge, experience, social contact… The text of comrade Blaž on the criteria for choosing an appropriate space illustrates this logic.

The work done by the group TEMP can be succinctly described as raising public awareness about the crucial value of public space. Do the working environments where actions were prepared and plotted retrospectively show this? Were these places in any way related to the content of the work or were they only haphazard choices related to nothing other than availability?

A list of workplaces and group offices states the following: a few apartments, some faculty facilities, two faculty parking lots, one functionally undefined space in a sports park, at least one public park, one mobile unit, the city's river bank, garden allotments, one abandoned factory, and a gallery in the city centre. It is hard to find a common denominator for all of these spaces, as there is not one. So this of no use if we want to answer the question above. In spite of this, if we chronologically try to order the list of spaces where TEMP operated, it is possible to get some strain of logical development that is connected to the aim of the group's work.

All the places mentioned can be grouped in three categories: 1. places where work was prepared that was to be shown at a different location; 2. places where work and its presentation was the same and 3. places where the place itself was part of the group's work.

Firstly, when the group TEMP started to operate, it used available places that were either private – homes of group members, the unused part of a small private sports park – or controlled public places – buildings of faculties that individual group members attended. Here the projects were prepared that would be presented to the public elsewhere. In such an environment the group's mobile pavilion was built, which was a basis for the second approach towards group's workplace.

The latter was characterised by joining the place of work with the place of presentation – at the same time. An example of this was the project on unused spaces in the old city centre of Ljubljana, which was prepared, discussed and presented in an NGO gallery called Škuc. Not only did working and presentation spaces merge, also the time of

presentation and preparation became one. In fact the work in progress was part of the presentation. By doing so the group worked for and in public space at the same time and by this token the members had strengthened their position regarding the value of public space.

The final project by the group TEMP, the reconstitution of an abandoned factory for public use, meant also a new work setting for the group. On this occasion the workplace itself was the goal of their work. Basic renovation works in the factory's buildings were being done for the purpose of providing diverse workplaces, performance spaces and the like that were publicly accessible. The group's workplace was thus not a public space but a public space in becoming. The work itself focused on creating public space in a form of spaces suitable for non-profitable work by different parties.

Despite the different places the group TEMP operated in did not have intrinsic common features, the different usages of these spaces did lend themselves to an interpretation that connects the group's principles to the ways in which the work was done.

Having reached a massive scale, the project was labelled a utopia that was not sufficiently functional by the same groups and individuals who originally rode this concept like a horse that would take them to their personal achievements. I am glad that this is the way it happened. It was a worthwhile experience. To gage what is possible when individuals come together to influence something that really matters to them. But maybe we were being too serious… maybe we should have taken more time to have fun.

Greetings from a cloudy and
gentrified Ljubljana, Sanja

Janna Graham:
Love in a Time of Hedging … Or How
to Break out of an Alien World

In Jacques Rivette's *Céline et Julie vont en bateau*, two amateur magicians, one a librarian by day, the other a variety magic performer by night, happen upon a parallel universe in a large abandoned house somewhere, it seems, outside of Paris. Upon visiting the house, one at a time, the women experience something. Upon leaving, exhausted and disoriented, they are not sure what that something was. Each time they are, however, left with a small legacy of their experience: a candy that, when sucked, allows them to view their experience in the house.

Each time Julie and Céline 'enter' their memories of the story, by way of their rather loud sucking of candies, they begin at a different point. They soon realise that the story repeats itself. Dissatisfied with the inevitability of its ending (the murder of the young girl), but also with the temporary roles they are scripted to play – either the silent maid or relentlessly sucking viewer (whose candy is always in jeopardy of running out) – they decide to intervene.

I begin with Julie and Céline's desire for intervention as it bears some resemblance to my own in relation to the spaces of Art.

'Culture' as 'Kelly Girl'

Beyond the spaces of Art, this experience of temporal distinction, the production of 'alien-worlds' of trapped narratives can be read in the modes of capitalist subjectivation in the last three decades.

It is by now an oft-quoted fact that in these decades a measured dismantling was staged of the potency of relations between the poetic and the political, i.e. the dispersal of the 'Artistic critique' into many aspects of life: the production of life as a work of art (or rather the art of work),

the privileging of virtuosic and communicative creativity among middle class, first-world workers, the proliferation of 'creative' management solutions for an economy made flexible, customised creative lifestyle options in the proliferation of consumer culture and the employment of 'creative' workers toward such aims as gentrification and the easing of social tensions. This proliferation of Art and its capacity to re-organise the sensible, it is said, often operates in separation from or even opposition to the elaboration of a *social critique*: a critique of conditions, of inequality in the relationship between the 'flexible' lives in the first world and the erratic and unstable lives of those who labour in its name, hiding the contradictions deeply embedded in the use of the terms 'creative' or 'artistic' for even those metropolitan workers who experience it in coincidence with the move towards homogenisations of space, policing of borders and the confining demands of constant innovation.[1]

Here the promise of 'Art' in the resistances of the 1960s and 70s is curtailed by the inflexibility of social hierarchies, regimes of property ownership and the drive towards profit. Where space and time appear to become flexible and open up, under the mantra 'anything is possible', the tyranny of the creative as 'new' (whether found in new products, new management strategies, new mission statements, or new government funding mandates) obstructs avenues through which these movements might find their legacies in the present, just as it blocks a continuity with an imaginable future.

The aesthetic regime habitually operates in the kind of dual motion described by Jacques Rancière of the avant-garde: dissipating 'art' into the temporalities of everyday life, while, at the very last minute, erecting a boundary,

pulling back, re-naming this moment as 'Art' and in contemporary experience indeed profiting from its separation from 'real life'.

The figure of the artist-as-temp-worker while presenting the promise of a freer lifestyle, less constrained by the daily regimes of the factory, the ability to enact the 'new' in all areas of life, also represents the proliferation of a kind of social anaesthesia, what Bourdieu described in his writing on 'disinterest', that has been distributed across social relations.

In this, cultural spaces join a multitude of processes that render life, critique, and experience 'disinterested' or 'unreal', as aficionados for the temporality of the 'temp'. Whether it be the temporary worker with multiple options for expression (and little pay), the temporary event, such as the biennial or the art fair or the production of temporary encounters between people thinking about 'Politics' and 'Art', the 'temp' conditions a series of barriers between past, present and future.

For example, orientations to the future such as 'the project' or 'the programme', prime modes of delivery of cultural experience, divide time into thematic units, into accumulations of events, and modes of thought through which the future is already written.

This orientation to the future coincides with contemporary affective temporalities like crisis, insecurity, panic, depression, uncertainty, fear, and rush, profoundly affecting our ability to imagine possible futures. We become advocates of a 'hedged' temporality, whether we are students who must become indebted in order to obtain a professional designation only to find this designation always morphing into another under the illusion of 'multiple options', interns who become conditioned through a series of 'indebted' occupations, migrant workers in the UK hinged to an em-

ployer who will determine the quality and duration of their stay, sub-sub-contractors whose protean employers work with the migration police to re-structure labour according to economic ebbs and flows, residents of a squat or social housing block who must live in the slipping temporalities of a pending eviction notice.

The 'temp', in this time, cannot imagine their future because it is already spoken for.

Thematic proliferation at the pace that cultural production currently requires curtails the emergence of thought that is born of encounters with otherness, whether between those who are separated by current striations of the social, or the otherness derived from rubbing against a future that is unknown. In spite of many opportunities to attend conferences, hear presentations, and write on the topic of "Art and…", it becomes difficult to consider *the possible* of the present.

Akin to the temporality of imprisonment described by John Berger, the time of the 'temp' is then one in which past and future are locked together in experiences of the present, in which 'events occur, things happen', but they do not enter 'life's time'.[2]

And themes, without the ability to rupture 'life's time', become what Cildo Meireles once described as 'sterile flights of fancy'[3,] rather than potent encounters, in which pasts and futures are liberated in the experience of producing a liberated now.

Beyond the mere instrumentalisation of culture, cultural activity here might be thought of as a kind of 'Kelly Girl' (the name given to temporary workers in the U.S. labour force in the 1950s who worked for Kelly Office Services – now a multinational corporation with 750,000 employees worldwide and a revenue of 5 billion dollars). That is,

even more than a pusher of ever-corporate artistic products, 'culture' enacts the production of a set of 'disinterested', sensible procedures in time, mirrored across many areas of life's production – be they work, the spaces of art or even, from time to time, the spaces of political organising.

From Theme-Time to Thematic Universe

The importance of understanding the critical need to exceed the trappings of the 'temp' and the 'theme' building links between the time of the cultural encounter and 'life's time' was poignantly highlighted by the research of Eyal Weizman. His investigation of the use of Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts by the Israeli army, suggests that the conditions in which we think together must exceed those of the production of mere content. Rather than dwell in the pages of the cynic, for whom such investigations only confirm that radical thought has always already been co-opted and for whom the answer to the question 'what do we do with such information?' is always a kind of silent shrug. Such an investigation affirms the necessity of drawing powerful lines between the space-times in which we think the thoughts of art and politics together and the spaces and times in which we wish to live.[4]

Recent calls for 'new languages' or 'new grammars' with which to think 'Art' and/or 'Politics' together in the spaces of Art do not necessarily produce these lines, unless undertaken through a dramatic revision of the modes of collective thinking production.

What seems necessary here is a move from the production of the theme in the time of the temp (as isolated Subjects), experienced in temporal units of spectacle or

display, that is themes as *thema* (from the Latin, "a subject, thesis" or the Greek "a proposition, subject, deposit") toward theme as *concept.*

As opposed to the theme in the time of the temp, the temporality of the concept as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari is always 'connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges'.

When a proposition is defined by its reference, 'its relation to a state of affairs' that '…force intensive [non representational or extensive] coordinates into spatiotemporal and energetic coordinates', concepts exceed current temporal coordinates. They are not the linking of 'independent variables' but of *variations* across time, created 'according to the concept's neighbourhood'.

A concept then 'extends into infinity' and is never 'created from nothing'.

The movement of the concept is to some extent dialectical. It is infinite, able to enact com-possible co-ordinates of space and time, 'through its speed' and its opening up onto others, and finite 'through its contours', the means through which it finds its shape.[5]

Methodologically we might find such a conceptual movement in the notion of the 'thematic universe', the complex interactions of 'generative themes' elaborated by Paulo Freire. In Freire the tensions between the finite and infinite concepts are understood by way of practices of 'codification', in which they contract, are given shape in time and decodification in which they are elaborated more fully, rub up against others, extend over time.

Investigative teams, including those from within and outside of a situation (for example, a militant and an artist,

or an artist and a community member) engage in ongoing articulations of problems and the developing of their solutions.

Thematic universes or *concepts* may employ the formal and aesthetic strategies of the artist, even the times and spaces in which 'art' is produced as 'temp', but only as moments of codification in ongoing temporal cycles of reflection, analysis and action.

Such processes are currently enacted at the edges of art spaces, for example in the work of the hosts of this discussion, the Radical Education Collective in Ljubljana.

They have also been critical of the work of the sound collective Ultra-red, of which I am part. Our project *Dub Curriculum*, for instance, started off from a thematic investigation undertaken by us and a group that includes migrants, social and cultural workers in the rural southwest of England, where new migration controls re-vitalise the historical rhetoric of racism and bureaucratic languages mask anti-racisms past.

Here encounters, while formally articulated through a set of 'procedures' (the aesthetic consistency of circular seating, the use of a microphone, scrawls on pieces of white flip chart paper, a scripted protocol that invited people to 'play a sound of racism from their lives') were conducted in spaces of art as well as social spaces (an Italian restaurant, a rural bar/meeting centre). Across theses sites, the subjectivation of the group coincided with the production of themes: moments of thinking together, and relations over extended periods of time, in which attenuations and frictions could occur.

Far from being abstract, these encounters (which extended from a gallery space in the city of Plymouth to

towns across the region, and most recently to the Tate Britain museum in London),[6] probed the bureaucratic and physical violence of racism in the region, coding and decoding the theme of racism through acts of recording, listening, and discussion.

Such decoding was again 'coded', through a series of 'words' selected by each group, written on a page and exhibited along with the sounds of racism from which they emerged. These words were then read aloud over the basslines used by dub poets, opening passages from past antiracism movements in the United Kingdom.

Codifications were then exhibited, and groups were brought together, again to *decode*. Each folding and unfolding of thought produced concepts that found both their problems, in Freire's words, the 'limit-situations' in which the contradictions of racism occur, and the emergence towards solution, such as the coming about of an anti-racism network in the region as well as discussions of 'Art and...'.

Concepts-as-words and universes here coincided with the a-signifying temporalities of speaking, listening, facilitating and writing that could be found in the sensible choreography of events. They called for us to trace pasts, seek out those specialists who could provide histories for our analysis and enter with us into the resistant time of the future.

While it is increasingly difficult to enact such continuous and cyclical processes, to reach across the brackets of temp time, to make lovers of the oft missed encounters between what we name 'Art' and 'Politics', in a time of 'Kelly Girl' productions, in which the blocking of continuous time finds many seeking micropolitical refuge in the macropolitical manipulations of the extremist Church, the nation, the 'traditional values' of the family and the sacrifice-mantras of a military state apparatus, it is here, in the production of

resistant and continuous chronotopes of the present toward which it would seem necessary to turn our efforts.

To do so is not simply to abandon the impossible spaces of Art, but to imagine that they, like the remaining cast of Julie and Céline's alien-world, might also be released by our gestures of temporal and thematic border-crossing, floating (if a little corpse-like) in the pond alongside the ones who follow their concepts and desires.

1. The terms 'artistic' and 'social' critique and the historical trajectory of their separation in the response to the disruptions of the 60s and 70s in the creation of flexible labour forces is by now a familiar analysis and indeed lived fact. It can be read about more fully, in Brian Holmes' *The Flexibile Personality* http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/1106/holmes/en and Chiapello and Boltanski's *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Verso, 2007.

2. John Berger and Jean Mohr. *A Seventh Man: The Story of Migrant Workers in Europe*. London: Penguin Books, 2007. The drawing suggests a kind of stranglehold that the past '-' and future 'o' on the time of the present, pp.178-79.

3. This concept appeared recently in a paper given at Tate Modern's Landmark Exhibitions conference by Suely Rolnik titled, *A Shift towards the Unnameable*, translated by Brian Holmes and Michael Asbury.

4. Eyal Weizman. "The Art of War: Deleuze, Guattari, Debord and the Israeli Defense Force" in Radical Philosophy. March/April, 2006. Also available at http://info.interactivist.net/node/5324.

5. Deleuze and Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Verso, 1994, pp.21-24.

6. Documentation and recordings of the iteration of Dub Curriculum that occurred at the Tate Britain, titled *We Come from Your Future*, can be found at http://www.tate.org.uk/intermediaart/ultra-red.shtm.

Radical Education Collective:
School of Missing Identity: Conversation on
Politics, Arts and Education in Kosovo with
Mehmet Behluli and Dren Maliqi

RADICAL EDUCATION COLLECTIVE — What was the context in which the School of Missing Identity was initiated?

MEHMET BEHLULI — We must look at the cultural and political significance of the former Yugoslav territory. As you know, Kosovo was quite underdeveloped. It was a closed society with a strong patriarchal way of thinking. In fact, only the region of Kosovo proved a big problem when it came to integrating into Yugoslav society. This was probably also due to the language, as the language we use in Kosovo is completely different from the other, Slavic, languages.

When we refer to the development of the art scene in Kosovo we are referring to the 1970s, not earlier. I studied classical painting in Prishtina and finished my course of study in 1987. At that time the only way to receive further education was to pursue postgraduate studies. I went to Sarajevo and studied there from 1988 till 1991. At about the same time other friends went to Ljubljana – Sokol Beqiri did and Gani Llalloshi, who is actually still living there. They were the first artists with a different way of looking at art and the artwork. Because up until that time we had one artists' society, one government party, everything had a uniform structure and everything was controlled. In this sense, it was very difficult to know about what was going on outside of Kosovo.

REC — There were only connections established with individuals who went to other cities in ex-Yugoslavia and then returned?

MB — Yes, exactly. At that time we exchanged experiences and situations. If I remember correctly, not many things

were happening in Bosnia in those days, but at least one thing had caught my interest: "Jugoslovenska dokumenta". Perhaps you remember that back then it was a big exhibition on an overall Yugoslav level. From Ljubljana we received information about the Graphic Biennale. When we returned to Prishtina, to our local situation, we tried to do something… In the period after 1990, however, the situation had completely collapsed, also in a political sense. We have all heard of what went on in 1990-91 and of the complete segregation of Albanians and Serbs that ensued.

The 1990s were a very interesting period because Albanians were expelled, evicted from buildings, removed from legal spaces. Consequently, we started to organise a completely alternative way of living, of acting – a new society. We are conducting this conversation in a café because ever since that period bars have been very important places for artists. From culture to politics, it all happened in cafés. As a matter of fact, Ibrahim Rugova did all his politics in two cafés.

In this process education was very important. We also tried to organise education in an alternative way in various private spaces: homes, basements, etc. In the beginning it was interesting for me to find out how to resist the situation without actually fighting the situation but by trying to find alternatives. Unfortunately, that was the situation at the beginning only; now the situation is completely different.

REC — You were organising your entire life in a creative way; how did this formation of alternative institutions sustain its autonomy?

MB — The Albanian diaspora was quite strong at the time, and 'thanks' to Milošević we were able to set up a new so-

ciety that functioned on different levels. One level implied that we established a government that operated in exile and was in charge of collecting taxes. Everyone gave 3% and the government functioned with that money.

I don't understand this even today: how is it that the people were satisfied? You are living your life – we all are living our lives – and there is this complete segregation from the local Serbian authorities. Even our childhood seems somehow forgotten. No friendship, no solidarity… no nothing… a complete segregation occurred. Like a Berlin wall; an invisible one, but effective nevertheless.

As I said, we tried, we organised a parallel system. It was not completely financed, but it was partially financed. Also the health care system was organised in this way. The intention was to further organise some level of security, but that was repressed because Milošević was afraid of any kind of security institution.

This financing, which came from abroad, primarily covered basic needs. It was the government in exile that set up a legal structure to collect taxes. It then forwarded that money to the parallel institutions here – commissions in a way – and that actually worked out.

REC — The official system of education – the higher educational level, the secondary school level, the primary level – completely collapsed. What happened next? Was the Albanian majority made redundant at work, expelled from school in the wake of the violent annexation of Kosovo between 1989 and 1991?

MB — Yes, they fired us, but they used small tricks. You see, they demanded that an agreement be signed stating that you accepted new programmes. Of course, these new

programmes were not acceptable for the majority at that time. But nobody – let's say, 99 percent – accepted that declaration and consequently people were fired from the educational and cultural institutions. But these people never considered themselves as having been fired, because they immediately started organising themselves in a parallel way, in an alternative way, and this resulted in a kind of continuity of our educational system. As a small, uneducated society, we put a great deal of effort into education, and this was very important, terribly important.

REC — Did the School of Missing Identity emerge from the situation in which the arts were practically marginalised?

MB — We learned how to fight institutions. Today we are quite alternative. Probably because of that, I am not sure. If you are not accepted, you find alternative ways to organise yourself. It is very simple. After 1995, when I started working in an art academy, I realised this was not adequate because its organisation was very formal.

I wanted to further develop the programmes, invite young lecturers, and so on. And this was very difficult at that time because everything was considered from a patriotic nationalistic perspective. Also at that time independence was a very strong idea. The official narrative was: if we became independent, like Slovenia, everything would be perfect. But the situation in Kosovo was completely different. So, when we tried to do something new at the academy we met with very tough resistance.

Some of our colleagues had a very conservative view: Picasso, the 1950s and 60s, and then they seemed to think that nothing happened after the 1970s. Even today Duch-

amp is "forbidden", nobody realises how important Duchamp is, not to mention Beuys and the others who came after him. So we agreed to leave the system, to leave the Academy. Through this we learned that being the majority against the dominant regime we can try to do the same thing, but at another level. So we said, if you do not accept our programmes, we will leave the Academy and we will create our own educational system. But it was very difficult because we had no idea how it might function with different sponsors. The Soros NGOs were established in places in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia, we had an office in Prishtina and a Belgrade branch.

These were our first experiences of learning how to fight, how to overcome the segregation, and how to be a part of the system but in a completely different way and at a completely different level…

REC — … by creating alternative institutions?

MB — Well, we never said alternative, except in conversations as we are having now. Officially we never said "the Academy is very bad". Instead we said: "The Academy is a very beautiful, very good institute, but it is too classical." What we tried to do was to help them update through another system. This was a very soft, a very peaceful approach.

REC — Like Gandhi?

MB — No, more like the "Art of Resistance" – this really involved learning from life, from practices. In the 90s all activities took place in cafés – exhibitions, politics and so on. And you can see that in some of the cafés in Prishtina this is even the case today.

But let me go back to our situation, our position. The very classical ways of teaching art caused difficulties. In those days, the professor was a kind of *hodja*, an imam, and a student must learn what a professor decides and nothing else. And we were against such practices, we wanted dialogue, we wanted a challenge, we wanted opposing viewpoints.

REC — What was your proposed alternative to reproducing the dominant – vertical, hierarchical – teaching practices?

MB — We proposed an entirely different practice in which the professor is no longer a god. The professor is just there to moderate the discussion. Even today they have a 'recipe' here for how art should be made and what it should look like if it is to be considered good art. If you don't follow the 'recipe,' the art is considered bad. So these are the roots of how we adopted an alternative way of approaching the lectures, in fact the institution, how to take on completely different ideas.

After 1999 we took the same approach; if you don't want to accept the common way of thinking, you act outside of the system. Missing Identity started somewhere around 2002; we were quite engaged in it, but completely on a voluntary basis. I would like to mention that here I met Irwin for the first time. They were doing a project with the Kosovo army on a completely private basis. We – when I say we I mean the group of people who opposed the institutional way of making art at the time – invited them and their friends to join our courses, which were not classical courses, but rather exotic. You know, we were trying to invent hot water once

again. But here was a situation in which nobody knew what hot water was. It was a pioneering way of dealing with things that are perhaps very common in the rest of the world.

REC — Were the students that took your courses enrolled at the Academy?

MB — Most of them.

REC — Were these non-formal courses additional to the courses at the Academy, i.e. part of the Academy's curriculum?

MB — No, no, not at all. The courses were completely separate from the curriculum of the Academy. How to put it, until that time we had gained some experience in subverting the official programmes of the institutions, with officials, with the government, how to try and fool them, but in a very peaceful way. The peaceful approach was very important because probably because of that we succeeded, because we never openly opposed the classical way of teaching art. We seemingly agreed with the established way and added that we wanted to try different ways. Of course, the students were not obliged to accept what we were saying, nor the way of communicating. We just wanted them to know there existed another way of teaching art. And this was quite successful because young artists were free to choose. Of course not everybody was with us, not everybody accepted this way of thinking.

REC — Dren, we would like to ask you if you could comment on how you experienced Missing Identity?

DREN MALIQI — To make a long story short, I started my studies in 2000 and at that time with fellow other students Jakup Ferri, Driton Hajredini, Alban Muja and Lulzim Zeqiri an artists group was set up at the Academy. We knew the study programme was bad. Together we started talking about art and related things, and at a given moment Shkëlzen Maliqi and Mehmet organised courses, so we started gathering there. The number of students grew from five to fifteen. Every Friday we met to discuss various topics.

REC — Were these courses organised at the university?

DM — No. They were organised in the alternative space that Shkëlzen was running. Every week we gathered to discuss contemporary art, how it started off from Duchamp through Beuys and evolved to what is happening at present. We were discussing and producing works. It was quite a relief for us, students, because we didn't have this opportunity at the Academy. We were creating a platform for discussion. For me setting up these discussions was the most important moment in the process. In the period from 2002 and on some of the most important works of this new generation of artists were made.

REC — So by now you have at least six years of experience with the Missing Identity?

DM — That's right. Gradually, the time was ripe to transform this platform into an institutional platform. Now we have offices, computers, and so on. And now it is time to start with a new generation. Now we are thinking of a sort of alternative Academy. At some point we would like to call

it an alternative Academy that provides lectures two times a week…

MB — In my view, Missing Identity is important because it offers courses that are completely free. The topics are freely chosen. We might even decide to talk about the weather or about nationalism. Anything goes. That is the situation. As long as we are aware that everything has a kind of artistic background, as do the participants. So we regularly stage exhibitions and art projects, and we do educational work of course.

I usually tell this joke that is not actually a joke… Dren's friend who had graduated from the Art Academy came up and said to me: "Hey Professor, listen, I didn't learn anything at this Academy, believe me." And I answered: "No, no. You learned something. You learned that you didn't learn anything." In my view, it is very important to be aware of what you are learning, but also of what you are not learning. It is essential to have a constructive way of thinking. You start off with a model and then you begin to research that model, using all the means available. You turn it upside down, and then it becomes a completely different thing.

REC — This initiative emerged as an alternative to the institutionalisation of knowledge, as an alternative to the situation at the Academy. As Dren mentioned, the School of Missing Identity is now becoming an institution in its own right that requires funding. This usually draws positive and negative consequences that have to be dealt with critically. It would be interesting to hear about the current situation and recent debates.

MB — After 1999 the situation completely changed. It may be hard to imagine, but from 1981 till 1999 life was very insecure, very day-by-day, very unpredictable. The situation was really difficult. Even when we were talking about making culture, making art, forming an opposition, we experienced a strong sense of fear.

After 1999 we had the feeling that we were free at last. There were no policemen, we didn't have to be afraid of what the government might do. This "freedom feeling" was so strong that it actually became a problem. Everybody thought they could do anything.

On the conceptual level we talked about reaching a point of chaos: no rule of law, people trying to get as much as they could, doing away with borders – this kind of mentality. In 1999 we started from zero.

Eventually, institutions with really strange organisms were formed, and the collateral damage – in consequence of the freedom of expression, the freedom of making decisions – was well handled. Yet, our modes of functioning have to be formalised in line with the idea that you are free as long as you are not attacking someone else's freedom. We are waiting for this 'independence' to happen. We will see what this declaration of independence will bring.

Today at the Academy it is no longer a taboo to teach in the ways we are used to at our alternative school. At this point, I think we have done a good job. Even the conservative guys [the professors] started changing their minds. They may still believe that video is a poor medium, but they see that the visitors like the video's, the installations, action art, so they may find it is not so bad after all. Just recently my Academy decided to start a new department, a department of contemporary art. This is really something. The art galleries now want to collaborate with us. We have made all

sorts of compromises with them except about the 'quality of the show'.

REC — Is there, then, no longer any need for Missing Identity?

MB — I think there still is a need for it. I believe that even if you have a 'perfect institution' you still need to have an alternative to that because you need to move things ahead on a different level. Once you are established you start dictating things.

REC — So there will be new people involved?

MB — Yes, I am waiting for the new guys.

REC — Do you see any problems with the way institutions "think" art?

DM — Prishtina has two institutional galleries and there are also two small galleries that are dealing with contemporary art, the Rizoma and Stacion Center for Contemporary Art. The problem with the institutional galleries, the National Gallery for example, is that they have no criteria at all. We had a discussion a while ago in which we argued that we could do things outside these institutional spaces; I think young artists are expecting too much of them. After all, they cannot give much here in Kosovo, except perhaps some media coverage. So we said that it is important to do things ourselves. This reduces the budget. Sure, art is a luxury, but you don't have to make a work of art that requires 5,000 Euros or more. We need to make the scene vibrant, to bring new people in.

REC — Would you say that Rizoma is such an initiative that wants to go the way Missing Identity was going at the beginning, pursuing a "radical becoming"?

DM — In some way Rizoma is a direct consequence of Missing Identity. As Mehmet mentioned before, it is linked to institutions, to the Academy, where they are having a new department for contemporary art. It is not only that, it is also a space open to new thinking and new approaches to art.

MB — I would say that at the moment Rizoma is a space where everybody can participate: anthropologists, activists, artists, punk musicians, anti-militarists, and so on. The space is indeed designed like a rhizome.

DM — Missing Identity and Rizoma have created a very lively art scene in Prishtina. The problem as I see it is that the scene is functioning mostly from the outside. Foreign curators are coming, engaging our artists to participate in exhibitions, and our artists are just waiting for them to come, involve them in their shows, and take them abroad. But this is not the way a healthy scene should be; we have to function from the inside as well. Rizoma in a way tries to fill this gap.

REC — So there is a strong desire in people to go abroad, but the idea is also to do things at a home level, to introduce changes locally?

MB — Well, we have done some very interesting things we will not easily forget.
It is important to develop this free energy, but also to channel it in creative ways. I am sure this can be done here,

but not immediately. Ten years have passed, another ten are coming, and now we are questioning ourselves regarding how to develop and not merely repeat ourselves. As I see it, it is no longer relevant to act like an art guerilla; now it is time to somehow be part of the institution and as such try to change something.

REC — This is, of course, one perspective. But another one is a more rhizomatic way of organising subjectivity. This can emerge from anywhere and its timing cannot be predicted.

MB — The School of Missing Identity is trying to establish itself as an institution that will act as part of the system but with some degree of independence. And then these young people will oppose our situation, take a different stance and attitude. And this is rhizome.

This conversation between Radical Education Collective (Gašper Kralj, Bojana Piškur / Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Missing Identity (Prishtina, Kosovo) took place in a café in Prishtina on 4 February 2008.

Sezgin Boynik:
Cultural Roots of Contemporary
Art in Kosovo

a. Art Now!

One of the most influential books for the contemporary art scene of Kosovo was *Art Now* published by Taschen. My friendship with the Kosovo art scene started later, when the first edition of the book was already completely stale and worn out, and the new edition had come to Exit contemporary art centre's library. Then the topic of the discussion was that Sislej Xhafa, an artist from Kosovo, was not included in the list of millennial artists, but instead the Albanian artist Anri Sala had the honour to be part of the cream of the contemporary art world.

Apart from this anecdote, the book *Art Now* obviously did not have any significant effect on the Albanian national aesthetic identity. *Art Now* was more a book about the aesthetical regulations in contemporary art. In other words, it was a book about how things should look in art. To young Kosovo art students it was a guidebook that taught them how to think, how to see and how to say things as contemporary artists. One must keep in mind that, alongside the Internet, other books by Taschen and different encyclopaedias, *Art Now* is only one of the many educational objects in the art world of Kosovo. I chose *Art Now* because it was totally thumb-marked with use.

So what were the Kosovar artists learning from *Art Now*?

Apart from names of artists, they were also getting acquainted with the logic of contemporary art forms. My thesis is that this logic, which they constructed from studying *Art Now* and related sources, was different from that of their contemporaries in the places the art in *Art Now* originated from.

First of all, the students from the Prishtina Art Academy had a heavy burden of interpretation; their professors, mainly non-figurative modernists that used many metaphors, wanted to interpret the world through art symbolism so that the history of their hidden metaphors could also illustrate their way of seeing the world. As every professor had his (until recently professors were always men) way of seeing the world, and the world of tactical politics was no longer valid (because the basis of their metaphorical politics in the new millennium had radically changed), the students started to see the difference. The eagle's-wing-in-the-deserted-black-field-with-the-big-hands-of-the-mother-abstraction-in-grey-cloud-depression did no longer interest them and neither did the archetypical figurations of mythological forms. The aesthetics of the *Art Now* helped young students to escape chaotic paternalistic complex abstractionism, which artist Mehmet Behluli calls 'the teaching of confusion', referring to the over-complicated art theories of modernist Kosovar painters. They wanted to look for new possibilities of the art logic, which would be simpler and more tied in with film, music, slang, and of course yarns from their daily lives. The art of *Art Now* did not seem to 'give a fuck' about the anxiety of interpretation; rather, it was all about the art of simplicity.

Could you say that this lesson drawn from *Art Now* was too simplistic?

As was Nam June Paik with a portable Sony camera, the young Kosovar artists were also excited about the new tool called video. It was the most proper medium for 'not giving a fuck' about any symbolical interpretation of reality.

Video made it possible to alter the boredom and anxiety in the ateliers of the Prishtina academy. It should not come as a surprise that the first artworks made with video mainly resembled jokes and sketches of situational comedy. Among the first jokes were parodies of propagators of artists from the world of *Art Now*, Yoko Ono and Damien Hirst, to mention just two.

In fact, the situation itself is a genuine comedy as none of the artist of the young new wave generation saw any video works before they started making them themselves. The knowledge about video art was based on the stills in the *Art Now* publication. Moving images of video works were captured and frozen in one or maybe two or three different stills. Since the artists were looking at videos the way they were looking at paintings, they read *Art Now* differently from their contemporaries in the places where the art depicted in *Art Now* originated. *Art Now* had such an impact on the art scene in Kosovo that the forms that arose then are still visible in works of many artists from the new generation.

These forms are lacking the main fundaments of the western historical avant-garde. For example, the time conception in the video art from Kosovo is very linear and every situation is happening in real time. There is no cutting or reversing, no cyclical or non-sequential time conception. This is obvious in the basic form of contemporary art created in Kosovo: not one single work is done with collage or montage. Everything pretends to be Real and Authentic. Also the cult of the artist as an Author and authentic originator of an artwork ties in with this conception of the work based in real time. Even when works made in Kosovo are referring to moments in the history of contemporary

art, they are adapted to the actual situation in Kosovo without using found material as reference. Actors, authors, scene, situation, ideas – everything has to be original and authentic.

There are always many ideas 'up in the air' in the world of contemporary art in Kosovo. This thesis will be made clear when we proceed with analysing some of the essential elements in the Kosovo art practice of recent times.

b. Marcel Duchamp

In 2002 at the Summer School of the Prishtina University Mehmet Behluli, a professor at the Art Academy, and Sislej Xhafa, a visiting lecturer, organised a course on contemporary art with the title 'Duchamp Effect'.

The course aimed at bringing new perspectives to the students of the Prishtina Art Academy and especially presenting them with new alternatives, different from the rigid conservative frames common to the Prishtina Academy's ateliers. The intention was to teach to the students that "there are no limits of expression in contemporary art". The influence of Duchamp on contemporary art in Kosovo, again, was not in line with the radical negation of art, or with the idea to transgress art with the use value of everyday objects. But students from the Art Academy were given a different kind of a lesson; they were taught that everything could be art, especially the things that their professors never thought or imagined as art.

I should remark about the new wave art scene in Kosovo that contemporary art education didn't happen systematically, genealogically and according to the dialectics of historical avant-garde movements. There were no father

figures like Duchamp or Beuys, or new heroes from the *Art Now* book. So when students were thinking about one specific artist they didn't take into account his or her history of development of ideas, they did not connect these ideas to the times when they originated, or how these ideas related to politics and the economy. In short, many of the students did not actually care about the history and site-specificity of ideas.

The important thing was to have an idea; and since the students became familiar with the concept of the 'ready-made', suddenly a lot of ideas popped up in the art world. Ready-made was for students, and also for their professors, an uncontrolled flow of expression. For an artist it was just enough to express their thoughts, or put across their own authentic and original ideas!

This also explains why in Kosovo, unlike in many other places, artists, long before they make any work, like to talk about it extensively. At parties, drinking sessions, dinners, or simply when strolling around, artists communicate their ideas for new art works, even when they are just a blitz of something that is not-yet.

Some of the artists are talking so often about their ideas that they never have time to realise them. There are many examples in Kosovo of artists with many never-realised ideas. One of the best examples is Tahar Alemdar, an artist from Prizren who unintentionally became the best conceptualist artist in Kosovo. Alemdar, who was also one of the first new wave art students and had attended the 'Duchamp effect' seminar, took the ready-made concept so literally and factually that the 'idea' became more important than anything else. For years now Alemdar has just been producing ideas, many of which are brilliant, but he

hardly ever made any of them materialise. Here comes a question for sociologists: can we think of any interrelation between the ready-made art culture and Kosovo's current political situation? Perhaps we can, but this article is just about forms.

c. Joseph Beuys

Unlike Duchamp, Beuys never had such an important influence on Kosovo. In the abovementioned seminar 'social sculpture' may have been one of the topics, hardly anyone is ever talking about it or mentioning it.

But the spectre of Beuys has been haunting the art scene in Kosovo for many years. He is a historical figure in the Kosovo art history. He somehow happened to become a symbol of confrontation with the Western hegemonic art system.

The first confrontation with Beuys was one of negation, and the second resulted in glorification. In both cases discussion was impossible.

The first encounter happened when Beuys visited Belgarde in 1974 to attend an artists' meeting at the Students' Cultural Center (SKC). In those days Beuys giving a long presentation at the meeting was a very big event for the Yugoslav contemporary/expanded art scene. Almost everybody in the expanded progressive media art scene of Yugoslavia was euphoric about Beuys, except for Shkelzen Maliqi, a philosopher from Kosovo who was then studying in Belgrade. His critique, published in the bulletin of the SKC in the same year, was an attack on Beuys as a utopian thinker. Maliqi clearly argued that Beuys was not. As a summary Maliqi was saying that Beuys, who saw himself as a philosopher, had

failed to grasp the fundaments of the utopian-philosophy of Hegel (with whom Maliqi starts his article) and the revolutionary thoughts of Lenin (with whom he concludes his article). Maliqi criticised Beuys for not being as radical, critical and socially engaged as he claims to be, but for just making a 'plastic-art philosophy'.

In the year 1974 Kosovo obtained expanded constitutional rights in Yugoslavia and the Kosovo population considered itself economically, politically and culturally closer to the modern world of Yugoslavia. But, of course, Maliqi's critique never had any real influence on the conceptualist scene, or on the Kosovo art and cultural scene.

The second meeting of the Kosovo art and cultural scene with Beuys occurred 20 years later. This time it generated an evocation. Mehmet Behluli, who was painting objects with tar, remembers the 1990s as a depressive and miserable era. His house was his place, and for him, like for many Albanians, there was no other public space than their private houses. In the 1990s Albanians in Kosovo were totally isolated. In the late 1990s Behluli painted his famous "Joseph Beuys visiting my House". (Behluli cannot remember exactly whether it happened in 1996 or 1997 and I think that this amnesia also shows the effect of the cultural quarantine of those times.) Of course this was a utopia. In the 1990s hardly anyone visited Kosovo, especially not artists or curators.

This evocation is like an omen of Kosovo contemporary politics, culture and also art, and this difference in confrontation with Beuys by Kosovars shows also a change in the main paradigm of Kosovo's actual situation. What was once an instance of modernist, rational and self-reflexive hope, turned into status quo postmodernist agnostic mysticism.

d. René Block

Even if Beuys never visited Kosovo, his gallery owner, the famous curator René Block visited Behluli and other artists in Kosovo and claimed that Kosovo is the capitol of the avant-garde in the Balkans. The rest is a short international glorious history of Kosovo contemporary art plus euphoria supported by national representation through contemporary art.

Marjetica Potrč:
Local Democracies

The following is a slightly edited version of a talk Marjetica Potrč presented at the East Coast Europe (ECE) round-table discussion, moderated by Markus Miessen, in the Theresa Lang Auditorium of the Vera List Centre for Art and Politics, New School University, in New York on 15 April 2008.

That was great. I will also be talking about democracy but from a completely different perspective.[1]

I would actually argue that local democracies have been developing on the margins of Europe and the US, and I will show a few examples from three of the projects I have done in the last three years. I'll be showing slides from the Western Balkans – from the *Lost Highway Expedition*, where I was with Srdjan[2] – then from Acre, a state in Amazonia in Brazil, and finally from New Orleans, which in a way is also on the margins of the United States.

[1] The previous speaker was Reinier de Graaf, an architect with Rem Koolhaas's Office for Metropolitan Architecture, who had been speaking about the architecture OMA designed in China and its role in building democracy in that country.
[2] The architect Srdjan Jovanović Weiss was one of the co-organisers of the *Lost Highway Expedition* (2006); he is also the founder of the Normal Architecture Office (NAO) and a founding member of the School of Missing Studies.

Let me start with a nice picture from Kosovo's independence celebration. Kosovo became independent from Serbia on 17 February 2008. It is the last stage in the balkanisation of ex-Yugoslavia – its fragmentation – and I was particularly attracted by all the US flags that were everywhere in the crowd. Of course, when you look at the US flag, you think of freedom, democracy and the promotion of democracy by the US.

When you consider how people in this region understand flags – I will show slides taken in Prishtina and Tirana – it's something quite different. The American flag here on this building doesn't refer to America; it refers to an individual who lives in the US. What I'm trying to say is that everyone in this region is actually building local democracies starting from their personal connections.

This is a beautiful picture from Tirana. Half of the city is self-built. There is enormous energy that the people put in there, and of course the region is known for its parallel systems.

A good example is Prishtina, the capital city of Kosovo. This is my drawing. Before it became independent, Kosovo

was governed by three parallel governments. When we were on the *Lost Highway Expedition*, we were reminded of the European Union, because the European Union also has different overlapping governments, like Schengen Europe, NATO Europe, membership Europe and so on. Kosovo was governed by the Kosovo government, by the Serbian government and, thirdly, as a UN protectorate. And in this space where no one governs, the individual becomes smallest state and, of course, marks out his or her own territory. Here you see a flag perched on the edge of a territory – a small family house with a small economy. I like this picture so much because it is exactly here that the word "balkanisation" changes meaning. Before, the word was regarded as a negative term because it meant the fragmentation of unity. After we experienced the *Lost Highway Expedition*, "balkanisation" turned into a positive term. Suddenly it stood for particles and group identities, and was actually the voice of democracy built from below.

Here is a reminder that this has been a process of only fifteen years, more or less. Of course, Kosovo in 2008 is merely the last part of it.

So there was a fragmentation of the territory. But the fragmenting didn't stop with territories. It has continued, and one of the most striking examples is the "ideal residential unit". As you probably know, ex-Yugoslavia was known for its beautiful modernist architecture and modernist ideology – the social state and so on. And it was normal for an apartment-block neighbourhood back in the eighties to house some 10,000 people. This has shrunk dramatically in the period after modernism.

Now two new architectural typologies have emerged: the Urban Village and the Urban Villa. Here we're looking at two examples – on the left is an Urban Villa from Skopje, on the right, from Ljubljana. People who want to live together move into an Urban Villa. Some fifteen to twenty families live in the same building. I also want to point out the incredible decorations these buildings have. The face of architecture becomes increasingly important.

Here are two examples of private houses in Prishtina. As you can see, the decorations just keep growing until they turn into kitsch. The façades become a second skin for the people who build these houses. They reflect their personal styles. As Srdjan said, "Each house is an island by itself." It is very interesting also that these are always "pseudo" styles. And of course the skin is important: it's like the skin of your own body, only now it is your architectural shelter.


These are two pictures that expand on the idea of pattern.

I want to show you this example of the painted façades in Tirana. I think there will be another one too. But most of

you probably know about the project initiated by Mayor Edi Rama after Albania changed its political regime and became democratic. One of his ideas was to paint the façades of the city, and of course, when you are in Tirana today, most of the buildings on the main avenues are painted in these crazy patterns.

Anri Sala, an Albanian artist who lives in France, made a video[3] in which he interviews Edi Rama, who at some point says: "The façades are not lipstick or a dress, they are organs." I thought it was beautiful how he pointed to the fact that actually the façade is an active surface that is alive. Just to mention one more thing here – because we will look at New Orleans, which deals with modernism in a different way – the Western Balkans actually just left modernism as it was – either just left it to rot or put a new face on top of it and in this way somehow obliterated modernist architecture.
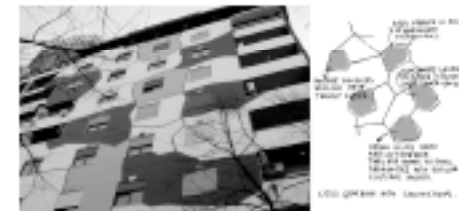
For me, the painted façades of Tirana are also an expression of citizenship. The citizens of Tirana actually agreed to them. At some point Edi Rama held a referendum and asked people if they wanted the project to continue, and they said yes. And today new developers are actually using the same style.

[3] *Dammi i colori* [Give me the colours], 2003.

Tirana's painted façades are for me an expression of citizenship, an agreement that is painted on the main avenues of the city. In what they represent, Tirana's painted façades are similar to the sum of the individual houses in Prishtina.

We are now in Amazonia. The Brazilian state of Acre, which borders Peru and Bolivia, has experienced the same kind of fragmentation, and in the same period of time (roughly the last fifteen years), as ex-Yugoslavia. Only this fragmentation was a very happy one, whereas, of course, ex-Yugoslavia's was very traumatic. Why was it happy? Because the communities who live in Acre were able to obtain the territories they wanted to manage – I'm talking about the extraction reserves and Indian territories. The state of Acre, the government, actually gave these territories to the people who live in them.

When we were travelling through the region – this was after the *Lost Highway Expedition* in the Western Balkans – I

was extremely interested in the patterns and surfaces of the architecture. In Acre we saw that people were reasserting their territories by painting patterns on the architecture, like the school on the right, as well as painting patterns on their bodies. So the painted bodies – both human and architectural – start to represent the building up of society from below.

Something else I found extremely interesting. The state of Acre in fact was asking for a new agreement on citizenship. Governor Jorge Viana once said (I have a recording of this): "We don't want to be called citizens because citizenship reminds us of cities. Our citizenship is *florestania*" (from the word for "forest"). So actually, the government of Acre was asking for a different kind of societal agreement.

This is just to remind you of something similar, which we see in cities like New York and São Paulo (on the right) and in urban tattoos (on the left).

And now we come to New Orleans, where the parades are actually not just tourist attractions – as I realised when I stayed there for a while.

They become very important because the citizens appropriate the city by dancing through it. Here again, we're talking about the body. Maybe some of you remember that when the first Mardi Gras took place in New Orleans after Katrina, many people said it shouldn't take place because there had been so much suffering and people shouldn't celebrate. But it was very existential, very necessary, for people to have the parade and so to reclaim the city, to bring it back to life.

What New Orleanians also do at Mardi Gras is they throw these strings of beads at the façades of buildings. So on the right side, you see a façade – I don't know if it's clear – with a lot of beads on it. And of course, I was again reminded of the Western Balkans.

New Orleans, in short, has three messages for me. One is that, like in the Balkans, the main architectural style in the period after modernism – I mean the period now – is pre-modern. The people who are actually rebuilding the city by themselves – again like in the Western Balkans – have opted for the "shotgun house", which is a pre-modern typology. Of course it is very richly decorated, since it is in fact a personal façade.

And of course, the neighbourhoods are very strong. You mark the territory of your house, and you also mark the broader territory.

What was for me most scandalous, and interesting, was the
fact that in New Orleans, modernist architecture is being
torn down. When we looked at the Western Balkans, we
saw that the people there were painting over it and reusing
it – balkanising it. But here in New Orleans, there has been
a drive to actually demolish modernist architecture. This is
the Phyllis Wheatley School, which was designed in 1955.
It will be torn down soon. It's a beautiful piece of architec-
ture, which was not flooded during Katrina, but still the city
doesn't want it to be there.

And of course all of you know about the demolition of pub-
lic housing. When I think about the demolition of buildings
from the modernist period in New Orleans, I also think
about how the International Style stood for a kind of
democracy that is now being challenged in New Orleans.

Maybe this should be the last slide, since it talks about the
territory the city is actually reclaiming as its own. We're
looking at the wetlands. New Orleans is there near the top.
In a way, the wetlands will become a new survival territory.

So just to wrap up: local democracies are going back to a
pre-modern period, and their message is about survival. But
as we have seen in the Western Balkans, in New Orleans
and in Acre, cooperation between a democracy built from
below and the government can work very well.

Thank you.

**Minna Henriksson:
Altered Landscapes**

What follows is a short extract from the text "Never Ending Construction" by Shkelzen Maliqi and a passage from an interview conducted by Sezgin Boynik with Minna Henriksson. Being invited by Rizoma Space for Contemporary Communication Minna stayed in Prishtina during the months of October and November 2008. During her stay she mainly studied the different manifestations of collective identification in the public space of Prishtina and other cities in Kosovo. Her artistic research into these various kinds of signs resulted in an exhibition that consisted mainly of photographs.

Shkelzen Maliqi
Never Ending Construction

She has taken snapshots of hundreds of spaces and construction sights, almost all of them unfinished, as well as shop displays, billboards, posters and graffiti of various natures. In this exhibition they act as a half-tuned cry of a simple Kosovo citizen, as well as the cries of those with great ambition that have turned rich and powerful overnight.

These collected images all have a specific theme and are divided in five parts. They are displayed with anarchic density in one corner of each floor of this building. Altogether they render an image and reflect the consciousness of contemporary Kosovo that emanates a rigid energy that has blocked any transition in the city. What is displayed is repression, war trauma and the hardship of building a new Identity for Kosovo and obtaining the country's independence. It is done with the energy of obviously anarchic competition towards the so-called values of a society and system that strives for democracy and freedom, but actually constructs a reality of a wild capitalism, a society in which roles and functions have collapsed.

The images we see testify to the fact that we are 'on the right path'. At the same time, they give evidence of the uncoordinated individual competition with arbitration and babbles. The errors in the inscriptions, graffiti and slogans show (not with a bad intention since the artist does not read Albanian) arrogance, incompetence and the bad taste of idealist fighters who took over public and private spaces.

We see these images every day, but paradoxically we do not perceive them as the artist does, as 'controlled' separate events, modern spaces, 'decorative' shop designs and isolated objects with postmodern shapes, with window displays full of designer commodities but mostly falsifications. Our view stops being holistic, like a view of a functional whole with aesthetic value, but we see reality as our own daily battle, like the oasis we have created in the chaos, where everyone creates their part of reality with a positive energy and view, resembling the reality of the inner asylum.

Translated from the Albanian
by Nurhan Qehaja

Excerpt of the Interview with Minna Henriksson

SB — Judging from the way you produce and display your artworks one can get the impression that making art can be very cheap and easy. Your installations are direct, simple, cheap, and not overly aestheticised and at the same time they are informative, provocative and composed through careful research. Sometimes I have the idea that your installations are more about using the gallery as a communicative or discursive tool.

MH — My installations are cheap and easy because I don't have the means to make more complicated works. If I had a video camera I would probably start making video works, but as I don't have one, I don't even think through that medium.

I don't know how else to understand gallery space than as a tool. To me a gallery is like an empty page, which you fill with images, sounds, and installations instead of words. Of course during the time of the exhibition the space is not empty. But at the same time it is not exactly a gallery, which is what I find more interesting and challenging.

SB — The connection between contemporary art and nationalism is very central to your work. For instance, in Prishtina you co-organised one workshop ('Altered identities', at Stacion CAC, 2006) and co-edited a critical reader on this topic (published by MM publishing house, 2007). Your latest work in Prishtina, an installation entitled 'Construction', also deals at length with national imagery and symbolism. In your statement you are further referring to Benedict Anderson, the main theoretician of nationalism.

MH — The word 'construction' in my exhibition does not only refer to the building that is under construction, but also to the situation in Kosovo. In Kosovo a national identity is being constructed. I find this very interesting. In Finland for example the same process happened 90 years ago. Of course much is happening still today and will do as long as the state exists, but more secretly. When Finland was constructed 90 years ago, or even long before that, the process of becoming was obviously not completed. Nationalism

keeps changing and updating itself very quickly, keeping pace with the trends. And contemporary art plays an important role through its contemporariness.

It is a rare moment to be able to witness this construction of a nation state. There is a very strong Kosovo identity. Yet, people have still not got used to the flag of Kosovo. In the demonstration in Vetevendosje I didn't see any Kosovo flags, only Albanian flags.

By showing these national symbols it is my aim to make them visible so that people become more aware of them. I want to show the sheer number of them, how dominant they are in public space. It is by no means my intention to elevate the national symbols, but rather to ridicule them.