RECLAIMING PUBLIC LIFE, BUILDING PUBLIC SPHERES: CONTEMPORARY ART, EXHIBITIONS AND INSTITUTIONS IN POST-1989 EUROPE

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This Ph.D. dissertation traces the emergence and development of an important current of socially engaged art in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of communism. It examines various participatory, collaborative and dialogic projects in public spaces by contemporary artists, working in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania. These works often directly engaged marginalized communities, such as the homeless, members of immigrant groups and the Roma. In various ways, these artworks revived leftist traditions in a local context where, as political ideologies and economic orders, socialism had become equated with authoritarianism and democracy with neoliberalism. Occurring at specific moments in time throughout the post-communist period, most often with the presence of both financial and institutional support from the USA and EU nations, specific contemporary art practices sought to reclaim public life and build inclusive public spheres as democratic forms within emerging civil societies. Relying on sociological theories of social and political capital, and on theories of civil societies in political science, my goal has been to identify the potentially transformative roles that socially engaged art forms played in the post-communist transition. Concerned with current socio-political issues and foregrounding spaces of participation and collaboration, such art practices implicitly proposed

new modes for art's communication with the viewer, explored notions of public space as the locus of constantly negotiated public spheres, and provoked discussions of viable forms of democracy.

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

1.1   OVERVIEW

While structured on thematic discussions of art practices in various localities in post-1989 Europe, this study is not intended solely for a European or a Central Eastern European (CEE) audience. Rather it is meant as a contribution to the understanding of worldwide developments of contemporary art, specifically as it concerns participatory and collaborative art. Throughout these pages, I trace the emergence and development of a current of socially engaged art in CEE after the fall of communism that is, at once, locally and globally connected. I examine various participatory, collaborative and dialogic projects in public spaces by contemporary artists, working in cities primarily in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, as well as in Italy and England that directly engage marginalized communities, such as the homeless, members of immigrant groups and the Roma.

In various ways, these artworks revived leftist traditions in a local context where socialism was equated with authoritarianism and democracy with neoliberalism as both political ideology and economic order. Occurring at specific moments in time throughout the post-communist period, these contemporary art practices sought to reclaim public life from both the recent communist past and current neoliberal ideologies in order to build inclusive public spheres as democratic forms within emerging civil societies. In these multi-dimensional projects that

directly call into question the larger political context, artists both contributed and made use of the mechanics of social capital as an emancipatory tool for political agency.

The concept of social capital, as leading to that of political capital, forms the basis of my analytical approach to the case studies presented here. "Social capital" designates a multitude of social networks and social skills developed and used within these networks. I contend that within the volatile post-communist socio-political condition, social networks, however small and fractured, often act as subversive modes of existence when the accumulated intersubjective relations within them lead to political agency. Most (yet not all) locally emergent socially engaged art practices that I present here concomitantly emerge from and expand upon existing social networks. As indigenous rather than imported forms, social capital's emancipatory potential emerged as a theoretical concept in CEE during the authoritarian communist period within the realm of second society. It provided the hidden reality of a tacit unity and resistance from below. In various former socialist countries, social capital accumulated in informal networks and expanded into broader and more or less organized social, albeit apolitical, movements. One such example in Czechoslovakia was Charter 77, a petition written in 1977 by writers and intellectuals demanding recognition of human rights by the communist regime. In Poland there was Solidarity, the trade union, which emerged in 1980 outside the control of the communist regime, advocating for workers' rights and social change. The Danube Circle environmental movement grew in Hungary during the 1980s and functioned as a platform for critiquing the centrally organized socialist government. In various ways, each played a direct role in bringing about the collapse of the communist regime and influenced changes within the early years of transition.

Although considerably dispersed, these networks survived into the post-communist period. However, they no longer formed a unified front against a clearly defined enemy, but instead morphed and divided, serving different and competing interests. On one hand, former communist functionaries made use of their networked connections to emerge as a dominant political class and an entrepreneurial elite who rapidly and aggressively accumulated economic capital within the highly corrupt privatization processes of the formerly socialized public assets. On the other hand, some informal networks that not only survived but also thrived within the post-communist transitional period also contained the possibility for agency for a marginalized section of the population.

Naturally, social capital, with all of its operational mechanics of trust, reciprocity and solidarity, contains both positive and negative connotations. Its subversive potential can be immediately countered by its abusive capacity when employed to serve, for instance, the speculative interests of neoliberal economists, conservative nationalists or religious fundamentalists. Rather than assuming social capital to be an uncontaminated concept an always emancipatory form and medium for democratic action, it is more realistic to acknowledge its double meaning and thus its inherently shifting possibilities. In fact, social capital's dual nature, or rather its double edged sword quality, communicates the perpetual need to articulate and re-articulate its politically subversive potential within the dominant yet shifting spaces of power. Critic and art historian Grant Kester points to a similar apparent duplicity existent within the concept of collaboration where it can mean both united labor and betrayal by cooperating with the enemy. Ultimately, he considers collaboration's inherent "ethical undecidability" as a productively active conceptual attribute that ultimately needs to be continuously asserted and

negotiated, just "as there is no art practice that avoids all forms of co-option, compromise or complicity."[1]

Although not directly stated, it is telling that the mechanics of social capital can be identified at the core of a variety of global social networks, which provide the content for conceptualizing various forms of collective belonging. In their book *Collectivism after Modernism*, Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette identify three forms of contemporary collectivism. The first is what they term "collectivism of public opinion" that envisions an organic community held together by the communitarian ideals of Christianity, Islam and Nationalism, where "the American televangelist or the Republican anti-gay-marriage activist shares a not-so-secret bond with the Mujahideen leader."[2] The other facet of the "new collectivism" manifests itself in two forms. On one hand there are the minimally regulated and DIY activities, flashmobs, blogospheres, listserves, and the techno-anarchist hacktivism. On the other hand, there is the imagined community defined by the Internet, which "animates the entrepreneurial, neoliberal spirit and fuels the demands for capitalism's labor and managerial classes alike to think outside the box in order to increase their productivity."[3] A third form, albeit less widespread, constitutes forms of collectivity envisioned and set in motion by provisional and often fleeting community forms, as exemplified by the artists belonging to the current of socially engaged art, some of whose practices I examine here.

In a similar fashion, theorist, critic and curator Okwui Enwezor points to two forms of collective formation. One form evolved over a sustained period of time where group authorship predominates over individual contribution. We can perhaps think of educational activities implemented by community centers or even more recent pedagogical initiatives headed by artists, curators and museums. Enwezor calls the second formation "networked collectivities,"

which he sees to be much more prevalent today especially due to the contemporary communication technologies.[4]

Several of the practices analyzed in my study, whether short-lived or long-term, are inherently different from these, mostly virtual, networked collectivities, which primarily make use of the internet to envision contemporary forms of belonging loosely defined against an even more loosely articulated enemy – the neoliberal global order. In contrast, the works that I will examine emerge from direct interactions and collaborations with people and from within physical interventions into public spaces. These make use of and expand upon the locally existent mechanics of social capital materialized in informal networks. They act as potential mediums through which claims for political rights within public spheres receptive of competing interests can be envisioned, articulated and realized.

Each participatory socially engaged project undertaken by artists working in post-1989 Europe manifests varied tools of engagement. The underlying thread connecting them is their concern of bringing about a form of collective belonging based on actively constructed public spheres. These aimed to allow legal, socio-political, individual and group claims to expressed and pursued as part of a functioning civil society.

It is important to identify here, even if schematically, the shifting and oftentimes competing notions of a democratic civil society throughout the last two decades in the region. In the early 1990s democracy, and the space of civil society within it, was conceptualized in strict opposition to socialism. As a result of this negative identification, a republican notion of society that championed individual freedoms, which initially were seen as unrestrained liberties to compete on the capitalist market, was embraced. Moreover, democracy was understood primarily in formal terms, such as establishing parliamentary representation, the writing of new national

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constitutions based on models in Western democracies, and free elections, among other aspects. In this context, several contemporary artists, such as the City Group in Sofia, Tomas Szentjoby and Gyula Varnai in Budapest and Adrian Timar in Cluj-Napoca, which I discuss in detail later in the text, conceptualized and realized projects in public spaces as ways to reclaim public life, which until very recently had been dominated by the political ideology of communist regimes. Their works became platforms for a society to exercise, albeit symbolically, its newly gained freedoms, especially the freedom of speech and individual expression.

In the early to mid-2000s notions of civil society increasingly became equated with values emphasized in the *acquis communautaire* put forward by the EU, which outlined accession principles for prospective members. During this process, the idea of "returning to Europe" played a significant role in the CEE region. I analyze this process in the third section (1.3) of the introduction. EU meant a regional belonging to a community of European nations held together by a highly constructed form of European identity that championed human rights, especially rights for ethnic minority groups in national contexts, transnational cooperation within the CEE region, and the elimination of widespread corruption. All of these points are seen as important steps forward in creating a welcoming business environment for investment. On the other hand, while invoking a weakening of national identities in the interest of a regional one, EU has been actively involved in creating a form of collectivity and political identity by employing cultural and symbolic strategies similar to nationalism. The result of a qualitative analysis of a focus-group through discussions in France, the UK and the Netherlands, cited in the Polish political scientist Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski's text, reveals that nationals of EU-member states generally distinguish between civic (meaning a border-free space, circulation of citizens and prosperity) and cultural (peace, harmony, lack of historical divisions and cooperation

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between similar people) forms of European belonging. This distinction resonates with the terminology of civic and cultural forms of nationalism, communicating in fact the EU's subtle emulation of nationalist strategies of collective identity formations. As such, the core of the EU's envisioned collectivity suggests the bypassing of national interests while paradoxically, itself employing nationalist principles as a way to, ultimately, secure its territory as a borderless union for a neoliberal market economy.

A corollary to this process can be visualized in the 2000s with the staging of several EU-funded exhibitions of contemporary art in public spaces in Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia. As I discuss in detail in the second part of my study, the curatorial frameworks of these exhibitions and several of the featured artists' works visibly reacted against locally exclusionary and conservative forms of nationalism, while invoking a form of belonging to a transnational public sphere at the EU-level, which ironically resorts to a subtle emulation of nationalist strategies. Such apparently contradictory maneuvers at the cultural level serve, in fact, as fuel and forms of legitimation for an ever-expanding neoliberal market into the new territory of CEE. In what some theorists termed *neoliberal communitarianism*, notions of community belonging are employed toward the dual goal of requiring responsibility from the individual member-states for their independently pursued activities, while uniting and identifying with a regional collectivity in the interest of providing an unrestricted space for capital accumulation.

Concomitantly with the previously noted forms of democratic belonging and continuing into the present, civil society – or rather the public sphere in which civil society can legally and politically function – has been envisioned and pursued, especially by a younger generation of artists, such as Big Hope, h.arta, 0GMS, and the *Department for Art in Public Space*. It has increasingly been based upon concepts of western-inspired revolutionary leftist traditions from

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the 1960s and 1970s and theories put forward by contemporary radical critics of liberalism, such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau. Methods of institutional critique, tactical media and socio-political activist strategies can be identified in several of these artists' projects. Such artists react to the dual forces of global neoliberal order – envisioning their work as part of the broader anti-neoliberal protest movement – and against renewed forms of nationalist forces visible not only within particular CEE nations but also at the EU level, as for instance in the exclusionary notion of the EU citizen, which I address in more detail in section 4.1.

As I illustrate in my introductory section, if we understand civil society in the terms put forward by theorists in western democracies, then its development in CEE is still non-existent or incipient at best. The artists' practices discussed here reveal that before legal notions of civil society can be debated and implemented, reclaiming public life and building public spheres are much more vital and pressing concerns in contexts where open public discourse is increasingly monopolized by either nationalist governments or EU neoliberal measures of implementing a free market economy. In their multi-dimensional projects that directly call into question the larger political context, I consider several of these artists as active participants in this process, which is still on-going not only in their localities but in a multitude of spaces around the world.

Concerned with socio-political local interventions, art practitioners engage in a multi-level collaborative mode of production with local organizations and members of specific communities. Their modes of communication encompass dialogic interactions, empathetic identification, oral history and role reversal strategies. Interactions, interventions, participations and collaborations, unfolding over long periods of time or within pre-determined spatial-temporal parameters, become the artworks' contents. The artists often favor collective authorship and processes as their projects aim to function as catalysts for socio-political change or as

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platforms for raising consciousness. The artwork is no longer grounded in its medium-specific materiality or dependent upon the gallery, museum or architectural context for its legitimization. Instead, in their process-oriented projects, artists prefer situations, events and exchanges. Implicitly, they transform the viewer from the traditionally passive consumer of art objects into participant producer by reviving art's direct role in society and its potentialities in provoking relational associations.

The nature of such participatory socially engaged art practices pose challenging obstacles to the contemporary researcher and art historian. Privileging process over product or final image, such artistic practices often seem to fall short when approached through the common art historical methodology of visual analysis. Moreover, the documentary photographs through which most of these practices are recorded and discussed do little justice to the complexities inherent in the artists' works, their motivations and impact on their participants and collaborators. On-site and first-hand experience of the project, which becomes a rarely attainable goal for the contemporary art historian, becomes essential. Oftentimes, the primary audience, comprised of the participants, members and staff of various organizations, curators, assistants, and volunteers are in the privileged position as direct observers, who ultimately can greatly influence the nature of the artistic project through their later recollections, discussions and presentations. As a result, the initially absent art historian becomes a secondary audience, employing research methodologies, such as field-research and interviews, most commonly found in the social sciences.

I have not had first-hand experience of most of the art practices in my study. Instead, I relied on direct interviews with artists, exhibition curators, assistants, and in some cases representatives of funding institutions. Interviews with participants, especially in the case of

older projects, have been impossible to attain. In addition, my research involved consultation of archival material on art practices from the 1970s through the 1990s. Collected by institutions, such as the artists-led Artpool Research Center and the non-governmental Center for Culture and Communication Foundation (C3) in Budapest and the independent International Center for Contemporary Art in Bucharest, archival material has been haphazardly and inconsistently gathered. It includes documentary photographs and video recordings, press clippings and reviews, art project proposals, call for projects as well as curatorial statements and written exchanges between curators, artists and funders. In particular, exhibition catalogues provided a vital yet secondary source of information and the starting point in the research process. It is significant that local state institutions in CEE lack any archival holdings on the case studies that I discuss here.

An important segment of the research material consulted for this study, in particular for more recent projects, represented grant proposals submitted by artists and curators to various grant-giving foundations. For example, in multi-year programs, such as the *Art for Social Change* in Sofia and *cARTier* in Iasi, the yearly written project proposals form a valuable narrative for the understanding of such projects. However schematic or detailed, they reveal the shifting goals and outcomes of these community oriented practices under the demands listed by the grant agencies. They communicate how curators, artists and programs' initiators re-formulate, re-focus or emphasize, from year to year, particular aspects of their projects as to best align to the directives of funding institutions, as exemplified by the EU-funded programs.

The multilayered nature of research conducted by the contemporary art historian inevitably challenges the discipline of art history with its inherent claim for an almost scientific objectivity based on arguments anchored in the actual art objects and related documents. In

particular, the discursive, site and time specific contemporary socially engaged project allows for a multitude of interpretative possibilities, especially highlighting the role of the living artists in influencing their work's critical reception. Nonetheless, I see the detective-like function of the contemporary art historian combining methodologies from both humanist and social sciences fields in order to not only reconstruct the initial narrative but also to offer a critical perspective on the nature, scope and methodology of such participatory and interventionist socially engaged art practices in public spaces.

1.2   OUTLINE OF DISSERTATION SECTIONS

In this research study the notion of "socially engaged art" functions as an umbrella term to include participatory, interventionist, collaborative, and community-oriented contemporary art that unfolds in public spaces either over long periods of time or represents temporary interventions contained within clearly determined spatial-temporal parameters. Even though each of these represents slightly different artistic strategies, they often overlap within the artist or artist group's practice. Such art forms ultimately can only be realized by physical involvement of people and/or their specific ways of working together. The participants and/or collaborators in the artists' projects vary from anonymous passersby in public squares, members of specific communities, such as peasants in villages, to individuals of particular minority groups, such as the Roma.

Taking an approach based on case studies, my dissertation avoids a cultural or national representational model framed, for instance, by county or nationality, followed by a series of exhibitions staged in Western democracies. I will discuss some of these in section 1.3. Only

section 2.1 retains a country-based structure since this section provides a historical analysis of both artistic and societal developments across three communist decades. As it is important to highlight the differences among national contexts in terms of political, social and cultural freedoms, close attention to three distinct countries in my study provides a productive selection and approach for multi-layered differentiations: Bulgaria – one of the closest allies of the Soviet power; Hungary – the country with the least severe socialist regime; and Romania – the only country that severed political ties with the Soviets and implemented one of the strictest regimes in the former Soviet bloc.

The remaining sections offer discussions on various exhibitions, institutions and artistic practices unfolding primarily in three cities: Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia. Since the overall study foregrounds socially engaged forms of public art and examines their role in building diverse and inclusive public spheres, an analysis of the context from which such practices emerge is both necessary and important. Just as during communism there were visible differences among Soviet bloc nations, after the fall of the socialist regimes, cities and local communities likewise experienced and coped with the highly volatile post-communist period in different ways.

Nevertheless, a common thread running through such societies were and are various networks of social capital, I claim, various socially engaged forms of public art had been contributing and expanding upon. In the CEE contexts social capital has developed in opposition to Western societies. In the latter, for instance, state or privately funded civil society institutions provide the officially open public spaces for cultivating and developing norms of bonding, trust and reciprocity – social capital's core mechanisms. In contrast, in the CEE region, forms of social capital emerged in hidden and unofficial private spaces and provided vital means of

survival. Rather than seeing them as a detriment to the emergence of civil societies in the region, as many theorists have done, I contend that such privately nurtured bonds of trust and reciprocity and informal networks gradually re-emerge into the public space transforming into political capital as potential alternatives to the encroaching forces of neoliberal capitalism.

Theoretical approaches to social capital and civil society articulated during the 1980s were associated with concepts such as "second society," "informal sector," "antipolitics" and "independent life of society." Such anticommunist attitudes continued into the post-communist period and combined with internationalizing tendencies and the emergence of new (art) institutions. In various ways and to different degrees, artists' participatory projects both with specific communities and in public spaces provide agency by creating open platforms for the privately accumulated forms of social capital to manifest and morph into political capital materialized in contentious public spheres receptive of dissent.

The study's overall structure includes three main parts, each with three sections, that aim to convey what I identify as three major simultaneously occurring tendencies within the discourse of socially engaged art in CEE during the post-communist period. Throughout, the text highlights the potent interstices between memories and remnants of the state-imposed collectivist ideology of communist regimes, desires for participation in the contemporary international (Western European and American) scene, nationalist conservative tendencies, and neoliberal forces constructing a public consumer identity. I argue that specific contemporary artists who embraced socially engaged art practices within this context worked at the intersection between these compelling forces in order to enhance the potential for an inclusive public sphere.

The first tendency towards this genre of art projects was evident within the framework of annual exhibitions, such as *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art*

(Budapest, 1993) and *Exhibition 01010101…* (Bucharest, 1994) organized by the former Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCA) funded by the Hungarian-born and USA-based financier and philanthropist George Soros in the 1990s, which I discuss in section 2.2 (in Part I of my three identified currents). A disconnect had emerged between the curatorial frameworks and the projects developed for the exhibitions. On one hand there were artists developing local interventions based on collective participation in a post-socialist context that embraces neoliberal ideologies and rejects any politically leftist and socially collective approaches. On the other hand, the exhibitions' curatorial frameworks engaged in a process of internationalization of local art by encouraging socially and politically engaged projects. Section 2.3 includes a discussion of the Bulgarian artist group City Groups' *Chameleon* public art intervention within the early 1990s socio-political context of loosely defined social protest movements. It also presents an analysis of the emergence of contemporary art institutions based on an accumulated set of formal and informal relationships and connections among artists, curators and critics. This tendency ran parallel with institutions such as SCCAs funded by foreign sponsors.

The second current of socially engaged art practices has manifested itself starting in the early 2000s before the entrance of Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania into the European Union. At the time, contemporary artists and curators from these countries benefited from Western European funding that encouraged socially conscious forms of public art. Programs and exhibitions –the *Visual Seminar* program (2002-2005) in Bulgaria, the *Public Space Bucharest* exhibition (2008) in Romania and the *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* exhibition (2003) in Hungary – were developed in conjunction with these newly available funding sources. Section 3.2 offers a brief taxonomy of artists' projects based on their modes and strategies of public participation and their potential for agency. While the curatorial frameworks in the three exhibition programs, I

argue, aimed at enacting a sense of belonging to a EU transnational sphere, section 3.3 presents a critique of the neoliberal notion of community embodied at level of EU. The two collaborative projects of the artist group Big Hope and Matei Bejenaru with various members of immigrant groups in two EU nations (Italy and UK) challenge the politics of belonging in the post-1989 EU Community.

The third tendency, which includes artists such as Big Hope and Matei Bejenaru, unfolds concurrently with the previous two. In fact, all three parts include examples of diverse initiatives as to highlight that these currents had not occurred only chronologically but also synchronically. In Part III, I focus on particular case studies that illustrate significant differences between socio-politically engaged participatory art practices that were funded by Western foundations on one hand, and locally or self-funded artists' initiatives. While both sets of practices make use of participatory and collaborative strategies of engagement, the institutionalized forms of community-arts, such as *cARTier* and *Art for Social Change* reveal the use of social and cultural capital in the formation of apolitical, exclusionary and convivial forms of community. In contrast, the smaller-scale and self-initiated artists projects, such as *Inside-Out* and *Disobbedienti* by Big Hope, both make use and contribute to the formation of social capital in order to transform it into political capital for its participants and by calling attention to the political framework conditioning the formation of social capital. Section 4.3 offers a discussion of three forms of artists' self-institutionalization, IMPEX as a continuation of DINAMO in Budapest, E-cart's *Department for Art in Public Space* in Bucharest and 0GMS in Sofia. I argue these represent a corrective to both Western forms of institutional critique and a counter force to traditional and nationalist forms of art institutionalization promoted by the local right-wing governments. However small or short-lived, such alternative forms of self-organization through

social capital, rather than leading to exclusionary forms of community, have the potential to accumulate political capital within a neoliberal era and a post-communist condition characterized by what Romanian theorist Ovidiou Tichindeleanu defined as "the dominant axes of anticommunism, eurocentrism and capitalocentrism."[5]

The remaining three sections of the introduction provide a discussion of contemporary art within the broader cultural context of post-communist Central Eastern Europe in a series of exhibitions staged in various Western European cities. Section 1.4 includes a brief outline of theoretical approaches to notions of civil society, the public sphere and on social capital's political potentials. A review of scholarship on participatory and collaborative socially engaged art concludes the Introduction.

1.3   THE 1990s BATTLE OF BOUNDARIES AND NAMES: THE BALKANS, CENTRAL EUROPE, EASTERN EUROPE AND IDENTITY-POLITICS IN POST-1989 ART EXHIBITIONS

The historical moment that began on November 10, 1989 with the East German population's collective action hammering down the Berlin Wall,[6] initiated the fall of the socialist regimes throughout Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) between 1989 and 1992: Albania in 1991, Belarus in 1991, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, Bulgaria in 1989, Croatia in 1991, Czech Republic in 1993, Estonia in 1989, East Berlin, Germany in 1989, Hungary in 1989, Poland in 1989, Romania in 1989, Slovakia in 1993 and Slovenia in 1989.[7] In a regional domino-like effect, within each country, the party-states' successive collapses put an end to the over four

decades of Cold War (1945-1989) that had neatly frozen and divided the world map into communists to the east and capitalists to the west.

Masses of people, radiant and full of hope, celebrated the collapse of the oppressive communist regimes and championed the triumph of western capitalism, individual freedoms, democracy and civil society ideals. Yet the euphoria was short lived. With the newly gained freedoms, nations, cultures and people on both sides of the former Iron Curtain began to define and re-define their identities and a series of more or less invisible borders began to rapidly resurface. These manifested themselves in a number of ways: on the freshly re-drawn European geopolitical map, within the cultural and political discourse associated with the European Union (EU) integration, and, no less significant on its register, through the curatorial frameworks of contemporary art exhibitions in western cities showing art from former socialist nations.

Inconsistent attempts during the 1990s to define, for instance, the countries that constitute the Balkans are illustrative of the problematic geo-politics and cultural dissonances during post-communism. According to the 1993 French *Le Petit Larousse Illustre* the Balkans states include Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Slovenia, Turkey (the European portion) and Yugoslavia. In the 1998 *Encyclopedia Britannica CD* the Balkan Peninsula has a slightly different composition comprising all the countries mentioned above excluding Turkey. The 1998 *Compton's Interactive Encyclopedia CD* explains the Balkans to include Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey-the European portion, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, and Romania.[8] A country such as Romania becomes part of the Balkans in some instances but is outside the Balkans in others, depending on the interests or arguments pursued.

Geographically speaking, Bulgaria is the only nation that rightfully belongs to the Balkans since the location of the beautifully misty Balkan Mountains is within its national

territory. Geo-politically and culturally speaking however, the Balkans is a broader and continuously shifting region, most often culturally defined and characterized by such antiquated colonial adjectives as "backward," "primitive," "no man's land" and "exotic"- in vital need of civilizational processes.

"Balkans" has often been interchangeably used to denote "Eastern Europe," both seen as polar opposites to Western societies. In his 1994 book, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, American historian Larry Wolff showed the eighteenth-century origin and later persistence of the Western view of Eastern Europe as a "no man's land," a place both uncivilized and backward. Wolff argued that the invention of Eastern Europe as a geographically and culturally remote and barbaric location during the Enlightenment was necessary for the creation of the West as the civilized and "refined land:"

> Just as the new centers of the Enlightenment superseded the old centers of the Renaissance, the old lands of barbarism and backwardness in the north were correspondingly displaced to the east. The Enlightenment had to invent Eastern Europe and Western Europe together, as complementary concepts, defining each other by opposition and adjacency. [...] Since 1989, Eastern Europe has become an idea once again, no longer under the military control of the Soviet Union. Eastern Europe however remains an extremely powerful idea, deeply imbedded in the history of two centuries, so influential in its political consequences that its intellectual origins are barely recognized, hidden in historical camouflage.[9]

Expanding upon Wolff's study, Bulgarian-born cultural theorist Maria Todorova set forth the differences between Balkanism and Orientalism of Edward Said in her book *Imagining the Balkans*. She argued that Balkanism was not a subspecies or a variation of Said's Orientalism.[10] She cited concrete examples to support her claim: the geographical concreteness of the Balkans; a lack of exotic and sexually feminine images typical of the Orient, such as the Harem; and the "image of a bridge or crossroads" rather than a distant place in time and space (as the Orient is perceived). While Orientalism, according to Todorova, "is a discourse about an imputed

opposition, Balkanism is about an imputed ambiguity."[11]

Moreover, the Balkans as both concept and region had been important after 1989 for the crystallization of "Central Europe," a notion carrying an extremely important weight for the nations belonging to this region in the EU integration process. Being part of the EU symbolically meant reuniting with Europe after long decades of isolation. As a discourse, "Central Europe" emerged in the 1980s as a moral appeal by Czech, Hungarian and Polish dissident intellectuals to Western Europe on behalf of an imagined community born of frustration with the Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.[12]

Officially, the new discourse on Central Europe was not premised on a nationalist dimension, but rather rested on accentuating the regions' cultural essence, a concept with essentially political aspirations. Writing in 2001, political scientist and social anthropologist Iver Neumann identified three kinds of representation of Central Europe. The first was a politically successful self-representation, which denoted the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary as Central European and hence accepted into NATO and first in line for EU membership. Second was a politically aspiring representation of Central Europe invoked by the belt of states from Estonia to Bulgaria, a self-representation that was not recognized by the Czechs, Poles and Hungarians and only by a few Western Europeans. The third was a politically successful representation of Central Europe known as *Mitteleuropa*, centered on Germany and usually not seen as comprising other nations.[13]

The essence of the politically successful self-representation was captured in Milan Kundera's 1984 article "The Tragedy of Central Europe."[14] Kundera distinguished between Western Europe, Central Europe and Russia.[15] His depiction of a Central European identity centered on its culture – tied to ancient Rome and the Catholic Church – which sets it entirely

apart from "totalitarian Russian civilization" and Eastern Europe, its close neighbor, anchored in Byzantium and the Orthodox Church. As a result, after 1945 the countries in Central Europe considered the Russian occupation not only a political catastrophe but also an attack on their civilization. As Todorova pointed out, after 1990, "Central Europe" no longer presented itself simply as different from Russia, but also as different from the other half of the old "Eastern Europe" – that is, the Balkans. The Balkans had become a new 'other' to Central Europe, "sometimes alongside with, sometimes indistinguishable from" Russia.[16]

Similar battles over names, seen as carriers of regional, national and individual identities, had been perpetuated by numerous curatorial frameworks in exhibitions of contemporary art from former communist countries. Staged primarily for Western (North America and Western Europe) audiences, a number of exhibitions had been concerned with the representational role of the artist as communicator of a specific country's national identity and cultural history, and the process of naming and renaming the geopolitical map of post-communist Europe in terms of these ideological constructs: *Central Europe*, *Eastern Europe* and/or *Balkanism*. In a 2007 interview, reflecting on the 1990s and the early 2000s, Romanian political cartoonist artist, Dan Perjovschi poignantly captured the times:

> You see, in 1995 I was exhibiting in East Central European shows, at the end of 1990s in East European shows, at the beginning of 2000 in South East European shows, and subsequently in Balkan shows.[17]

Organized in various countries in the post-1989 period, *Beyond Belief* (Chicago, 1995), *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm, 1999), *Body and the East: From the 1960s to the Present* (Ljubljana, 1998), *Aspects/ Positions: 50 Years of Art in Central Europe* (Vienna, 1999); *Blood and Honey* (Vienna, 2002) and *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (Kassel, 2003) exemplify these exhibitions of contemporary art from former Eastern European

communist nations. These can be grouped into two fluid categories. The first includes exhibitions such as *Beyond Belief*, *After the Wall*, *Blood and Honey,* and *In the Gorges of the Balkans,* which featured contemporary works produced only in the post-communist period. The second category includes exhibitions, such as *Body and the East* and *Aspects / Positions* that featured artistic practices from both 'pre' and 'post' communist periods. Their goal was to combat the widespread public reaction of voluntary collective amnesia characteristic of the 1990s, invoked as a way of coping with the painful impact of the past.[18]

A number of these exhibitions are illustrative of the cultural dissonances and resurfaced divides during post-communism. First, the titles of the exhibitions in the first category situate both artists and their artworks within a far away, and literally beyond belief territory, somewhere in the gorges of the Balkans filled with blood and honey. As the then director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, where *Beyond Belief* was first shown, stated:

> The exhibition's title refers to what can be termed the region's "post-revolutionary" disbelief in the viability of doctrine, ideological structures, and belief systems (…) this traveling exhibition begins to address a region that to the West is *mysterious* and rarely characterized.[19] (my italics)

Second, exhibitions such as *Beyond Belief* and *Body and the East,* followed a country-based organizational structure, echoing the rise of nationalism within the region – whether as a method for retaining identity or proclaiming difference. As seen from the design of catalogues, exhibitions illustrated models of nationhood, with each country represented by specific artists, often a contour of a small map of his or her country of origin, and an essay by (a local) curator. Several Eastern European artists had been caught within a position of opposing temporalities. While aware that their work was included in exhibitions based on their nationality, they intentionally created work targeted for a Western audience, which in turn guaranteed their

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selection, as they were both pressured to join, and eager to emerge within, the international art scene. Croatian artist Mladen Stilinovic's renowned 1992 work *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist*, a pink fabric banner stating its title in black letters, represents a critical commentary on the almost global authority and hegemony of the English language (replacing, one may argue, the hegemony of the Russian language as carrier of communist ideology) strongly felt in the 1990s by artists in peripheral countries.

After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe was a particularly noteworthy and large-scale exhibition, including works produced during the 1990s by one hundred forty-four artists from twenty-two former Communist European countries. The wall metaphor, also part of the title, was present within the exhibition as an immaterial wall of sound in the work of Kutz Becker, a German abstract artist and film-maker whose montaged installation was based on documentation from the archives of the West-Berlin radio station of sounds of people pulling down the Wall in 1989. The exhibition aimed to bypass 'representational models of nationhood' (as seen for example in the *Beyond Belief* exhibition) by focusing on individual artists and following a thematic approach with four loosely identified themes: social sculpture, reinventing the past, questioning subjectivity and issues of gender.

The curator, Serbian-born Bojana Pejic, interrogated her own curatorial position by asking: "Focusing on individuals rather than on the countries of their origin have we tried in fact to apply a Western (say capitalist) model of individualism, artistic subjectivity and uniqueness to the artists in the exhibition?"[20] Nevertheless, the exhibition ultimately framed the artists included in the show within the post-communist condition in which only artists, as well as curators and critics, from the East took part, thus illustrating a third essential characteristic of such exhibitions. While the curator aimed to go beyond a framework based on a cultural

representational model, she essentially reinforced it. David Elliot, director of Moderna Museet where the exhibition was organized, stated that Bojana Pejic was chosen as the chief curator of *After the Wall* mainly for her experience living "both in and outside the two different systems."[21] Because Pejic was born in Belgrade in 1948 and since 1991 has been living in Berlin, Elliot implied that, she, herself an "exotic" was able to provide both an "outside" and an "inside" view on the art from post-communist Eastern Europe.

It was precisely this omnipresent lack of a genuine dialogue among artists and artworks from both sides of the former Iron Curtain that exhibitions such as *Interpol* in 1996, and the European biennale of contemporary art *Manifesta* initiated in 1996, as well as the Slovenian artist collective IRWIN's book project *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, aimed to overcome, with varying degrees of success.

The *Interpol* exhibition at the Center for Contemporary Art in Stockholm has become a much-discussed event because of the scandal caused by two Russian artists. Oleg Kulik participated with his performance *Dog House*. It consisted of the artist performing as a dog chained to a doghouse, biting viewers as they walked by. The police eventually arrested Kulik. This, along with the other Russian artist, Alexander Brener's destructive work that comprised in the artist tearing apart Chinese artist Wenda Gu's large-scale installation made of Russian and Swedish hair,[22] provoked the writing of "An Open Letter to the Art world" by all the other (mostly western) artists in exhibition accusing Kulik and Brener and by extension all Russian and Eastern European artists of "hooliganism" and of not respecting the premise of the exhibition.

On one hand, the scandal showed the reality of the continued East-West division. On the other hand, Kulik and Brener became representatives of "the other" who were now supposed to

behave aggressively, to be wild and destructive that is, to embody not only their "Russianness," but also an Eastern "attitude." Interestingly, Boris Groys observes that while the post-communist subject is unfamiliar with a nationalist discourse (since the Soviet project was Universalist and post-national in aim and practice), it invents one so that it will fit within a Western expectation for a culturally, regionally and nationally specific art, and thus also enter the international art market.[23] Although a provocative argument, Groys' hypothesis is too general, and does not take into consideration specific developments, such as, for instance Romania's Nicolae Ceausescu type of nationalist communism or Bulgaria under the dictator Todor Zhivkov who also pursued a nationalist type of communism. In the 1980s Zhivkov forced tens of thousands of Turkish individuals – the largest minority in Bulgaria – to either change their Turkish names into Bulgarian or leave the country permanently. Several left.

Despite or perhaps because of *Interpol*'s failure to generate dialogue and exchange, the European itinerant biennial exhibition *Manifesta*, initiated in 1996 in Rotterdam, seemed to have picked up where the previous show left off, and continued the dialogic initiative between Eastern and Western Europe. But despite its intended nomadic structure, centered on notions of openness and open-endedness, it showed discrepancies between its officially stated goals and its practical outcomes. First, despite *Manifesta*'s central aim to provide a link between artists from both East and West Europe, so far, not one edition has taken place within the former East bloc. A second point is the financial premise upon which the exhibition operates, which consists of each exhibition venue bidding for the right to host an important cultural event. This also eliminates several cities from Eastern Europe, considering the lack of institutional infrastructures and poor economic situation in the aftermath of communism. Also in its strictly pan-European biennale (in

unison with EU policies), the exhibition automatically omits the multiplicity of immigrant communities in Europe with limited rights and no national ties.[24]

The *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe* book project by the Slovenian artist collective Irwin aimed at forging communication among the region's various nations and encouraging art historical comparisons among art produced concurrently in the East and West.[25] Each of the invited art critics, historians and curators from Eastern and Central Europe presented up to ten artworks from their respective countries that were collectively featured as a cross-national communicative network. However, the majority of contributors did not pursue comparative analyses between local and contemporaneously happening international art forms. As a follow-up to *East Art Map,* the *Mind the Map!-History is Not Given: A critical Anthology based on the Symposium* – Leipzig, October 13-16, 2005 – consists of a series of essays by young researchers exploring parallel developments, connections, dialogue across the (former) Eastern and Western European art map. In Marina Grzinic's words the publication is intended as "a politically theoretical, cultural, and artistically contaminated space of exchange."[26]

I claim that this "contaminated space of exchange" has been taking place and can be most productively discussed within the region itself, and within the particularities of each of the local contexts caught in the multi-layered transitional processes from a centralized system of governance and way of life into a democratic and individualistic one. Without a doubt such exhibitions and programs provided an important and much needed platform for artists from the former communist bloc countries in order to not only communicate with one another but also to be made known to a Western audience. However, such initiatives failed to fully address the impact on and the role of specific contemporary forms of art within their own localities aspiring towards implementing democracies. What do democratic notions of civil society mean within

such transitional contexts? How are these achieved and made visible? What can and is the role of contemporary art in such broad yet vital societal processes?

I argue that exhibitions and artists developing participatory socially and politically engaged art in public spaces form an important yet under examined artistic tendency that attempts to tackle such questions and issues. Bypassing the limiting representational approaches and concerns with national belonging or provenance as promoted in the above-discussed exhibitions, a number of artists have created participatory and collaborative works that directly engage members of specific groups or the public at large. Although less visible, this tendency, I claim, has been emerging concomitantly with a similar socially engaged art current within the international art scene since the mid-1990s. Occurring at specific moments in time throughout the post-communist period, most often with the presence of both financial and institutional support from the USA and EU nations, I contend that such contemporary art practices, in various ways, aim at reclaiming public life from both the communist and capitalist ideologies in order to build inclusive public spheres within emerging democratic forms of civil societies.

Moreover, because direct involvement and/or forms of collaboration with various members of the public has been at the core of these socio-politically engaged artists' practices, which often have shared authorship, this current visibly marks the emergence of art as *contemporary* in both practice and theoretical conceptualization across various localities in the region. Concerned with locally current issues and foregrounding spaces of interaction, participation and collaboration, such art practices implicitly propose new modes for art's communication with the viewer as well as enter and explore notions of public space as the locus of constantly negotiated public spheres. Thus, when we speak of *the contemporary* in general and the new forms of socially engaged forms of public art in particular, the accent falls on the

identity of the participant(s) or collaborator(s). And the artwork is no longer grounded in its materiality or dependent upon the gallery, museum or architectural context for its legitimation, as was the case with a modernist art object, but rather, it enters and becomes defined by the perpetually incomplete and shifting public spheres in constant need for articulation as to include a multitude of needs and interests.

Taking a worldview perspective, art historian and theorist Terry Smith outlined his concept of *the contemporary*, as "the multiple ways of being with, in and out of time, separately and with others at the same time."[27] The conditions of *contemporaneity* that define *the contemporary* are illustrated by the global struggle for economic, cultural and political hegemony, the increase of inequality among people around the world, and the rise of a spectacle society and mediated culture industry, the "iconomy." Smith proposes taxonomy of three major currents of contemporary art. The first is comprised of the institutional or official styles,[28] the second represents the "transnational turn" that emerges out of Africa, China and Eastern Europe and contains art practices shaped by the simultaneous processes of decolonization, rise of nationalism, local and internationalist dialogue.[29] The third current comprises a younger generation of artists that are concerned with questions of time, of place, of being in highly mediated environment and with questions of mood and affect.[30] It is important to note that these art currents are closely connected and their interactions and frictions produce the multi-layered nature of contemporary production.

Within the larger art historical narrative, Smith sees the move from modern to contemporary nascent already during the 1950s and emerging in the 1960s in the modes of making and distributing art. For instance, the core of conceptualism and performance art in the 1960s was to break the modern narrative with its historical inevitability. Within the modern

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period there is the structural pairing between a historical period and an art historical period, since here the sense of time is historical, connected to progress (i.e. the need to be original, different from the past marching towards the unknown future). If in the modern period the present is rich and is quickly taken over by an uncontaminated future, in the contemporary period the future is re-imaged by going back to specific moments in the past. In the condition of *contemporaneity*, the present is much fuller with a much greater awareness of the worlds' differences and multiplicity of cultures.

Within the pre and post-communist period, across various former Soviet bloc countries, *the contemporary* in art, as I will show in the next sections, could also be seen to have already began in the 1960s, in specific artists' street actions, such as those of Miklos Erdely and Gabor Tóth on the streets of Budapest in the 1950s and the 1980s respectively or performances such as those of Tomas St. Auby's in the Chapel Studio in Balatonboglar artist-run alternative art space in the 1970s or Ana Lupas' work in Romanian villages in the 1960s, all involving the direct and physical participation or collaboration of the public or a specific group of people. Such art forms parallel developments in the West, thus illustrating a key aspect of the contemporary or in Smith's terms "the multiple ways of being with, in and out of time," implicitly marking an early departure from the modernist art object bound to its media specificity and authorship quality. Post-1989 socially and politically engaged forms of art belong to this international and local art historical genealogy.

Moreover, such practices depart and are in opposition to the locally created conservative art forms that champion a pictorial aesthetic rooted in religious spiritualism and national folklore or various forms socialist realism prior to1989. The former became especially popular in the

post-communist period, as a concern with building and preserving a national identity competes with a desire to implement Western capitalism and adopt neoliberal values.

While forms of socially and politically engaged art are part of a current emerging simultaneously in various countries across the globe, they are all contingent upon the worldwide forces and local conditions shaping the artists' own contexts. If we understand *contemporary* in the condition of *contemporaneity* in Smith's terms, it includes our past and the pasts of others as well as our historical present and the historical present of others. As such, within the post-1989 CEE, art becomes *contemporary* as it emerges and unfolds at the productive interstices between the memory of a recent socialist past and a present filled with longing for liberalism and democracy, between a concern with the specificity of its locality and yearning for an international belonging and recognition.

Implicitly, different generations of contemporary artists have been negotiating these tendencies in various ways in their works and my study captures differences in approaches and strategies. Moreover, even though each post-socialist nation had its own particular transitional path, the emergence of contemporary art has been closely linked to three important aspects, which are characteristic to most of the region.

First, there has been the formation of a few yet active and significant independent − that is, non-governmental − and artist-run contemporary art institutions that often act as counter-forces to conservative and nationalist local institutional tendencies. Second, there has been the emergence of the figure of the curator. In the early years of transition, his/her role has most often been opposite to the 1990s international rise of the curator as a power figure subordinating the artists' works to his or her own curatorial vision materialized in exhibitions. Instead, in the post-communist transitional decades the curatorial discourse manifested, what Jens Hoffman termed,

paracuratorial activities – where curators expand the exhibition format to include programs such as coordinated discussions, workshops and public debates.[31] A final phase within the local curatorial narrative is generated by those for what Terry Smith calls *infrastructural activists*, curators and artists who engage with "the exigencies of contemporary life" and are concerned with establishing connectivities between large-scale pictures and local needs.[32]

A third and most crucial aspect concerns the, however symbolic or short-lived, impact and role of specific artists' socially engaged art practices in the process of building inclusive public spheres and democratic forms of civil society. They do this on the ruins and the strongly enduring cultural, political, economic and social values of the former centralized government on one hand, and the rapidly encroaching neoliberal ideology and economy on the other.

1.4 THEORIES OF CIVIL SOCIETY, PUBLIC SPHERE AND SOCIAL CAPITAL'S POLITICAL POTENTIALS

In the CEE societies, after 1989, to invoke notions of civil society, implied not only an opposition to, but also a departure from the former collectivist regime, during which time the state was seen, theoretically, as sole provider, shaper and guarantor of public life and civil rights. In reality, however, as revealed by the gradual opening up of the former secret police files, not only was public and private space highly controlled by the numerous party-state informants but large segments of the population were integrated into in the functioning of the overall system. At the same time, it must be emphasized that speaking about civil society in the post-1989 context meant that the local oppositional forces desired identification with Western liberal democracies,

which were seen as champions of individual human rights, free elections, a competitive market economy, the state's minimal role in public life, and an opposition to the rising nationalist forces.

In the last decade and a half, the predominant tendency in political science literature and in sociological studies of civil society in the post-communist transitional nations has been to assess the existence or absence of civil society based on similar criteria to that employed in Western countries. Specifically, it is seen to depend on the actual number of voluntary associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the number of members or the population's trust in voluntary associations that are considered to be at the core of functioning democracies. For instance, the New Europe Barometer 10-Nation Survey (NEBS) conducted in 1995 used a questionnaire to measure the levels of trust in civil and political institutions. It concluded that despite some variations between the CEE nations, there was a low level of trust throughout the region. [33] The World Values Survey (WVS), conducted between 1995-1997 in more than 50 countries around the world, looked at the number of members in a multitude of civil society associations, ranging from religious and political to cultural and educational organizations. Among all the countries surveyed, the post-communist nations showed the lowest level of participation.[34]

Bulgarian literature in the field of sociology understands civil society in ways similar to Western conceptions. Terms such as "the third sector," "third realm,"[35] or the "nonprofit sector" that includes NGOs, foundations, and philanthropies are seen as legally protected spaces contributing to community-building initiatives that are officially considered autonomous and separated from the state and the market. Present in the former socialist countries since the 1990s, NGOs have been considered producers of civil activity in their role as intermediary between citizens and state. American sociologist Robert Putnam claimed that participation in voluntary

associations such as neighborhood associations, choral societies, cooperatives and sports clubs, which are viewed as separate from the state, where members learn the habits, skills and modes of cooperation is considered as mandatory to a functioning democracy.[36]

However, within the post-1989 CEE contexts that are primarily supported by foreign funding, it has been argued that most NGOs developed programs following the directives of their foreign donors by focusing on issues such as minority rights for Roma and women, environmental protection[37] and corruption, topics of greater concern for the donors in the West than the local population. As such, these organizations had their funders' interests primarily in mind, which contributed to a lack of engagement on the part of the local population. Furthermore, since most NGOs also develop programs to address poverty, disadvantaged groups and education, they often take the role of the state, towards which the population had a strong mistrust because of their recent experiences under a socialist regime. As a result, citizens tend to view NGOs either as fulfilling their donors' interests or as agents of a state that until recently defined their lives, rather than as organizations meant to empower them to fight for their rights.[38]

Furthermore, as Norman Uphoff has pointed out, competition for funding and clients is at the core of these so-called independent or nonprofit organizations and thus they have more in common with the market than being part of an autonomous third sphere or third sector.[39] In post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe this tendency manifests itself in the Soros Center for Contemporary Art's exhibitions in the early 1990 in Hungary and Romania and in programs, such as the *Art for Social Change* in the early 2000s in Bulgaria, initiated and funded by Western foundations.

The "new pluralists," with roots in the 1970s Western European Second Left, have put forward another approach to civil society.[40] They conceive civil society as a plural realm, where

a multitude of forms of autonomous associations co-exist, ultimately acting as a counterforce to both the state and the corporate powers. Social scientist Michael Walzer pointed to the paradox of civil society where the state both frames civil society and occupies space within it. Arguing for a pluralist approach to associational life exemplified through political, cultural and social organizations, he considered a democratic civil society as "a project of projects" or " a setting of settings" and one controlled by its members through numerous, different and uncoordinated processes.[41] Ultimately, Walzer argued that the state is an integral component in producing and reproducing civil society no matter how many forces within civil society aim to resist the state directives. This is because "civil society requires political agency."

From this perspective, specific civil society institutions form a sphere where citizens gain a platform not only to express their interests, needs or to bond but also to influence political processes so as to take into account their varied claims. However one defines civil society, the minimal public participation in its organizations in post-1989 CEE means that an actual democracy occurs, at best, at a formal political level.

Political scientist Marc Howard identified three factors underlying what he called a "pattern of nonparticipation" throughout post-communist Europe: *the legacy of mistrust of communist organizations* (the mandatory and forced participation in state-controlled organizations, such as the Union of Artists in the field of arts), the *persistence of friendship networks* (in a context where the public sphere was highly politicized and people relied on a trusted private sphere of friends for both emotional and economic support, which after 1989 people continued to invest "in their own private circles, and they simply feel no need, much less desire, to join and participate in civil society organizations") and *post-communist disappointment*

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(seen in the population's disillusionment in failed expectations of new democratic and market institutions).[42]

1.4.1   Social capital's political potentials

Instead of viewing civil society in terms of membership numbers, or trust in public voluntary organizations, we could view the same phenomena as indicative of the emergence of an incipient, transitional form of democracy. More specifically, rather than perceiving "the persistence of friendship networks" as a detriment to the emergence of civil society, as Howard does, I contend it is precisely the informal networks of accumulated social capital that can become generators of independent and voluntary associations, some with direct political potential at the societal level. This is vividly exemplified, first, in public manifestations – small-scale and short-lived, as seen in the Bulgarian artist collective City Group's public action *Chameleon* and the *City of Truth* mass protest in Bulgaria in 1990, which I discuss in detail in section 2.3 along with similar manifestations in other CEE cities. As I will show in section 4.3, there were also longer-term initiatives, exemplified by the self-organization of artists in galleries and institutions for contemporary art in Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia. I argue these visible embodiments have at once fuelled and are fuelling multilayered forms of social capital, developed first within the private sphere of individuals and groups as remnants of the former collectivist regimes. These gradually emerged onto the public sphere and led, in certain cases, to the accumulation of political capital, critical in a context of the increasingly aggressive advance of both nationalist and neoliberal market-oriented policies.

"Social capital" can be defined as the accumulation of informal collaborative modes of production, organizations and exchange among networks of individuals and groups that represent

the vital means of existence within the society at large and among contemporary artists during and after communism. At its core, social capital is enacted through various forms of participation as it essentially represents the multiplicity of relations among the individuals of a group. While participation in and of itself does not or should not be seen as a direct guarantor of democracy, it can open up spaces of resistance when seen within the larger political context that has a direct impact on its emergence and function.

From the outset, it is important to emphasize, as Bulgarian sociologist Siyka Kovacheva rightfully observed, that the presence of social capital in the context of post-communist nations is most often the result of factors that are opposite to developments identified in Western democracies, for example, by American sociologists James Coleman and Robert Putnam. Coleman was concerned with social capital's impact in the development of human capital of American children in public schools, Catholic private schools, and non-religious private schools.[43] Unlike physical capital represented by material forms, and human capital captured in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual, social capital exists in the relations between and among persons through "obligations, expectations and trustworthiness of structure," "information channels" and "appropriable social organizations."[44]

Putnam followed and built upon Coleman's functionalist view of social capital, regarding it as a particular resource available to an individual or organization to meet its needs and interests. In *Making Democracy Work*, he outlined its features: "generalized social trust" (trust in people in general), "generalized forms of reciprocity (a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequired, but that involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future) and "networks of civic engagement." These networks can be horizontal, "bringing together agents of equivalent status and power," like neighborhood

associations, choral societies, cooperatives, sports clubs, etc., which are an essential form of social capital, or vertical "linking unequal agents in asymmetric relations of hierarchy and dependence."[45]

Putnam considered that a "vigorous" civil society was achieved through social capital that was generated through civic and voluntary participation in associations. Illustrating a civic republican tradition, he saw these associations as non-oppositional but rather consensual in character and composed of small community organizations of like-minded members. Emphasizing their role in socializing its members, for Putnam, these associations produced moral commitment, generalized social trust and trust in government, and ultimately contributed to the health and stability of democracy.[46]

Thus, if in Western democracies, social capital is visibly accumulated in the publics' participation in the various voluntary and most often apolitical associations, in the post-socialist context, social capital is, instead, accumulated in private networks and forms of associations, not regulated by official organizations and thus, I claim, has the potential for political agency. Most significantly, social capital as a potentially emancipatory tool for marginalized groups can only actualize if its formation and function is connected to and analyzed within the larger political context of each locality within which it emerges.

I will argue that several contemporary participatory and collaborative artistic projects make use of the mechanics of social capital as critical tools in their work. Simultaneously, though their various practices, certain artists also implicitly expanded the fabric of social capital in order to contribute to the formation of political capital. The latter materializes, on one hand, at the level of the project participants' access to socio-political rights. On the other hand, it becomes visible at the level of the artwork itself that aims to reveal and/or call attention to the

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political framework that conditions selective forms of social capital formation, which ultimately lead to exclusionary kinds of communities.

Political capital is most directly understood in terms of power and power relations. Sociologist Pari Bauman defines political capital as "an asset that links an individual or a group to power structures and policy outside the locality." Conceptualized in terms of power and politics, political capital emerges "in a direct tangible sense in that rights give way to claims and assets, and in an indirect way, in that institutions determine access to these claims and assets."[47] Therefore, social capital's potential for change can only be understood and realized when the political impact on how social capital is constructed is foregrounded.

At the same time, the divisive characteristic inherent in the fabric of social capital must also be noted, an aspect which French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has addressed in his work. If Coleman and Putnam focused on the "bright side" of social capital, viewing it as a public good meant to serve through cooperation self-interested individuals or lead to a united and consensual civic community, Bourdieu focused on the "dark side" of social capital. He argued that benefits and access to social capital are unequally distributed and like economic capital is based on inclusions and exclusions. Bourdieu distinguished between three forms of capital: economic (that is convertible into money and property rights), cultural (convertible, on certain conditions into economic capital and institutionalized in educational qualification) and social, composed of social relations and obligations (connections).[48]

Influenced by Marxist thought, Bourdieu argued that "economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital"[49] and social capital often functions to disguise the individuals' interests in accumulating economic capital. He defined social capital as:

> The aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more of less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and

recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various sense of the word.[50]

For Bourdieu, the benefits of social capital that require time and energy to build, was closely connected to power relations among individuals privileged to have access to it. For instance, lawyers or doctors exploited "a capital of social connections, honorability and respectability" to gain clientele or advance their careers.[51] Considering social capital exclusively as a product of networks of connections nurtured by individuals to maintain their (economic, cultural, social) superiority, Bourdieu did not acknowledge its emancipatory potential for marginalized groups of people as means to agency across different cultural and socio-political contexts.

While social capital accumulated in a group is by definition exclusionary, it nevertheless can have emancipatory potentials, especially in contexts were political, financial, physical and cultural resources are in short supply or the market economy that characterizes Western democracies is either absent or barely nascent. In my discussion of specific case studies, I build upon Bourdieu's view of social capital as a site for power relations, but in order to show that contrary to its solely exclusionary characteristics, the mechanics of social capital have the potential to inspire collective action and generate political participation in order to achieve oftentimes-contentious yet inclusive forms of civil society. I do this through a contextual analysis of the political, institutional and curatorial frameworks within which the specific artists' projects emerged.

My dissertation's three parts aim to trace the shifting notions and function of social capital from the pre-1989 communist contexts and the early 1990s to the flourishing of neoliberalism in the mid-to-late 2000s as it closely correlates to the shifting political and economic societal changes. In its first manifestation, during socialism and the early 1990s, social

capital appears to be most clearly distinct from its emergence in Western democracies – as outlined, for example by Bourdieu – as directly linked to class hierarchies (and implicitly to money, investment, markets). In contrast, in the CEE context social capital was accumulated through informal networks that were sustained and provided an informal, mostly tacit, form of resistance toward the generally repressive socio-political regimes, where forces of the market or class hierarchies were at least theoretically non-existent, or much less visible in the early 1990s.

In such a context, social capital meant collaborative forms of organizations – not limited to only personal relationships – and exchanges among networks of individuals and groups. Social capital emerged as a vital tool towards change at both societal and artistic levels. It is seen most vividly as it contributed to the erosion and then collapse of the communist regimes. Within the contemporary art, as I will show through the various case studies, specific socially engaged and collaborative art and institutional practices began a slow process of change of the traditional understanding of art, in particular art in public spaces involving actual people, that had been primarily perceived as propaganda tools for spreading the party-state's communist ideology.

Throughout the later 1990s and more so in the mid-to-late 2000s, forms of social capital became diversified under the visible and aggressive re-emergence of class hierarchies within a context of wild capitalism that included privatizations of publicly owned property and services that benefited the top 1%, leaving the rest of the 99% to struggle for basic everyday survival. In such a context, social capital accumulated to form exclusionary groups of corrupt businessmen and politicians working together for their own benefit, reflecting Bourdieu's concept of social capital. The 2011 documentary film *Kapitalism: Our Secret Recipe* by Romanian film director Alexandru Solomon offers a poignant illustration of the unregulated merging of political power with individuals' private wealth that contributed to the impoverishment of the Romanian society

(which after 20 years since the fall of socialism has the smallest GDP of all former communist countries) while enriching a few oligarchs. To varying degrees, such a situation is common across most of the CEE nations.

However, the same tools of close collaboration and informal networking that lead to corrupt capital gains among both the political elite and business entrepreneurs can have emancipatory power and be utilized from bellow in the interest of the marginalized. Michel Foucault's concept of "governmentality" suggests that the government's activities are attempts at creating governable subjects:

> The ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. [52]

Most importantly, these sites of power are in permanent need of reconstruction in order to perform their roles of dominating technologies. As such, these endlessly contingent and contested forms of governmentality simultaneously also provide possibilities for subversion and re-appropriation, transforming any site of power into fluid platforms, shifting between domination and resistance.

Understanding social capital as directly implicated with political capital becomes a useful analytical tool in approaching various socio-politically engaged art practices that enact or call attention to the conceptually different approaches to public sphere and civil society both as emerging contentious spaces in the CEE context as well as at the EU level. In the remaining part of the introduction, I outline the particular character of social capital in the pre-1989 Central Europe that continued in the early 1990s, and the specific conceptualizations of public spheres and civil society that become relevant to the art, exhibition and institutional practices that I

discuss in the following sections.

1.4.2 "Anti-politics" as social capital and civil society in pre-1989 Central Europe

Theories of social capital were advanced in Central Europe during the 1980s, for example, in the Hungarian sociologist Elemer Hankiss' concept of "second society," one that emerged and existed as a complementary, rather than as a binary opposite to the official first (communist) society. The idea materialized in the work of former intellectual dissidents, in the concept of "antipolitcs" developed by Hungarian intellectual George Konrád, and in Czech writer Vaclav Havel's concepts of "living in truth" and the "independent life of society." Representing embryonic forms of civil society, such concepts illuminate an existent web of social capital. Intellectual dissidents conceptualized it as a space for "antipolitics" or "anti-political politics," an independent sphere where activity was entirely divorced from yet directed against the socialist state or government. For example, in his 1982 book essay *Antipolitics* Konrád described the democratic opposition as "antipolitics:"

> Antipolitics is the emergence of independent forums that can be appealed to against political power; it is a counter-power that cannot take power and does not wish to. Power it has already, here and now, by reason of its moral and cultural weight.[53]

Similarly, Havel defined an "independent life of society" under the socialist regime. This sphere, according to Havel, was not limited to a small community of intellectuals but included everyone "living within the truth" that is:

> Anything from a letter by intellectuals to a workers' strike, from a rock concert to a student demonstration, from refusing to vote in the farcical elections to making an open speech at some official congress, or even a hunger strike.[54]

These oppositional gestures were not meant as political actions aiming to restructure the current

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political system (as the proponents of the New Left or reform communists intended from the late 1950s through the 1970s), but rather as social initiatives to improve the conditions of everyday life to assert basic human rights. Such gestures acquired a political nature because of the context in which they arose. These calls for the depoliticization of lives and a conception of civil society based on morality emerged as reactions to socialist regimes that the intellectuals believed that could no longer be reformed, but whose politics attempted to control every aspect of social life.

Kopecky called attention to the "zero-sum logic" and the "monolithic" nature of the dissidents' conception of civil society when seen as an antithesis to the totalitarian state, which "stressed the unity of opposition of 'us' (the people) against 'them' (the corrupt elite of the state).[55] Moreover, while implicitly based on a critique of political power, its emphasis on moral attributes envisioned the sphere of civil society to be above politics. One could argue that there is, in this case, a similarity between "antipolitics" and conservative or republican notions of civil society composed of like-minded individuals, which were likewise portrayed as functioning separately and as alternative to formal politics. In the conservative approach, as American political scientists Michael Foley and Bob Edwards point out, "civil society itself is decidedly depoliticized, more focused on the substantive benefits to society than on struggles over state policy and direction."[56]

Nevertheless, a firm distinction between the space of civil society and the state makes sense under socialism, when the regime did not allow any political representation for opposition groups or independent activities outside its party-state's directives. Advocates of civil society before 1989 aimed to achieve a sphere that would feature, for example, the rule of law, protection of civil rights, freedom of expression and private property. After 1989 this conceptualization coalesced with the space of neoliberalism where individuals have, for instance,

property rights and can become active players in the market forces that implicitly shape a consumerist public identity.

According to Romanian born and US-based political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu, the Central and Eastern European dissident writers' texts on the importance of civil society "have rehabilitated the notion of citizen as the true political subject" in the West. Moreover, with their emphasis on the individual rights and freedoms from state's interventions, concepts such as "apolitical politics" and "living in truth" elaborated in 1980s in the East of the Iron Curtain have greatly influenced the reemergence of social capital debates and the "revival of civic initiative and the restoration of substantive freedoms, especially the freedom of association and expression" in Western democracies.[57]

1.4.3 Contentious forms of civil society and public spheres

Civil society and public spheres in pre and post-1989 Central Eastern Europe were hybrid amalgams, emerging from strong friendship legacies forged under the communist past, the complex juxtapositions of competing tendencies, such as the choice between a political and antipolitical position or between an economic, individualist society and a civil society based on solidarity. Specific contemporary artists' projects, such as those developed within the framework of the *Visual Seminar Program* (2003-2006) in Bulgaria and in the *Public Art Bucharest* in 2007 in Romania worked at the intersection between these competing forces in order to enhance the potential for inclusive public spheres.

Emphasizing the highly penetrable boundaries between civil society, economic forces and political activities at the state level, Delhi-based political scientist Neera Chandhoke pointed to several reasons for this co-existence. First, civil society needs the political state since the latter

provides "the legal and the political settings for the sphere to exist and maintain itself."[58] This is so, even under the communist regimes, which in fact framed the nature of the independent society in the types of organizations and groups that were allowed to (unofficially) exist, as I will show in the next section. Second, groups within the sphere of civil society have the legal right to challenge state actions, but such actions are ultimately done within the legal limits imposed by the state in the first place. Third, the relationship between the state and various groups in civil society can at times be also collaborative rather than always oppositional, and as such, state organs may in fact financially support the activities of certain autonomous groups.

Referencing Michel Foucault, Chandhoke also pointed to the ubiquitous presence of power relations and politics, which are not only seen in the formalized rules at the institutional level but also in the everyday gestures and discourses at the individual level, thus very much penetrating the sphere of civil society as well. Moreover, she argued that the state, as a codifier of power relations in society (i.e. the state secures property rights to individuals through laws), is in a reciprocal relationship with the sphere of civil society where these same power relations are contested (i.e. state laws privileging a certain class of individuals and their property rights).[59]

Building upon Chandhoke's approach, I argue that the space of civil society is a fragmented and divided sphere; one that is in a continuous state of flux impacting and being impacted by various local and global processes at political, social, artistic, cultural and economic levels. It is not and should not be understood as a consensual space where like-minded individuals and exclusive communities can voice their concerns, but rather as a set of perpetually contested public spheres where a multitude of competing voices can be heard and pursued, and where collective action can influence, challenge or draw attention to the exclusionary measures operating at the institutional level. Specific artists' socially engaged art

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projects and exhibitions in post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe, as well as a number in Western Europe, became nodal points where desires to become part of contemporary international art currents intersect with recent communist legacies and the locally emerging forces of neoliberalism.

The space of civil society is also a space where public spheres are defined and enacted. As an integral feature of any functioning democracy, public spheres are perpetually contested spaces, where a number of publics, including *counter-publics*, manifest their interests along side or rather in opposition to dominant publics. According to Michael Warner's concept of *counterpublics*:

> Counterpublics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability and its reflexivity; as publics, they remain oriented to stranger circulation in a way that is not just strategic but constitutive of membership and its effects.[60]

Illustrative examples of this process can be seen in some artists' works, such as those by Luchezar Boyadjiev – whose projects I will discuss in section 3.2 – where he appropriates advertising media techniques, such as billboards to represent and provide a communicative platform for a specific minority counter-public, in this case the Roma, to become visible and voice its interests. As such, while established representational frameworks remained intact, its tools have been re-appropriated in order to provide an oppositional content to its originally normative function.

Contemporary socially and politically engaged art practices break open the insular modernist world of the formalist art object through their artworks' emphasis on relationality, negotiation and direct communication as well as through the participation and collaboration with viewers. Most significantly, such contemporary forms of art implode the modernist or the

bourgeois notion of the public sphere, which was theorized by German sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas as bound to a specific location, such as a coffee shop, and composed of white middle-class bourgeois men.[61] In the contemporary era, such gender and class-based conceptions of the public sphere have been expanded by theories such as those of Michael Warner's *counterpublics*. At their core is an implicit conception of citizenship that is grounded in social capital's participatory features into the broader political framework as exemplified by Foucault's concept of governmentality.

1.5   SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART: PRACTICE IN THEORY

Since the early 1990s, a current of socially engaged art that encompasses practices referred to as "participatory," "collaborative," "community-based" and "socio-politically conscious forms of public art," has been developing as a major contemporary art current throughout the world, challenging the traditional divide between artists and public. While always contingent upon a particular locality, representative artists of this tendency employ varied strategies, ranging from dialogic interactions, empathetic identifications to role reversal and oral histories, in order to physically engage specific publics at a particular site. Interactions, participations or multi-layered collaborations that unfold over long periods of time or within pre-determined spatial-temporal parameters, become the artworks' contents. The artists often favor collective authorship and collaborative processes as their projects aim to function as catalysts for change or as platforms for collective representation, thus implicitly challenging traditional methods for evaluating art and creating social value. Euro-American art criticism, theory and art historical research – led by authors such as Suzanne Lacy, Suzy Gablik, Grant Kester and Claire

Bishop in the US and Nicolas Bourriaud and Maria Lind in Western Europe – has taken this diverse tendency as a a key one within contemporary art.

In 1998 Nicolas Bourriaud coined the term "relational aesthetics" in order to address various art practices emergent in the 1990s that were based on participatory forms of audience engagement staged within a museum context or gallery space. Bourriaud's highly influential concept, in which meaning emerges from within the social interaction and conviviality among people as they gather in the gallery, proves to be problematic. For instance, he ignores the impact of the actual and physical space in which these projects occur. Confined to the museum or gallery space, which is inevitably governed by a set of rules defining appropriate museum behavior, the implied idealist and democratic form of participation among people is limited to a highly controlled space (such as museum guards, surveillance cameras) and time (such museum opening hours, presence of artist in the gallery). In these relational encounters the artists set up their own temporal structure that 'summons' its participants to complete the work within a set and controlled framework. Another omission in Bourriaud's proposed theoretical model is apparent in the presumption that convivial relations will always occur within relational artworks. Such an assumption is based on a normative conception of community where individuals come together through a shared common existence, which essentially ignores the identity of participants, and, subsequently, the recognition of difference and conflict at the core of a democratic form of community.

In response to Bourriaud's conception of the harmonious community at the core of his relational aesthetic, Claire Bishop, in her 2004 article "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," proposed the concept of *relational antagonism*. Bishop builds upon Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of "inoperative community," developed in his 1991 book entitled *The Inoperative Community*.

Arguing against a harmonious and monolithic myth of the community (as envisioned by the Soviet Communists) he suggests instead a form of inoperative community among "singularities" (not individuals) that is continuously formed and re-formed. This inoperative space is not only created through verbal enunciations but also through silences, which essentially point to conflicting relations inherent within any community fabric. It is to this aspect that Bishop's concept of relational antagonism refers. Despite her insistence on participatory projects that aim to create a space where tensions and differences are made visible and sustained rather than eliminated, her theoretical approach evades discussion of the impact the artists' practice have on the lives of their participants or on the community in which they erected their artwork/installation. As a result, the usually economically and politically marginalized ethnic community becomes a simple prop in the artist's attempt to make a broader political statement.

In her 2006 book *Participation*,[62] Bishop distinguishes two trends within participatory art. One deemphasizes authorship, embraces collaborative work, is constructive and aims at social improvement. In contrast, the other trend is authored, provokes participants' involvement and aims to be disruptive. In her latest book, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*[63] she clearly accepts participatory practices from the latter category. If Bishops advocates for politically engaged projects that are intentionally disruptive and confrontational, Grant Kester's concept of *dialogic exchange*, which he developed in his 2004 book *Conversation Pieces*,[64] is at the core of collaborative practices that also encompasses the first trend of participatory art.

Kester's dialogic approach to community formation is based on the mandatory presence of an ingredient: *empathetic identification,* which, he believes, should exist between artists and collaborators and between collaborators themselves. This empathetic identification is considered

to facilitate reciprocal dialogue and exchange where each member attempts to understand the other's social context, not only through conversation but also through a process of active listening. Kester criticizes the lack of political and social responsibility evident in both Bishop's relational antagonist practices based on destabilizing the presumed harmonious fabric of a community and Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics even as it stakes a claim for micro-utopian concepts. In contrast, Kester puts forward his notion of *politically coherent communities*, which he developed in response to the forms of negation that can occur when artists view their collaborators as raw and inert material to be transformed or improved in some ways. Specifically, Kester refers to groups that have a defined political identity already prior to the process of collaboration with the artists. His concept does not necessary imply a harmonious communication within a coherent community which dissolves differences among its participants. Rather, Kester's proposed model of dialogic exchange based on empathetic identification has the potential to leave open a space for a transformative experience within the encounter with others. Kester's discussion provides a useful analytical tool in understanding the complexities inherent within the process of communication, which forms the basis of community-based projects. In his latest book, *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in A Global Context*, he expands his discussion of contemporary collaborative art practices by emphasizing their inherently complex interplay between the aesthetic form and political content.

The process of communication emphasized by Kester is also an important vehicle of artistic production in what Suzanne Lacy calls "new genre public art," developed in the 1995 anthology titled *Mapping the terrain: New Genre Public Art.*[65] Lacy's model of critical analysis for new genre public art projects is based on the process of interaction between artists and audience/ participants. The strength of Lacy's taxonomy lies within its systematic deconstruction

of the closely interrelated collaborative exchanges taking place within a socially engaged, community-based project. However, Lacy's distinct designations of artists and audience appear to omit the connectivity and permeability among the various level of interactivity. Moreover, as Lacy designated separate roles for the artist, participants and collaborators, her model doesn't take into account for example the inversion of roles – or role reversals – in which, for example, artists relinquish their roles as creators to the collaborators.

Several recent major exhibitions – *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in 2008-2009; Creative Time's Summit on *Revolutions in Public Practice I and II* organized under the leadership of curator Nato Thomson in Manhattan in 2010 and 2011 respectively; as well as Creative Time's on-line database of over 350 socially engaged art projects initiated in conjunction with the *Living as Form* exhibition in 2011–attest to the widespread popularity of this discourse. Yet this scholarship rarely documents or minimally refers to similar developments in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Many artists and curators, developing their work in the CEE region as well as within the broader post-1989 European context, have been fully aware of this on-going discourse and have employed similar strategies of engagement in developing such art practice. My study inquires into the ways in which these forms of contemporary art have contributed to democratically inclusive public spheres and pluralist forms of civil societies that allow for dissention and difference in their respective contexts. Ultimately, the overall aim is to contribute to the growing scholarship on the contemporary discourse of socially engaged art, which I sketched above, by focusing on particular artistic and exhibition projects developed in contexts rarely discussed or addressed.

2.0   PART I: FROM SECOND SOCIETY TOWARDS CIVIL SOCIETY

In order to understand what it meant for ordinary people to stand in those vast crowds in the city squares of Central Europe, chanting their own, spontaneous slogans, you have to first make the imaginative effort to understand what it feels like to live a double life, to pay this daily toll of public hypocrisy. As they stood and shouted together, these ordinary men and women were not merely healing divisions in their society; they were healing divisions in themselves.[66]

Timothy Garton Ash

Writing about the joyful masses of people celebrating the collapse of the socialist regimes across most former Soviet Bloc countries in 1989, Ash places emphasis on people's lived experiences under the recent communist past. Here, he felt, lay the true meaning of these historical revolutions. While the official communist party-states employed a vast network of faithful members, who ranged from political officials and workers' leaders to secret police agents charged with population surveillance that kept the system functioning, much of the rest of the population had likewise nurtured a tightly knit network of social bonds that amounted to an unofficial, parallel, or, more exactly, "split" form of existence. These social bonds formed valued social capital, embodied in informal, collaborative modes of production, organization and exchange among networks of individuals and groups. These networks provided the vital means to create an alternative existence within both the society at large and between contemporary artists during and after communism.

Section 2.1 provides a contextual analysis of specific neo-avant-garde participatory art practices in Romania and Hungary in the 1960s and 1970s and in Bulgaria in the latter part of the

1980s as precursors to the socially engaged art that emerged in the early 1990s. I discuss them in light of the different levels of independent and oppositional second societies present in these national contexts since the late 1950s. The existence of avant-garde practices under socialism, I contend, was based on informal social networks among both artists and the public, which were (for the most part) conducted in private settings away from the watchful eye of the regime. By contextualizing specific art projects within each country's particular socio-political environment, I illustrate how such practices evolved within the unofficial second societies, drawing upon existing networks of social capital that led to open forms public life.

A brief historical overview of the artistic and societal transformations through the decades of socialist rule in the three contexts is necessary in order to be able to understand the powerful legacy of both the artists' and the dissidents' *antipolitical* view of civil society as an apolitical sphere entirely divorced from the state's interventions and its accumulated forms of social capital. In particular, the significance of conceptualization of civil society by various CEE intellectuals during the 1980s proved to be important driving engines towards regime change. It was also at the core of the early 1990s high hopes and expectation – from both East and West – for the newly emerging democratic societies. Notions such as "living in truth" or "anti-political politics" emerged in opposition to the top-down collectivist and centralist communist ideology. They emphasized, as Vaclav Havel pointed out, "such values as solidarity, a spiritual dimension of life, "love thy neighbor," tolerance, and civil society."[67] Nevertheless, when merged with spiritualism and moral philosophy, for instance, such strictly anticommunist conceptualizations lacked clear political visions, belief systems and concrete proposals that could be followed and implemented in the post-1989 societies as they entered their post-communist condition. The enthusiasm of the revolutionary spirit of the early 1990s was short-lived, while the

disappointment of many – both in the East and West – with these utopian values has proven long lasting. This quickly led to a mass orientation towards market values, financial capital accumulation, individual freedoms and Western forms of liberal democracy. As Romanian theorist, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu observed:

> For all the good deeds of civil society, capitalocentrism ("free market fundamentalism) and eurocentrism (the epistemic privileging of the Western experience) have been naturalized in the postcommunist transition, that is, introduced as the organic principles needed for a 'return to normality' after the 'communist deviation.'[68]

The early 1990s post-communist period was characterized by a general anticommunist attitude, an aversion towards anything communist or socialist, and a full embrace of capitalistic economy, a pluralistic political system and a widespread desire to join NATO and the European Union. However, as Havel reflected, "the human mind and human habits cannot be transformed overnight; to build a new system of living values and to identify with them takes time."[69] The first post-communist decade, across most if not all CEE nations, was characterized by a perpetual fluidity, swinging between collapsing communist structures and not yet fully reformed or rebuild neoliberal political, social, cultural and economic structures and infrastructures.[70] Such a societal fluidity also resulted in weak local institutions at all levels, especially in arts infrastructure.

Section 2.2 offers a closely contextual reading and critical analysis of two post-1989 art exhibitions in Budapest and Bucharest that were staged by the local Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts (SCCA) funded by the Hungarian born and US-based businessman and philanthropist George Soros. The chapter explores the role played by the institutional, curatorial discourses and socially engaged contemporary art in catalyzing locally emerging forms of civil society in the early 1990s. Caught within a perpetual in-betweeness, each exhibition, I argue,

revealed the paradox of civil society, juxtaposing an *antipolitical* temporality shaped by the communist legacy with a simultaneous desire to participate within the contemporary international art scene. A disconnect existed between the curatorial frameworks' stated goals and some of the artists' projects that I claim activated an already existing informal network of social capital.

Section 2.3 takes as its case study a participatory project in public space by the Bulgarian artist group City Group. This was one of the first contemporary artistic manifestations to reclaim public life during the early 1990s in Sofia. It enables a discussion on the role of social capital in the emergence of local contemporary art institutions in parallel to the local SCCA. Social capital, most vividly materialized through local friendships among artists, curators and critics, lead to self-organized independent forms of institution within a crisis-ridden post-communist context that was focused towards adopting neoliberal values of consumerism. This tendency will be more fully explored in Part III of this study.

Artists' interventions and initiatives, however small and temporary, aimed at reclaiming first an independent public life under socialism and then a public space immediately following the collapse of the communist regimes. Moreover, they generated forms of social capital leading to local institutions that functioned as alternatives to the disappointment and lack of possibilities that followed the euphoria of post-socialist freedom provoked by the 1989 changes, the failed dialogue with the West, as seen in several exhibitions staged in the 1990s and the early 2000s and a rapidly settling capitalist totality.

2.1 HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS: NEO-AVANT-GARDE PARTICIPATORY PRACTICES IN SOCIALIST HUNGARY, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA, 1960s-1980s

Following the Yalta conference in 1945, the US, UK and Soviet Union leaders divided the geopolitical world map, with all the CEE countries falling under the Soviet influence. By 1948 a communist leadership instructed by Soviet advisors was installed in each of the CEE nations, placing them in a relationship of economic, political and military dependence on Moscow.[71] Although satellite states within the Soviet Union's orbit functioned under officially similar and especially strict homogenizing directives during Joseph Stalin's era, each nation nevertheless manifested specific variations in the implementation of the socialist regime.

During and after the destalinization period of the 1950s and early 1960s (following Stalin's death in 1953) most Soviet-bloc countries saw a period of cultural, political and economic relaxation. Despite a relative period of thaw, the totalitarian system was, as Vaclav Havel noted, "thoroughly permeated by a dense network of regulations, proclamations, directives, norms, orders, and rules."[72] This official web of control was bound together by the communist ideology premised on a socialist present that would eventually lead to a utopian communist future. Nevertheless, corollary to this, a second form of existence was taking shape, namely a web of independent activities by various individuals and groups.

Hungarian sociologist Elemer Hankiss called this sphere the "second society." It comprised of various areas: "the second economy" (in Hungary this included, for example, household farming plots alongside collectivized agriculture); "the second public" (the body of samizdat literature represented an alternative public sphere); "the second culture" (the youth subcultures, hippies, pop, folk, and punk music); "the second consciousness" (the "split" mind where people lived an official life and another life in the second society or in their family

environment); and "the second sphere of sociopolitical interactions" (social networks associated, for example, with peace and environmental organizations).[73]

This second society was not, however, in a relation of binary opposition to the first society, which was characterized by "vertical organization, downward flow of power, state ownership, centralization, political dominance, saturation with official ideology, visibility and legitimacy."[74] Rather, the second society represented a "no-man's land," "a zero degree"[75] that emerged as a complement to the official first society, helping in fact the system by acting as a release valve. As Hankiss noted, the communist elites "needed the human and material resources generated in this second sphere, they needed the people's goodwill and readiness to consent."[76] Thus, activities within the various areas of the second society were neither in complete opposition nor outside of the legality of the officially centralized party-state.

The plurality of non-official actions varied in terms of challenges they posed to the socialist regime. Some pursued "antipolitics" as described by Konrad and Havel. Although not overtly political in nature, they had political implications and greatly defied the regime's directives. Others had goals of direct political change, such as Solidarity in Poland and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia.[77]

Neo-avant-garde participatory and socially engaged art practices within the second society, particularly what Hankiss referred to as the "second culture," were attempts to carve out public spheres, however small, where diverse interests and voices could be heard. Eventually, they led to the weakening and collapse of the political systems. While Hankiss identified youth subcultures, hippies, and punk music, for example, as forming the "second culture," neo-avant-garde art practices along with samizdat publications and oppositional groups comprised a significant part of this societal realm. Moreover, initiatives within the second society were

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fuelled by and fuelled an intricate web of social capital, which increased and became more diverse as a more inclusive public sphere of civil society was achieved.

State-society relations varied greatly across the CEE nations in both place and time, forming a constantly changing set of interactions and actions. As Gordon Skiling rightfully observed, some socialist states, totalitarian in nature, such as socialist Romania, sought "to maintain complete authority over society and to destroy all forms of autonomy" in which case, "independent action remained highly individualistic in character." He goes on to observe that other socialist regimes, authoritarian in form, such as Hungary, "permitted or were forced to recognize some degree of independence and autonomy," in which case a small independent society existed but one which could rarely "rival or challenge the official state power."[78] In order to emphasize the context-specific nature of artistic developments and activities and how they varied in frequency and intensity depending upon the state-society relations of these communist regimes, I will explore specific avant-garde artists' projects in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

2.1.1 Socially engaged art in socialist Hungary

Hungary saw its first oppositional actions against the socialist regime during the 1956 revolution, which became a full-scale revolt after the Hungarian Secret Security Police (AVO) fired at a mass demonstration of students, intellectuals and workers in Budapest on 23 October. Inspired by Khrushchev's speech in 1956 denouncing Stalin's policies, the demonstrators voiced their disapproval of Hungary's Stalinist leader Rakosi, who was reluctant to lessen party control over all aspects of social life and to address the great majority's desire to restore democracy. Despite Imre Nagy's (a reformist communist and elected Prime Minister in October 1956) intention to restrain the Soviet influence, the revolution ignited. The first Soviet intervention in

October that aimed to dissipate the revolt was not successful, as the Hungarian army began to fight alongside the demonstrators against the Soviet occupation. Their collective demands, going beyond those of the reformist communists, included "full political pluralism, civil liberties, free elections, independent labor unions and worker's councils, the abolition of security police and collective farms and the restoration of parliamentary democracy and a mixed economy." After the momentary withdrawal of the Soviet army, Nagy announced the abolition of the party-state.[79] However, the Soviet army returned in full force on November 4, 1956 and crushed the incipient move toward democratization. A pro-Soviet central party of Hungarian Communists was reinstalled under the leadership of Janos Kadar.

The participatory public action on Budapest's streets in October 1956, *Unguarded Money* initiated by Hungarian conceptual neo-avant-garde artist Miklos Erdely (1928-1986) emerged from within this context, taking place in the interim period between the first failed and second successful intervention of the Soviet Red Army. It was a collaborative public action by Erdely, his artist and writer friends and members of the Hungarian Writers Union. *Unguarded Money* consisted in placing unguarded boxes in six locations around Budapest for collecting money for the victims of the revolution. Each box was accompanied by a poster, each interlaced with a hundred-forint bill that read: "The purity of our revolution makes it possible for us to collect money in this way for the families of our fallen martyrs. Signed by The Writers Union of Hungary."[80] In a 1983 interview Erdely stated:

> ...we organized a group and decided to throw the money into unguarded collection boxes at six different locations in Budapest and from then on my task was driving around in the car of the Writer's Union and chasing away the national guardsmen standing guard net to the collection boxes because they were unable to conceive of the fact that these no longer needed guarding.[81]

The action functioned as a platform for participations and interactions between the small group of writers and artists who played an active part in the revolution, and the broader Budapest public. Despite or perhaps because of the repressive years of the Stalinist doctrine, a tight web of social capital had accumulated among different individuals and groups within the realm of second society. Informal horizontal networks functioned as alternative "information channels" and politicized forms of engagement.

Unguarded Money manifested two cumulative effects of locally accumulated social capital. On the one hand, the action was an open and unambiguous gesture in support of the 1956 revolution, acknowledging its initiators' position against the current socialist regime. Most significantly, the collaborative nature of the project revealed the effects of social capital established through conversations and social relations among networks of friends, where all sorts of information could be obtained and transformed into "the means of communicating spontaneous public sentiment."[82] These very networks of informal communications sustained the revolution's physical presence on the city's public spaces. On the other hand, *Unguarded Money* also functioned as a platform for collective action, activating a broader public and solicitating contributions from passers-by who might have only indirectly participated in the revolution. The collaborative intervention within the city's streets carved out a public sphere where open and equal relations among autonomous yet anonymous individuals were fostered.

The collapse of the boundary between art and life was further emphasized by the fact that it was not until 1965, when Erdely became aware of "happenings" that he referred to this action as an art event and gave it the title *Unguarded Money*.[83] Yet in 1956, when the action took place, it defied both the contemporary artistic doctrine of Socialist Realism that aimed to celebrate and depict a not yet realized future communist utopia of the proletariat. Initiated by a socio-

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politically engaged conceptualist artist, Erdely's collaborative public action became an interstice of people, objects, activities and spaces held and brought together, I argue, through the imperceptible yet present and varied forms of accumulated social capital.[84]

Following the suppression of the 1956 revolution, and the imposition of drastic measures, such as the declaration of martial law on December 9, 1956, and the reappointment of Communist leadership in all public posts, the Kadar regime transformed the Stalinist slogan "those who are not with us, are against us" into "those who are not against us, are with us."[85] This gesture entailed an unwritten "social contract" with the population. In exchange for an improved economic situation and living conditions the people had to demonstrate political passivity and acceptance. As part of Hungary's process of reform, the New Economic Mechanism was initiated in 1968. It established an economy that combined market elements, decentralized planning and a greater enterprise economy with regard to production and investment.[86] While this economic reform, also referred to as "goulash-communism," placed Hungary in a socially and economically better situation than any of the other Soviet bloc countries, it did not diminish the political stranglehold of Kadar's regime.

The legal boundaries of culture and intellectual debate were established in 1966 with the introduction of the cultural policy based on the 3T's: *Tiltás* (Prohibition)*, Türés* (Tolerance)*, Támogatás* (Support). While these guidelines, which extended to visual art and publications of all types, were meant as forms of co-optation of the groups of intellectuals into the system, they also gave rise to manifestations that were highly critical but disguised in the official jargon so that they were allowed to appear. George Schopflin used the term "para-opposition" to describe activities that "do not overtly question the ideological bases of the system, but do accept the leeway for a semi-autonomous political role permitted by the system."[87] The Balatonboglár

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Chapel Studio art space's existence and activities – considered as one of the most important center of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde[88] – active during the summers between 1970-73 on Lake Balaton (about sixty miles from Budapest), could be seen as an example of "para-opposition" in its negotiations with the official regime. Moreover, it further emphasized the intricately ambiguous relationship between the first society represented by the regime and the second society containing unofficial or rather, semi-official activities. The young Hungarian artist György Galántai initiated the Studio in 1968 when he signed a fifteen-year lease on a deserted chapel to be used for various art activities. Inaugurated in the summer of 1970 under the name "Chapel Exhibitions," it included six different exhibitions, performances, music concerts and lectures.[89] The following summer, the programs increased in number and diversity so had the close attention of the county authorities, which requested that artworks be juried prior to being exhibited. The officials' interest in the Chapel's activities was ignited in the summer of 1971 following the publication of an article titled "Some avant-gardists moving on the lawless path, illegal art exhibitions and programs at the rented chapel" in the local official paper. Galántai along with a couple of other artists, made an attempt to negotiate with the local cultural officials in a face-to-face meeting in 1971.

Failed negotiations with the communist officials led Galántai in 1972 to change the name to Chapel Studio, designating a personal studio rather than a public space for exhibitions that required approval from the authorities. Even though the chapel, as a private art studio, was theoretically qualified to organize unjuried shows, the authorities often paid visits to the space, arbitrarily removing works that they considered provocative. As the authorities had already decided the Chapel Studio could be shut down, they looked for reasons to publicly legitimatize its closure, such as the absence of a toilet. Aware of this fact, and in order to extend the life of

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the studio and its activities, Galántai was in continuous correspondence with various local authorities (the public health office, the fire marshal's office in order to get permits) knowing all too well the vagaries of the bureaucratic system. The time it took to process his requests was also the time the Chapel Studio could remain open, as authorities needed a legitimate reason to close it.[90] Although the final summer of the Chapel Studio saw international artists' participation (from Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia), the space was forcibly shut down in late August 1973.

The Chapel Studio was held together through the existence of various forms of social capital. Its activities were part of the *Türés* (Tolerance) category, which included cultural activities happening out of sight, most often in the countryside. Although required to disclose their location, the participants were given no or minimal state support. Networks of friends served as the primary funders as well as information channels, spreading the word among unofficial artists across the country to gather in Balatonboglar. For instance, generalized forms of reciprocity based on obligations and expectations represented the engines of the neo-avant-garde activities at the Chapel Studio. Effects of existing forms of social capital manifested, for example, in the collective cleaning of the abandoned chapel and collective curating and installation of exhibitions. Other examples include the sustained group negotiations with the authorities, as well as the collaborative staging of exhibitions showcasing competing aesthetic tendencies. In fact, the Chapel Studio became a public platform where divergent artistic groups were able to exhibit together. It was a dynamic art space where close to two hundred artists showed their work over the course of three years.

Rather than unified within a common art practice, these neo-avant-garde tendencies – either socio-politically motivated or having a formalist artistic goal – stayed united against a common political enemy, defying and critiquing current conditions.[91] During the last two years

of its existence the Balatonboglár Chapel Studio also became a platform for body art performances, actions, happenings, conceptual art, land art and site-specific art. For example, in 1972 the poet, conceptual and fluxus artist Tamás Szentjoby, who in 1975 was forced to leave the country to return only in 1991, created his work *Expulsion Exercise: Punishment-Preventive Auto-Therapy*. In the same year at Balatonboglár a collaborative art project emerged from a Czechoslovak and Hungarian artists' friendly meeting. Dada-inspired activities, these projects were representative of socio-politically engaged art based on public performance, participation and engagement.

In his *Expulsion Exercise: Punishment-Preventive Auto-Therapy* action, Szentjoby sat for eight hours in the gallery with a bucket over his head. On the wall was posted a list of questions that viewers could ask him:

Can one form a community with another person without being free oneself?
Is it the most important thing to discover and realize what is needed by life?
Can he stand without us or is everything hopeless?
Can the blockade of the present be broken only by new attitude?
Is the realization of the future in the present an acceleration of our lives?
Does your action include the punishment?
Does your punishment include the action?
Do you feel particularly exposed because you cannot see whom you are talking to?[92]

On one hand, the process of asking those simple questions created a situation that resembled a police interrogation, a constant threat and source of trauma for the artists as well as the population. Also, in its time and site-specificity, the action undermined the communist jury system, which was designed for traditional forms of art, such as painting and sculpture. On the other hand, Szentjoby engaged the public dialogically in the creation of the work. He triggered a form of collective protest, provoking self-reflexivity and self-awareness in the participants that included fellow artists, local residents, Hungarian and international tourists, as seen in visitors'

comments left in the guestbook. Within a relatively strict socio-political context, the artist's action aimed at carving an inclusive public sphere where the basic human right of free expression would be possible. As Polish art historian Pior Piotrowski noted:

> When considered in purely 'stylistic' or 'formal' terms, one could see East European neo-avant-garde practices as being to a certain extent, derivative. However … their performance often involved deeply held existential and political convictions.[93]

Szentjoby's participatory action based on dialogic exchanges with members of the public both emerged from and fueled horizontal networks of trust and solidarity, or what Konrad called a "network of spiritual authority," which he compared to "the intimacy of travelers on a slow train ... where passengers start talking with one another as if they were old friends."[94] This sense of "moral opposition" was also conveyed in the art project initiated by Hungarian theorist, art historian and (later) curator László Beke at Balatonboglar, in the summer of 1972. Rather than the result of a curatorial authority in a hierarchical relationship with the artists in the exhibition, Beke's initiative was a collaborative effort among groups of friends and individual artists bound together through various forms of social capital.

Beke's intention was to document and transform a friendly meeting between several Hungarian and (then) Czechoslovakian artists visiting Balatonboglar into an art project. Conceptually integrating different modes of communication, the project juxtaposed three representational registers: textual, gestural and bodily. The first consisted in researching over one hundred words from Hungarian and Czechoslovak languages that are similar in both meaning and form. The words were then printed on paper and installed in a vertical column on one of the Chapel Studio's exhibition walls. The second phase consisted in all the artists shaking hands. Each of the handshakes was photographed, with all the photographs then placed on the wall. The

last part of the project consisted in a rope-pulling game between the Czechoslovak and Hungarian artists.

In its focus on various forms of (mis)communications the conceptual project mocked national boundaries dividing neo-avant-garde artist communities. At the same time it became politically symbolic, communicating the Hungarian artists' solidarity with the (failed) aspiration of the 1968 Prague Spring, realizing that socialism, as a system, was impossible to reform. Socially engaged participatory art practices, such as those developed at the Chapel Studio could be seen as attempts to create public spheres, where various publics – not limited to the artist and intellectual groups – could come together. By channeling forms of social capital, accumulated through informal channels and social relations, into visible actions, such neo-avant-garde art implicitly functioned as latent, semi-official resistance to the regime.

In the following year, in 1973, Beke initiated a *samizdat* magazine called "Ahogy azt Moricka elkepzeli" (the title refers to the main character of several Hungarian jokes, who confuses or misunderstands words and situations). Guided by the conceptual art notion that "a work of art is identical with its notion documented" Beke collected various artists' proposals and ideas of unrealized (or unrealizable) art projects and presented them in a manuscript. Published in seven copies, it was distributed to only those who promised to make another seven copies.[95] Beke's notion was similar to what conceptual artist Sol LeWitt expressed in his 1967 "Paragraphs on Conceptual art," namely that "the idea becomes a machine that makes the art."[96] Sol LeWitt's conception emerged as a critique of the Modernist paradigm based on the original art object created by the artist's hand. Beke's initiative, on the other hand, aimed to bypass the restrictive possibilities of his local context, making an existential difference between, for example, the Western notion of conceptual art and the Eastern European variant:

On the other hand the 'immaterial' nature of conceptualist works, and the 'poorness' of the media employed made communication easier and censorship more difficult. This is why conceptual art had to be invented in Eastern Europe, and its function as a strategy for evading authority should be considered a feature specific to its development in the region.[97]

Beke's focus on the existential character of these art practices and the participatory form of distribution of his *samizdat* manuscript further emphasized social capital's vital role in people's everyday lives, which functioned "as a strategy for evading authority." The informal networks of friends and acquaintances required a generalized form of trust among its participants in order to relate and/or obtain uncensored information that most often travelled by word of mouth and various social relations.

If the Chapel Studio's participatory actions took place away from the capital city, Gábor Tóth's anonymous and collaborative actions in early 1980s unfolded within Budapest's urban public space. His interventions, despite their ephemerality, were suggestive examples for the role of the artist as participant observer and catalyst of collective actions. Engaging directly with the locality of a particular social space, the import of Tóth's public actions was to raise questions about art's active role within the contemporary Hungarian "goulash communism." For example, his early 1980s *Food Vending Machine,* a one-hour action in Moszkva Ter, consisted in directly engaging the public. He appropriated one of the four existing vending machine in the square, purchased all of the items in it – sweets, cakes and sandwiches – and began giving them away to passersby. In exchange for a desired food item from the vending machine, he asked for a personal object. The public actively engaged in the action and creatively offered not only various personal items, such as photographs, handkerchiefs, small clothing items, newspapers, or a small drawing, but also food was exchanged for food or money was exchanged for food. Tóth placed the objects he received in the exact location of the item extracted. As such, the food vending

machine gradually transformed into a portable people's museum made of personal yet anonymous items. After approximately an hour, the action ended when the artist left the square, leaving behind all the items in the vending machine.[98]

The verbal and physical processes of exchange between Tóth and the public in the square represented his work's content. The artist's emphasis on anonymity both when the action occurred and in the absence of any documentation of the project is strategically important. Tóth sees in the concept of anonymity a powerful way to undermine the institutionalized Modernist myth, which values the Artist as sole creator of an Artwork. In contrast, his ephemeral actions within the social fabric of the city aimed at engendering dialogic interactions as a way to overcome the divide between artists and the public. Such attempts build upon earlier avant-garde movements such as Dada and more recent practices in the US and Western Europe, such as the Situationist International, Fluxus, forms of institutional critique of the 1970s and collaborative practices, as seen for instance, in Group Material's activities of the 1980s in New York. Artists of such movements aimed to dissolve traditional methods for evaluating art by conceptualizing ways of uniting art and life and paradoxically challenging the concept of art by making art.

Most importantly, Tóth's participatory action reenacted within the city's public space, the network of social capital exemplified through the informal modes of exchange among groups of people. The enthusiastic willingness of passersby to take part in the artist's action made visible the collaborative practices present between artist and non-artist groups, where, for example, sharing equipment and knowledge of techniques was instrumental and vital.

By the mid-to-late 1980s a series of artists groups had emerged. They continued their activities into the early 1990s. They adopted a rather satiric approach to the neo-avant-garde forms of the previous two decades. Groups emerged spontaneously devoid of a clearly defined

agenda or the leadership of an individual artist. For instance, in the manifesto of the seven-member Helyetes Szomjazok (Substitute Thirsters) Group it was specified that the Group was:

> Heterogeneous, not permanent and does not endeavor to permanency, it is not an institute and not self-consistent, has no profile and is built upon occasional actions (exhibitions, installations, lectures, competitions, concerts, depression-evenings).[99]

Using humorous reproductions and reconstructions, their collective work was based on re-adapting well-known historical events and artworks from the past, as a way to undermine Modern Art's quest for the new. A similarly anti-establishment drive was at the core of the eight-member Ujlak Group (meaning New Dwelling). It emerged in 1989 as a group of artists staging various one-night exhibitions initially in the derelict buildings of Budapest Public Baths and then in an abandoned movie theater. Refusing any sort of *a priori* organized program, their organically emerging process-based and Dada-like activities combined performances, happenings, mixed media installations; music and dance performances. Rather than be guided by a particular artistic tendency, for Ujlak "individual and joint work becomes an insignificant problem since the importance of creating dwarfs the question of who creates."[100] While the work of these young artist groups[101] only indirectly involved the public, their collectively staged exhibitions and practices in alternative spaces emerged from within existing social networks and forms of reciprocity among its members. Through the eclectic and haphazard nature of their activities, these groups, in various forms, aimed to stand against any form of institutionalized art practice. Furthermore, as already noted, this was also the period when the concept of civil society appeared in the discourse of dissident intellectuals.

Participatory and engaged forms of art paralleled other currents within second cultures, such as the organization and production of *samizda*t books and magazines. As Havel noted "culture is a sphere in which the parallel structures can be observed in their most highly

developed form."[102] *Samizdat* means the distribution of one's own writing without the intervention of a publishing house or the official permission of authorities. Coined by a Russian poet in the 1950s, the term evolved to include typewritten publications not sanctioned by the socialist party as well as imported and circulated copies of books published abroad by emigrants.[103] Although most visible and developed in Poland, which had an organized opposition in Solidarity, and in Czechoslovakia, where a human rights movement emerged in Charter 77, *samizdat* developed to various degrees in all former socialist countries.

In Hungary *samizdat* publications emerged in considerable numbers as a way to voice solidarity with Charter 77's human rights demands and express protest against the establishment of martial law in Poland in 1980. For example, in March 1980, *Keleteuropai Figyelo* (East European Observer) appeared in typewritten format, containing eyewitness reports of the 1956 revolution, as well as documents relating to communist repression of dissidents in other Central and East European countries. In the early 1980s a bookstore was established in Laszlo Rajk's personal apartment to sell *samizdat* literature. The journal, *Beszelo* (News from the Inside, or the Talker) an important manifestation of the Hungarian democratic opposition, appeared in 1981 in 1000 copies with 120 pages that included articles on officially forbidden subjects, such as the Polish Solidarity, democratic reforms in Hungary and Hungarian national minorities in neighboring countries.[104] These activities were facilitated by the 1980s relatively relaxed political system in Hungary and later by Gorbachev's Perestroika initiated in 1986. Although there were limits to freedom, Hungarian citizens were allowed to travel to Western countries, books and magazines could be exchanged with other foreign countries, Hungarian artists visited galleries and exhibited their art outside Hungary, thus facilitating contacts among various people and currents.

Even though organized opposition, paralleling Solidarity in Poland, had not emerged in Hungary, the existence of solidarity among networks of friends gave rise to various initiatives with a more or less political and oppositional character. For instance, the environmental group, the Danube Circle, founded in May 1983 protested against the construction of a hydro-electric power station and dam (Gabeikovo-Nagymaros) on the Danube, which was agreed upon by both the Hungarian and the Czechoslovak governments. The dam would displace a large number of Hungarian villages and destroy valuable plant and animal habitat. The Danube Circle protested through several marches on the Danube and a petition for a referendum signed by close to 6000 people. While it did not consider itself as a political opposition, the Circle's activities were viewed as such by the Hungarian authorities.[105] Moreover, the dissident opposition in the late 1980s also led to the formation of political parties, which played an important role in the 1990s politics, such as the democratic opposition or the Free Democrats (SZDSZ), the reform Socialists as the Socialist Party, the nationally oriented dissidents formed the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF) and FIDESZ (Association of Young Democrats), the anti-system youth party whose membership was initially restricted to individuals under thirty-five.[106]

It may also be noted that at its inception in Budapest in 1985, the Soros Foundation of the Hungarian-born and US-based billionaire George Soros, had as its local representative Miklos Vasarhelyi – the former press representative of the Imre Nagy's 1956 government – whose involvement signaled the foundation's oppositional stance toward the socialist state. In addition to support for arts programs, the foundation funded what Soros called "self-governing student colleges" which were housed in faculty dormitories where students initiated their own study programs. These spaces generated members of what became FIDESZ who, as I will show in the next section, played a significant part in the post-1989 first government and the structuring of

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public space in Budapest.[107]

Even if these various initiatives are considered more as (semi)opposition or "para-opposition," they were integral to the continued development toward a more open society. As noted above, just as the web of social capital has functioned as hidden engines for the neo-avant-garde art practices, similar features were visible in both the realm of *samizdat* activities and oppositional groups. For instance, the modes of production and organizations developed between groups of individuals working together to not only self-publish journals and books but also to share them among a trusted network were the expression of "generalized forms of reciprocity." This meant continuing relationships of exchange that were at any given time unrequired, but that involved mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future. Informal networks of communications were continuously formed through people's social relations and contacts. News heard in the workplace, someone's account of his or her trips abroad or knowledge of someone's possession of foreign language books, magazine or records, each contributed to the closely knit yet widely spread web of informal social capital. As Tibor Varnagy recounted "there was nothing strange about someone you had never seen before turning up at your home just because he was told that you had a collection of, say, recordings of concrete music."[108]

As vital forms of communication, participatory art practices, oppositional activities and *samizdat* publishing represented complex networks of engagement and unofficial platforms for discussing and sharing thoughts and opinions that were not allowed public expression in a relatively closed regime. Moreover, based on various forms of trust, reciprocity and informally agreed upon conventions and norms, such semi-official participatory activities functioned as social channels of opposition, independent thinking, friendship, and collective formulations of

inclusive and contestatory democratic forms towards which, it was hoped, the nation would transition. Emphasizing the importance and real benefits of these networks of engagement Konrad noted:

> The network of friends has become very important indeed, more permanent than the family.... today I help, tomorrow you help, and the helping hand is never translated into the language of money.... People here have more friends than people in other countries; friendship is security.[109]

At the same time, it may be noted, networks of friends and relations also generated forms of conflict within the second society itself. Inevitable tensions emerged as some individuals or groups were better able to use informal channels than others. Moreover, in light of scarce resources, people used their energies to maximize their own private or household strategies and in this process they not only competed with the state, but with the informal networks of others as well.[110] In fact, this strengthens the argument that specific activities within the second society were incipient attempts at carving a pluralistically open public sphere based on difference and not uniformity.

2.1.2 Participatory art in socialist Romania

If the relatively relaxed socio-political situation in Hungary permitted the flourishing of diverse forms of artistic activities within its second society, the neighboring country of Romania experienced a considerably shorter period of "liberalization" and a harsher socio-political and cultural situation, especially under Nicolae Ceausescu's regime from the mid-1970s to1989.

Following World War II and the defeat of the fascist Antonescu government, the Romanian Communist Party secured its leadership in most local positions and, with the falsified elections of 1946, officially sealed its victory. In 1948, the Communist Party with Gheorghe

Gheorghiu-Dej as its Secretary-General was transformed into the Romanian Workers Party (Partidul Muncitoresc Roman), by combining with the leftwing of the dismembered Social Democratic Party. During the political period from 1948 until the early 1960s, the country saw the strict consolidation and centralization of the Communist Party, which included forced and rapid industrialization and complete collectivization of agriculture. Moreover, during the 1950s, the doctrine of socialist realism was forcibly introduced into the contemporary arts, not only in Romania but also uniformly across all Soviet satellite states.[111]

In 1960 Gheorghiu-Dej declared the nation's independence from Moscow, initiating Romania's nationalist communism, while maintaining international "neutrality." However, despite its proclaimed independence, the country remained in an economic and political relationship of dependence upon the Soviet Union. As Janusz Bugajski and Maxine Pollack point out, "despite his more independent stance toward Moscow, in comparison to other Soviet bloc heads, Gheorghe-Dej was a doctrinaire Stalinist intent on rapidly Communizing Romania."[112] After Gheorghiu-Dej's death in 1965, the Party's name was changed back to the Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Comunist Roman) with Nicolae Ceausescu becoming Party chief. In 1974 the country's constitution was altered and Ceausescu was "elected" President. Ceausescu continued most of the directives initiated by his predecessor, most clearly demonstrating, for example, Romania's independence from the Soviet Union when he declared in August 1968 his adversity towards the Red Army's intervention in the Czechoslovakian Prague Spring.[113]

During the late 1950s and the early 1960s in Romania one can speak of a period of "de-satelization" or a "de-Sovietized Stalinism" (evidenced in the Party's break from the Soviet orbit) rather than of a period of de-Stalinization, which was rather minimal compared to other CEE nations.[114] While there was nothing close to the Hungarian revolution of 1956, there were

small workers protests during 1956 in the cities of Cluj-Napoca, Targu Mures, Timisoara and Bucharest expressing dissatisfaction with the economic situation that were rapidly crushed.

Between 1965 and 1974 Romania saw a period of "normalization," with the regime adopting a moderate political reformism, which also permitted some artistic reforms. Just as we observed under Kadar's regime in Hungary, the Romanian Communist Party during these few years was satisfied with an unwritten social contract with the population, as long as it was not challenged politically. This relative political and cultural thaw was characterized by: a softening of police and ideological control, improved economic situation, an opening toward Western countries, the ability of Romanians to travel, the staging of contemporary art exhibitions by American and European artists in Bucharest and the participation of Romanian artists in biennials in Venice, San Paulo, France, and the gradual replacement of the mandatory aesthetic doctrine of celebratory socialist realism (which began to fade already in the late 1950s) with a diversification of styles that included even abstract tendencies under the generic title of "diversely enriched realism."[115]

However, this cultural liberalization did not mean the complete disappearance of official culture celebrating the Party. Somewhat similar to the cultural policy based on the 3Ts in Hungary under Kadar's regime, three categories for artists during this period (1965-1974) had been identified: "the engaged or conformist artists" following openly and directly the Party's directives; "the neutral or the fake non-conformist artists," who were navigating both official and unofficial cultures, living a double life in the first and second societies; and the "oppositionists or the non-conformist artists" who aimed at total refusal to engage with any of the Party-state directives.[116]

All artists were formally required to participate in Party celebrations and anniversaries as well as producing propaganda works. Also, most artists' relationship with the power structures as well as with most of the viewing public went through the Party's organs, such as The Union of the Fine Artists, and Ministry of Culture, through which artists received salaries, supplies as well as sold and exhibited their works in State funded national and regional exhibitions. During this time, however, besides a few mandatory appearances, artists, critics and art historians were able to create and debate in a relatively open society, generating a richly textured second society where artistic practices, to some extent, corresponded with developments in international neo-avant-garde art practices.

During the early 1970s, ten years after relevant international artistic developments, the younger generation of Romanian non-conformist artists experimented with a variety of neo-avant-garde practices, including Op-art, Fluxus, minimalism, conceptualism, happenings, environmental art and land art.[117] They were self-taught, mostly via magazines, journals, art catalogues and books that crossed the border to Romania. Since they often combined, and experimented with, a multitude of neo-avant-garde styles from project to project or from exhibition to exhibition, their individual oeuvre cannot be easily categorized as belonging to a specific tendency.

For instance, in the early 1970s, Ana Lupas's (b.1940) and Mihai Olos's (b. 1940) participatory socially engaged art represented the artists' temporary experiments with this form of practice. In their actions, in different ways, both artists combined elements from the Romanian rural and peasant world with contemporary international art trends such as installations, minimalism, happenings and actions. In their work the art object functioned as an instrument or product of a participatory intervention.

Inspired by peasant wood architectural elements of his native region of Maramures (in the northwest part of Romania) as well as by Brancusi's sculptures, Olos explored the continuously self-regenerative power of the traditional shape of a spindle, creating various sculptures of uniform modules, such as the 1970 *Universal Town*. Geometrically regular wood sculptures held together using traditional joints instead of nails or glue, he called his constructions "the universal town" to indicate a belief in a planned and mathematically measured planetary and utopian urban space – not unlike what the modernizing communist project aimed to achieve, as illustrated in the building of ordered blocks of flats all across CEE. While emerging from the spiritualism of local folk traditions, Olos' constructivist and minimalist sculptures developed in geometrical progression, recalling Frank Stella's mid-1960s sculptures based on serial repetitions, in which, as Michael Fried noted the artist's investigation of the shape.[118] Yet in contrast to the minimalists, whose recourse to industrially neutral and serial forms were aimed as critical attacks against the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, Olos's use of the endlessly repeating wooden shape was to connect with the spiritual core of archaic and universal traditions.

Olos' interest in his native culture led to participatory actions, such as the *Gold, Wheat and People* (Aur, grau si oameni), which took place on November 14, 1972 in the Herja Mine in Maramures. The artist descended 500 meters into the mine with several gold ingots in hand to build his "universal town" of geometrical sculptures on a table that was used as a base in the "muster chamber" between mine shifts. He directly engaged the miners to activate his sculpture by inviting them to throw wheat grains over it as in the traditional folk custom in which this gesture signifies prosperity and fertility.[119] While Olos' action appeared to pay tribute to the communist utopian dream of equality and prosperity of the proletarian class, the artist brought to

light a community of individuals, emphasizing the presence of each of the miners in their everyday working conditions. Although in a priori-prescribed role, they become active participants (rather than mere parts of an anonymous workforce), without whom neither the communist dream nor the artist's work could not be realized.

An interest in folk traditions also drove Lupas' work in decorative textile art. She created *Flying Carpets* that were the results of her experiments in the use of form and color. Her tapestry was composed of carefully shaped geometrical patterns that gave a sense of three-dimensionality to the flat surface of the textile. Emerging from both her interest in the rural world and the contemporary international currents of land art, Lupas created a participatory and ephemeral project and installation titled *Humid Installation* first in 1966 in Cluj-Napoca and again in 1970 in Margau Village, near Cluj-Napoca in Transylvania (central part of Romania). Her collaborative artwork lasted twenty-four hours and involved close to one hundred women from the village, whom she asked to concurrently hang up white linens on clotheslines installed in an open field overlooking the town, as seen from a documentary photograph. Expanding upon her main practice with textile art, itself a traditional form of art practiced mostly by peasant women, her socially engaged *Damp Installation* work was based on direct participation of village people, whom she engaged through visits and face-to-face dialogic interactions.

Another of her large-scale, process-based installations is entitled *Solemn Process* or *The Wreaths of August* (Proces solemn or Cununile lui August) and took place first in 1964 in Saliste village and again in1966 in Margau. It consisted of life-size cylindrical and geometrical structures made collaboratively with the villagers. They were plaited ears of wheat, arranged and placed around various architectural elements found in three peasants' courtyards, re-arranging and morphing their function in the process. Lupas's participatory work combined the medium of

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installation and action with traditional materials to directly engage peasant families in enacting a ritual celebration of crop harvesting. In a 1972 interview Lupas expressed:

> I think art does not exist outside the questions of "why?" and "For whom?"... My actions have a clear social message. That is why I prefer that my works, with all the risk of being destroyed, be placed in places where people work and play, in places where they are not given full attention (as art objects) but are rather continuously touched in people's everyday interaction with them.[120]

In utilizing the object as a pretext for dialogic exchanges and interactions among members of communities and by bringing together people who may or may not have directly known each other beforehand, Lupas' works, especially *Humid Installation*, recalls Bulgarian artist Christo and French artist Jeanne-Claude's land-art projects, such as their *Curtain Valley*, successfully installed for two-weeks in August 1972 in the Colorado Valley, or their *Running Fence* in the Sonoma Valley, California. Though their large-scale public gestures the artist duo altered the social space of the site as their work functioned as a trigger for an inclusive public sphere characterized by direct exchanges among various people.

Informed by contemporary international art tendencies, both Lupas and Olos were artists officially recognized during the late '60s and early '70s in local and international exhibitions and press, with Olos even participating in the 1977 Documenta in Kassel. It may be recalled this was also the time when Romania embarked on its unique road toward a nationalist communism, when focus on national traditions, such as textile art as an applied form of art, was encouraged by state authorities. It is difficult to discern how much of both Lupas' and Olos' work, unfolding in a specific social reality, was motivated by a genuine desire in communitarian collaboration and how much their actions were due to their formative years under aggressive communist propaganda based on forced community engagement in the 1950s, leading to an inherent predilections to maintain a cautious public presence in a still highly censored society.[121]

Romanian critics and art historians such as Alexandra Titu referred to Lupas' and Olos' socially engaged projects as "sociological art" primarily due to these artists' engagements with the real world, specifically the rural world.[122] While acknowledging the complex juxtapositions of local traditional folkloric elements with international contemporary art orientations, Titu failed to address the significance of the participatory aspect, that is, the presence of members of particular communities in both Lupas's and Olos's works. In a somewhat similar fashion, Romanian critic and art historian Ileana Pintilie included the two artists' works under what she called "actionism" of the 1960s and 1970s, which she defined as a broad art tendency that encompassed numerous experimental art forms that were ephemeral and focused on the subject rather than the object and took place unofficially during socialism. Moreover, unlike Viennese Actionism, performance art or happenings, in which the public is an integral component of the work, Romanian actionism, according to Pintilie, was closely determined by the socio-political context and took place primarily in private spaces or with limited art audiences.[123] As we have seen, however in Lupas' and Olos's art, members of specific communities – broader than a limited art audience – were at the core of their artwork.

While working in different localities, the Romanian artists displayed strategies of engagement similar to the ones we have seen in the Hungarian artists' works. They directly engaged members of different communities in order to both question and address locally specific socio-politically themes and, most importantly, to give visibility and contribute to a highly textured and constantly changing web of social capital, which I argue had the potential to create enclaves of open public space. For instance, Olos's participatory work with the miners, while metaphorically underlining the underground existence of vital social interpersonal relationships, also called attention to the effects of forced industrialization to fulfill the socialist regime's

obsession with steel (the emblem of communism) production. Likewise, intervening in the existing network of social capital at the village level, Lupas' participatory initiatives emphasized collaborative unity as the locus of the rural world's strength and power within a socio-politically oppressive socialist system.

Under the leadership of Gheorghiu-Dej, beginning in the late 1940s, Romania began an aggressive nationalization and centralization of its entire industry and the collectivization of its agriculture. The latter was undertaken through Agricultural State Cooperatives and Peasant Associations where peasants worked their land in common ownership, which ultimately was actually owned by the state. If verbal persuasion was not successful, violence was used against these peasants who refused collectivization. The disappearance of all private property was officially declared in 1962, marking the complete collectivization of nation's farmlands. As Sampson has pointed out, the Cooperative Farm system essentially operated by allocating a piece of land to individual farmers who had to weed, harvest and deliver the final crop to the state cooperative. Payment was made according to the amount delivered rather than the actual labor time. Who worked the land or how, was not important to the authorities.[124] It is noteworthy that Romania's nationalized industries and collectivized agriculture were in stark contrast to Hungary (or Poland), where, as we have seen, agriculture continued to have a strong private sector with households able to own private plots of land and the national "goulash economy" was opened to Western imports.

Lupas' participatory actions in the life of the village indirectly called attention to the interpersonal relations that were driving the second society or "informal sector." For instance, several collective farmers relied on family ties and networks of friendship to work their allotted land and distribute their crops to the state. Like Hankiss' concept of "second society" discussed

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above, Sampson used the notion of "informal sector" to refer to alternative ways to allocate resources in CEE under socialism. He identified as types of informal organization: family and kin group; common ethnic or territorial origin; ties of friendship representing horizontal networks where the friendship ties tend to be equal; or personal networks that are unequal or vertical where patrons, brokers and clients interact. Sampson also pointed to the close interdependence between the formal sector, represented by the Party-State, and the informal sector, which was in a simultaneously "begin, corruptive or self-threatening" relationship to the first. At the same time, Sampson cautioned against an overall-positive understanding of the relationships within the informal sector: "There is no need to revert to nostalgia: informal relations can be just as conflictual and exploitative as the most repressive bureaucratic apparatus."[125]

This observation may certainly be true especially when applying it across all social strata of the population. However, as have been demonstrating, these informal face-to-face modes of interactions within networks of friends, which accumulated a diverse web of social capital through general trust and norms of reciprocity, were integral to the appearance of both alternative and oppositional groups, as seen in the participatory socially engaged forms of art, *samizdat* and oppositional activities. As such, these manifestations however much indirectly or subtly, nevertheless have challenged the regime's politics and directives, ultimately contributing to the erosion of authoritarian states by carving incipient forms of paradoxically open yet partially hidden public spheres.

Although minimal compared to Hungary, oppositional activities, even if weak and brief, also appeared in Romania. While a failed initiative, the small 1977 human right movement, guaranteed by the country's constitution and international accords, initiated by the dissident

writer Paul Goma was held together through the existent informal networks of like-minded groups of people. At the same time however, the existence of the informal sector, as exemplified through the secretive world of rumors, was also the cause for the movement's failure. Sampson pointed out how the formal sector of the Party-State strategically made use of the informal channels to spread rumors (which especially for Romanians, who distrust official news, were carriers of truth) about Goma as a "bad writer" and his group of human rights activists were just a group of opportunists.[126] An already complacent and frightened Romanian public did not support such small or individual oppositional actions.

During the 1980s, Ceausescu's personality cult, and disastrous economic policies motivated by the dictator's aim to pay off the country's entire foreign debt, kept the general public in literal hunger. Moreover, his xenophobic insecurity, which was at the base of his nationalistic communism, became so acute that international opinion recognized serious abuses of human rights in Romania. All minority cultures felt the brutality of a steady, institutionalized discrimination. In his effort to erase minority culture and homogenize the mythical "Greater Romanian" nation, Ceausescu bulldozed entire villages and placed the populations into concrete "agro-industrial complexes." The second half of the 1980s was one of the most devastating periods in Communist Romania. Poverty, fear, the irreversible demolition of Bucharest's historical center, the daily fight against political oppression and international isolation dominated the nation's conscience.

Despite such a restrictive socio-political context, an unofficial local art scene flourished with exhibitions staged in private apartments, such as the basement shows in Bucharest and Sibiu (between 1986 and 1989), the "pocket shows" in Oradea (1988) and house pARTY I (1987) and house pARTY II (1988) the last two staged in the house of the main organizer Decebal Scriba in

Bucharest. By making use of irony, grotesque quotations, eclectic combinations, withdrawal and passive participation, these artists flouted the authorities by ignoring their rules and retreating within private spaces away from the public eye.[127] Artists active in this unofficial art scene, such as Teodor Graur, Lia and Dan Perjovschi, Adrian Timar, Marcel Bunea, Calin Dan and Iosif Kiraly who later formed the group subREAL, became leading figures in the 1990s art scene.[128]

2.1.3   Unconventional art in socialist Bulgaria

In a somewhat similar fashion to Romania, organized dissent in Socialist Bulgaria was for the most part subdued. Bulgaria became a People's Republic in 1946 with Georgi Dimitrov as the leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). Just as we have seen in Hungary and Romania the Stalinization period in Bulgaria was particularly aggressive with many "native" members of the BCP being replaced, imprisoned or executed by entrenched "Moscovites." After Dimitrov's death in 1949, Vulvo Chervenkov became the Secretary General of the Party and under his six-year leadership; Bulgaria went through "full-scale nationalization, heavy industrialization, and comprehensive agricultural collectivization."[129] The de-Stalinization period saw minimal transformations in the country, except some personnel change within the political ranks – Todor Zhivkov became premier in 1962, and as Minister of Culture, Chervenkov continued his aggressive policies against dissent intellectuals – and somewhat improved working conditions for the workers, similar to Romania.[130]

In comparison to neo-avant-garde art activities in Hungary and Romania during the 1960s and 1970s in Bulgaria such manifestations were minimal and rarely documented. Some artists, while belonging to the official Union of Bulgarian Artists (UBA), experimented unofficially with assemblage, but these activities were done in secluded circles and private spaces away from the

public eye. Just like in other CEE countries, by the late 1950s the strict directives of Socialist Realism were no longer officially pursued by Bulgarian artists. It was replaced with the concept of "multiple realisms" (not unlike the notion of "diversely enriched realism" in the Romanian context) that included modern styles ranging from abstraction to expressionism.

While open in appearance, in fact the UBA continued its wide-ranging control over local artists, being the only venue for contemporary artists to publicly show and sell their work as well as to earn a living. As no artist was able to survive outside the Union, an implicit self-censorship guided local artists whose will to revolt against the State was suppressed by the economic benefits and their relative stable situation as UBA members.[131] As such, most artists associated with the Union were engaged in a functionalist form of social capital where individual needs and interests were met through the organization's available resources. Based on massive artist participation, the Union could be seen as an excellent example of national participation and unity, elements that represent social capital's positive effects of association (where numbers are of critical importance) that lead to a consensual sense of community of like-minded people.

A centralized, socialist model was the rule in Bulgaria up until 1989. As a Party-State funded institution, UBA organized various juried national and regional exhibitions through which it implicitly showcased and established criteria for State-sanctioned artworks. For instance, national exhibitions staged every three, four or five years had themes such as "Labor and Man," "People and Land," or "People and the Sea."[132] Paradoxically, the State simultaneously encouraged an opening up of the country, especially during Ljudmila Zhivkova's initiatives beginning in the mid-1970s in her role as the country's Minister of Culture (as the Party-leader's daughter). With advice from Party art experts and State funds, she compiled an eclectic collection of foreign artworks centered on early 20th century figurative painting to be

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housed in 1985 in what today is Bulgaria's National Gallery of Foreign Art.[133] Russian-born and Bulgaria-based curator and art critic Iara Boubnova notes: "The uniqueness of this project consists in that for more than a decade it oriented and defined the concept that Bulgaria had of foreign art."[134]

Despite the state controlled cultural context, public oppositional art activities began to manifest themselves, particularly from the mid-1980s after Gorbachev's Perestroika, by a number of young contemporary artists working in (short-lived) groups, such as the City Group (1986-1991), the Dobrudzha Group (1986-1991), the Turgovishte Group (1986-1991), the Cuckovden Group (founded 1981), the DE Group (founded in 1984), the Edge Group and the MA Group (1986-1990).[135] They aimed to break away from the official directives of the UBA through their actions, happenings, and performances, outdoor and indoor installations, assemblages and sculptural objects that adopted the formal characteristics of the 1980s New British Sculpture or Nouveau Realisme tendencies. These were been referred to as "non-conventional" works and collectively formed what was perceived as contemporary Bulgarian art. Taking place in both public spaces and natural environment, outside state-sanctioned galleries, their activities erupted organically from within established and trusted social networks within the second society. As Boubnova observed: "These events originated almost spontaneously and were based on relations of friendship."[136]

The emergence of numerous artist groups during this time, not only in Bulgaria but as we've seen also in Hungary, was based on existing forms of social capital. For instance, while official members of the UBA, several artists redirected their previously passive association into collective work aimed at opposing State-mandated interests and directives that limited free creative experiments outside the traditional artistic genres. They made use of the social capital

created though the Union's official networking channels to re-group, organize and express their non-conventional approaches to art. Group activities were not limited to Sofia, Bulgaria's capital city. They happened independently and simultaneously in various locations in Bulgaria, such as the various groups' happenings and actions with the same name *The Road* in 1986 by the Turgosvishte Group, the Group MA and the Dobrudzha Group.[137]

Artists were reluctant to use the term "avant-garde" to designate their work, mainly because their practice was based on 1960s and 1970s international neo-avant-garde forms no longer current within the Western scene. However, considering the Bulgarian oppressive socio-political and cultural context, where traditional forms of art dominated, the presence and work of these young artists, majority under 35, were cutting edge and avant-garde. It is noteworthy that in contrast to the Romanian contemporary art scene of the 1980s (under the draconic Ceausescu regime), which unfolded in private studios and apartments, Bulgarian artists during this time worked collectively with several individual artists belonging to more than one group.

Although during this time there was not a clear or conscious distinction made between the concepts of "modern" and "contemporary," the artworks' emphasis on viewer participation was a distinct feature of the locally emerging non-conventional art. Bulgarian art critic and curator Maria Vassileva specifically pointed out the artworks' "provocation of direct contact and the direct participation of the viewer."[138] The participatory happenings concomitantly and spontaneously occurring across the country were considered as distinct marks of contemporary art. Mixed-media installations both indoors and outdoors were composed of natural and non-durable materials found on site, such as pine, rope, plastic, wood and twigs. Such artworks not only encouraged viewers' direct touch, who often "swing on them, touch and spin some parts and cause them to give forth different sounds,"[139] but also challenged the locally powerful

emphasis on traditional modes of art making, such as painting and sculpture (practiced as separate media), championed by the Union of the Bulgarian Artists and generated through the curriculum of the National Academy of Fine Arts in Sofia. Thus, a public presence and a participatory dimension within the content and form of artworks have been considered core features of the newly emerging "non-conventional" contemporary forms of art.

An early example of participatory collective work among artists and audience was the educational program in the exhibition and action "E/A" (Artist Proof or Author's Print) in 1987 by artist and curator Kiril Prashkov and curator Philip Zidarov. Artists demonstrated various graphic techniques to the audience by marking their experiments onto one large sheet of canvas concluding with a "public creation and printing out of a collective work (more than 20 participants) which turned into a symbolical shaping of the new artistic community."[140]

The City? exhibition in 1988 by the artist collective the City Group was an important event, becoming a representative image for an entire generation active in the mid-1980s. Bulgarian art critic Philip Zhidarov initiated the exhibition by extending an invitation to six young and well-regarded (by the UBA) painters Andrei Daniel, Bozhidar Boyadzhiev, Vihrony Ponedelev, Gredi Assa, Nedko Solakov, Svilen Blazhev (who although took part in the 1988 exhibition was no longer associated with the group).[141] Taking almost two years to define through numerous conversations with both of the artists and the UBA officials, Zhidarov's premise was an exhibition with no paintings. It transformed the conventional UBA art gallery space on Rakovski Street into a mixed media installation that combined music performances, junk-art, ready-mades, objects placed on the floor, drapes hanging on a corner wall, individual framed paintings displayed at an angle on the wall, floor or on abstract wooden sculptures, as seen in a documentary photograph of an installation. Moreover the exhibition was a communal

place, where direct participation and communication among members of the audience was a key element. A band was playing, while artists, critics and general public engaged openly in conversation. It was a locally revolutionary event in its distinct stand against the alienating and neutral gallery space expected to provide an individualized and disembodied experience of medium specific artworks. Numerous articles and reviews in local newspapers, such as *Kultura* and *Pulse* attest to the exhibition's visible impact and importance within and outside of the art scene.[142]

Active networks of engagement woven through a multitude of informal relations became vital resources for artists in organizing and staging their work both in the early 1990s and before 1989. For instance, an emblematic exhibition of local contemporary art of this period was *Earth and Sky* organized by Diana Popova and Georgi Todorov in October 1989. Only a few short weeks before the fall of socialism, it was staged on the rooftop of Shipka 6 Gallery, standing literally on top of the building of the official UBA. The exhibition was the first official public display of "non-conventional forms" with artist performances, happenings and installations continuously changing over the one-month duration of the show. In the course of the exhibition there was also the first official meeting of the Club of the /eternally/ Young Artists – C(e)YA, with its leader Nedko Solakov, and formed by members under 35, which stood openly against the official UBA during the country's early transitional period.[143]Certainly, the state-sanctioned UBA made several unsuccessful attempts to shut down the exhibition, refusing for instance to advertise the show. The tightly knit social networks among people in the second society proved to be essential in making the exhibition known to a wider public. As the curator put it: "There was a rumor" and news traveled through word of mouth. Moreover, non-artist supporters of the event, such as the editors at the *Pulse* newspaper helped spread the word.[144]

Lyuben Kostov's *Downfall of the Article 1* in 1989 was "the first public political art action on the Bulgarian art scene." It took place in a busy Sofia public square and consisted in a winding arrangement made of dominos. Stage in a public place with passersby observing the work's creation, artist's action was part of the heated societal discussions during December 1989 regarding the dissolution of Article 1 of the Socialist Constitution that stated "that the Bulgarian Communist Party has the sole ruling authority in the country."[145]

These multiple art manifestations paralleled various yet isolated instances of oppositional activities. For instance, Yonko Yankov was sentenced to two years in prison in 1984 for visiting Western embassies to discuss human rights issues in Bulgaria and for allegedly being a member of a monitoring group. In 1987, six dissidents appealed to the Vienna CSCE conference and proposed that an international commission monitor the abuse and respect of human rights in Bulgaria. In 1985 oppositional leaflets created by workers in a locomotive factory and signed "Dimitrov" featured criticism of the government and appealed to the population to stage protests against the machinery of exploitation and oppression."[146]The presence of dissident manifestations, however small, was possible because of an ambiguous political environment, where the local Party State was restructuring the country on a national course initiated in 1986 by Gorbachev's Perestroika.

Although not an organized opposition under socialism as we have seen in Hungary, nevertheless a small number of dissident manifestations in Bulgaria and Romania formed social capital that united people through informal channels and social networks, that were essential resources in people's everyday lives. Through a historical and contextual analysis of specific neo-avant-garde artists' projects – in this chapter – I have argued that participatory socially engaged forms of art became platforms for reactivating and building upon a web of social capital

forces already present within the second society. Through the artists' aim of their projects, addressing locally pertinent socio-political themes, and their participatory mode of collaboration with various individuals and groups of people, such contemporary art practices, I argued, contributed to the erosion of the authoritarian states by carving, however small, open and inclusive public spheres. In the following section through specific exhibitions and artists' socially engaged works in Hungary and Romania, I will attempt to show the multi-layered impact of the communist legacy on the emergence of civil society and open public spheres within the early transitional period of the 1990s.

2.2   THE POLITICS OF ANTI-POLITICS IN THE SOROS CENTERS FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS' EARLY 1990S EXHIBITIONS IN BUDAPEST AND BUCHAREST

In various parts of the world in the early-1990s, there were several landmark exhibitions that commissioned and showed community-oriented, socially engaged forms of art – Mary Jane Jacob's *Culture in Action* (Chicago, 1992-93) and Creative Time's *42nd street art project* (New York, 1994) in the US, Yves Aupetitallot's *Project Unite* (France, 1993) and Valerie Smith's *Sonsbeck 93* (The Netherlands, 1993) in Europe. Articulating a new direction in site-specificity within the discourse of socially engaged art, artists and curators aimed to dissolve boundaries between art and life to create new audiences for art publics beyond the artworld. They engaged specific publics at a particular site as the works' contents, intervened in the social context serving as catalysts for change or functioned as platforms for collective representation, and thereby challenged traditional methods for evaluating art and creating social value.

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Similar kinds of art and forms of exhibition developed almost simultaneously in CEE shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, but have remained under-examined. *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art* (Budapest, 1993) and *Exhibition 01010101…* (Bucharest, 1994) were major exhibitions that showcased two distinct yet concurrent approaches to socially engaged art: forms of participatory public art that were short-lived temporary public interventions, and forms of community-oriented art that unfolded over longer periods of time engaging various members of specific communities. Staged in the early 1990s, the exhibitions represented an interface between hybrid temporalities localized within the 1990s post-communist condition characterized by strong legacies of the recent communist past, desires of becoming part of the international contemporary art scene and emerging neoliberal market forces. Considering them as spaces of negotiation, in which ambivalent curatorial strategies were caught within a perpetual in-betweeness, I argue these exhibitions became both the products and active producers of specific forms of civil society in Hungary and Romania. Embracing a neoliberal approach, they juxtapose a desire for collective change against a longing to participate in the contemporary international art scene.

2.2.1   Civil society during the 1990s post-communist transition

When considering the CEE transitional period politically, Hungary along with Poland and the Czech Republic, are typically categorized as "liberal states" because the collapse of their respective totalitarian regimes was immediately followed by the creation of a competitive democratic political system due to the presence of a strong opposition to the socialist state. Call for reform and negotiations for political pluralism had already began in 1986-7, followed in 1989 by immediate personnel change within the ranks of the communist party. Hungary entered the

post-1989 transition period, as we have seen, with the experience of goulash communism (a communist-type consumerism fueled by Western loans and credits), and Jozef Antall, a former intellectual dissident, became the leader of the Hungarian Democratic Forum (MDF), the right-wing party that led the coalition government after the first free election in 1990. On the other hand, countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia are considered "illiberal states" because of a lack of a strong opposition party to take power immediately following the collapse of communism and because of a generally non-competitive political system. Romania, for example, under the dictatorship of Ceausescu, had no organized opposition to communism as it had been almost entirely silenced by the regime's oppressive measures.[147] Even though the first elections in 1990 were mostly free and fair, former communists won most seats, and Ion Iliescu, a former high-ranking and active member of the former Communist party, became the president and leader in the National Salvation Front (FSN).

While the different socialist legacies had shaped in distinct ways the nature of the transitional period in the two countries, both Hungary and Romania shared similar cultural and political understandings of the emerging function of civil society. This was deeply rooted in the former intellectual dissidents' conceptualization as a sphere of activity entirely divorced from the state or government. Civil society, most often, meant a retreat from the totalitarian state into forms of self-organized enclaves grouped around dissident intellectuals such as George Konrád in Hungary, Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia, poet Micea Dinescu in Romania.[148] For example, Konrád's democratic opposition or "antipolitics" was meant to exist not only under communism but also after its collapse:

> If the political opposition comes to power, antipolitics keeps the same distance from, and shows the same independence of, the new government. It will do so even if the new government is made up of sympathetic individuals, friends perhaps; indeed, in such cases it will have the greatest need for independence and distance.[149]

This call for the de-politicization of lives and an understanding of civil society based on morality, truth and avid hostility towards political parties emerged as reactions to the socialist regimes whose politics controlled every aspect of society. Such principles, for example, motivated the activities of the Hungarian environmental activist group Danube Circle in 1984, as noted in more detail in the previous section. But also, the same anti-political ideas were the engines for the emergence of oppositional political parties composed of intellectuals and students that contributed to the collapse of the Hungarian Communist Party.

Despite such enclaves of opposition, the legacies of the suppressive communist regimes, especially in Romania under Ceausescu, have nonetheless greatly shaped contemporary forms of civil society. In the early 1990s, citizens generally maintained mistrust toward any voluntary associations (or NGOs) and refused to participate in public activities, mainly because of the recent past experiences and memories of mandatory participation in May Days parades and several other such propaganda-related activities.[150] At the same time, a central concern among the general population was the concept of civil society, which was understood to include: forms of association not controlled by the state, an open and inclusive idea of citizenship and the notion that "people should be 'civil': that is polite, tolerant, and above all nonviolent."[151]

In Romania, the Independent Group for Social Dialogue, composed of former intellectual dissidents with backgrounds in such disciplines as sociology, literature, history, and law, issued the weekly journal *22*, named after the date – December 22, 1989 – the Ceausescu regime collapsed. In their first edition, the authors of *22* discussed the nature and constitution of civil society in the country:

> Romanian civil society is beginning to be configured. We have begun to talk with a firmer voice, and the themes of our discussions are: pluralism, political parties, free

elections, independent unions, parliament. There are signs of democracy, which, if we do not guard it actively and with circumspection, we can lose. To be whole... this democracy must have real economic resources, institutions of a legal state, a social life in which the interests of all socio-professional categories are correctly represented. Tolerance must correspond with a diversity of interests freely expressed... The group is an independent and strictly informal group, not subordinated to any political party... The group does not wish to be a center of power, but a center of influence.[152]

Emphasizing individual freedom of association and expression, along with parliamentary democracy, these basic principles also further underline the conceptualization of civil society as parallel yet separate from the state. Paradoxically, such a popular approach was both in unison and in opposition to the newly post-1989 elected governments' agenda, which were committed to adopting certain Western forms of civil society as part of the transition from totalitarian and centrally governed systems to democratic and self-governed forms of state institutions.

In the 1990s the leading political class of right-wing parties and the large segment of the populations that supported it in Hungary and Romania, championed individualism, freedom and liberty. These were the same principles valued by neoliberalism and its market economy eager to extend into the newly emerging democracies of the CEE territories. Yet, instead of encouraging freedom for associations to form meaningful collective organizations supporting, the political and legal rights of minority groups, emphasis was placed on participation in charitable, philanthropic organizations, or civic associations that would nurture morality and consensual behaviors.

Such tendencies are part of what David Harvey described as neoliberalism's need for "the construction of consent" in order to be swiftly implemented and embraced, while securing profit in the hands of the very few and eliminating social programs that would benefit the many. Capturing the rhetoric of individual freedom, highly valued by citizens from the post-socialist CEE, neoliberalism could appeal to a mass base, since it required a "market-based populist

culture of differentiated consumerism and individual libertarianism."[153] According to neoliberal theory:

> Human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.[154]

The aggressive cultivation of a public consumer identity was made evident in the visual urban aesthetics of cities such as Bucharest and Budapest, where large-scale corporate logos such as those of McDonalds took the place of the ideological slogans and symbols of the former communist regime. The emphasis on the freedom of consumer choice was extended to certain modes of expression, behavior, and cultural practices, spread for instance through popular media and mainstream TV programs imported from the USA and Western European countries, which were all part of the process of creating a culture of consent. It is no coincidence that under the hegemony of neoliberalism, as Harvey noted, the concept of civil society – conceptualized as a sphere outside the state – also appeared as the locus for oppositional politics.[155]

The spaces of civil society and of the public spheres in post-1989 CEE arise from the complex and uneasy juxtapositions of the political with the antipolitical; and of an economic, individualistic society with a civil society based on solidarity. The early phases of democratization corresponded to the existence of mutually exclusive relationships between civil society, economic forces and political activities. Such disconnect between the spheres of civil society and the state within the post-communist transitional period has been theoretically but not practically similar to a western liberal approach to civil society.

Serbian curator and critic Bojana Pejic wrote about the 1990s post-communist transitional period in terms of a "process of normalization," which should eventually lead to a

"state of normality."[156] The former most often refers to the political process at the governmental level where post-communist nations learn and implement the rules of Western democracy, culminating in their acceptance into the European Union. If the process of normalization can be measured, with a beginning and an end, "a state of normality" as exemplified by civil society is much harder to achieve, not only because of its inherent relativity, but also due to a context imbued by a multitude of conflicting notions.

On the political level, therefore, concepts of civil society have been cumulatively shaped by locally emerging activities informed by the legacies of both the communist regime and intellectual dissident enclaves, nationalist forces resurrected from before World War II, as well as by NGOs funded by private foreign foundations that promoted Western civic notions. Emerging from engagement with particular sites and their publics, I argue that socially engaged art and curatorial initiatives have been an integral part in the process of achieving a "state of normality," or inclusive public spheres becoming critical platforms and nodal points where macro societal transformations are responded to and interfered into at the micro, everyday level.

The local Soros Centers for Contemporary Art (SCCAs), initiated by the Hungarian-born, US-based financier and philanthropist George Soros, were the first independent institutions in the region supporting local art throughout the 1990s. They became the most influential instances of this type. Guided by the concept of "open society," as developed by the philosopher Karl Popper,[157] the SCCAs exemplify an institutional structure based on promoting consensual forms of engagement within a civil society seen as divorced from the state. Soros founded the first SCCA in Budapest in 1985. From the end of 1991 until 1999, eighteen additional centers were opened in eighteen CEE countries, each functioning under his foundation's direct funding for approximately five years, after which each center was expected to become self-sustainable. The

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SCCAs were branches of local Soros Foundations connected to the Soros Foundation New York. All local centers were considered as actively participating in the building of open and democratic societies as they aimed to promote, develop and support contemporary art(s).

Both *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art* in Hungary and *Exhibition 01010101…* in Romania were annual exhibitions staged by the local SCCAs. It was within such an ambivalent socio-political local setting, shaped by competing concepts of civil society, that the two exhibitions, with their explicit focus on forms of contemporary art that directly engaged the social (and only obliquely the political) context as an artistic medium, are in retrospect most productively understood. Both included a generation of artists born in the 1950s and 1960s that were active during the 1980s and their practices bridged the experience of the recent communist past with the newly emerging art tendencies within the transitional period. I argue that each of the two exhibitions revealed the paradox of civil society, illustrating the different artists' understandings of what role art should play in society and the mediating role of the curator as an institutional representative seeking to internationalize the local art scene.

2.2.2   Reclaiming public life through interventionist public art

The first series of socially engaged art projects in public spaces to be developed in the Hungarian capital after the fall of the Iron Curtain were realized as part of *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art* (1993). Organized in Budapest and curated by Suzanne Mészöly, the exhibition aimed to encourage and support contemporary socially conscious artworks, harking back to the leftist tradition of the early twentieth-century Russian avant-garde and its goals of closing the gap between art and life. *Polyphony*, however, intended to provide contemporary Hungarian artists with "a forum to express their broadest social

commentaries," and so distanced itself from contemporary political ideologies by inviting works that did not engage with "current political issues, specific persons, institutions, lobbies, ideological trends or interests of the state."[158] This stated distance was understandable since the left-oriented practice of socially engaged art did not correspond, for example, to the nationalist tendencies promoted by contemporary right-wing conservative government of 1990-1994 led by the first post-communist Prime Minister, Antall of MDF, with its emphasis on nationhood and, of course, market-based neoliberal economy. Moreover, as political scientist Emilia Palonen observed, the Antall government through its particular political rhetoric aimed to establish sharp delineations between political identities and coalitions within the Hungarian political scene, which represented a strategy from the socialist past when the dissidents opposed the former regime along the clear-cut lines of "us" versus "them."[159]

Initially planned to take place in Mücsarnok, a state funded art space, the exhibition was rejected by its then-director Katalin Keserü based on the premise that it featured political art too closely connected to the ideology of the recent communist past. The museum director objected most directly to the 1980s dictionary definition of the word "art," which states: "ART = One of the forms of social consciousness: a creative activity"[160] that opened the call for proposals:

> I was outraged by the text of the advertisement that began with a crazy epigraph; a text, which I later found out had been written in New York, by some guy, called András Szántó … a proto-Marxist.[161]

Keserü thus considered that the exhibition's concept promoted Marxist ideals, which were considered contrary to the locally emerging forms promoted by the nation's newly elected government, whose representative was a former dissident opposing communist ideals. Even though Mészöly called the incident a "bleak echo of censorship from the not so distant past,"[162] I would argue both the stated goals of *Polyphony*'s curator and Keserü's reaction actually

manifested a similar understanding of the locally emerging civil society as divorced from politics, suggesting a strong continuation of Konrád's antipolitics into the early 1990s. It also reflected one of the founding goals of the Soros Foundations, which he first opened in Budapest as an institution of civil society, initially understood to stand in opposition to and help bring about the dismantling of the totalitarian state.[163] The Foundation accomplished this, for instance, by providing funding for non-governmental creative initiatives and training of Hungarian economists and intellectuals in neoliberal theory and practice in Western countries.[164]

The curatorial framework was ambivalent in terms of its plural allegiances. It juxtaposed an antipolitical temporality shaped by the communist legacy with a simultaneous desire to participate in the contemporary international (socio-politically charged) art scene. An important goal of the SCCAs was the promotion of local visual arts nationally and internationally via comprehensive documentation, such as exhibitions, catalogue publications and international conferences. Towards this end, each local center was contractually required to: organize annual exhibitions on an artistic "medium rarely explored within the country;" introduce new ideas and artists; and publish a bilingual catalogue in both English and the local language. Participation was open to competition and publicized nationally. An international jury invited and financed by the SCCA awarded prizes.[165] *Polyphony* identified and adopted one of the early-1990s international trends of issue-based, site-specific art practice as its theme to provoke and motivate Hungarian artists to formulate their own distinctive approach.

Well-known western curatorial projects were taken as inspirational models for the exhibition. At the symposium marking the exhibition's closing on December 4, 1993 at the Budapest French Institute, Mészöly directly acknowledged *Polyphony*'s precedents: "I was greatly influenced by the *42nd Street Art Project*, which I had seen before and I was very aware

of a lot of issue-based work happening in the US and Great Britain especially."[166] Such a statement appears somewhat contradictory when noting that *Polyphony* became an exhibition of site-specific works only as a result of Mücsarnok's refusal to house it in its galleries, and the two calls for proposals (CFP) illustrate the change in the curatorial premise. In the CFP final version, it invited art projects for "any public or private space" that were intentionally minimally advertised to confront viewers unexpectedly in a number of public spaces in Budapest, thus further blurring the lines between art and life. The works were referred to as site-specific, yet there was no explanation of what was actually meant by site-specificity in the exhibition or local context.

Nonetheless, the curator had in mind contemporary site-oriented artworks, as practiced in the US, where site was conceptualized in both physical and discursive terms, art addressed socio-political issues and artists often engaged the participation of audience in the production of the work. American critic, Miwon Kwon proposed three paradigms of site-specificity as it developed since the 1960s: experiential, in which site was defined in terms of physical attributes and location; social/institutional, where site was perceived as a network of interrelated spaces and economies; and discursive, where site could be as various as a billboard, a disenfranchised community, a magazine page, a social cause or a political debate.[167] In a manner similar to Creative Time's *42nd Street Art Project* in 1993 that included temporary art installations in the storefronts, windows and public areas between New York's Broadway and 8th Avenue, the *Polyphony* exhibition in Budapest featured art on city streets, telephone booths, bridges, buses, grocery stores, electronic billboards, local newspapers, an artist's flat, and a private gallery. Yet, instead of highly charged socio-politically themes such as racism, AIDS, violence and feminism, which had been directly approached by the artists in New York, their Hungarian contemporaries

used the city of Budapest's social and physical context as their artistic medium.

Critics reviewing the exhibition for the local press, such as Sherri Hay in her 1993 article "The Aesthetics of art and politics," and participants in symposium, such as András Szántó and László Beke, objected to the lack of politically and socially-charged art forms in the Hungarian context when compared with the artistic, activist and dissident public interventions in New York. Hungarian-born and US-based critic Szántó argued that in contrast to the calculated silence towards the communist regime, after 1989 the same "politics of silence" carried no meaning, as there was no longer a Big Brother to fight against. According to Hungarian curator and art critic Beke, the early 1990s vacuum of politically and socially engaged contemporary art was due to the fact that "we've used up all our gun power" following the 1960s and 1970s neo-avant-garde's activities, which prepared the way for political changes.[168] In a 1997 essay, Hungarian art historian Edit András remarked that in the Hungarian context, politics were equated with governmental politics. According to András, the social consciousness that drove international art currents in the 1990s had not triggered any local response because such initiatives in Hungary still carried the memory of state control and manipulation.[169]

I would argue, however, that rather than positioning themselves in relation to the contemporary American socio-politically engaged art practices emerging in reaction to the conservative climate of the Republican government, several artists in the *Polyphony* exhibition developed projects that were anchored in and contingent upon their locality. They reactivated local public spaces as forums for dialogue that until very recently had been dominated by the visible ideology of a totalitarian regime. Rather than passive social commentary, Hungarian artists attempted to formulate different strategies to directly interact and establish participatory platforms for communication with and among local publics. Incidentally, it is worth noting that

the English translation changed the original meaning of the exhibition title, which in Hungarian read "social context as a medium," reflecting what most artists actually accomplished, while the English title read "social commentary in contemporary Hungarian art."

For instance, among the twenty-nine projects, Zsolt Koroknai's *Telephone Booth Gallery* consisted of public telephones booths in seven different locations across Budapest each connected to the artist's Audio Studio.[170] Upon dialing the indicated number, the caller could enter in an open dialogue with the artist on various topics including the role of art in contemporary society. The street-level, open-ended dialogic project extended agency to the passerby who actively participated in the creation of the work. Moreover, it gives visibility and audibility to the silent yet active relationships of reciprocity that formed the multi-layered social capital web of the second society so vital in the citizens' daily existence under socialism.

Gyula Varnai's two-and-a-half hour acoustic installation *Agitator* consisted of a tape-recorder on a stand positioned next to a tree and two microphones placed at a busy Budapest intersection,[171] recording street noises and sounds. The artist looped the tape of the recorder so that it encircled the tree trunk, while covering the delete button of the recorder with aluminum foil. The work's title could allude to the "agitators" who were the "peoples' educators" during the Stalin era of the early 1950s who would come to people's doors to both control and spread the Socialist Party ideology in direct face-to-face conversations. By ultimately eliminating any intelligible sounds from *Agitator*, Varnai both establishes this specific connection with the past – one could see the role of the tree as a silent yet rooted witness to this legacy – and erases it through the noise of the shifting spatial-temporal dimension of the present. In its paradoxically infinite possibility of capturing transient yet incoherent moments, openly absorbing the streets' random sounds, voices of passers-by and physical landmarks, *Agitator* coalesced the perpetually

fluid relations between the simultaneously existing present, past and future temporalities.

The unrealized artists' proposals presented in the exhibition catalogue illuminate another facet of participatory practices envisioned on a large scale. For instance, Tomas Szentjoby, represented by his dispatcher of IPUT (International Parallel Union of Telecommunications established by the artist in 1968), proposed a large-scale project *Beautiful Darkness Variation 2* (since the concept was based upon Hungarian artist, Balazs Beothy's rejected proposal that was submitted to the same exhibition) that would include the entire Budapest population. His work of art would have been 24 seconds of darkness, the period of time IPUT proposed to decrease by 24 units at 10pm all of the city's public electric consumption yet "the decrease of luminous intensity will not affect traffic lights and the supplied electricity to buildings."[172] Half of the money saved by switching off the power, would have been given to the National Society of the Blind and Visually Impaired, and the other half the artist would have divided among the artists in the exhibition, since the Soros Foundation did not offer honoraria for the artists' participation.[173]

The Foundation did not approve the proposal – most likely due to the irreversible negative outcomes that an electric outage would cause, for instance, in the hospitals or for the security networks. However, the project might have been rejected because of its particular aesthetic quality. László Beke pointed out how the "The Person in Charge at the Soros Foundation said to Szentjoby's dispatcher that he (the artist) did not do anything," obviously failing to recognize the conceptual nature of the project, which in part consisted in this 'nothing' or 'darkness.'" Beke, on the other hand, failed to address the project's participatory nature, which, if realized, would have created a platform for collective representation and bodily connectivity as a way to bypass the recent past's dichotomous societal order between the political party-state and the population. It would have collapsed into visible darkness; the gap –

both actual and symbolic – between the vertical and horizontal networks or social capital present at the street and institutional level by provoking the entire city public in a (somewhat forced) unity.

An earlier large-scale attempt by the same artist directed towards the entire population of Budapest, intended as a way to turn a negative memory into a positive one, was Szentjoby's 1992 *The Statue of Liberty's Soul 1992 W*. The artist covered the Liberty Statue with a white sheet. This is a monument erected in 1947 on the city's prominent Gellert Hill to honor the Soviet liberation of Hungary from Nazi forces during WWII. By covering it with a sheet that only had two holes cut out for the eyes, the artist in a satirical gesture transformed its power as a carrier or reminder of traumatic (socialist) past into a ghost or spirit. Although harmless, its presence still hovered over the city. The population, for the most part, responded negatively to the project. András discussed works by contemporary artists, such as Szentjoby in terms of their works' potential to act as sites for collective memory work, provoking the population to work through the trauma of the past memory rather than to simply reject it from consciousness. The public's negative responses reflected the fact that the trauma of the past is avoided rather then worked through open and public discourse.[174] This was part of the larger discourse of the early 1990s burial craze, which in Hungary manifested in the reburial and official remembrance of Imre Nagy the leading revolutionary figure of the 1956 revolution. Moreover, in parallel with the recovering of forgotten heroes, a "cleaning-up" of public spaces also occurred, by removing statues and monuments of the recent communist past and collecting them in isolated parks, such as the Statue Park outside Budapest, which since its inception attracted a number of international visitors.

The artists' projects in the *Polyphony* exhibition, both realized and unrealized, could be

seen as tools for unrestrained expression, bringing to public light the horizontal social networks of communication and exchange that functioned parallel to the totalitarian regime as embryonic forms of civil society before 1989. This became particularly important during the initial process of democratization. According to Putnam, the sustained presence of social capital, based on interpersonal trust and norms of reciprocity that facilitate problem solving through collective actions, would gradually offer a model for democratically functioning political institutions.[175] Although Putnam had in mind institutions based on consensual politics and serving civil and obedient communities, I argue that the same features of social capital can fuel pluralistic associations and communities with diverse interests, most often not in unison with the status quo. Artists subtly disrupted and intervened in the city's familiar urban sites in order to break down their prior associations with official spaces of control and surveillance. They articulated a form of socially engaged site-specificity where social interactions and the participations of passers-by became the site and content of artworks.

Rather than explicitly appropriating American models of contemporary public art interventions of the early-1990s, which *Polyphony*'s organizers aimed to provoke, several of the Hungarian artists in the exhibition responded to the transitional geopolitical locality of their country. At the same time, they built upon strategies of local unofficial pre-1989 art practices that emphasized participatory forms of engagement as open models of social communication. For example, the interventionist street actions of Miklós Erdély in 1956 and Gábor Tóth in the early 1980s, which I discussed in detail earlier in the text, despite their ephemerality, were suggestive examples for the role of the artist as participant observer and catalyst of collective actions.[176] Although the curator vaguely acknowledged this legacy, it was not explored in the exhibition catalogue. Instead, Mészöly articulated *Polyphony*'s aim in contradictory terms by

arguing that it was meant to "introduce even the understanding of issue-based work; and it is not an introduction; this work has existed here for a very long time. Issue-based work has always been made here."[177] So, while alluding to the locally existing historical precedent for socially engaged art, the curator's goal was to connect to and participate within international art discourse.

Despite its overarching ambivalent aim, *Polyphony* acted as both curatorial provocation and public platform for the individual artists' interventions. Taken together, such manifestations, however small and temporary, contributed to the opening up of public life, which as American historian Gail Kligman rightfully stated "is a prerequisite for the formation of a public sphere in which civil society can function."[178] The historical importance of exhibitions such as *Polyphony* in shaping newly emerging forms of democracy lie in exactly these artistic and participatory attempts to engage the public and, even if symbolically, to exercise newly gained freedoms of expression and rights of free assembly in public spaces. These early endeavors began a slow process of changing decades-long understandings of public art as propaganda tools for spreading party-state's communist ideology, often in the form of monumental sculptures and overpowering pictorial representations in public space. Moreover, within the broader history of such emancipatory curatorial initiatives, *Polyphony* has become an important point of reference for subsequent exhibitions of participatory and socially engaged public art, such as *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* (Moszkva Square Gravitation) (2003) in Hungary, which I will discuss in part two, as well as other exhibitions in the CEE region that have included diverse modes of interventionist art as strategies for public participation and political agency.

2.2.3 Curatorial Visions: Framing Community-oriented Art Projects

The Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Romania funded the organization of *Exhibition 01010101…* (1994) that, like the SAAC in Budapest, encouraged forms of socially engaged art practice. Curated by Calin Dan in Bucharest, the exhibition represented an analogously ambivalent curatorial framework that aimed to promote local contemporary art while showing its synchronization with the international art discourse as a way to break its isolation. According to the curator, the exhibition was meant to "force the artistic discourse" in a new direction by provoking Romanian artists to engage with their immediate social context. In the interview published in the exhibition catalogue, Dan stated: "For me the artistic result of an exhibition is less important than the opportunity to install an alternative."[179] Such a curatorial goal was partly motivated by the stagnant local socio-political context of the early 1990s.

Unlike Hungary's relatively clear rupture with the political past, Romania's political changes had not been nearly as substantial. The country's leading post-communist party, Frontul Salvării Nationale (FSN), represented by Ion Iliescu, "a communist with liberal views," had the backing of the National Army and former Communist Secret Police or *Securitate* forces in 1990 to silence any critics. The local opposition was represented, on one hand, by a small group of intellectual dissidents with no organized political agenda, who formed under the regime and contested its legacy. On the other hand, there were the members of parties that had survived the Gulag and maintained the pre-1938 conservative and traditional view of Romania as a monarchy. Such weak and fractionalized opposition made it possible for Iliescu's party to occupy the majority of seats in the 1990 Parliament.[180]

In the first few years after the 1989 revolution, the FSN, or the so-called *nomenklatura*, built upon the continuing strength of personal networks of the communist regime's

administrators and actively worked to maintain the former ideological and institutional structures. The party appointed previous political elites to key national positions, thus delaying the replacement of a centrally governed infrastructure with democratically oriented forms of leadership. The persistence of the former political elites may be understood in terms of Bourdieu's formulation of social capital that requires time and energy to build and is closely connected to power relations among individuals privileged to have access to it as belonging to exclusionary groups. Members of Iliescu's political elite were able to exploit a capital of social connections, which combined with the general Romanian population passive acceptance of authority (a legacy from the past), allowed them not only to stay in power but to advance their economic situation as well.

On the other hand, there is evidence that an accumulated social capital at the street level had the potential to inspire collective action and generate political participation in order to achieve oftentimes-contentious yet inclusive public sphere, thus acting as a counter force to the institutional power structure. This was illustrated, for instance, in what became known as the University Square Phenomenon, a mass protest lasting six weeks beginning on April 22, 1990, in Bucharest (exactly one month after the December 22 Revolution, which claimed more than one thousand lives) by students, intellectuals and workers. The protesters opposed the self-proclaimed provisional government of FSN led by Iliescu, and aimed to "adopt legal measures preventing corrupt former communist elites and members of the Securitate from running for office and from holding public functions."[181] Within the first few days, the protesters increased in number and diversity and continued their anti-communist and anti-neo-communist opposition while maintaining a moral stance towards politics since they never intended to form a political party and run for office. The openly stated, apolitical character of the protest was similar to

Konrad's "antipolitics," whose apolitical orientation, as we have seen, continued in the early 1990s in the Hungarian socio-cultural and artistic scene.

Signboards reading "PCR=FSN (Romanian Communist Party = the National Salvation Front) or "Down with the Communists," communicated a direct link between the 1989 revolution and the protest in the University Square. Iliescu refused to enter in dialogue with them and openly called the protestors "golani" (thugs). The latter adopted this label as a badge of honor separating them from the neo-communists and even naming the University Square Golania (Thug Land). Moreover, the golani/protesters renamed the Square as a "zone free of neo-communism"[182] and "the kilometer zero" of freedom and democracy.[183]

Reclaiming an open public space within the capital city, chanting and expressing openly their demands and opposition, the protesters ignited the freedom of assembly and the power of independent collective action among the population, whose minds and bodies were aggressively controlled only a few months earlier by the Ceausescu regime. Their voluntary gathering and public presence and face-to-face interactions were not mere symbolic gestures but a clear demand for legislation that would eliminate former communists from public office. The University Square Phenomenon was all the more important as Romania had not seen a well-organized mass protest movement under socialism, and thus the protestors' contentious presence within the city streets were the first attempts at establishing public life, itself entirely absent outside the political propaganda activities of the former Party-State.

It is along these lines that specific socially engaged and participatory projects, developed as part of the *0101010... Exhibition* could be understood as attempts of reclaiming public space and having the critical potential to participate in the construction of democratic and contentious public spheres. These are especially important, as however small-scale they may have been,

collectively they recalibrate a space for a multiplicity of voices to be heard and thus undoing the hegemony of discourse of the previous political power structures and challenging their continuation into contemporary undemocratic political structures.

In such a context, Dan's overarching curatorial aim – to offer an alternative and to participate in building emerging forms of civil society inspired by contemporary Western democratic values – gained almost a revolutionary aura. Anchored by the theme "The Artistic Discourse as a Reflection of the Community," *Exhibition 01010101…* was a two-tiered curatorial project featuring, on the one hand, site-specific art projects and actions with particular communities, and on the other hand, the exhibition's elaborate installation on the opening day. The first component was represented by nineteen projects by artists – formed and active in the 1980s – chosen by an appointed international jury. Over the course of the summer of 1994, artists were asked to engage with a marginalized community, developing their projects simultaneously in different localities where they lived and worked.

At its core yet not directly stated, the curatorial goal was to articulate a local understanding of the internationally emerging current of new-genre public art practice. Identified by American artist and critic Suzanne Lacy, new-genre public art addressed public and social issues, engaged marginalized groups and mostly took part outside the art institution. It emphasized the process of production and communication, where collaborative strategies of engagement became its artistic and aesthetic features.[184] This was illustrated for example by the *Culture in Action* exhibition curated by Mary Jane Jacob in Chicago from 1992 to 1993. It aimed to promote organically emerging, fluid and open collaborative projects between artists and specific communities guided by mutual interests. However, in their active roles as mediators between artists (who for the most part did not reside in Chicago) and local groups, the curator

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and institution, in fact, predetermined the nature of several of the community projects. As Kwon observed, "The contribution of the community partners was limited to the realization of projects that fully prescribed the nature of their participation in advance."[185] Thus, rather than fully collaborative works, community members were excluded from many of the projects' initial conceptualization and featured instead as assistant help in their material construction.

A comparable curatorial premise was also evident in *Exhibition 01010101…*, which provoked artists to engage with real people and real situations as a way to surpass their creative isolation. For example, Alexandru Chira's *Installation for Reminding, for Suggesting the Rain and the Rainbow* most successfully achieved the exhibition goals, winning the jury's first prize. The curator was instrumental in shaping the project as he strategically refused to fully fund Chira's proposal so that the artist would engage with the local community. The artist received the enthusiastic approval of the members of the village of Tauseni (where he was originally from) for building this elaborate, large-scale work. It took the form of a hexagon, the shape of a living cell. Meant to connect the realms of the sacred with the profane, his structure, situated on top of a hill, connected the village's school, cultural center and the church.[186] The site of the installation was even consecrated during an official religious ceremony. However, instead of open collaborations, the community of villagers only performed physical labor, executing a large-scale public art project that was entirely *a priori* conceptualized by the artist in his studio. Even though Chira and his family was from the village, which instantaneously established a sense of trust and openness toward him, the artist's project was not based on sustained forms of engagement and collaboration but rather on interaction and participation of members of the community in the staging of the work.

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Nevertheless, Chiara's project in his native village aimed to rearticulate the deeply held spiritual beliefs of the peasants. Implicitly, the artist's work also functioned as platform for collective healing from the recent past. During the 1980s, as part of the country's urbanization and the communization of the entire population, Ceausescu planned to replace each village with a small urban center composed of blocks of flats. This way the agricultural terrain would be extended while Romania's urbanization would be total. Fortunately, Ceausescu ran out of time, destroying but a few villages, which were replaced by bad quality flats with no running water.[187] With a still fresh memory of this recent political system, Chira's work in the rural area could also be seen as confronting the negative effects of the previous dictatorship by restoring its unity in visibly articulating and expanding upon the existing social capital in the village community.

The concepts of "community" and "site-specificity" were not explicitly defined within the framework of exhibition and the catalogue. Several projects conceptualized the site in terms of the location of a particular social group or community in a specific space and time, as seen in Chira's project and Marcel Bunea's *Exodus Traces*. The latter was a two-week collaborative action with a 200-member Roma community of traditional brick makers. This group settled in the Death Valley region near Lapus city, located in the north western part of Romania, after their houses were destroyed by the nearby villagers following the rape of a pregnant female villager by one of the Roma.[188] Instead of Chira's unilateral mode of engagement, Bunea's collaboration resulted in the building of a decorative throne used for ritual traditions and an inhabitable structure, which were collectively conceptualized and executed. The everyday interactions and process of collaboration became the content of the artist's action seen as assisting in the Roma's social integration within the broader Romanian society.[189] Under Ceausescu's xenophobic polices, which were at the core of its nationalist communism, Roma, similar to other minority

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cultures such as Hungarians, were to be eradicated through their forced Romanization. Roma in particular were marginalized both politically and physically to the outskirts of cities and towns. Bunea's action becomes even more significant since, as we have seen, Iliescu's government failed to officially address the situation of the minorities, implicitly practicing unchanged discriminatory pre-1989 policies.

A set of site-specific projects in *0101010...* expanded upon previous initiatives to build public life and an open public space seen as prerequisites for an inclusive public spheres. Artists proposed communicative social interfaces by provoking temporary participations and interactions with various groups of people. For example, Adrian Timar's[190] *Transylvanian Gazette*, which won the jury's third prize, consisted in silk-printing four different, large images of the Black Church, the most significant church in Brasov, a double-faced portrait, a cat, and a mask of an idol within the pages of his city's local Transylvania Gazette newspaper, a pro-government paper. The artist collaborated with the local printing press and printed the four images directly onto the already printed newspaper in a limited number for four consecutive days – Wednesday through Saturday. According to the artist's observations, people reacted positively toward the image of the Black Church and the double-faced portrait, but the image of the cat received some scandalous responses: "what does it want to do with its claws? To pull all of us down?" One person even returned the paper, yet when a reporter standing-by (informed of the artist's action) asked the man what he saw in the paper, he reconsidered and asked for his paper back: "Give me back the one with the cat, it's mine."[191]

By making it difficult to read the printed text, the artist aimed to provoke the local newspaper readers of Brasov, his hometown city, to question the reception of mediated information, which they did. Moreover, despite Timar's stated goal of triggering his readers to

rethink or question what they read, which implicitly casts a negative light on the written material, the newspaper editors, while eagerly agreeing to collaborate with the artist, officially avoided to communicate the project's intention. For example, in a short article in the Gazette about the work, the emphasis was on the symbolic connotation of the images and on what was perceived to be the unconventionality of the artist's work as it unfolded on the street directly implicating the public, rather than the traditional studio-based forms of art.[192] Although the artist's action lasted for only four days, the collaboration he initiated with the director and editors of the newspaper took a life of it own, culminated in the latter inviting, after several weeks (via adds posted in the paper), all the newspaper owners to the paper's headquarters to engage them in conversation and offer them prizes. This unexpected outcome of the artist's initiative led to his readers experiencing the inner workings of printing a newspaper, one of the most significant ideological tools of the recently oppressive Ceausescu regime. Timar's interventionist work provoked the readers to exercise their personal freedom of expression in a still fragile state of civil society, when, as noted above, Romania's newly elected government aimed to essentially preserve the pre-1989 ideological and institutional structures.

Similar to projects in *Polyphony*, Timar's subtly disruptive public interventions functioned as temporary platforms for dialogic interactions and voluntary participation. Romanian artists built upon local antecedents while inspired by international figures. As Timar noted: "At the time when in Romania you did not have access to outside information, her (Lupas) works appeared to us students as a miracle. Then when we saw that there were others out there, the enthusiasm for Romanian art diminished. I discovered Joseph Beuys' works."[193]

While *Polyphony* featured a small-scale, one-day exhibition documenting the artists' works coinciding with the organized symposium, *0101010...* was a carefully choreographed

installation and large-scale curatorial event. It was strategically installed in the Romanian Peasant Museum in order to set forth contemporary Romania's conflicting features that reflected both modern and traditional values. The exhibition title *0101010101…* referred to a computer binary code representing data processing. It aimed to introduce and stress the important role of new technologies such as e-mail, computer and video devices in establishing and maintaining free and alternative networks of communication: "We cannot afford to maintain the 50 or so years distance from what is still supposed to be the Western model."[194] The design of the exhibition installation aimed to demonstrate the applicability of the new technology. The participating artists were only virtually present via the interface of computers connected to the Internet, which were meant to function as communicative devices between the museum audience and artists physically located in their different hometowns across the country. Yet this new mode of communication became a closed circuit, failing to engage the public, who was unprepared to use computer technology. Although an early date for Internet connectivity even for Western users, it underscored the increasingly growing gap of the global socio-economic divide between those who do not have the opportunity to acquire (digital) literacy and those who have access to the technological networks of communication.

At the same time, one may claim that the computer installation created, as an unintended consequence, a social encounter and a sense of communal gathering among individuals and groups of people present in the museum space. In an article on participatory art, Russian-born and US-based art critic Boris Groys argued that exhibitions of computer installations composed of several computers with varied information provokes viewers to wander from one computer screen to the next, thus undermining the traditional solitary experience of the single user in front of the computer screen.[195] In such a context the movements and social interactions among

members of the public takes precedence over the installation itself, therefore, even if unplanned by the curator, the exhibition display in a way might have fulfilled the intended curatorial goal.

Nevertheless, despite the curator's declared socially transformative goals to help propel the nation towards a digital and democratic future, the overpowering curatorial framework created a problematic translation between the time-and-space-specific participatory art projects and the gallery space. Rather than involving the artists in the representation of their own works, the curator worked closely with the architect Marius Marcu to construct an elaborate exhibition installation that featured sound, projections, flickering screens and even a disco ball. Short movies made and edited by the curator based on his summer travels across the country to the sites of each of the artists' projects were projected in a loop on the walls of the exhibition space. Images and texts documenting the artists' projects were also presented by means of projections lined-up, one after the other, along a gallery wall. At the center of the gallery on an elevated structure, seven computers displayed the documentation of all the projects. Although the public was meant to openly browse the computer files and spontaneously communicate with each other and with the artists via e-mail, the installation remained structurally bound, performing a self-contained virtual monologue.

Articles and reviews in the local press emphasized the discrepancy between the exhibition's stated democratic goals and its highly mediated installation. For instance, Alexandra Titu referred to the museum display as a "form without a content," indicating how the complexities of sustained modes of engagement and forms of communication at the core of most of the artists' projects were reduced to the visual, special effects of high-tech arrangements.[196] Erwin Kessler called it a mega-installation that swallowed all of the individual projects forming a "noisy and glittering organism that just entered into an aesthetic comma."[197] The disjunction

between premise and outcome was conditioned by the exhibition's ambitious and opposing goals. While it aimed to be an interactive event featuring the latest communicative technology, it also sought to reinvent the transformative potential of locally anchored, socially engaged art as separate from its former communist connotation as rhetorically unifying propaganda. It is noteworthy that thirty-one percent of Romanian citizens (triple that of Hungarians) were members of the communist party, which implicitly involved participation in party propaganda activities.[198] Under Ceausescu, for example, beginning with 1977, large numbers of Romanians ranging from factory workers and peasants to teachers and students were obliged to participate and organize cultural events in their local community, to perform patriotic song and dance recitals in conjunction with the national cultural festival *Cantarea Romaniei* -The Singing of Romania.[199]

Exhibition 01010101…, in its broader aim to recover from the tainted memory of the recent collectivist past, contributed to an emerging civil society as a space for articulating and pursuing agency and reflexive thought. Like *Polyphony* in Budapest, the exhibition provoked and acted as a trigger for artists and audiences alike to actively engage with the multi-layered changes occurring in the country. However small and temporary the artists' projects were, they could be seen to be working collectively towards re-activating a democratically inclusive public sphere in which a civil society bypasses hegemonic silencing principles and instead becomes a space for diverse and conflicting interests to be expressed and negotiated. Moreover, in the history of Romanian exhibitions, *Exhibition 01010101…* evidenced the first notion of a socially engaged curatorial initiative that would be furthered in exhibitions a decade later, such as *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* (2007), which I will discuss later in the text.

2.2.4   Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts: Constraint and Self-Determination

Emerging from particular localities shaped by a continued strong socialist legacy, unstable governments, and a desire to participate within the international art scene, the two exhibitions became platforms for negotiating competing approaches to the role of art in society. Under the auspices of the Soros Centers, *Polyphony* and *Exhibition 01010101…* were shaped by a mandate to promote emerging democratic forms of civil society according to Western neoliberal values of individualism and entrepreneurship within a free-market economy and culture industry. Yet some contradictions exist within its openly stated rhetoric of inclusive democracy. As curator Calin Dan has asserted, the philanthropy of these Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts in fact operated in ways similar to the market forces of supply and demand: "the rich […] provide jobs, goods, control, and the poor […] provide work, profit, recognition" […] "Soros Foundation's programs are gambling maybe on the elites of tomorrow and rely on the local societies for accepting or rejecting them on a long term."[200] Rather than attempting to negotiate at the state level as a way to establish a legal framework that would support, for instance, the local contemporary art scene, SCCA implemented and funded their centers only for a period of five to seven years, "gambling" that the local society will take over. After this initial period, funds were terminated and the local Centers were expected to become self-sustainable by securing their own funding as individual competitors within the neoliberal market, employing the training the SCCA had provided to the staff. For instance, the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Budapest morphed into and continued its activities within the framework of the C3: Center for Culture and Communication;[201] the Soros Center for Contemporary Art in Bucharest transformed into the International Center for Contemporary Art[202] in 1999 headed by former Soros employee, and the Soros Center for the Arts in Sofia dissolved and most of its staff formed

the Red House for Culture and Debate in 2002.[203] Moreover, several of the artists associated with the Centers had become aware of what was expected of them in order to be included in international exhibitions, such as *Beyond Belief* (Chicago, 1995) *After the Wall* (Stockholm, 1999) and *In the Gorges of the Balkans* (Kassel, 2003) staged for various Western audiences.[204]

At the same time, the important role the Soros Centers had within the local art scenes during the 1990s must be emphasized. Their financial support and institutionalized programs represented vital resources for contemporary curators, artists and art critics in a context where the centralized Unions of the Artists continued to monopolize the local scene with pre-1989 conservative forms of art, even immediately after the collapse of the communist regimes when state funds were almost non-existent. While alternative activities emerged, as I noted earlier, especially with the formation of several artist groups, these were short lived. The SCCAs, through their annual exhibitions and grants to individual artists and curators, were an important alternative to the state funded Unions by providing infrastructure, training and assistance to implement exhibitions and programs to benefit the local experimental contemporary art scene.

The curatorial frameworks of *Polyphony* and *Exhibition 01010101…,* while aiming to broadly open up communication and participation, remained within the confines of the Soros Centers as sponsoring institutions. Both exhibitions revealed the paradox of civil society in their sustained tension between the concern for regenerating local ground-level relationships unmediated by the state and the interest in building democratic institutional structures at the state level based on Western models. While it was former art critics and artists (turned curators) active during the 1970s and 1980s who assumed curatorial and directorial roles at these centers, they all were expected to implement directives issued and approved by the Soros Foundation in New York. One could speak of a somewhat wholesale import of specific art media, as exemplified for

instance, in the staging of contemporary video art exhibitions by SCCAs in virtually all countries within the span of a few years.[205] In this way, the Soros Centers were both enabling and constraining structures, yet *Polyphony* and *Exhibition 01010101…* set crucial precedents for institutionally-sponsored and socially-engaged artistic practices in the crucial transitional period of post-communism that would more fully materialize in the subsequent decade.

2.2.5   The role of institutions, curators and artists in the 1990s post-communist context

Internationally, the 1990s was also the decade that saw an accelerated "curatorial turn" within the practice of contemporary art exhibition making. As Paul O'Neil observed, this entailed a shift in the primary or traditional role of curator from "a curator as a caretaker and administrator to a curator who has a more creative and active part to play within the production of art itself."[206] Concepts such as "artist-curator," "meta artist," "creator" or as Daniel Buren referred, "organizer-author" present the curator in a powerful position that uses the artists' works as raw material or as "useful fragments" for the staging of his/her vision of an "exhibition as a work of art."[207] Within the US and Western Europe the curator was rapidly emerging as an agenda setting figure in the staging of contemporary art exhibitions and determining the fate of artists' careers.

Curators organizing exhibitions in post-communist CEE, such as Suzanne Mészöly in Hungary and Calin Dan in Romania, entered into a complex process of negotiation between the SCCAs institutional demands and the local artists' needs and desires. It is significant that both curators were also active as artists: Mészöly was a former member of the artist group Helyetes Szomjazok (Substitute Thirsters) that lacked any defined artistic aims, and Calin Dan was a current member of the artist group subREAL. They were both active within the local art

networks of communication and exchanges before 1989. In their new roles as curators, they simultaneously made use and expanded upon this existing web of social capital that incorporated friendships and varied social relations among both local and regional artists, former dissident intellectuals, critics and art historians. While aiming to synchronize their activities with international contemporary trends through the organization of specifically themed exhibitions, Mészöly and Dan provided an important platform for their fellow artists in a local context lacking support for contemporary art. Rather than an uncomplicated hierarchy between curator and artists as was emerging in the international scene, in the CEE context of the early 1990s the curator – despite of the problematics that emerged in the staging of exhibitions – acted as mediator, animator and organizer of competing interests.

Russian/Italian critic Viktor Missiano wrote about an "institutionalization of friendship" in the 1990s, a concept that he developed to describe the history of relations between artists from Moscow (Vadim Fishkin, Yuri Leiderman, Antoly Osmolovsky Oleg Kulik and Dimitri Gutov) and Ljubljana (IRWIN) as a history of friendship. Missiano calls a *confidential project* an artistic project that emerges from the strategies that employ resources of friendly relationships. "The strategy maintained in the framework of those projects can be called the institutionalization of friendship." Because friendship is a matter of personal choice rather than, for instance, organized collaboration to meet certain aims, it implicitly excludes a priori determined selection criteria of participants. While artistic or exhibition projects that emerge from within friendships based on open communication tend to be introspective and lack an audience, the curator's hierarchical role gives way to a collective curatorship where each of the members play a role. This was evident, as noted in detail in the previous section, under communism where various artistic and exhibition projects emerged from within the existing social capital accumulated through multiple and

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diverse friendships. With the fall of communism there was also the disappearance of second societies while the accumulated social capital splintered and morphed, in some instances, into political capital within the slowly emerging democracies.

The two exhibitions that I closely examined had a conflicted nature. That this was so must also be understood in the context of the early 1990s, when former socialist countries, each in their own specific ways, were caught within the phenomenon of "catching-up to Europe." As Pejic pointed out, this was characterized by two concurrent tendencies: on the one hand there was the "creation of a collective amnesia regarding the period of communism," which was manifested for instance in the removal of public sculptures and changing of street names; on the other hand, there was the "recreation of a collective memory of pre-communist times."[208] In both of its tendencies, this phenomenon bypassed the complex and rich legacy of the four decades of socialism.

In light of this context and despite the problematically overpowering institutional frameworks, artists' projects presented diverse models of communicative interactions with various urban and rural publics addressing locally pertinent themes, such as the social integration of Roma, the re-appropriation of confiscated land and freedom of speech. These socially-engaged, community-oriented art projects were meant to generate and articulate the already existing yet unacknowledged, informal network of social capital characterized by interpersonal forms of reciprocity and open dialogic encounters, while simultaneously serving as antagonistic and disruptive social interventions vital for an inclusive public sphere.

2.3 PARTICIPATORY PUBLIC ART AND EMERGING CONTEMPORARY ART INSTITUTIONS, SOFIA 1990s

In contrast to Romania's violent regime change that culminated with the media spectacle of the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's and his wife Elena's bloody assassination on Christmas Eve 1989, Bulgaria's Communist Party and its leader Todor Hristov Zhivkov fell from power on November 10, 1989 in a rather smooth and calm process. As in other CEE nations, during the months that preceded Bulgaria's first free elections in June 1990, a series of roundtables, meetings and public protests for the removal of the temporary government unfolded regularly throughout the city, manifesting the newly gained democratic freedom of expression. The general public gathered in city squares to voice opinions on current events, anticipating the first free elections or openly conversing with one another. Bulgarian cultural historian Alexander Kiossev described the crowds' actions as "playful performances:"

> The spontaneous, colorful crowds of different people who not only protested but also rejoiced, sang and celebrated their own boldness, who behaved (moved, jumped, danced, shouted) any way they wanted, staging their own freedom and "lack of restraint"... the demonstrators would block traffic, march with lit candles though places that used to be venues of tank and missiles parades, surround and symbolically desecrate official public buildings.[209]

These collective materializations were among the first attempts at openly reclaiming public life in public spaces that until very recently were monopolized by the visual, political and social presence and control of the communist party-state.

It was in this early 1990s context that the five-member Bulgarian artist collective City Group realized their one-day, self-funded, public action *Chameleon*, one of the earliest participatory contemporary art projects in Sofia's public spaces. It took place in a central square in front of the National Palace of Culture (NPC), on a cold February day in 1990. It was timed to

take place simultaneously with the last Congress of the Union of Young Communists (UYC or DKMC in Bulgarian) held inside the NPC. During socialism, such congresses were typically held every four or five years to elect new leaders in the union. In what was to be its last meeting, the UYC attempted a complete refashioning of its organization's image based on relinquishing any visual and symbolic connection with the communist party while, at the same time, being unable to clearly define its new direction.

City Group's action consisted in constructing a large structure that resembled the skeleton of a chameleon from found materials – wrought iron and scraps of metal used for anchor and sheets of wood used for the body. Assembled in a courtyard in the vicinity of the National Academy of Arts in Sofia, it was then moved by the artists in the square. *Chameleon* could only be realized with the publics' participation. The artists directly engaged passersby in conversation, asking them to relinquish their Communist Party membership cards, which were bright red on the outside and light blue on the inside. Willing members of the public either placed them directly on the wooden structure or gave them to the artists who, with the help of a stapler, nailed each of them face-up to the wooden boards, as vividly portrayed in a 1990 documentary video by Jordan Sotirof.

The structure gradually began to resemble the body of a chameleon. Activated by slight wind currents, the red membership cards opened and revealed their inner blue colored pages. The entire structure continuously shifted color from red, symbolizing the communist regime, to blue, representing the newly organized opposition, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). Hence, the title of the work – *Chameleon* referring to the changing political climate while simultaneously alluding to the possibility of the same people staying in power after altering their political orientations to adapt to the times.

City Group's participatory intervention both emerged from and took part in the society's claim of a public life, which is a prerequisite for achieving inclusive public spheres and civil societies. Visibly and voluntarily affirming a collective presence in public spaces was essential in a context when until very recently the state was conflated with the public space.

In preparation for the *Chameleon*'s appearance, Philip Zhidarov, in his role as the group's organizer, had contacted several schools from around the city calling them to participate in the action by donating their membership cards. He also made public announcements on national TV and radio calling people to participate. Moreover, Zhidarov asked the participants at the UYC Congress to donate their membership cards, which in fact they did, one may argue in a symbolic gesture renouncing their communist identity.[210]

At one level, the City Group's one-day action had short-term participation as its core strategy of engagement with the publics' voluntary donations making their project possible and also grounding it within a specific time and place. At another level, *Chameleon* both emerged from and contributed to an articulation of a broader form of community composed of a mosaic of groups and individuals, held together under communism through forms of social capital. These informal relations and networks critical for the people's everyday survival were brought to light and given visual form in the City Group's *Chameleon*. That this was not a homogenous form of community of like-minded individuals was also evident in the installation being destroyed during the night. According to Andrei Daniel, one of the group's members, the structure was put on fire, burning all of the membership cards, while according to Philip Zhidarov the cards were simply removed, thus stripping the chameleon of its camouflage. Regardless of how exactly the destruction occurred, it prophetically alluded to the politically and socially divided climate of the country, ultimately functioning as an eloquent instant of public spheres inclusive of dissent.[211]

Kiossev emphasized the heterogeneity of the crowds during these early months of the transition period: "Unlike the previous parades, the individuals no longer merged in a uniform focus [...] they consisted of chaotic individuals with heterogeneous styles and behaviors, who were not susceptible to unification and discipline."[212] At the same time, the crowd's public and festive presence chanting "we are the people" in public squares had a temporary character, dispersing and dividing within the following years into different socio-political, economic and cultural trajectories, as I will address in Part II.

The first free elections after the fall of the communist party in Bulgaria were held in June 1990 with the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, formerly the Bulgarian Communist Party BCP) winning an absolute majority in the multi-party parliamentary elections, dominating the National Assembly. The election results "revealed a profound urban-rural, professional-worker schism in Bulgarian society."[213] Rural Bulgaria wanted the continuity and the security of the slightly reformed communist power as reflected in the election of Prime Minister Andrei Lukanov, conservative leader of the BSP and a reformed Socialist, while the cities' intellectuals, students and professionals formed the opposition, voting in support for the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) led by Zheliu Zhelev. Dominated by predominately center-left figures, UDF was a coalition of several major and minor parties and groups with diverse interests, such as the Social Democrats, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (BANU-NP) and the "Group of Thirty-Nine," which will fracture and split in the next few years in different and opposing parties, some moving to the far right.[214] Yet, during the early months of 1990 they formed a united front against the BSP, reformed former communists, whom UDF blamed for Bulgaria's weak economy, advocating for the national government to adopt a radical, "shock-therapy" economic

reform (sudden release of price controls, withdrawal of state subsidies and large scale privatizations of public properties) similar to Poland.

Only a few months after the politically charged action *Chameleon* that clearly manifested its stand on the side of the urban opposition, a mass protest against the newly elected BSP unfolded over the course of several weeks, outside the National Assembly, in the public square next to the office of the Bulgarian president. The mass protest came to be known as the *City of Truth* – composed of approximately 100 tents that were pitched up starting on July 7th, 1990. This was preceded, shortly after the election, by several student strikes at the University of Sofia that requested both an investigation into the nature of elections and the removal of the newly elected socialist president Petar Mladenov.[215] Shortly after the election, he resigned and the UDF-leader Zheliu Zhelev was elected president, with a BSP-member as the prime minister. In its sheer number of participants and clear oppositional stand, the *City of Truth* public demonstration was unprecedented in Bulgaria in the last four decades. Although limited to the urban population of the city, it had become nationally and internationally known. It was comprised of intellectuals, students, writers, philosophers, poets and artists who shared an oppositional stance against the former communist party and its leaders. Some made their temporary homes in tents, others joined in at various times.

Artists participating in the *Beach Exhibition,* held July 9-30, 1990 – that is, during the same time as the *City of Truth* – on the rooftop of the UBA (Union of Bulgarian Artists) gallery, divided their time between the rooftop beach events and the *City of Truth*.[216] The *Beach Exhibition* included artworks that ranged from ready-made sculptures placed in sand, swings, blow-up plastic kiddy pools to a wooden raft based on the Theodore Gericault's 1819 *The Raft of the Medusa* among many others. Most artworks served primarily as generators and triggers for a

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communal and participatory gathering. Rather than a limited or close-knit arts community, exhibition organizers and artists swiftly coalesced into and engaged with the tent city's collective activities happening only a few city blocks away. Similarly to *Chameleon* yet on a broader scale, the masses gathered in the public square became a visual embodiment of the informal and diverse body of social capital fermenting within the second society under the socialist regime.

One journalist referred to the *City of Truth* as the "Balkan Woodstock scene" with John Lennon's 1960s song "All We Are Saying is Give Peace a Chance," playing in the square. In fact, the mass protest was inspired by regional movements, such as the *Polish Orange Alternative*, a series of happenings staged collectively in the public space in the 1980s.[217] The *City of Truth*'s similarity to the *Orange Alternative* lied in its lack of organized opposition or participation in a major political force, and in its visually dynamic presence as a collective. Moreover, a closely related manifestation that happened only a few weeks earlier was the student protests in Bucharest's University Square, as previously discussed.

City of Truth demanded the resignation of both Mladenov's and the head of Bulgarian television as well as the removal of the mummified body of Georgi Dimitrov – the first leader of the Communist Party in Bulgaria – from its still standing mausoleum in central Sofia. While the popular slogans since the November 10th "velvet revolution" were "openness," "truth," "we are the people," suggesting the protestors' stand against the rulers of the former communist regime, they had not a clear political directive. Opposition, as such, defined their credo and activities. Such loosely defined social protest movements, I argue, were motivated by the "anti-political politics" (Konrad) and the "living in truth" (Havel) moral values and beliefs, which, as seen in the previous section, developed in the late 1980s and continued into the 1990s in both Hungary and Romania as well as other CEE nations. Its core represented claims of universal human rights,

freedom, social justice and a broad understanding of democracy perceived solely in terms of a strict opposition to the communist and post-communist state and an embrace of individualism and market-oriented neoliberal ideology and economy.

Kiossev observed how the simplicity of such claims provoked some Western commentators to refer to the 1989 event as "conservative revolutions." Moreover, it has also been argued that in fact the regime change maintained the socialist collectivism in the very fact of opposing "one total modern Subject (the People) against another (the Police State)."[218] Nevertheless, in nations where such basic rights have been consistently violated for several decades, the people's public presence was seen as part of, what Bulgarian sociologist Galina Koleva called "mass forms of protest of civic participation," where voting in the newly introduced multi-party system, for instance, was eagerly and enthusiastically embraced by a population who had not had free elections in nearly 40 years.[219]

2.3.1   The Role of Social Capital in emerging post-1989 Contemporary Art Institutions

During the euphoria that immediately followed the fall of the regime and the restructuring processes of the Union of the Bulgarian Artists with its satellite organizations, a number of private galleries – 150 by one account – most opened by individual artists as small private studios – mushroomed throughout Sofia in what came to be known as the private galleries boom. Although for the most part very short-lived, ranging from one to two years, such private initiatives demonstrated not only the rather naïve expectations and beliefs in a rapidly bourgeoning private local art scene stimulated by the state, but also, as artist Kiril Prashkov noted, the effects of the Union of the Bulgarian Artists. During socialism, the unions conferred upon artists (especially those held in particular esteem position by the Union) a prosperous

economic and respected social status thus implicitly boosting the artists' self-confidence in engaging in private initiatives after 1989.[220]

ATA-Ray Gallery was established in 1991 within this initial wave of private galleries. It was among the very few that survived the short-lived boom into the 21st century, changing its name to ATA Center for Contemporary Art in the early 2000s. Directed and owned by Raymonda Moudova, self-funded with the support of her family, it functioned in several concurrently existing locations. Although primarily focused on painting, the gallery was also one of the few that displayed photographs (not considered as an art medium by the local Fine Arts Academy) and video installations. It had a quite unique mission to promote artists working in traditional media such as painting, sculpture and graphic design promoted by the Academy of Fine Arts, as well as artists working in, what was then considered experimental art practices, such as mixed media installation, happenings, collage and assemblage. It was not only a commercial gallery but also a platform for established artists as well as for young graduates from the National Academy for Fine Arts.[221] Artists such as Luchezar Boyadjiev, Kiril Prashkov, Kalin Serapionov, Nedko Solakov as well as curator Iara Boubnova, who were already emerging as leading figures in the local contemporary art scene, were actively featured in the gallery's exhibitions and as project collaborators. As an open space for a wide range of artists and artistic directions, Ata-Ray Gallery both benefited from and expanded upon existing forms of social capital, generating further informal reciprocal relationships among artists, collectors and curators. In its initial years, Ata-Ray Gallery represented among the first private initiatives to offer an independent form of public institutions.

If Ata-Ray Gallery's success was due in part to its access to a number of networks among groups of artists, the emergence and continued survival of the Institute for Contemporary Art –

Sofia (ICA) is an eloquent local example of social capital's vital role in independent collective self-organization and institutionalization in a post-socialist context characterized by minimal or locally non-existent public and private funds for contemporary arts. Officially established in 1995 as an NGOs, the founding of ICA was both a practical and logical outcome of a group of artists and curators[222] that had already closely known each other and had been collaborating on a number of important exhibition projects, such as the first Bulgarian participation in the 3ʳᵈ Istanbul biennale, which put contemporary Bulgarian art on the international map.

At a first level, ICA, as a 12-member artist community, could be seen as, what Russian and Italian art critic Viktor Missiano called a *confidential project* – an artistic project that emerges among friends. Because friendship is the result of personal rather than a politically or socially motivated choice, according to Missiano, a *confidential project* eliminates the ethical pitfalls of selection, inclusion and representation to the outside world. It is also void of internal hierarchies that are implicit, for instance, in a curated exhibition most often staged to communicate the authoritarian vision of the curator. The presence of such confidential projects and confidential communities are vital recourses in an Eastern European transitional context that lacks a support system for the arts: "In an institutional, ideological, and moral vacuum, friendship becomes the last shelter for culture."[223]

At another level, such networks of friends illustrate forms of existing social capital characterized by bonds and norms of trust, reciprocity and empathy among individuals of a group that, in fact, have the potential to lead to forms of political capital materialized in alternative forms of self-organization and self-determination. Thus, ICA represents an instance of an institutionalization and politicized friendships, where existing friendships are not limited to

the private sphere, but gain strategic value for both the collectively organized institution as well as for each of its individual members.

While each an established and independently working artist and curator, within ICA each member has a particular role, bringing their singular contribution to the overall functioning of the collective initiative. Personal and professional contacts of its internationally recognized members, such as Luchezar Boyadjiev and Nedko Solakov become important resources for the ICA. For instance, the 1999 exhibition *Locally Interested* that featured international names such as Rikrit Tiravanija, was made possible by Solakov's personal contacts: he was able to directly invite the artists. Moreover, the individual members' contributions extend, for instance, to solving practical aspects involved in the organization of exhibitions, as each of the ICA's members divide among themselves the various tasks, such as, preparing the gallery space, installing artworks, solving technical problems, designing exhibition invitations and catalogues, writing of texts, photographing artwork for advertising materials and maintaining a public library and archive.

The 1998 *Hot Soup and My Home Community* and the 2003 *Hot Meal* video installations by Kalin Serapionov capture this sense of communal activity among the ICA individual members. *Hot Meal*, for instance, features a screen divided into six or eight separate squares, each showing an ICA member eating a meal. While each manifests his or her particular approach to consuming the meal, they form a community that is not only held together by professional interests but most importantly represents bonds between friends that often share a meal together.

ICA has been a nomadic institution since its inception in 1995, changing several locations until 2009 when it found a home as a public gallery in a private apartment owned by Nedko Solakov. Despite its lack of a permanent space for more than a decade, ICA has been the most

active local institution promoting Bulgarian contemporary artists on the international art scene since the mid-1990s. It has organized exhibitions of local Bulgarian artists abroad as seen for instance in *Bulgariaavantgade* in Munich 1999. Its artist-members have been featured in important exhibitions, such as *Beyond Belief* (1995), *After the Wall* (1999), Manifesta 3 and 4, *Venice Biennale* in 1999 and 2007 and Documenta X (1997) making ICA an internationally reputable institution. Although Iara Boubnova features as its director, the role of the curator has most often been absorbed within the ICA's collective responsibility as different members act as curators for different projects. Exhibition themes and artists' selection is oftentimes the result of a joint decision making process among the members. At the same time, through its various exhibition programs and, since 2003, the Baza Award for young and emerging artists under 35, ICA also provides a platform for local artists of all generations whose work critically engages with contemporary themes and innovative formal approaches.

Moreover, since the appointment of Maria Vassileva, one of ICA's members, as chief curator at the Sofia Art Gallery, the only art gallery funded the city government, the institution developed programs, such as *Meeting Point*, a platform for contemporary art and young artists, or the *Sculpture Program* for contemporary sculpture as an initiative of the Vaska Emanouilova Gallery. The latter is a branch of the Sofia Art Gallery, solely dedicated to supporting contemporary art. Through its members' activities, ICA is indirectly actively working towards broadening a local platform for contemporary art.

At one level, ICA demonstrates an effective example of social capital's potential in generating strong publics and independent initiatives that implicitly also take the role of a public institution through its activities and programs. As such, ICA is an active player in the locally

developing civil society, especially through its collaborative public initiatives such as the Visual Seminar project (2003-2006), which I will discuss in detail in subsection 3.1.2.

At another level, exactly because of its tightly knit community, ICA is implicitly exclusionary, limiting access to specific artists, as seen, for instance, in the same names appearing in most of its international participations. Also, the voice of one member may overpower the collective when his contribution is materially substantial, as illustrated in Solakov's personal purchase of the apartment used for ICA-Gallery and his subsequent individual power to influence the selection of artists for solo exhibitions in the gallery. In this instance, social capital

Nevertheless, in a context both lacking financial support for contemporary art and imbued by conservative artistic trends that champion national and traditional forms of art making, ICA, through its small membership and selective programs, is in fact able to maintain a critical distance and thus implicitly becomes a powerful alternative to a provincial local scene and to increasing recentralization of the local art scenes by the state organs. The role that ICA fulfilled in Bulgaria, in other CEE countries, such as Hungary and Romania, as we have seen, was performed by the Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, whose curators – who were often artists or members of artists' collectives – developed programs promoting contemporary art locally and internationally. Motivated by similar goals, a Soros Center for the Arts also opened in Sofia, yet its structure and activities had a rather limited impact.

As other SCCAs around the CEE region, the Soros Center for the Arts –Sofia (SCA) was funded in affiliation with the local Open Society Foundation – Sofia, which was a branch of the New York Open Society Institute. As an NGO, SCA was founded in 1994 to support the development of contemporary arts in Bulgaria, promoting visual arts, performing arts, cultural

heritage and literature, each with a different program coordinator. With the 1990 partial dissolution of the state funds for the Unions that represented the sole lifeline for the local arts scene, SCA was an important financial and communicative resource for local artists and writers. Its visual program was led by Kamen Baltanski who collaborated with a different curator for each of their total of six annual exhibitions that were staged in various venues throughout the country between 1994-1999.[224]

The SCA's first exhibition, *N-Forms? Reconstructions and Interpretations* (1994) curated by Diana Popova, Boris Klimentiev, Svilen Stefanov and Nikolai Bostev, set the stage for the nature of contemporary art SCA was going to support, and thus implicitly giving contour to its institutional image. In its oppositional stance towards traditional forms of art, it aimed to promote "projects that fall in with the notions of avant-garde, wider horizons, non-conservatism, alternative."[225] Moreover, as we have seen with the other SCCAs in Hungary and Romania, it had as a scope the documentation and archiving of "modern Bulgarian plastic arts" as well as providing financial support for contemporary artists' projects, with more than half of its activities being grant funding for individual artists and projects.

The *N-Forms* catalogue included photo documentations on art practices since the mid-1980s, the moment that marked the emergence of local contemporary art in Bulgaria. Most of SCA's annual exhibitions including *N-Forms*, *Ars ex Nation: Made in Bulgaria* (1997),[226] and *Culture and Subculture* (1999) proposed discussion on notions typically viewed as binary opposites: traditional and experimental, national and international or "the national substance" in contemporary art, east and west, or center and periphery. Artists and artworks showcased in exhibitions and topics proposed for discussion symbolically aimed to communicate SCA's

oppositional stance against the traditional and conservative currents in the local culture and oriented towards international art developments.

While not entirely inscribed within the politics of anti-politics or the politics of opposition that dominated the CEE regional discourse as we've seen in the early 1990s, SCA's institutional presence nevertheless promoted a form of civil society that was meant to be strictly separated from the state and hence, from any forms of art symbolically associated with the (former) political regime.

In some instances, such as *N-Forms* and *Ars ex Nation*, SCA engaged in collaboration with ICA members who participated as artists or served as curators and were seen as important figures in the local contemporary art scene. However, SCA's annual exhibitions also featured artists working in traditional art making practiced by the National Academy of Fine Arts alongside artists working in "non-conventional" directions, one might argue as a symbolic way to emphasize its institutional mission working towards an open society entirely separated from the state organizations. At the same time, by funding artists and exhibitions of progressive forms of contemporary art,[227] SCA implicitly gained a visible form of symbolic capital of an NGO promoting a form of civil society characteristic of a liberal democratic orientation that champions not only ideas of individual liberties, autonomy and protection of human rights but also of free market competition and private property.

In *Outline of A Theory of Practice* Pierre Bourdieu argues that symbolic capital is closely interrelated with economic capital:

> Symbolic capital, a transformed and thereby disguised form of physical "economic" capital, produces its proper effect inasmuch, and only inasmuch, as it conceals the fact that it originates in "material" forms of capital which are also, in the last analysis, the source of its effects.[228]

Providing infrastructure and financial resources for what have been locally viewed as "avant-garde" activities of a particular group of artists and individuals, SCA defined its image, as a center aimed to connect and build upon grass-roots arts activities.

Moreover, SCA tapped into specific forms of social capital existing among circles of artists and critics that, as we have seen, have been working together in-group initiatives since the mid-1980s. Illustrating norms of reciprocity characteristic of the social capital mechanics – where a favor now would be repaid later – curators, artists and critics that directly engaged in SCAs activities by either curating exhibitions and/or applying for funds, gained a platform to further their experimental approaches, connect and communicate with international art institutions, curators and critics, as well as to gain "the know-how" of the inner workings of a private institution and procedures of grant applications, all aspects deeply lacking in post-communist Bulgaria of the early and mid-1990s and necessary in a market determined competitive context.

Bourdieu argues that especially in societies with limited economic resources and possibilities, symbolic capital, which is seen in "the form of the prestige and renown attached to a family and a name," is easily transformed back into economic capital and therefore represents "*the most valuable form of accumulation.*"[229] Thus, despite its unquestioned beneficial initial presence in the post-communist CEE region, SCCAs were primarily oriented in fostering a public sphere limited to a particular arts community, rather then in fact working towards inclusive public spheres and an open society at the core of its mission. As Jonathan Peizer, who created the Network Internet Program for the Open Society Institute New York (OSI-NY) stated:

> We [Soros Foundation] do not start out mandated to resolving problems to the benefit of the entire society, but simply in creating approaches to the development of civil society that work.[230]

The focus on individual projects and initiatives assumes an understanding of civil society outside the government. In this particularly liberal conception of the public sphere, civil society, exemplified through NGOs or voluntary associations, is seen as entirely separated from the state. Nancy Fraser labels *weak publics* those practices in the public sphere that "consists exclusively in opinion-formation and does not encompass decision-making."[231] While this might very well be the case in western societies with a long tradition of liberal democracies, in the post-communist nations during the 1990s expressing opinions freely in opposition to the state and/or in associations outside of the state's control and interference were among the most championed values.

These outcomes are to be expected in societies that experienced the monopoly of the Communist Party with its rules directing behavior, attitudes and beliefs. As I pointed at earlier in this chapter, within such politicized context the informal networks of social capital functioned as a release valve and compensation for the population. Following the collapse of the Communist Party, the accumulated social capital through the networks of friends, proved to be at the core of the emergence of local institutions and initiatives supporting contemporary art. Nevertheless, SCA made use of a passive form of social capital that led to what Fraser called *weak publics* as illustrated in SCA's short lived activities and in its unsustainability following the donor funded initial period. In contrast, I have demonstrated that ICA's continued and active presence in both the local and international contemporary art scene, is due in great part in its use of active forms of social capital that concentrated at the level of small community groups, leading to strong publics willing and able to question and influence directions and decisions within the local context.

3.0   PART II: PUBLIC SPHERES IN A POST-1989 EUROPEAN CONTEXT OF

NEOLIBERAL COMMUNITARIANISM

Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the self-evident facts that structure relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection.[232]

<div align="right">Jacques Rancière</div>

Representing the first large-scale collective attempts at reclaiming public life in public spaces in the last forty years in the region, the early 1990s revolutionary mass exuberance, as we have seen, was inspired by the former dissidents' credos of "living in truth" (Havel) and "anti-politics" (Konrad). These notions championed transparency and morality in politics on one-hand and universal human rights and a complete retrieval from politics on the other. Yet, as the transition's real costs began to impact the population at large and with the European Community's increasing reluctance and hesitation in "accepting" their Eastern neighbors into their ranks, the former dissidents' much admired calls in the 1980s and the early 1990s began rapidly to fade.

Moreover, high economic instability, the disintegration of the welfare state and the future's great unpredictability impeded a sustained interest in what had come to be perceived as utopian intellectual ideals, as the population's attention and energy shifted towards meeting immediate real-life demands for subsistence. Rather than a clear break with the former communist structures in 1989, in several countries in the region, such as Romania and Bulgaria,

reformed former communist political leaders won the first free elections, while in Hungary and Czechoslovakia the opposition gained leadership of the countries. However, regardless of their differences in the level of political reforms, in virtually all nations in the region a core battlefield throughout the transition period (which often bypassed the typical "Right" versus "Left" debate) has been between those promoting civic values of Western-style liberal democracies, on one hand, and on the other hand, those championing a collective belonging to a unified nation grounded in national traditions. The latter often leading to the promotion of exclusionary measures towards ethnic minorities.

With the goal of internationalizing the local contemporary art scene, a number of early 1990s exhibitions, as we have seen, looked at Western models for inspiration. At the same time, the curators' motivations manifested a continuation of the anti-politics principles with their particular emphasis on building public spheres and civil societies entirely separated from politics, which were directly understood as only party and state politics. As we have seen, the Soros Center of Contemporary Arts-sponsored initiatives in the early 1990s illustrated a first tendency in the locally emerging discourse of socially engaged art featuring two distinct yet concurrent approaches to the genre: temporary participatory interventions in public spaces and community-oriented art that unfolded over longer periods of time engaging various members of specific communities. Several of the participating artists' public interventions were actual reclamations of public spaces. In contexts of transition and high instability, however small, symbolic gestures are especially important, because, as Gail Kligman correctly points out, "an open public life is a prerequisite for the formation of a public sphere in which civil society functions."[233]

A second tendency became visible in the early to mid-2000s, when a number of local institutions, curators and artists benefited from available European Union (EU) Funds. The first section of this part considers some of the exhibitions staged during this period and their role within the broader cultural and political discourses associated with the candidate member states' droves towards economic integration into the EU. The second section proposes a brief typology of artistic models based on audience participation in terms of their critical potential in building inclusive public spheres by giving voice and visibility to various *counterpublics*. The third and final section closely examines two forms of collaborations in Big Hope's and Matei Bejenaru's art projects. The latter enter the complex web of locally existent social capital by identifying with and involving the collaboration and participation of particular immigrant groups in two EU-member states. These artists' projects transform social capital into political capital by probing the broader European discourse on belonging and not belonging most vividly illustrated through debates associated with the EU's eastward expansion from the early to late 2000s and the notion of European Citizenship. Instead of homogenizing tendencies, in different ways, the two collaborative projects propose a relational approach to the idea of community where the shifting conditions of belonging are continuously negotiated among its participants through relational processes.

3.1   FROM LOCALIZED PUBLIC SITES TO EU TRANSNATIONAL PUBLIC SPHERES: EXHIBITIONS OF SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART IN PUBLIC SPACES

Benefiting from EU funding a number of programs and exhibitions featuring participatory art in public spaces were organized in the early and the mid-2000s in several CEE

cities. These included *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* (2003) in Budapest, the *Visual Seminar* project (2003-2006) in Sofia, and *Public Space Bucuresti* (2007) in Bucharest. In their overall approach, these departed from the early 1990s apolitical, oppositional stance against politics in general and in particular the collectivist state policies of the communist party with its reformed post-communist variants in countries such as Romanian and Bulgaria. As I argued in the previous part, the earlier series of exhibitions featured a disconnect between their curatorial frameworks aimed at an internationalization of the local contemporary art by encouraging art projects reflecting communal civic bonds on the one hand, and, on the other hand, some of the participating artists' interventions into the public space that championed individual-oriented values perceived to be at the core of liberal democracies.

In contrast, the more recent series of exhibitions, I claim, became interstices of often-conflicting desires and directions that included a simultaneous embrace and questioning of neoliberal forces, most visible within the cities' urban landscapes. Moreover, there were strong desires for EU membership, which symbolized the nations' "return to Europe" and thus their worth and presence within the international scene despite their isolation during communism. Finally, there existed an implicit underlying preoccupation with building a national local culture based on civic values of tolerance, dialogue and inclusion.

In varied ways and in different contexts, each exhibition represented important manifestations within the local development of socially engaged art practices seen as claims for open public spaces in a transitional period of rapid and often-times chaotic transformations fuelled by privatizations of a free-market economy and local forms of (ethnic) nationalism. Most importantly, these contemporary art exhibitions challenged the traditional understanding of public art as celebratory monuments, which before 1989 were exemplified by a multitude of

commissioned sculptures in public spaces seen as visual embodiments of the communist party-state ideology. Through their programs, such as public debates and publications, and their specific funding sources, I contend that each exhibition aimed at activating a sense of belonging to a European transnational public sphere while grounding themselves within a local specificity. I understand the transnational public sphere, conceptually, as enacting a broader desire for community through culture at the EU level and, practically, in the art projects' public existence in a particular space and time, engaging with specific publics. According to critic Boris Buden: The transnational public space cannot be appropriated in terms of an old universalistic concept, and the only way to describe it is by saying that there is a sort of translation that takes place among different public spaces.[234]

3.1.1 *Moszkva Ter Graviation*

Curated by Dora Hegy the *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* exhibition took place in May 2003, being preceded by a two-day interdisciplinary seminar titled *Public Space and Representation* in November 2002, which was meant as a public forum for debate among a specialist public and as a preparatory phase of the following year's exhibition. Initiated by freelance critic Emese Suvecz at the Ludwig Museum Budapest – Museum of Contemporary Art, the seminar included artists, curators, sociologists, anthropologists and architects. Discussions centered on the meaning of public and private space and sphere in both the Hungarian and Western contexts. Hungarian sociologist Judit Bodnar highlighted the complexity of public sphere in terms of class and its dialectics of exclusion and inclusion referring to it as a "delicate unity ... the result of a fragile equilibrium between diversity and equality." As such, a middle class understanding of public space is based on both the visible and socio-political exclusion of the poor from within the public

space, from the perspective of a welfare state the socio-economically marginalized strata of society is equally included and provided for, and a third state where "everything is in its own place, i.e. poverty is not disturbingly visible."[235]

Among the seminar participants was Barnabas Bencsik former assistant curator of the 1993 *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Hungarian Contemporary Art* exhibition, who presented an overview of the art projects included in that show.[236] His discussion functioned as both a point of reference and departure for the *Moszkva Ter Gravitation*, which in contrast to *Polyphony* positioned itself as a critical platform for debates on the conceptual meanings of the terms "private" and "public" spaces. Moreover, it aimed to offer a framework for artists' direct yet transitory engagement with a particular site (rather than the entire city) and its diverse inhabitants for the duration of the exhibition.[237]

At the suggestion of the Hungarian artist Roza El-Hassan, Budapest's Moszkva Ter was selected as the public site for artists' interventions as part of *Moszkva Ter Gravitation*. Although the square has existed since the 13th century as an important crossroad intersection, market and transportation hub in the city of Budapest, it was only in1929 that it was given a name: Széll Kálmán, after the then prime minister. In 1951, under the newly installed socialist regime, its name was changed to Moszkva Square and was renovated into the architectural structure that it is today. In 2010, under the right-wing party leader Viktor Orban, the square's name was changed back again to Széll Kálmán.

The square's late modernist style architecture embodies its fragmented history, which is layered underneath its present condition and use. The visually arresting fan-like rooftops of the Metro station and its beehive-like formation of its market stalls attest to a utopian socialist past. Layers of haphazard advertisements and small businesses signage have been added in the last

two decades. The structure's eclectic quality has now become backdrop to the square's contemporary use as one of the city's most popular transportation hub that includes the red metro line as well as bus and tram terminals. Moreover, as the exhibition curator pointed out, Moszkva Ter has been neglected and marginalized within the city's urban planning programs: economically by the private interests that developed the nearby posh Mammut shopping mall as well as politically by the national government's initiatives that constructed a well-groomed public park in the vicinity of Moszkva Ter.

Although not overtly fashioning Budapest as a European city, the exhibition's choice of this particular public venue becomes highly politicized when considered as a site caught in between the neoliberal forces materialized in the opening of the shopping mall and the nationalist forces visualized in the nearby Millenaris Park. The latter is an urban manifestation of the polarizing politics at the time between the right wing and conservative national government FIDESZ[238] and its Prime Minister Viktor Orban (1998-2002) on the one hand and the left-wing city government on the other hand.

FIDESZ emphasized the metropolitan-countryside (*nepi-urbanus*) divide, promoting the vision of a "new Hungary" that visibly manifested on Budapest's urban landscape in architectural constructions, such as the Millenaris Park.[239] Inaugurated in 2001, this architectural complex, which included an exhibition hall, a theater bloc and a multi-use building, were meant to highlight the party's departure from the past and its emphasis on Hungarian culture. For instance, the displays showcased artworks and artifacts from the fields of sports, science and technology presented as part of a national canon. Most importantly, its location was seen and talked about as an island fitted with a countryside (a key concept in its nationalist rhetoric) landscape and farm that includes planted vegetables, grape vines and rolling pathways along lily-

filled ponds. The government's discourse of ethnic nationalism was conveyed through concepts such as the "New Hungary" based on notions of progress and nationhood, and visualized though the Millenaris Park, which was literally "a closed world" away from the noise and smells of the nearby eclectic Moszkva Ter.

By focusing on an urban site that stands outside and in opposition to rightist FIDESZ's urban presence within the Budapest's landscape, as well as being funded in part of the city's leftist municipality, *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* implicitly foregrounds Budapest as a progressive European city in contrast to the country's government's nationalist discourse. At the same time, it implicitly sees its interventions as possible triggers for private investors to transform and improve this "forgotten" space. It is at this intersection between these competing forces – neoliberal, nationalist and transnational – that the exhibition articulates the meaning of a public sphere as a discursive space characterized by diverging interests and continuous claims for inclusiveness. It should also be noted that in most of the post-communist transitional nations, notions of right, left or center have elastic meanings and cannot or should not be compared to their meanings in Western contexts. As Romanian born and US-based cultural theorist Vladimir Tismaneanu explained:

> The abuses committed in the name of the Marxist faith in the former Soviet Union and East-Central Europe engendered apprehensions toward any explicitly socialist program. This explains why post-communist leftist leaders have gone out of their way to emphasize their commitment to the free market, private property, and political pluralism.[240]

Several of the artists' interventions into the site challenged the exclusionary tactics of the ethnic nationalist government by highlighting and bringing awareness of marginalized groups, such as the homeless in Ilona Nemeth's *Capsules*. These were structures for sleeping or relaxing that fit a laying down human body. Immigrants and Roma individuals that make their home or look for

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temporary employment in the square became protagonists in Janos Sugar's *Time Patrol* that offered 4,000 Hungarian forints for anyone that dictated to a typist uninterruptedly for ten minutes. Balasz Beothy's action engaged homeless and beggars, whom he paid to hand out money to passersby and drivers around the square.

In terms of the spatial coordinates' physicality, *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* embodied the dialectics of exclusion and inclusion inherent in the composite of virtually all public spheres. For instance, the exhibition maintained a divide between the public of the square and the art public, who gathered, debated and watched the square below literally from an elevated terrace that functioned as a Bistro for the duration of the exhibition. As seen in the recorded video documentaries, conversations and presentations held on the rooftop Bistro were for and among a professional art public that included both Hungarian and international curators, artists and critics, rather than colliding with the square's regular inhabitants. Some participating artists made these visible divides the content of their work as seen in Andreja Kuluncic's art project *On the Way Home* in which she "accompanied a few of the people passing through the square on their home with a video camera, asking them about their everyday lives."[241] The collected personal and oral narratives, which revealed aspects of Hungary's transitional period from socialism to capitalism, were juxtaposed with a filmed debate between three social scientists that took place on the rooftop terrace, in a documentary video that was installed at the Info Point located in the Moszkva Ter Bistro. While Kuluncic brought the professional (art) world and the everyday life, the private and the public spheres together, their juxtaposition in both form and content culminated in a perpetual tension, as each side of the screen overpowered the other in an incoherent cacophony of sounds and word fragments.

If Kuluncic's sustained cacophony of local individual voices has been at the core of her contention-ridden artwork, at the European level, cultural and artistic initiatives serve as consensus builders and triggers for harmonious communities. *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* exhibition aimed to simultaneously position itself and by extension the city of Budapest within a transnational public sphere at the European level. This becomes most evident in its institutional support from the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art as a recipient of funds from the EU's Culture 2000 Program (2000-2006).[242]

According to its official mission statement, the EU Culture 2000 promoted culture as an important tool in meeting three major challenges: "the acceleration of European integration, globalization, the information society, employment and social cohesion."[243] Moreover, while focused on the transnational dissemination of culture at the European level, the program primarily highlighted "the role of culture as an economic factor" and cooperation among EU member states and prospective members that was meant to help "increase the sense of belonging to the same community."[244] Ultimately, the broad field of culture has been considered as lubricant for the ever-expanding engines of the neoliberal market forces and the advancement of a neoliberal ideology across most of the European continent.

After the collapse of Communism, CEE offered a crucial opportunity for Western Europe to stabilize and fortify its position as one of the economic superpowers in a globalized world politics. This was achieved through access to new economic markets within geographical proximity, new sites for low production costs, and cheap labor.[245] In return, the EU Agreements introduced in the newly emerging nations "political dialogue, free trade and freedom of movement, economic, cultural, and financial cooperation, and immediate economic assistance for associated countries."[246]

In a 2001 article referring to the 1990s, social anthropologist Chris Shore retrospectively examined key sites where EU policy-makers have attempted to invent Europe at the level of public opinion.[247] Culture has become increasingly politicized by EU elites in their attempt to mobilize support for further European integration. The goal was to create a new kind of political subject: one who identified with and is loyal to the EU's institutions of European government. The European Man was first envisioned as a "transnational, post-national political actor who would rise above attachments to locality or nations."[248]

In the 2000s the focus on culture as a vehicle towards economic integration and cooperation across the EU territory continued as exemplified by the EU's Culture 2000 Program (that still continues today, its name changing annually) as well as other collaborative cultural initiatives among different EU member states and/or prospective states. While the primary emphasis on building a transnational space remains part of the official rhetoric, it is simultaneously anchored within a local specificity, one may argue, implicitly contributing cultural freshness to the neoliberal market sphere in a continuous process of reinventing itself. As Buden observed, a transnational public sphere is held together (we may add, at the EU level) by various translation mechanisms among the different and locally specific public spaces. For instance, such attempts at translation are imbedded in EU's Culture 2000 program's multiannual cultural cooperation agreements that are established:

> [...] between cultural operators from at least five participating countries and their aim is to create, within a period of up to three years, structured cultural actions which help to achieve an objective of cultural interest which has been set in advance. The cooperation agreements relate either to enhancing a cultural field or to integrating several cultural sectors.[249]

3.1.2 *Visual Seminar*

Although not directly a participant in the EU Culture 2000 Program, the *Visual Seminar* (2003-2006) in Sofia was nevertheless part of a multiyear collaborative initiative at the EU level, within the framework of *relations* initiated by the Cultural Foundation in Germany. Since its foundation in 2002 by the German Federal Government, the German Cultural Foundation aims at funding collaborative cultural projects in Eastern Europe "as part of its engagement for European integration." The Foundation's *relations* initiative has spearheaded long term projects that developed simultaneously in several Eastern European countries that were not yet EU members, such as Bulgaria before its 2007 official acceptance into the EU. According to the website, *relations*:

> [...] allows the projects to pursue their work intensively and independently, unhindered by the interests of national governments in representative showpiece projects, gives amble time to evolve, and furnished with a license to experiment.[250]

Most significantly, the Foundations' aim, as exemplified by its *relations* initiative, has been to help create a "genuine European identity" and contribute to the development of a "European public sphere" composed of a multiplicity of cultures and characterized by "trust in one another and respect for cultural differences."

Developed within the framework of *relations*, the *Visual Seminar*, a three-year interdisciplinary project, was a collaborative effort between the Institute for Contemporary Art – Sofia (ICA) and the NGO, Center for Advanced Study – Sofia (CAS). Its goals were to interrogate the uncontrolled avalanche of advertisements assailing over the city of Sofia following the collapse of the socialist regime in 1989; to create a bridge of communication between artists and theoreticians associated with CAS, and ultimately to provide a platform for

the city's inhabitants, artists, media outlets and members of the Sofia Municipal Council to exchange views and influence policy change that would provide control on commercial advertising.[251]

Unlike the short-term *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* developed under the auspices of the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art Budapest, *Visual Seminar* unfolded over the course of three years and included various public discussions and debates between art professionals, city officials and members of the public (under the *Forum for Visual Culture*), paid, six-months collaborative residencies between local artists and theoreticians (under the *Resident Fellows Module*), visits and on-site projects by several foreign artists (under the *Guest Module*) and a series of newsletters and publications (under the *Publication Module*).

Although lacking an overtly stated political mission, the nature and range of topics raised at the four differently organized and themed debates revealed the *Visual Seminar*'s intention to politicize Sofia's urban landscape while simultaneously and implicitly calling for belonging to a transnational public sphere anchored within its particular locality. A main issue, for instance, centered on the absolute need to regulate the onslaught of foreign advertisements deforming the city according to private interests since up until 2004 there was no official national or city regulation. With money you could do almost anything in the public spaces across virtually all CEE nations. Immediately after 1989, in Bulgaria and Romania, for example, there was a generally welcoming attitude towards the presence of advertisements that were seen to visually enliven the grey and decaying blocks of flats with their colorful billboards, at first placed in the city's central areas. By the early 2000s however, the billboards' aggressive presence began to be questioned by local urban sociologists, architectural historians, art critics and cultural theorists.

In an attempt to activate and provoke policy change that would reinforce regulations according to European standards, the October 2003 public debate titled "Can you see Sofia?" invited the four major candidates at that time running for the mayor's office: Liuben Dilov Jr., Nadejda Michailova, Stephan Sofianski and Stoyan Alexandrov. They were shown images of various sites throughout the city and asked to address the rights of citizens in the decision making process as well as the responsibilities of the City Council in regulating what appeared to be unstoppable privatization forces.[252]

The various debates revealed a divide among participants and organizers. On one hand, the *Visual Seminar*'s initiators placed emphasis on the critical need to reclaim public space through government-implemented regulation. On the other hand, there were the supporters of neoliberal transformations seen as vital for the city's progress and European character as expressed by some of the invited architects' comments as well as the mayoral candidates' avoidance of discussing privatization conflicts regulating the city's visual landscape.

Most importantly, the debates revealed the weakness of the municipal officials in taking control of the city's urban ecology as they are "threatened by merciless pressure from all sorts of private, legal, semi-legal and criminal mechanisms of utilizing the city." Alexander Kiossev further pointed to Sofia's and Bulgaria's "inadequate regulatory framework, lack of administrative capacity, unprofitable but already signed contracts, weak judicial control and lack of court sanctions."[253] For instance, under the three consecutive terms in office as Sofia's mayor the leader of the Union of Free Democrats (UFD) and former leader of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) Stefan Sofiyanski (1995-2005) has been retrospectively accused of corruption and of self-interested contracts with the real estate company Sofiiski Imoti that consisted in selling important public property in downtown Sofia for a fractions of their actual worth.[254]

Thus, in a context where the state's regulatory organs and public spheres have been absorbed by private economic interests, the *Visual Seminar* aimed at raising awareness among the local publics of their legal and civil rights. Moreover, supported and funded by an EU member state's Federal Foundation the Seminar functioned as a platform for inspiring a sense of belonging to a transnational public sphere at the EU level, where principles such as mutual trust and respect for regulations among culturally diverse members stood in contrast to the corruption and distrust towards the local political government.

While *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* focused attention on a specific urban site, *Visual Seminar* and the artists' participatory socially engaged projects became triggers to address the city in its entirety. For instance, Luchezar Boyadjiev's *Hot City Visual* consisted in a series of digitally manipulated images featuring various urban sites across Sofia, such as the government's building with a line of clothing digitally hanged between two of its windows, ironically suggesting a link between politicians and their dirty laundry. Such manipulated images were then emailed through an anonymous email account to over two hundred individuals from several media companies with the question "Do you See Sofia?" The artist provided a telephone number where he received responses. Boyadjiev's ultimate aim was to provoke critical responses and inquires from media representatives traditionally perceived as vital organs in articulating public spheres inclusive of multiple and diverse interests.

Although both *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* and *Visual Seminar* initiatives deliberately lacked a clear political mandate, their choice for sites, types of funding or the programs' structures and topics revealed not only specific differences in their respective local contexts but also the various ways in which they politicized public space as a way to reclaim public spheres. Towards this end, for instance, one of *Visual Seminar* debate, titled "Communal and Private

(and/or Public and Personal),” aimed to address the actual implications of the terms “private” and “public” that in Bulgarian language (or any other Slavic language) do not have a clear meaning. As Boyadjiev pointed out, in the local context:

> [...] the use of “public” often refers to either “state-owned” or “urban,” but rarely to “communal” especially when used with regard to the city. At the same time, there is serious hesitation about “private” – does it mean “privately owned” or “personal”?[255]

This is in stark contrast to the general understanding of these notions in western contexts. For instance, referring to the American context, political scientist Nancy Fraser defined the public space as: “state-related, accessible to everyone, of concern to everyone and pertaining to a common good of shared interest and the private as exactly the opposite of the public’s in addition to pertaining to private property in a market economy and pertaining to intimate domestic or personal life, including sexual life.”[256] In the post-communist context, the ambiguity between the meaning of “public” and “private” has been a consequence of more than forty years of enforced collective experience under the communist regime when both the public and private spheres collapsed within the reality of the party-state. While a genuine communal living has only been rhetorically present before 1989, collective action increasingly gained a negative connotation after the early 1990s mass protests movements, with especially the urban population championing liberal democratic values of individualism, competitive market economy, private property, political pluralism and a desire to unite with Europe. If under the socialist ideology images of the proletariat and labor dominated public spaces, then under the current neoliberal ideology, images of products and services groom the next generation of consumers. In both cases, the public becomes estranged and communal activities or communal interests are looked upon with suspicion or confusion.

At another level, in the city of Sofia, for example, the very lack of regulation can provide a point of entry into what the leftist urban theorist Henry Lefebvre calls *abstract space* or the space of (neocapitalist) power that is produced and reproduced through the global financial networks. In Western cities, such invisible networks also translate into the everyday spaces, generating certain spatial consensus illustrated by behaviors and conventions in relationships between people and certain places, such as shops, cafes and movie theaters. Regardless of this apparent homogenization under the capitalist hegemony, the possession or consumption of communal or shared spaces, such as city squares, cannot be entirely privatized, and it is within such space that disruptions have the potential to occur.

Sofia's urban and social fabric characterized by, what Boyadjiev called "capitalism without capital," and a lack of state regulations for public and private activities may in fact have an emancipatory power. For instance, the Austrian group Gelitin, invited as part of the *Guest Module*, performed on one of the city's public square a series of Yoga exercises with their brightly decorated nude bodies. Unlike perhaps an institutionally regulated western context, in Bulgaria there was no need to ask for permission from a governmental institution for public activities in public spaces.

Nevertheless, through its programs *Visual Seminar* suggested the need for regulation of the neoliberal market forces that increasingly and aggressively have been taking over not only the city's public spaces but also the municipality's political power of resistance while widening the economic gap between the haves and have nots. As Iara Bobnova expressed: "We are not against the regulated city, but we are against the privatized city." Thus in a context where civil rights are defined in terms of one's access to the economic capital of the market, the *Visual Seminar* played the role of an autonomous yet public institution implicitly attempting to bring

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awareness to the citizens' individual rights and provoke critical responses from the city's inhabitants.

3.1.3 *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest 2007*

The lack of public discussion spaces was among the major triggers for the *Public Art Bucharest 2007* exhibition curated by Romanian-born and Germany-based Marius Babias and the German curator Sabine Hentzsch. According to them, the project aimed to explore "how public art encourages a critical engagement with the power structures that are dominant in the public sphere." Moreover, similar to the other two exhibitions, *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* likewise meant to "confront the inhabitants of Bucharest with the city they live in, harnessing their determination to assume an active role in defining the public sphere."[257]

As a pilot project of an international partnership between the Goethe-Institute Bucharest, Romanian Cultural Institute and Alianz Kulturstifung and in its choice of foreign rather than local curators, *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* functioned as an important vehicle to fashion Bucharest as a "European cultural metropolis," as stated in the exhibition catalogue. Just as we have seen in the context of the *Visual Seminar* that emerged from a socio-political locality similar to Bucharest, returning to Europe meant structures and respect for regulations.

Both Sofia's and Bucharest's urban landscapes reveal a similar clash between remnants of a welfare state left in ruin and neoliberal market forces avidly encroaching on both private and public spaces. For instance, in exchange for a sum of money that covers utilities for one month, residents of grey and dilapidated apartment blocks give up on natural daylight by renting out their windows to advertising companies for their large-scale billboards that take over entire buildings' facades. Such visual urban discordances expose economically struggling societies that

lack politically competent government organs and administration that would enforce minimal control and regulations. Implicitly, these are indicators of the increasing gap between those whose precarious lives become the backbone for the neoliberal economy, and those very few active agents in the market able to consume the publicly advertised products and lifestyles.

Similar in overall structure to *Moszvka Ter Gravitation*, *Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest*, which included works by seven artists, unfolded over the course of six months, from April 20 to October 15 and was preceded by a one-day interdisciplinary conference among, artists, curators, and directors of institutions funding the exhibition project. Although Adrian Videanu, the mayor of Bucharest at the time was also invited, he did not attend. As stated on the project's website, the debates meant to open dialogue on the notion of public sphere and "the way this is reflecting the state of the city and of society in general." Moreover, the public event emphasized the importance of public dialogue between art professionals and city officials that could potentially lead to "an independent institution for public art."[258] As such, the exhibition positioned itself, as a critical initiative aimed to provoke Bucharest's publics to reclaim public spaces and insist on their individual and collective rights for inclusive public spheres. Towards this end, it also included two collaborative magazine-projects with the local *Suplimentul de Cultura* and the *Observatorul Cultural* that included written contributions by artists, curators and critics on various themes related to the topic of publicity, public space and public sphere.

It is revealing that the title of the exhibition in Romanian reads *public space Bucharest* while in English is *public art Bucharest*. The language discrepancy in translation has been intentional. It meant to indicate the exhibition's overall aim to act as an inquiry and illustration of public space in Bucharest by challenging not only the traditional understanding of public art

as celebratory structures and inert statues on pedestals, but, most importantly, the undemocratic and abusive claims of the concept of "public."

Coincidently, one day before the official opening of the exhibition, on April 19th 2007, for the first time in the country's history, the Romanian president, the democrat Traian Basescu was suspended from office by the parliament that accused him of "political partisanship" and of "instigating public opinion against state institutions" such as the parliament and the government. Following the Romanian court's dismissal of the alleged charges of constitutional breach and a public referendum, 74% of the Romanian population voted against the president's suspension, returning him to office after one month. Only a few months after Romanian's official entrance into the EU on January 1st 2007, this incident illustrated the continuing political instability of the country. It essentially gave visibility to the conflict between two forms of nationalism: one civic and pro-Western liberal as represented, for example, by Traian Basescu and his Democratic Party and an ethnic form of nationalism grounded in anti-liberal ideals promoted by a refurbished network of former communist leaders and hierarchies, seen at the basis of political parties, such as the opposition Party of Social Democrats (PSD led by reformed communist and former president Ion Iliescu) and the extreme nationalist Greater Romanian Party.

Encountered in most former communist CEE nations, this conflict is beyond the western political concepts of "Left" versus "Right," as political leaders and their orientations shift fluidly between and along this axis depending on the interests pursued. An essential battleground for the post-1989 transitional period has rather been between the "Westernizing liberals and the resurgent xenophobic, nativist rights."[259] Thus, if public space and public sphere most often indicate a common or public concern, it needs to be continuously claimed and protected not only against the rapidly encroaching private interests of the market, but also against a debilitating

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form of ethnic nationalism that envisions the nation in the exclusionary terms of ethnicity, aiming to instill a national fear towards minority groups portrayed as a threat to national stability. One of the most illustrative examples are the actions taken by ultra-nationalist Romanian politician George Funar as mayor of the Transylvanian city of Cluj-Napoca with a large ethnic Hungarian minority. Directly reflecting his "anti-Hungarian rhetoric," in 2001 he ordered the city's park benches, traffic lights and city pavements "to be painted in the colors of the national flag – red, yellow and blue."[260]

A corollary to this broader political conflict within the local art scene unfolds between two broadly opposing artistic directions. The more experimental forms of contemporary art, such as the interventionist art practices in public spaces discussed in this study – most often promoted by western funds and institutions – are in conflict with the academically supported and union promoted traditional artistic media, such as painting, sculpture, ceramics and textile. Their content is most often inspired by national traditions and folklore spirituality. Contrary to the latter, contemporary artists' projects in *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* functioned as generators of transitory and micro counter-publics within the artistic, political and urban fabric of the city. Their interventions revealed varied approaches to public space.

In an attempt to provoke a re-politicization of the public sphere, older generation Romanian artist Dan Perjovschi conceptualized his intervention, *Monument (History / Hysteria 2)* as a performance that occurred daily for one week (September 15-22) in the University Square: "two performers, one representing a miner and the other a student, can be found taking several frozen attitudes towards each other, sometimes confrontational, other times expectant."[261] In this symbolic gesture, the artist invoked a painful memory from the nation's collective past when in the early 1990, the country's acting president – the former communist Ion Iliescu, asked

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miners from the Jiu Valley in the southern part of Romania to travel to Bucharest to help break apart the young protesters gathered in the capital's University Square during the month of April 1990. As I illustrated in detail in the previous part, the predominately student protesters revolted against the then government led by neo-communists. They claimed democratic public spheres anchored in the dissident intellectual ideas of the 1980s that championed a moral form of anti-politics, individual rights, freedom of expression, civic and pro-Western liberal ideals.

Continuing the revolt against both illiberal nationalist tendencies and neoliberal market forces has been at the core of a younger generation of artists, such as the group h.ara. Their *Project Space*, which I discuss in detail in the following section, functioned in the exhibition as a platform for communication and interaction among various political activist groups from both the national and international scene, aimed to form a global collaborative and alternative network of groups and individuals actively engaged in challenging the status quo.

Although not a multi-year project, *Public Art Bucharest 2007* (in a similar way to the *Visual Seminar*) saw itself as a project that "produces its own autonomous institution"[262] in a transitional context suspended at the interstices between communism, post-communism and neoliberalism. Developed outside the framework of a national or city institution, the project indeed can be seen as an independent initiative taking up the critical role of an (public) institution functioning and performing in the publics' interests. At the same time, I argue that as a project initiated by cultural institutions from within EU member states and curated by foreign curators, *Public Art Bucharest 2007* essentially communicated a sense of belonging to a transnational public sphere at the level of EU community.

Dutch sociologists Willem Schinkel and Friso van Houdt coined the term *neo-liberal communitarianism* to refer to "the underlying rationale of a population management" that

operates both in an individualizing (i.e. neo-liberalism governs through an emphasis on citizenship based on individual participation and responsibility to achieve membership to a community) and a de-individualizing way (i.e. community integration – national community in some instances – is foregrounded above individual citizen's rights at various localized levels).[263] Although Schinkel and Houdt exemplified their concept as the new forms of governmentality arising in the managing of immigrant population in the Netherlands, I contend that the concept of *neo-liberal communitarianism* is a productive conceptual framework for the understanding of community formation through cultural initiatives at the level of EU, especially since the early 2000s. As seen, during this time, both the EU as a political body and individual EU member states generated multi-national collaborative cultural projects primarily in prospective EU-states, geared towards forging of a transnational public sphere based on the dual process of individualization and de-individualization.

Further complicating the discussion on the form of collectivity at the European level are EU's attempts at forging a sense of belonging using strategies similar to nationalism – as an ideology that inspires in a people social trust and civic obligations towards a cultural, political and historically constructed imagined community. It attempts to invoke, what Polish political scientist Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski referred to, "a national sense of belonging in a non-nation-state environment." In his text, Karolewski notes that instead of the clear nationalist tendencies visible in EU's individual member states, a light form of nationalism is being activated at the EU level where it functions in a much more subtle way by using specific identity technologies of European nationalism. Among such strategies are cultural and symbolic region-wide initiatives. The author cites as an example the EU-lead and funded "European Cities of Culture" programs with arts and crafts festivals and music concerts unfolding throughout various cities. They are

aimed to raise "visibility and identifiability of the EU"[264] within the everyday lives of various national citizens while preserving a symbolic ambiguity. Certainly, the exhibitions of contemporary art in public spaces, discussed in this chapter, exemplify another realm where EU cultivates a collective form of identity through regionally funded cultural initiatives.

The other facet of this narrative manifests within the context of prospective and recent EU-member states. The detailed regulations of the *acquis communautaire* – the body of EU laws and policies – that each prospective EU member-state has been individually responsible to implement and follow in order to be accepted into the EU, inevitably position candidate states in an inferior and dependent position towards developed states. Bulgarian cultural theorist Vassil Prodanov referred to Balkan and Eastern European countries as being caught in a perpetual process of "implementing catching up development." The close dependencies on the Soviet Union, especially in the case of Bulgaria, have been replaced after 1989 with "a strategy of openness and dependent development related to the EU integration."[265] This sense of "catching up" to Europe and the socio-economic and political dependency creates a sense of inferiority within such nations' populations. In such a context, as Corina Suteu observed, the "European Cultural dimension of Eastern European integration" represents a key element within an efficiently functioning socio-economic EU order. Suteu emphasized the EU's cultural dimension especially in its potential to: "facilitate the identification of common roots and ground, and engage through adapted means, a dialogue where countries in Eastern Europe would feel less inferior and less excluded."[266]

Actively engaged in cultivating a form of belonging through culture that is both within and beyond national borders is therefore of critical and strategic importance. For instance, in the context of all three exhibitions, there was either an overt or an implicit aim to fashion the

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respective cities as European metropolises. Moreover, supported by EU funds, each project claimed an autonomous position within their national contexts, creating a sense of belonging to a European public sphere, while nevertheless anchored within their specific (national) locality. In different ways, each project entered into a politicized space, caught between nationalist, transnational and neoliberal competing tendencies.

Although such cultural initiatives require members to articulate their Europeaness in order to belong, the prospective (and recent) EU-members reflect attributes of what, Bulgarian cultural theorist Alexander Kiossev called "self-colonizing cultures." These are cultures that are "not central enough, not timely and big enough [...] insufficiently alien, insufficiently distant, and insufficiently backward." As a result they "import alien values and models of civilization by themselves and they lovingly colonize their own authenticity through these foreign models."[267] Although imported values and models are willfully adopted they inherently remain perpetually alien, igniting a continuous process of adjustment and re-affirmation implicitly fueling the conflict between pro-Western liberal ideals and forms of collectivist and illiberal nationalisms. Thus, at one level the above discussed art exhibitions were part of EU-initiated multi-national projects based on harmonious modes of collaborations geared toward consensual and convivial forms of European community perceived as devoid of dissent or discord. At the same time, as cultural initiatives, the exhibitions functioned as platforms for interdisciplinary dialogue seen as prerequisite for future productive collaborations with local state officials. Their aim was to emphasize the active role that contemporary forms of public art should play in the city government's decision-making processes, especially as regarding the visual presence of the local urban landscapes. This is seen for instance, in the *Visual Seminar* that included candidates for the local mayor's office in their conferences and *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* in its politicized choice of

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venue as a way to challenge nationalist tendencies of the country's government. And at yet another level, several of the artists' participatory and socially engaged projects, included in the exhibitions, were subversive, making use of contentious forms of collaborations, participation and communications, in order to address locally pertinent socio-political issues as well as challenge the exclusionary politics inherent in the EU's normative notion of community, as I show in detail in the following two sections.

3.2   PARTICIPATORY MODELS IN CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ART PRACTICES: ATTEMPTS AT INCLUSIVE PUBLIC SPHERES IN BUDAPEST, BUCHAREST AND SOFIA

If the developed programs and curatorial frameworks of *Moszkva Ter Gravitation*, *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* and *Visual Seminar* aimed to act as dialogic platforms for local negotiations while implicitly embodying a sense of belonging to a transnational public sphere at the EU level, several of the participating artists conceptualized projects that in different ways became vehicles for representation of various *counterpublics*. Although all confined to the time frame and geographical location suggested by the exhibitions, three main and interrelated modes of participation could be distinguished among the featured artists' projects.

Based on the artworks' strategies of direct engagement with various publics and their particular relation to the local socio-political context, it is possible to differentiate between artists who developed democratically self-organized projects, initiatives that take a contention-based approach and projects that emerge through various forms of generous or gift-like exchanges,

with overlaps among all these three models occurring simultaneously. A further yet broader distinction could also be made between, on one hand, socially engaged art projects that ignited broad participation from varied publics, where the artwork most often became a pretext and a context for interaction and communication. Projects by artists such as Lia Perjovschi, Ivan Moudov and artist collective Hints were illustrative in this sense. On the other hand, there were art projects that unfolded through rather intimate collaborations with specific people, whose individuality were recognized and foregrounded through the project, in some instances standing in as representatives of specific socio-political groups in society, as seen in the work by Luchezar Boyajiev, Janos Sugar and artist collective h.arta.

3.2.1   Displaying the Roma as critically participatory monuments

In 2003 Bulgarian artist Luchezar Boyadjiev, a participant in the *Visual Seminar* project in Sofia, created his socially engaged work *Hot City Visual – Stephan's Brigade (himself and his sons-in-law)*, an "advertisement" campaign for a family-owned small business that comprised of a large-scale billboard featuring a full portrait of radiantly smiling four Roma men, a 4-minute "promotional" video, *Super! Super!* and a series of posters distributed throughout the city streets. The central figure on the large billboard is Stephan Metodiev, a Roma man in his 50s, whom the artist had known for fifteen years during the time he worked as a handy man at the Union of Bulgarian Artists and at the National Gallery of Foreign Art both in Sofia, helping with the installation of various art exhibitions. The other three figures are Stephan's three son-in-laws who work together in their family business. They eagerly participated in the artist's project as seen in the short video the artist created showing the four men doing a roof repair, one of their

specializations on the background of a patriotic song from the 1970s *One Bulgarian Rose* easily recognized by any Bulgarian.

Boyadiiev used the visual language of advertisement in the form of a public billboard in order to politicize public space and give visibility to what Michal Warner called *counterpublics* or groups of people in a more-or-less conscious awareness of their subordinate status in society. As such, the artist drew attention and provoked reactions towards the contemporary marginalization of both local family businesses and the Roma ethnic minority in Sofia, a city rapidly changing under aggressive privatizations of formerly publicly owned structures and spaces. It was strategically placed for two weeks, beginning on October 13th, in the heart of Sofia, on the façade of the National Art Gallery (former's Tzar's Palace) in the central square where the Georgi Dimitrof Mausoleum housed the former communist leader's preserved body until 1996.

Through the artist's work an under-the counter local business got advertised on an equal footing with international corporations, publicly announcing Stephan's well-known yet unofficial address in Sofia, namely Macedonia Square-north, where most Roma day-laborers, like Stephan's family look for employment between 8:30 am and 10:30 am. The billboard's placement was timed as to coincide with the local governmental 2003 elections for the city's mayor. As such, the artist's public intervention provoked political reactions from the mayoral candidates, especially Stephan Sofianski, who considered the billboard to be a personal insult since he had the same first name and also three daughters. Although this was a mere coincidence, the angry candidate's staff demanded explanations from the artist. Nevertheless, the local press dedicated articles profiling other Roma individuals, thus bringing into public debate the social and political discrimination and marginalization of the Roma ethnic minority in Bulgaria, a

situation common to most Central and Eastern European nations. Ultimately, one of the project's aims, as expressed by the artist, was to promote a positive image of the Roma minority, as "there is no integration of Bulgaria in the EU without integration of Roma people in Bulgaria!"

The artist's choice of representing the Roma ethnic minority may indeed have been in part influenced by the contemporary local context going through the "normalization" process defined by the various negotiations as part of the EU's accession process where the generic slogan "respect for minority rights" feature as an important point in the EU *acquis communautaire*. Most importantly however, Boyajiev's project emerged gradually from his meticulous analysis of what he called Sofia's "visual irregularities," which revealed the hot character of the city's advertisements – in the sense defined by Marshall McLuhan. In his extensive research, the artist identified three forms of advertisement present in Sofia: the "corporate logo," which is bright and shiny and positioned high above the person's eye level, the "neighborhood logo," which features crude personal handwriting and is positioned on poles and surfaces at a person's eye level, and the "Bulgarian billboard," which combines the form of the first and the content of the second.[268] Intended to subvert the typically vulgar content promoted in "Bulgarian billboards," *Stephan's Brigade* was conceptualized as a public intervention by foregrounding the lives of an ethnic minority:

> The project supposed to be like a flash from a photographic camera, a momentary lightening that is pouring light on some invisible aspects and niches of life or on some concrete people. In a long-term perspective it should work towards a change of attitudes.[269]

In a contentiously subversive approach, Boyajiev appropriated the visual language of capital marketing in order to convey a positively active image of a politically and socio-economically marginalized group. His short "promotional" video *Super! Super!* for example, showcased four

hard-working individuals rather than the typical image of Roma stereotypically perceived as thieves and burglars both locally and at the broader European level. Moreover, the artist-initiated and publicly displayed billboard that featured only Stephan's name and address (with the artist's name being omitted) became both a vehicle for representation and a form of gift for his participants. Ironically, the broad media attention and public reception of the billboard was made evident in the difficulty that Stephan encountered in receiving his monthly allowance from the government's office where a clerk refused to offer it to him questioning his financial need since he has a well-functioning family business proven by the fact that he can afford to advertise it as large billboard in the city center.

Most significantly, the project has grown out of continued communications that overtime accumulated forms of social capital, engendering a sense of trust and reciprocity between the artist and Stephan.[270] These already existent relations facilitated their collaborations and created a final work meaningful for its participants. Boyajiev's work aimed to activate a public sphere where a Roma *counterpublic* can claim and exercise their rights as active citizens of the nation. This is all the more important, as local media across most of the Central and Eastern Europe, portray the Roma ethnic minority as second class citizens, as the artist noted: "I have noticed that Bulgarian media covers the Roma in the same way Bulgarian nationals are written about in the European media."

Although the primary intended audience was the everyday city public, the media channels and the local political class, concomitantly with the public presence of the billboard, the other components of the advertisement campaign – the posters and the *Super! Super!* video – were exhibited at the ATA Center for Contemporary Art. The gallery exhibition also included a display of Luchezar's *Hot City Visual*,[271] a series of photomontages illustrating various streets

and buildings across Sofia, texts, diagrams, all documenting the rapidly morphing neo-capitalist city that in the post-Soviet bloc countries it often indicates, as he expressed: "a capitalism without bourgeois; a consumer society without consumers, and a society where public space is anything that one can sell and/or buy."

3.2.2   Staging confrontation and a lack of self-determination

If Boyadjiev's subversive project re-appropriated the language of advertisement in order to confront and challenge the generally negative attitude towards an ethnic minority group, Hungarian artist Janos Sugar's project *Time Patrol* embodied an alternative exchange system that problematically engaged various economically marginalized publics. Part of the 2003 *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* exhibition, Sugar's *Time Patrol* was a caravan installed in the center of the square. During "opening hours," a sign invited anyone to enter the caravan who can dictate to a typist uninterruptedly for 10 minutes in exchange for 4,000 Hungarian forints – the hourly wage in Hungary at that time was between 500-1000 HUF. Then, the numbered yet un-authored and un-edited texts were collected into a publication called *Time Patrol*, which was put up for sale for 400 forints at the nearby newspapers stalls. According to the artist:

> My aim is to produce a documentary whose future value is incalculable – exactly because it does not seem to be of any significance in the present. What we wouldn't give to have an accurate transcription of a random conversation in a mail-coach at the beginning of the 19th century![272]

However historically justified or noble his intentions might first appear to be, the artist accomplished his project through a profoundly problematic exploitative process. As is well known in Budapest, Moszkva Ter is an eclectic square colored by the presence of a mixed economy comprised of street vendors selling cloths, flowers, and flea-market items along with

newspaper stalls. It is a transportation hub and a transit point for many of the rich who pass through the square to reach their residences in the nearby Rozsa Domb upper-middle class neighborhood. It is also an urban location where many of the city's poor, homeless, Roma and the illegal immigrants – majority from the Transylvania region in Romania gather and look for work. Considering the relatively high pay for only ten minutes of work, it is not surprising that Sugar's caravan was a popular spot among the square's inhabitants, who presented and sold their stories as some sort of exotic display of the society's poor. Unlike, for instance, Boyadjiev's politicized and individualized portrayal of Stephan in a project that emerged from already established relations of trust and reciprocity, the participants in Sugar's project remained anonymous, objectified and documented for some "future value." While the public's direct participation was at the core of *Time Patrol*, the project reiterated rather than disturbed or challenged the dialectics of exclusion and inclusion inherent in the fabric of virtually any public sphere.

In projects that engage specific members of a group or community, of great importance is the problematic inherent in the relation between participants and artists, as representatives for a particular group. American art historian and critic Grant Kester developed his concept of a "politically coherent community" in response to forms of negation that can occur when artists view their collaborators as raw and inert material to be transformed or improved in some ways.[273] According to Kester, the strength of a project lies in its ability to create a space of dialogical exchange, where both the artist and the collaborator is transformed and where the artist no longer occupies the superior position of creative master. However, *Time Patrol* conferred upon the artist precisely the superior position of a creative master, who made use of the participants and their stories as raw material and content for the work. As Hungarian critic

and art historian Hedvik Turai reviewing the exhibition observed: "It is a purely abstract relationship between the parties: Someone enters the caravan, dictates, receives the money...."

On the other hand, it may be argued that Sugar envisioned his alternative exchange system as intentionally confrontational in order to challenge the exploitative effects on human labor of the global neoliberal market forces, similarly, for example, to what the internationally known artist Santiago Sierra has done in several of his projects. According to Judit Bodor's and Bea Hock's project description included in the exhibition catalogue, *Time Patrol* "gives voice to those who remain unassimilated, invisible and mute in the narratives of power," it communicates a history "from below" and by faithfully transcribing the participants' stories into a publication, the project "realized an instance of the unmediated and unreformed self-representation of the subaltern."

Yet, this "unmediated self-representation" is purely textual and achieved through the misappropriation of actual human beings that participate in the work not because of their understanding of the project's aims, but rather because they have no other means of earning a living than to sell their last possession – their poverty. Most importantly, the project maintained the status quo undisturbed, with the artist in its privileged position and his participants in their subaltern position. Similar for instance, to Santiago Sierra's *Workers who cannot be paid, remunerated to remain inside cardboard boxes* (Berlin, 2000), a title that describes the actual project, participants were utilized as simple props in the artist's essentially autonomous artistic practice. Although employing the strategy that art critic Claire Bishop described as "relational antagonism" meant to bring forth sustained tensions inherent within our complex contemporary conditions to combat harmonious or consensus notions of public sphere, both Sugar's and

Sierra's projects used a confrontational approach to bring awareness of already well-known realities while implicitly denying any possibility for the participants' self-determination.

Other similarly problematic local projects included Moldavian artist and dramatist Nicoleta Esinescu's *A(II)Rh+* (in *Public Art Bucharest / Spatiul Public Bucuresti* exhibition, 2007) and Hungarian artist Balázs Beöthy's *Distributed Money* (in *Moszkva Ter Gravitation*, 2003). Esinescu engaged several Roma individuals walking the streets of Bucharest in search of scrap iron over the course of several weeks. She asked them to recite fragments of the artist's own writings on the socio-political and racial discrimination of the Romanian society towards the Roma minority. Beöthy paid several homeless people in the square to hand out money to the passers-by. In their confrontational approaches, both artists ultimately made use of individuals as expressive tools for their orchestrated and staged actions that maintained unchanged both the artists' and their participants' attitudes towards one another and the issues addressed in the work.

3.2.3 Democratically self-organized projects undermining curatorial protocols

In contrast to such participatory artworks that take an explicit contention-based approach, artist collectives, such as h.arta (Maria Crista, Anca Gyemant, Rodica Tache) initiated what I call democratically self-organized projects. Developed for the 2007 *Public Art Bucharest* exhibition, their contribution was titled *Project Space* and consisted in a physical space housed in the building of the Romanian Architects Order (Ordinul Architectilor din Romania) that doubled as the exhibition's information point as well as an art project where the three-member female artist collective invited several artists and speakers to talk, work and present their projects for the one month duration of the exhibition – September 16 - October 15.

In what could be perceived as an act of generosity, h.arta diffused their invitation to other participants in an attempt to create an alternative platform for activities and discussions. They gave an organizational structure to their discursive space by identifying four topics: *post-communism* – that implied not only discussions on the meaning of communism in Romania but also an awareness of how "communism is used to validate conservative, nationalist and sexist positions" – *feminism* – comprised of inquiries and feminist positions that challenged the broader society's dominant heterosexual male view – *education* – disseminating forms of alternative and horizontal models of knowledge production – and *display* – activities that reveal both ideologically dominating public spaces and places of resistance.[274] The activities of their collaborators contributed to at least one of these four topics.

Among the participants were Ofensiva Generositatii, a group of artists (primarily theater actors, writers and directors) and volunteers that engage members of the primarily Roma community from the Uranus-Rahova neighborhood in Bucharest since 2006 in various long-term projects and participatory theater activities inspired by locals' stories and real-life experiences and performed by members of the community. Ofensiva Generositatii's presence in *Project Space* manifested through posters on the wall, video screenings of theater plays and activities performed within the community, and a workshop on creating personal maps. Activists such as the Romanian/American Joanne Richardson, founder of D Media in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, an NGO supporting activist film production, screened various films followed by discussions on topics such as borders, activism, transition, post-communism, woman's work and precarity. Individual presentations, such as those by cultural theorist Cristian Carcel addressed the manipulated and constructed history though history textbooks during the national-communist period in the era of Nicolae Ceausescu.

A total of fourteen participants contributed their activities to h.arta's *Project Space*. The organically emerging conversations, presentations and programs among the various participants undermined the conventional exhibition display and its curatorial protocol. Each group or artist left their projects' traces onto the walls of the space making it a perpetually morphing environment amidst a flow of social relations and dialogical interactions among various publics. It took shape as a temporary and contemporary archive. Poster-filled walls surrounded tables with samizdat publication and DIY objects, while communications occurred both within the physicality of the space as well as in virtual space through the several computers in use, thus creating a multi-layered context of self-reflexivity characteristic of an active and self-determinant public.

As opposed, for instance, to Sugar's or Boyadjiev's projects in which a "single collaboration" unfolded between the artist and his contributors who are there to realize the artist's already formulated idea, h.arta's *Project Space* was based on what, curator and critic Maria Lind referred to as "double collaborations." In such projects "collaboration takes place both on the level of the author, with the formulation of the idea, and also in the realization of the work."[275] The collaborative activities in the *Project Space* unfolded horizontally bridging various interrelated activities such as artistic, curatorial and activist, where, for example, activist groups borrowed the space to organize themselves for the following year's anti-G8 summit demonstration in Bucharest.

In the post-1989 context, Romanian society has been marked by a continuing lack of a local art market, conservative and traditional art academies that continue to value an elitist art based on a modernist medium-specificity and separation, lack of infrastructure for contemporary critical art initiatives, all on a background of nationalist political tendencies juxtaposed with an

embrace of neoliberal values by local entrepreneurs. In such context, h.arta's motivation for their

Project Space, as stated on their on-line blog, has been to bring people together to envision

common modes to "struggle against authority" and to "create the conditions necessary to think

differently." Their motivation has been to formulate an alternative to the existing conditions, to

democratically self-organize in order to collaboratively produce parallel platforms and spaces for

critical knowledge production as separate from both state-driven initiatives and capital-

determined programs and activities. These goals have also constituted their initial motivation to

come together as a group in 2001 in a space located on the second floor of an industrial building

in Timisoara (a northwestern city in Romania):

> We wanted to have h.arta as a meeting place, a place where we could talk about art not as
> something abstract, general and distant but as something that have a real connection to
> our lives. [...] We were trying to redefine art from this perspective, in opposition to the
> discourses of art as "High Art", that were taught to us in the entire course of our
> education. This was the political content behind this simple operation of declaring the
> private, the emotional, the trivial and the everyday as a rightful part of a public discourse,
> as something worthy of being the content of art.[276]

Within the context of *Public Art Bucharest / Spatiul Public Bucuresti* exhibition that envisioned

itself as a "critical engagement with the local power structures" while enacting a sense of

belonging to a transnational and convivial European public sphere, h.arta at once conceptualized

and manifested a public space for multiple people to come together. Collapsing the traditional

artist participation within an exhibition by using their invitation to invite yet other people to take

part, a self-organized public sphere emerged within the physical boundaries of the *Project Space*

– and through the discourses enacted among the various people present. Cumulatively they thus

formed an alternative network of public participation. Although perhaps not a public sphere

where a public, in Michael Warner's words, "exists by virtue of being addressed,"[277] and through

various forms of social relations among strangers or "stranger relationality," h.arta's *Project*

Space became a forum for public debates and social interactions among a self-identified network of people working in and towards a critically alternative local and international scene.

Several other projects by older artists, not included in the exhibition, have employed such participatory models based on redistributing their invitation to other artists as a way to challenge the limiting frame of the traditional form of exhibition and the authoritarian position of the sole artist creator by proposing a collective participation and a collaborative process of art making. For instance, in his *Communication Project and Installation* (2002-2006), Romanian artist Matei Bejenaru used his entire artistic production budget to sponsor a week-long visit to Vienna for "five artists from Iasi with whom I was working within the Vector Association."[278]

3.2.4 Self-historicization as situational and participatory art practice

If h.arta's *Project Space* became a public forum for debate of a more or less identified network of individuals and social groups, Lia Perjovschi's Contemporary Art Archive / Center for Art Analysis (CAA) since its inception in the early 1990s has been contributing towards an inclusive public sphere through a form of artistic self-institutionalization. CAA is an artist-initiated, organized and presented archive that includes books, art magazines, slides, photocopies, files, postcards, exhibition invitations and catalogues on both Romanian and international contemporary art. As part of the *Public Art Bucharest / Spatiul Public Bucuresti* exhibition, Perjovschi invited the public (mostly an art public) to her studio that housed the CAA and which acted as a pretext for direct interaction or in the artist's words: "I produce events, relations, contacts, dialogue and communications."[279] Similarly to h.arta's *Project Space,* Perjovschi's CAA unfolded as a situational, relational and dialogic platform for various publics to gather, share ideas and generate new and alternative forms of knowledge. While both with a

participatory structure in relation to the audience, each artistic project has responded in different ways to the existent socio-cultural and political local context, implicitly also illustrating their belonging to a different generation.

Lia Perjovschi began her artistic practice in the 1980s with body art, initially performing in the intimacy of their apartment in front of her husband, fellow artist, Dan Perjovschi's camera. Such forms of artistic practice secluded in private apartments characterized an entire generation of Romanian artists in 1980s. Their private practices were responses to the local regime that in contrast to the gradual collapse of socialist governments in other CEE countries initiated by Gorbachev's 1986 perestroika; Ceausescu pursued a national policy of economic starvation and socio-political oppressive control. Gradually since 1985 and more systematically since 1990, in her husband's words Lia's practice shifted from an "art with her body [...] to the research of the body of international art"[280] that was fuelled by her curiosity and need of understanding of contemporary art. Her practice of gathering and sharing of information has emerged within the pre-1989 Romanian oppressively ideological context when the local official art institutions highly controlled the transmission of information and restricted knowledge on regional and international contemporary art.

Aimed to overcome her locally isolating tendencies by collecting information and housing it in their private apartment and studio, CAA has been both fueling and existing within the networks of the second society where informal social relations or forms of social capital among groups and individuals, as I have shown earlier in the text, were people's vital means of survival. After Ceausescu's collapse, alternative and unofficial strategies of survival have continued in different forms within the society at large that struggled to learn and adopt neoliberal tendencies of economic entrepreneurship. Perjovschi's self-organized CAA represents

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an example of such a survival strategy at the level of contemporary arts. Though an artistic

project, the artist adopts the role of the archivist collecting, organizing and displaying written

material in, what art curator and critic Zdenka Badovinac called, "an artistic process of self-

historicization:"

> Because the local institutions that should have been systematizing neo-avant-garde art
> and its tradition either did not exist or were disdainful of such art, the artists themselves
> were forced to be their own art historians and archivists, a situation that still exists in
> some places today. Such self-historicization includes the collecting and archiving of
> documents, whether of one's own art actions, or, in certain spaces, of broader
> movements, ones that were usually marginalized by local politics and invisible in the
> international art context.[281]

Other artists in the region that have initiated such personal archives, illustrating a process of self-

historicization include the Slovenian artist collective IRWIN's ongoing project *East Art Map*.

The visual artist Gyorgy Galantai and his wife Julia initiated the ongoing Artpool Archive,

known for its major collection of Fluxus art from Central Eastern Europe in the late 1970s. The

Hungarian conceptual artist Tamas St. Auby created in 2003 his *Portable Intelligence Increase

Museum* as an interactive installation at the Dorottya Gallery in Budapest that includes his own

database of artists "working in Hungary outside and against the oppressive government system."

Ljubljana-based independent curator and critic Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez discussed IRWIN's

archival project as a form of contest against the "hardening of grand (art) historical narratives

imposed by 'colonizers' from Western Europe and the U.S." Petrešin-Bachelez also emphasized

St. Auby's personal archive as an alternative to the "colonized local art historians" as the artist's

intention was to expose the erroneous official art historical accounts, such as those promoted by

the influential publication and exhibition *Aspects/Positions* that omitted the inclusion of

subversive practices of the neo-avant-garde practices of the 1960s and 1970s.[282]

In different ways, both h.arta's *Project Space* and Perjovschi's CAA have been contributing conceptually and materially towards an alternative to the neoliberal democratic notion of public sphere that champions solely individual liberties and private interests. For instance, in its aim to forge a connective network among contemporary social and activist groups and individuals usually performing their activities secluded at the margins of the official societal currents, *Project Space* proposed communal gathering and collective work within the framework of well-known exhibition. Their project became the materialized body of a counterpublic continuously morphing through public debates, presentations and dialogic interactions. The same communal physicality is at the core of CAA, which is only activated though the publics' presence, participation and interaction with the archive. CAA's various projects envision a public sphere where counterpublics represent alternative and subjective (art) histories.

Based on historical documents, photographs of various historically important individuals, scans of art catalogues and other printed information from within CAA, Perjovschi, in an anti-art and anti-establishment Dada-spirit, devises projects such as "My Subjective Art History from Modernism to Today" (1990-2004) that take the form of gallery installations. The artist uses wall-drawn and textual diagrams made of images and historical data that visually and textually challenge the linear-pattern of the traditional art historical cannons both locally and internationally: "Diagram are round-shaped, have some sort of a center, and the idea is to catch their growth, how they become more complicated."[283] For instance, one of her diagrams consisted of a map of Romania in different shades that designated the country's urban regions and counties from which arrows radiated out, like spikes in a bicycle wheel, that carried the names of various artists and writers, the dates and titles of their publications. The result is a circular alternative mapping of a local art history's contemporaneity.

In a contemporary local context that continues to lack institutions charged with recuperating, systematizing and presenting local and international developments in modern and contemporary art history, Perjovschi's CAA has been a critical center not only for recording and cataloguing information but also for instruction of the younger generation of art professionals. At the same time, the artist's work exists through these very acts of performativity and discursive exchanges, which at however short time intervals, consist of various publics' interactions and attention. In stark contrast, for example, to forms of institutional critique in Western contexts, such self-organizations and self-institutionalizations, represent corrective attitudes rather than explicitly critical positions towards the art institution as such, since in the transitional post-1989 context there must first be institutions before a critical discourse on their existence or otherwise can actually occur.

3.2.5 Performing a museum of contemporary art through collective participation

Aiming to call attention to a (then) non-existent museum for contemporary art in Bulgaria through the direct participation of a broad public has been at the core of the Bulgarian young artist Ivan Moudov's 2005 participatory art project MUSIZ (abbreviation in Bulgarian meaning Museum of Contemporary Art). Making creative use of PR strategies in order to trick the media, MUSIZ stirred up public debate on a national scale. Similar to Luchezar's work created two years earlier, Moudov's project was conceived as part of his participation in the ICA-Sofia's *Visual Seminar* fourth and last artist residency program on the theme of "The City through the Window of the Museum." MUSIZ consisted in an advertising campaign that included four large billboards placed in the center of Sofia and hundreds of posters plastered all around the city four days before the project's interactive aspects with the public materialized. Flyers were distributed

in coffee shops, universities, art galleries and museums. Official invitation cards with the MUSIZ abbreviation in golden relief announcing the presence at the opening of the internationally known Bulgarian artist Christo (born Christo Vladimirov Javacheff and partner of Jeanne-Claude) were designed by Nadya Lyahova following the local American Embassy's design of a party invitation and were mailed to press agencies, embassies, city officials and international contacts. A website and an email address for RSVP were set up as well, which provides a record of those who attended.

All were announcing the opening of the Museum for Contemporary Art – Sofia on April 26, 2005 at 7pm at the Podujane railway station in Sofia. Over three hundred people showed up at the location and time indicated only to find an empty railway station.[284] The artist's "simulation of the opening of a Museum of Contemporary Art" was at once anchored in a specific national site as "the Poduyane station is the first railway station in Sofia and a symbol of modern Bulgaria" and projected a vision of the actual function of a future museum exemplified through Moudov's process and strategies of communication with various publics between February and April 2005 and during the opening event.[285]

As featured in a documentary video and commented in the published articles, at the opening some people were confused, some felt manipulated by the artist, others disappointed by the actual lack of a Contemporary Art Museum in Bulgaria, yet others were amused or applauded the artist's intervention. Debates in internet chat rooms and numerous articles in the press about the art project and implicitly about the lack of a museum of contemporary art in Bulgaria kept the public dialogue on the issue on several levels that included art professionals and students, as well as the society at large. Such mixed reactions suggest the publics' conflicted attitude arising from their often confusing the absence of an actual museum that has been advertised and the

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artist's work as a participatory project that many considered to be, a manipulative gesture. Yet this merger or rather publics' confusion of the art project with a broader social concern has been at the core of Moudov's work. In fact, he removed his name from any form of advertisement, eliminating any association between his persona with MUSIZ. Only the few whose assistance he needed were in the know.

Moudov's project reveals a participatory model based on anonymity and accidental involvement of a broad audience that becomes both participant and observer of the work. Two forms of participation can be distinguished within the artist's project. First there were the individuals involved directly by the artist in his advertising campaign and the only ones in the know of his fictitious museum opening. In fact, in his published "Chronicle of Manipulation," Moudov lists the names of both individuals and institutions and acknowledges each of their roles in assisting him to bring about his project. Rather than mere documentation, this post-event written and published text appears more like a museum director's acknowledgments and introduction to his institution's inaugural event, thus transforming the project's documentation into a continuous performativity of his museum simulation in textural form.

Second, MUSIZ could not have occurred without the presence of the hundreds of people gathered at the railway station. Bulgarian art critic and journalist Diana Popova who was among the participants and observers described the scene:

> The place was swarming with individuals in constant motion: rushing, stopping within little groups, gesticulating, finding their ways in a business-like manner around others hanging out or maneuvering around TV cars on the car park democratically-chaotically mixed with diplomatic limousines – each with a little flag [...] 'the ambassadors support the action for the museum,' 'the journalists don't care about him, they want Christo','Svelin Roussev made a joke about it and said that Christo got off at the Central Station by mistake,' 'some of them left in a rage, it's interesting what they will write' – these are some of the comments I heard in the mayhem.[286]

The temporary presence of numerous members of the Bulgarian art scene, several of the local embassies' officials that came to fulfill their Public Relations duty and media representatives thirsty for shock-filled reporting formed an eclectic mix where the line between those who were being watched and those doing the watching had been continuously blurred. Those who made their home at station had also observed the scene. The homeless, the regulars at the small café at the end of the train station's main platform drinking their beer, and travelers waiting for their trains watched with curiosity, suspicion and some amusement at the absurd presence of the growing crowd. Thus, in a subtle inversion and perhaps unintended by the artist, members of the officially visible society has been convinced to take part in a site-specific art project, involuntarily also becoming a spectacle watched by the site's locals, an officially invisible public.

Eluding the boundary between participants and spectators, MUSIZ thus embodied a temporary public sphere where a dominant public co-existed with a counterpublic. I understand the formation of a public in some of Michael Warner's outlined terms: one that is "self-organized through discourse" – people attending the fictitious museum opening were all invited by the artist yet their collective presence formed a public by the very fact of them being addressed/invited – one that is formed not only among friends but also "among strangers" – Moudov's invitees were an eclectic mix of individuals with different backgrounds and unknown to one another – and one that creates a social space through the very reflexive circulation of discourse –exemplified in the case of MUSIZ first through the interactive relations and dialogue among the participants, but also at a textual level through the discourses ignited by close to fifty articles and editorials in both the on-line and printed press that extended the life of the project by expanding its public.

Moreover, the MUSIZ enacted public sphere incorporated counterpublics of two kinds. At one level, there were the socio-politically and economically marginalized homeless and the poor, or what often have also been called "subaltern counterpublics,"[287] residing at the railway station. While subtly or accidentally present, this public became temporarily empowered through their position as spectators of the "manipulated" crowd. At another level, Moudov's project aimed to bring visibility and to give a voice to another counterpublic composed of all those involved in creating and supporting the local Bulgarian scene of contemporary art. As such, "a counterpublic, against the background of the public sphere, enables a horizon of opinion and exchange; its exchanges remain distinct from authority and can have a critical relation to power."[288]

MUSIZ ignited a local debate that has been on-going since the early 1990s, on the need for a museum of contemporary art and implicitly on the meaning and value of what constitutes contemporary art. Since their emergence in the late 1980s, political and cultural institutions in Bulgaria have consistently ignored contemporary artists and their art practices. Contemporary art continues to remain outside of any institutional interest for collection, preservation, documentation and presentation, for example, in academically researched publications and museum exhibitions. The general lack of attention toward the local contemporary art practice has also been fuelled by the art academies, Ministry of Culture and the Unions of the Artists. These implicitly refuse to understand art outside the modernist tradition that champion medium and genre specificity, craftsmanship, the artistic genius and creator of formally pleasing works of art most often employing national elements. Furthermore, in the absence of comprehensive or substantial private collections or foundations that would support and promote a public understanding of contemporary art, as Alexander Kiossev pointed out, it has been assumed that

this role should fall on the state, the only one "possessing the institutional and financial means necessary for such a costly and ambitious project."[289]

One could argue that Moudov's call for a contemporary art museum has been answered with the official opening of a Contemporary Art Museum in Sofia in the summer of 2011. However, its inception has been motivated by what we might call a public relation neoliberal strategy meant to bring symbolic capital to the nation through a positive image internationally. After all, Bulgaria had only recently been the last country in the EU with no museum for contemporary art, an institution that has been seen as an integral component within any civilized nation. As such, the Bulgarian state's belated attention to such museum was determined by this "civilizational" need of the country that would help brand and secure the nation as a true (not only cultural but also economic) member of the European community. Even more disturbing is that being initiated by the state's Ministry of Culture with structural funds provided by a Norwegian foundation, the Museum of Contemporary Art is part of the state's renewed and most recent attempt to recentralize culture through its museums seen as fulfilling a state-imposed culture policy. This is most evident in the state's control of all major local museums: The National Art Gallery – Sofia, the National Gallery of Foreign Art, the newly formed Museum for Contemporary Art and also the newly formed Museum for Socialist Art. Thus, the recently opened Museum for Contemporary Art in Bulgaria is in the hands of those that Kiossev already warned about a year earlier in 2010:

> The position of a museum-builder is claimed now by ministers and proud inheritors of the purely national kind of art; by officials from the Union of Bulgarian Artists and by groups of young enthusiasts and social climbers who are eager to get rid of the older generation; by market oriented life-style stewards of taste and shadowy businessman who have a clear idea about how much money one can make from such a venture.[290]

Within such a locally divisive context, Moudov's large-scale participatory project gains an even more significant role by disturbing and challenging the status quo. Just as the dominant power requires perpetual repetitions and reformulations in order to preserve its authoritarian position, so do contemporary interventionist art practices, have the potential, however temporarily, to disrupt the dominant fabric through acts of subversion, denaturalization and recontextualization, such as those of Moudov's.

In his book *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy argued against the "myth of community," which essentially incorporates the will to power, as deployed for example by the Soviet Communism's call for a unified community based on a collective equality. Instead he proposed the notion of an "inoperative community" as a possible way to challenge the will to power constituent in a monolithic collectivity, which negates difference. For Nancy, the "inoperative community" is not "a territory but an areality," it is a space between singular beings in a moment of enunciation, for communication "consists in the appearance of the *between* as such."[291] Thus, rather than seeing a community in normative ways where individuals come together through a shared common existence, Nancy considers human beings as "singularities" and not individuals that are continuously formed and re-formed, never actually achieving the status of independent beings and thus are incapable to deny the existence of the different other. Therefore for Nancy, the multi-dimensionality of communication (the "being of communication") cannot be represented or defined as it constantly re-formulates and "unworks" the certainties of representable spaces. So the "inoperative community" is an inoperative space, which is at once representable in the very moment of communication and obscure as it resides in *a between* as such.

The primacy of communication seen either in the act of verbal enunciation and dialogic exchange, or through various forms of collaboration has been a central strategy of engagement or production in all of the above discussed projects. In their temporality, each project becomes an instant of perpetual *between* able to undo, even if only momentarily, normative conceptions of public spheres. As such, several of the artists' projects became a platform for both construction and representation of various *counterpublics*. Their public initiatives become even more critical within a context where neoliberal forces increasingly threaten the uniformization of the cultural scene as symbolic supporters of neoliberal ideology.

3.3   CHALLENGING POLITICS OF BELONGING IN THE POST-1989 EU COMMUNITY: BIG HOPE'S AND MATEI BEJENARU'S COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES

The 2002 project *Re:route* in Turin, Italy by the Hungarian artist Miklos Erhardt and Scottish artist Dominic Hislop (also known as the artist collective Big Hope)[292] and the 2007 *Together/Impreuna* project (as a follow-up to his 2005-2007 *Travel Guide*) in London, UK by the Romanian artist Matei Bejenaru exemplify two collaborative models of artistic production that challenged the consensus building form of community at the EU level. Engaging members of specific immigrant communities in two different EU states, I consider these collaborative artworks in light of the notion of European citizenship and its exclusionary effects on immigrant populations from non-EU nations and citizens of recent EU-member states. I argue that through their hybrid modes of collaboration based upon an approach that combines social capital and political capital, such community-oriented art projects enter the contested political debates on

immigration raged at the EU level, and propose alternative views to notions of community and citizenship generally posited as positive attributes of a pan-European community space.

Identifying with and involving the participation of particular immigrant groups in two different European cities, Erhardt & Hislop's and Bejenaru's projects probe the broader European discourse on belonging and not belonging most vividly illustrated through the debates associated with the EU's eastward expansion from the early to late 2000s and the notion of a European Citizenship. In 1993 the Treaty on the EU – also called the Maastricht Treaty, which also gave EU its current name – legalized the category of European Citizenship that conferred upon every legal citizen of any EU member nation the status of citizen of the European community of nations. Technically the term "community" was used in the European Coal and Steel Community or the ECSC, which was established in 1951 and brought France, Germany, and Italy and the Benelux countries together in a Community with the aim of organizing free movement of coal and steel and free access of sources of production. In 1957, the EEC and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC) were merged with ECSC forming the European Communities.[293] It may certainly be revealing to elaborate the etymological aspects and the social, political and cultural implications of the shift in the use of the term Community immediately after Second World War to the use of the term of Union in the early 1990s. However, as my aim in this text is not to offer a history of this political and economic formation, I do not use the term community to refer to a particular phase in the history of the EU, but rather to refer to current EU-member nations and (arguably) sense of cultural belonging that the status of European citizenship aims to invoke.

Demonstrating a free-market notion of citizenship, the principal rights enjoyed by the European citizens are referred to as the Four Fundamental Freedoms that include the freedom of

goods, persons, services and capital. It is significant that the Union citizenship is seen as supplementary and contingent upon the rights and obligations attached to every national member state, which in effect retains the power to define and decide who is or is not a European citizen. Reducing citizenship to a mere legal right, Union Citizenship limits non-EU residents' access to political and social opportunities at the pan-European level, transforming them into second-class citizens, an economic underclass of unwanted yet needed foreigners. While aiming to facilitate a borderless territory of free economic transactions, it ultimately contradicts the ideological claims of an inclusive and multi-cultural European community.[294]

In 2000 Etienne Balibar spoke of a *European apartheid* that exists simultaneously with the notion of European Citizenship. It implies that immigrant populations on the EU territory coming most often from the African nations – historically tied to Europe through the labor circuits of recruitment – and Eastern Europe – societies undergoing a selective admission process into the EU community – are constituted "as "inferior" in rights and dignity, subject to violent forms of security control and forced to live on the border, neither absolutely inside nor totally outside."[295] To combat this situation, as one of his proposed "worksites of democracy," Balibar calls for the democratization of borders promoting the notion of "a citizenship in Europe" rather than a "European citizenship," a shared construction of citizenship by the diverse inhabitants of Europe.[296] Such relational notion of citizenship relates to the spatial and temporal belonging to a certain place, where political and social rights are negotiated collectively yet guaranteed individually. As such, it emphasizes contingency and constant recontextualization and reformulation as essential components of an inclusive form of democratic belonging.

Both Erhardt & Hislop's and Bejenaru's projects have been created as a result of institutional invitation and are based on multi-level forms of local collaboration among

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communities of heterogeneous social agents. I believe that their art practices can be viewed as important nodal points where macro societal transformations are responded to, manifested and interfered in at the micro, everyday level. As such, I examine the different ways the artists advocate for democratic forms of citizenship aimed to address political exclusions and economic inequalities through the nature of their collaborative strategies of engagement, approaches to the notion of community, and their negotiations with the organizing and exhibiting institutional structures.

3.3.1   Advocating a pluralist form of democratic belonging

Invited to participate in the 2002 BIG Torino International Biennial of Young Artists titled "Big Social Game," Erhardt &Hislop conceived *Re:route* between December 2001 and May 2002.[297] Their project was part of the biennale section called Guestland, where the guest country was the Internet, curated by the artist group CALC formed by Thomas Sheidebauer and Teresa Alonso. Conforming to the organizers' criteria of selection, artists were invited based on their previous work that engaged specific modes of social transformation strategies. While developing a web-based component, each of the artists in the biennale was asked to create projects "with a socio-cultural link to the city of Turin" and also have a physical presence.[298] The Northern Italian city of Turin, with a legacy of labor activism and one of the few cities in Italy at the time with a leftist local government, is home of numerous non-governmental agencies and social organizations offering, for example, support for immigrant populations, aiming to empower them as active social agents in shaping the local political culture of the city. This is significant when considering the right-wing national legislation on immigration, most vividly represented by the 2002 Bossi-Fini law (two different right-wing political party members

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Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Fini), Italy's "most highly restrictive reform since the fascist period."[299]

While informed by the biennale's broader framework anchored in art's potential as a social catalyst, the artists' project evolved from the collective's independent working and decision-making process based on various ground level collaborations. Following initial research and a visit and tour of the city with the biennale curators, Erhardt & Hislop identified the conflicted relationship between local and immigrant population, a situation that is characteristic to most EU countries and the world at large. Once in Turin, in a rather organic way, they established contact with social workers, teachers, political activists, cultural organizations and support groups for immigrants that were willing to recommend the artists to potential participants: "Due to their knowledge of English and my knowledge of Italian, we were quite autonomous of making all sorts of contacts… some organizations directed us to specific people…others just invited us to meetings where we could approach people on our own."[300] For example, Association Diafa Al Maghreb, founded in 1997 by Sued Benkindim offers educational, legal, and welfare support to immigrant groups from Maghreb countries, Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in order to facilitate their integration into Italian society and promote cooperation between immigrant and Italian population.[301] The staff of such organizations functions as cultural, political and social mediators both between the immigrant community and Italian society and among the different migrant groups. Just as in their earlier collaborative projects, the artists worked with a multitude of groups and organizations, which as Hislop expressed gave them "an insight into the broad spectrum of contexts, conditions and concerns of different immigrant groups in the city."[302] Conversely, the participating associations considered the art project as a platform to promote their goals to a broader public.

The social capital built through their interactions with a network of such local organizations allowed the artists to gain their trust to successfully engage with individual members and also avoid the ethical pitfalls of misappropriation and misrepresentation. *Re:route* represents Erhardt & Hislop's engagement with twenty eight recent immigrants in the city of Turin. It developed through a collaborative process that included several meetings and extended over a period of two and a half months, mostly funded by the biennale organizing institution. Beginning in December 2001, they met with participants who were invited to trace their own version of the city, "a mental map," based on their routes and affective responses to specific urban places on a blank white paper with only a dot in the center symbolizing the Torino's Porta Nuova train station, the main entry point to Turin for all immigrants. An interview based on their hand drawn mental maps immediately followed and a photo camera was given to them in order to photograph sites considered relevant to their view of the city.[303] Although initially structured around several production meetings, Erhardt & Hislop's project evolved organically through concomitant collaborations among various individuals who became part of the project at different stages of its development. In their roles as facilitators, rather then prescribers of a rigid structure, they maintained an open and fluid premise of participation. Moreover, through a role reversal strategy the artists relinquished their authoritarian position as sole creators. Different members of the immigrant community became the photographers and producers of the work. Combining techniques of direct participation and distant observation, the artists blurred the line between art and life, their project emerging through a collective decision and production process.

The *Re:route* web archive features several of the individually hand-drawn maps, photographs and accompanying text. Each participant is identified by name, age, origin and current legal status in Italy.[304] This apparently classificatory criteria for managing immigrant

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population is brought into tension with alternative yet simultaneously existing views of the city offered by the mental maps. Such spatially subversive attempts are reminiscent of the *psychogeography* approach pioneered by Guy Debord and the Situationist International in the late 1950s. Engaging in a self-reflexive production of space, *Re:route* becomes a platform for articulating an inclusive and democratic form of citizenship based on complex relational processes, where temporal and spatial differences are continually negotiated between individuals. (Simultaneously, the same places are perpetual sites for policing practices, such as racial profiling that associate race with criminality. For example, the Turin police consider Porta Palazzo one of the most difficult zones in the city. James from Nigeria observes:

> when a black man is involved in a dirty deed the belief of the Italians is that every black man is involved in a dirty deed…the Police can come into the market and ask your document or passport and you can be deported…

Such informal patterns of everyday interactions have been regulated by Italy's institutionalized restrictive legislation on immigration, as seen in Silvio Berlusconi's early 2000s "zero tolerance" policy,[305] which is in stark contrast with the inclusive community rhetoric officially promoted at the EU institutional level. Through the collection of individual views where each of the self-narrated oral history becomes part of a community of singular voices, Erhardt & Hislop disrupts the exclusionary and essentialist approach to immigrant populations. They propose a pluralist form of belonging that not only advocates for interactions between equal social agents but at the same time it recognizes the contingency and ambiguity of social relations forged at the street level.

Although the term "community" (like "citizenship") has varying meanings depending upon the context; most commonly it indicates a group of people who have common interests and goals, share a way of life generated through cooperative activities, identify with the group, and

have some means of deciding who is or isn't part of the community.[306] This ordinary notion of community is flexible[307] and/or ambiguous enough to accommodate users from the entire political spectrum. Also, it does not exclude injustice and exploitation between its members interested in pursuing their individual goals. Typically, in institutionally commissioned community-based art projects, the standardized formula is to choreograph the artist to engage with a previously identified local community and to address an *a priori* identified social issue, ultimately exploiting the concept of community-based to advance an institutional goal. In contrast to this formula, Erhard & Hislop's collaborative process is based on an organically emerging relational process and interactions relatively independent of the art biennale institution. Most importantly, the artists make use of the institutional invitation as a tool, first, to engage with politically coherent groups, as illustrated by the various social organizations whose defined goals are advanced through their participation in the art project. Secondly, they trigger a form of temporary yet intensely, engaged form of community composed of a plurality of individually distinctive voices that share a sense of solidarity in confronting the exploitative effects of political legislation.

This gains particular significance in the context of what Cris Shore referred to as *Fortress Europe* to indicate the tightening of EU borders against immigrants in the early 2000s. Contrary to the artists' conceptualization of an inclusive and productive form of difference, in the Italian context, for example, difference has played an exclusionary role. Markers of differential ordering of immigrant groups had been based on a person's national affiliation, physical appearance or popular stereotypical notions produced and reproduced in the media or in discussions among Italians rather than on actual interaction with immigrant groups and individuals. As a result: Bangladeshi immigrants are seen as street vendors, African groups sell handbags and Romanian

and Albanian men are viewed as untrustworthy and to be part of the mafia.[308] As Flavia Stanley argues, the Italian citizens' differential treatment of immigrant groups is motivated by a desire to protect their own European status from and against non-EU citizens.[309] Illustrating a call for an egalitarian and heterogeneous form of citizenship, Erhardt & Hislop's project based on hybrid collaborative modes of production resulting in collective yet individually distinct views of the city, aim to disrupt the divisive notions of managed diversity within the Italian and European context.

3.3.2   Transgressing essentialist views through participatory performativity

Aiming to transgress essentialist approaches to immigrant groups based on stereotypical views has also motivated Matei Bejenaru in his 2007 work *Impreuna/Together*. It is a video documentation of a one-minute performance that resulted from a two-month long collaboration with various organizations and individuals of the Romanian immigrant community in London. Similarly to the above-mentioned artist collective, but employing different collaborative strategies and approaches to the notion of community, Bejenaru's work participated in the socio-political debate on immigration raged at the European level in the mid to late 2000s. *Impreuna/Together* was a site and time specific performance to accompany his 2005-2007 work *Travel Guide* in the 2007 *Irresistible Force* exhibition at the Tate Modern London. Installed in the Level 2 Gallery (this space is dedicated to emerging international artists) the exhibition was part of a series of four related shows that aimed to "explore ideas of citizenship through themes of economy, belief, the state and the individual."[310]

At first sight, the one-minute performance *Together/Impreuna*, choreographed by the artist in front of Tate Modern, suggests a poetic notion of belonging. It communicates a symbolic

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community based on an all-encompassing and generalized view of the Romanian diaspora. At the same time, it is an anchor for a sustained tension emerging at the city level as the global becomes localized. It engages with a "new geography of marginally" as the individual immigrant bodies that are gradually coming together into a nearly forty-member group are made visible against the background of the architectural structures of a "new geography of centrality"[311] represented by London's financial and corporate institutions. Most importantly, similar to *Re:route*, Bejenaru's work proposes a form of shared construction of citizenship based on what Balibar considered "the universal right of *circulation* and *residency*, including reciprocity of cultural contributions."[312] This is most evident in the artist's multi-layered collaborative process that led to the performance.

While Bejenaru was invited by Tate Modern to participate in the exhibition, he created *Impreuna/Together* during a two-month residence at the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), which provided organizational and financial support for the project. A non-profit institution, ICR is Romania's official organization. Effectively working in London since 2006, through its diverse programming focused on promoting the country's cultural heritage, ICR stated goals are to reverse the "negative stereotype of orphaned-children, stray dogs and too-eager migrants,"[313] which tend to inform the way Romania is seen in the UK. Fitting well within the institute's mission, *Impreuna/Together* was viewed by both ICR and the artist as an important vehicle to influence the public perception of the Romanian immigrant community positively. The project's potential for great impact in this regard was clearly stated in the artist's call for participation, which was sent by ICR to the members of various organizations of the Romanian Diaspora in London.[314]

Over the course of several weeks following the distribution of an initial call for participation, Bejenaru entered in numerous dialogic interactions with several individual members of the Romanian immigrant community. According to the artist: "30 to 40 people responded to my call and I personally met with them. Several discussions happened in a Romanian restaurant in London…"[315] Inevitably, being a Romanian citizen and speaking the language, the artist identified with the Romanian immigrant community and was also able to gain support for his project from both official organizations and individual members. An important step forward was gaining the trust of the religious community including the priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church of London, who spoke about Bejenaru's project during his masses and invited the Romanian parishioners to participate in his project.[316] Spontaneous cooperation with and among various members of the community for the project was facilitated by the artist's access to the existing social capital built through the network of the different Romanian organizations in UK.

Bejenaru's individual interactions were coalesced in a collective representation as seen in the *Impreuna/Together* performance. While it symbolically brought together an active collective of bodies into a form of community where its members were in control of enacting its own self-presence. In a podcast on the museum's website, Bejenaru referred to the performance as a space where the Romanian immigrant community can communicate self-esteem through "the power of a gaze" aimed at breaking through the public perception of their identity based on ethnically and culturally divisive stereotypical notions. His collaborative work with "politically coherent communities"[317] challenged the cultural and economic discrimination towards a specific immigrant community in UK. He brought together various organizations of the Romanian diaspora, each contributing a different aspect to the project while also providing a space to

advance each of their individual missions. As a productive component of the artist's accessed

social capital, the norm of what Robert Putnam calls "generalized reciprocity"[318] contributed to

various relational exchanges with different organizations that considered their participation in the

art project to benefit them at a future date rather than offer them an immediate advantage. For

example, Bejenaru engaged members of the Romanca Society, whose mission is to support

Romanians' integration into the British society. In 2008 the Romanca Society filed a petition

signed by 208 individuals addressed to the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown asking for

legislation that would give Romanians in the UK an unrestricted right to work.[319]

This request is particularly significant especially since currently Romanian and

Bulgarian nationals are subject to restricted regulations, although both countries are members of

the EU. This is due to one of EU's regulations instated in 2001 regarding accession negotiations

with several CEE countries. It states that citizens of new EU-members do not have the legal

permission to work in any of the existing 15 member states for a period of seven years following

their nations' official entrance in the EU.[320] As I mentioned earlier, one of the fundamental rights

of being a European Citizen (status which is conferred automatically to nationals of any EU

member state) is mobility of labor or services. Thus, EU's policy discriminates not only against

non-EU state citizens but also against specific EU-nations by going against one of its core idea –

the four freedoms that theoretically should be open to any EU-state. As Heather Grabbe

observes, even though aware of EU's hypocrisy, candidate states agreed to the condition since

the overall gains of membership outweighs the costs of the restriction. For instance, Romania

and Bulgaria wanted to join the EU also because it would mean the elimination of visa

requirements to legally travel across the EU territory. Although official EU-member since 2007,

Romania is not yet (the projected date is sometime in 2013) part of the Schengen zone, or the

European passport free zone. As the decision of who can belong or not belong to the privileged community is made independently by each of the EU member states, the restriction further indicates the highly negative impact the presence of, for example, Romanian immigrants in EU-nations have on the overall tightening of European borders as a way to politically manage the presence and future intake of foreigners.

Bejenaru's *Impreuna/Together* was a follow-up to his 2005-2007 *Travel Guide* on view in the *Irresistibly Force* exhibition at Tate Modern. Conceived in 2005 before Romania joined the EU and its citizens could not travel to UK without a visa, *Travel Guide* vividly articulated the exclusionary effects of political legislation instated to prevent the migration of people. It was feared that migrants would become financial 'burdens' on the European states' social assistance programs.[321] The *Guide* detailed several ways in which Romanian citizens could travel illegally, yet safely to England, one of only three countries that granted citizens from the CEE countries, who became EU members on May 2004, the right to work. The work took the form of an actual travel guide that unfolds into a large schematic map of different routes across Europe. It featured photographs of various modes of transportation, border crossing sites and a color-coded statistical chart illustrating the risk conditions for passing the frontiers. Although written by the artist, the text appeared to be generated by former illegal immigrants based on their own or their friends' experiences.[322] As such, Bejenaru identifies with the former and/or prospective immigrants and his *Travel Guide* articulates a notion of community whose members not only share a way of life, common interests, and a sense of belonging but also a strong sense of solidarity across national borders.

Whether the information was true or not is much less important than what it indicated about the conditions that sustain the ideal of a community of Europe. Its real effects were

captured, for example, when the *Guide* warned future immigrants of the danger of hiding in shipping containers and told of an incident from 1995 when three Romanians "ended up drowned or eaten by sharks" in the Atlantic Ocean after having been caught on the shipmaster of Maersk Dubai company. Subverting the language and scope of generic travel guides designed for well-off tourists to explore new sites, Bejenaru's *Travel Guide* was about the worldwide contemporary liminal condition of immigrants and foreigners as such. Moreover, the guide and its 2007 follow-up *Together/Impreuna* based on collaborative processes unfolding in various urban sites of the Romanian diaspora, wove an alternative urban geography of several European cities. Similar to the "mental maps" of Turin in *Re:route*, Bejenaru's two-part project revealed the potential of the city's everyday sites as places for a self-reflexive production of space. These artists and their collaborators engaged with what Henri Lefebvre calls, *differential space* which enables users to appropriate space and undo the domination of global political arrangements and financial markets, which have imposed their regulatory spatial organization.[323] Such art projects help build a counter-space by revealing the contention between the production of space for profit and control and the use of space in everyday life.

The artists, in different ways and from different cultural and national contexts used their institutional invitation to react to the socio-politically exclusions affecting various immigrant populations. At the same time, rather than take a directly oppositional stance towards the institution of art as such, they employed institutional critique strategies.[324] They aimed to expand it into an institution of critique, able to reflect on its own role, for example, in the wider contemporary discourse on immigration and the accompanying notions of community as a way to possibly enable practices that help redress existing political and cultural exclusions. For instance, to create *Re:route* Erhardt & Hislop used the framework of the Turin Biennale as a

resource and a starting point in their process to articulate an egalitarian yet heterogeneous form of community through collaborations with politically defined groups and organizations. *Re:route'*s installation consisted of an overwhelming amount of information – hanging fragments of texts next to over 600 photographs along with numerous hand drawn "mental maps" geographical city coordinates, all aimed at encouraging informed and sustained interaction with the art project.[325]

Nevertheless, the authority of the institution in shaping the work could be seen in the artists' inability to create an official foldable map of Turin featuring the mental maps with the accompanying individual texts, as they initially intended. The Turin Biennial in partnership with the city government did not support the production and distribution of the proposed map, thus also maintaining the political divide between those who belong and those who do not belong to the European Union community.[326] On the other hand, Bejenaru's *Travel Guide* installed on the gallery floor was made available to visitors (albeit to a limited art audience even though the museum did not charge an entrance fee for this exhibition) at the museum to take away. According to the artist, *Travel Guide* was intended as an artwork, meant solely for an art context, which problematized a political issue. In the *Irresistible Force* exhibition, *Travel Guide* was a component of a two-part project, which included the participatory and collaborative work *Together/Impreuna*. I argued that Bejenaru, through his art project exhibited at one of the world's major art institutions, was actively engaged in constructing a positive public image of the Romanian diaspora in England, an aim shared by the various organizations, the museum and individual members with whom he entered in collaboration.[327] While his Guide directly confronted the precarious reality and conditions of (Romanian) immigrants, his one-minute

performance bypassed a distantly symbolic representation and became an active body of a community performing its own presence, desires and goals.

Taken together the projects analyzed in this section share an emphasis on the shifting conditions of belonging that are continuously negotiated through relational processes. They foreground a multiplicity of identifications across and within different groups. They become platforms for contesting the existing conditions of specific immigrant groups in particular contexts, as well as challenge the exclusionary effects of normative conceptions of community. As such they offer a terrain for articulating different modes of democratic participation and for conceiving citizenship both in political and legal terms while taking into account individuals' active bodily presence in a particular space and time.

Rather than isolated forms of art practice significant only within the specific geopolitical context from which they emerge, Erhardt & Hislop's and Bejenaru's projects are part of a worldwide discourse on socio-politically or community-oriented art forms created by a younger generation of artists concerned with socio-political interventions at local levels. Practitioners share a multi-level collaborative mode of production over a sustained period of time with local organizations and members of specific communities, with which they actively engage through dialogic interactions, empathetic identification, oral history and role reversal strategies. Secondly, they take part in the constructions of emancipated forms of community composed of heterogeneous social agents actively involved in a self-reflexive process of recreating their immediate locality. And finally, they aim to expand the self-critical potential of the art institution by putting the exhibition framework to use as a public site for collective advocacy.

Such practitioners' art projects can become unique sites for action throughout the world, enabling community members to take ownership of their own actions and engage in a collective

practice to articulate forms of democratic belonging. Ultimately, their aim is to function as catalysts for change or as platforms for collective representation, thus implicitly questioning traditional forms of making art and building upon earlier forms of avant-garde, such as Constructivism with its ultimate goal of merging art and life. As one of the two main branches of the Russian avant-garde,[328] Constructivism was fuelled by the belief in art and artists' direct roles in overcoming the impoverished life conditions in Russia following the 1917 October Revolution that ousted the tsarist regime from the country. Especially during the peak years between 1917 and the early 1920s, artists were encouraged and expected to envision, propose and design innovative ways for the social use of art. In a 2010 essay, Russian curator and art critic Ekaterina Degot reflected on the Russian Constructivists endeavors:

> Passive spectators were to become creators and their works transformed into a kind of human being that is not to be judged by beauty alone. [...] This new artwork was a speaking one, a working one, a human one. Art had to become live.[329]

Such goals of creating renewed forms of sociability among people, of transforming the viewer of art into a direct participant and collaborator in (art) production are what contemporary artists, such as Bejenaru and Erhard & Hislop build upon in their socially engaged works discussed in this chapter. Through their various art projects, such artists aim to recover the transformative potential of politics as a discursive and participatory practice open to a multitude of voices and interests. Such artistic attempts carry potentials for change in the current era of neoliberalism. Contemporary democratic governments have considerably distanced themselves from their original mandates to represent and act in the interests of people, as was the case, for instance, with the Bolshevik revolutionary government when art and politics were united, and their current role has increasingly been to facilitate the expansion of free-market mechanisms worldwide.

By reviving art's direct role in society, viewer's direct engagement in (art's) creation as opposed to passive consumer of (aesthetic) objects, art's potentialities in provoking relational associations and inspiring change at both the local and global level, these artists aim to counteract current market-oriented tendencies centered on the financial and/or symbolic investment properties of an art object and art practice. Under the increasing influence of global neoliberalism with national states facilitating its borderless policies, art in general and community-oriented socially engaged art in particular has increasingly been incorporated into the programs of mainstream privately and/or state funded organizations often only to contribute to the institutions' symbolic capital. Such maneuvers are often seen as elitist modes of entertainment or occasions for charitable donations primarily meant to elevate the benefactor' social and symbolic status. Ultimately, these are part of the broader field of culture considered to function as a lubricant for the ever-expanding engines of the neoliberal market forces and the advancement of the neoliberal ideology according to which:

> Human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.[330]

As discussed earlier in this part, the cultural initiatives at EU level, especially in prospective and recent member CEE states are representative of the cultural tools utilized in the forging of a transnational European community space dominated by neoliberalism. This illustrates EU's inherent paradox as it navigates between conflicting desires. On one hand, there is the ideal of a transnational community most often achieved through cultural policies where each member-state enacts its own individualized national specificity while committing to a community centered on the European identity. On the other hand, there are the legislative maneuvers enabling a free-

market borderless union that puts limits on the free movement of individuals, facilitated by each individual member-state, under the EU's directives.

Several art projects analyzed in Part II challenged the notion of community based on consensual approach aimed at overcoming conflict in the interests of unregulated neoliberal market forces. By both expanding upon and making use of existing forms of social capital, the artists' participatory and collaborative strategies aimed to enact inclusive public platforms empowering their participants, while calling attention to exclusionary forms of community.

It is therefore important to avoid misappropriations of both the term and actual fabric of a community by approaching it, for instance, in terms of its members' constantly shifting identities and histories. It is essential to develop tools of engagement that establish reciprocity between the artist and community members and allows for both debates and negotiations. Ultimately, the resulting projects have been either collaboratively conceptualized and produced, reflecting and calling attention to a particularly relevant issue in the community, or functioned as a participatory platform for the local individuals empowered to pursue their shared interests at the political level. Although different in scope, at the core of most contemporary socially engaged art practices lies a renewed sense of sociability centered on dialogic exchanges and direct participation. In different ways around the world, such contemporary artists employ various methods and strategies to imagine and produce artistic projects most often with and for the members of a particular community.

4.0   PART III: FORMS OF ARTISTS' INSTITUTIONALIZATIONS IN AN ERA OF

NEOLIBERALISM

It's not a question of being against the institution: We are the institution. It's a question of what kind of institution we are, what kind of values we institutionalize, what forms of practice we reward, and what kinds of rewards we aspire to. Because the institution of art is internalized, embodied, and performed by individuals [...][331]

<div align="right">Andrea Fraser</div>

It is important to acknowledge that while spaces made available by the powerful may be discursively bounded to permit only limited citizen influence, colonizing interaction and stifling dissent, the contingency of participatory processes and the expected effects that they can have lends even the most instrumental of interventions the potential for transformation.[332]

<div align="right">Andrea Cornwall</div>

While in the first post-1989 decade former socialist societies were visibly dominated by collapsing communist institutions, an almost unanimous embrace of neoliberal market-oriented policies, a desire for internationalization and reunification with Western Europe, after most countries' entrance into the EU, a lack of funding and the marginalization of experimental forms of contemporary arts continued to define local contexts. Despite of or, perhaps, because of the existing local conditions, minimally or self-funded projects by a younger generation of artists began to emerge that challenged the effects of increasingly aggressive neoliberalism, as both political ideology and economic order.

Art initiatives in the early 2000s by artists, such as the Budapest-based collective Big Hope that unfolded simultaneously with institutionalized forms of art, attempted to revive the

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meaning of leftist politics in a context where democracy has been equated with neoliberalism, and the left was discredited *en masse*, being synonymous with totalitarianism and oppressive policies of the former communist regimes. More recently, in the late 2000s and into the present, contemporary artists in Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia entered in a process of self-institutionalization forming alternative gallery spaces and discursive programs. Such initiatives, while exemplifying the international trend of "the paracuratorial" seen as the latest phase of what initially started with "the new institutionalism," could be seen as counter-forces against the locally right-wing governmental programs aimed at condemning any left-oriented or inspired manifestation, while promoting a national re-centralization of local art museums and institutions.

This final part considers three modes of socio-politically engaged art practices, which employed mechanics of social capital towards different aims. The first section offers a comparative study of two institutionally funded and managerially implemented community-based art projects, the *Art for Social Change* program in Bulgaria and *cARTier* in Romania that made use of participatory forms of engagement in order to enact apolitical and exclusionary forms of community. In contrast, Big Hope's *Inside Out* and the *Disobbedienti* project, presented in the second part, while making use of similar participatory and collaborative strategies, aimed to transform forms of social capital into political capital. Part III discusses three case studies of artists' self-institutionalization into various local art organizations – Dinamo and its transformation into IMPEX in Budapest, E-cart's *Department for Art in Public Space* in Bucharest and 0GMS in Sofia. In various ways, these reveal the emancipatory potential of social capital (accumulated through diverse forms of networking among a younger generation of artists) to offer a corrective to Western forms of institutional critique and stand against traditional and nationalist forms of art institutionalization promoted by conservative local governments.

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Ultimately, this part argues that contrary to the understanding of social capital as solely leading to exclusionary forms of belonging, its features of generalized forms of trust, reciprocity and networking have the potential to inspire collective action and generate political participation in order to achieve oftentimes-contentious yet inclusive forms of public spheres. Representing various forms of participations and a multiplicity of relations among individuals and groups, social capital, as a conceptual tool, recalls theorist Judith Butler's notion of the *performative act.* Butler defined it as "one which brings into being or enacts that which it names and so marks the constitutive or productive power of discourse." The potential for agency lies in the discursive "power regimes which constitute us, and which we oppose."[333] As such, sites of power with and through their fluidity and constant need for the (re)articulation of conventions, contain the potential for subversion, denaturalization and recontextualization.

4.1   COMMUNITY-BASED ARTS AS DEPOLITICIZED SOCIAL PRACTICE IN THE 2000s: *ART FOR SOCIAL CHANGE* AND *cARTier*

Since the 1990s, international development organizations, such as Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and foundations active in second and third world countries with the aim of reintegrating socially excluded local communities, have increasingly emphasized in their initiatives, participation and close collaborations with local individuals and groups, as their main working methodology. For instance, the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) strategy, implemented in rural India in the 1980s and early 1990s and theorized by Robert Chambers in 1994, encompassed a series of approaches and methods to "enable local (rural and urban) people

to express, enhance, share and analyze knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act."[334] PRA foregrounded the role of the outsiders – the representatives of the development agencies – as "facilitators," and catalysts who "watch, listen and learn" in order to "allow people to dominate, to determine much of the agenda, to gather, express and analyze information, and to plan."[335] Similarly, in the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/1: Attacking Poverty* emphasis was placed on methods that contribute to the empowerment of poor people by promoting, for example, "economic opportunities," "better access to markets and expanded assets," all defining inclusion of the marginalized in terms of their individual participation in the neo-liberal market economy.

However, such emphasis on participation and collaboration with local people that are considered to lead to their empowerment and self-improvement act in fact to legitimize the existing power relations by obscuring, for example, the systematic causes that provoked the condition of global poverty in the first place. Moreover, by foregrounding the self-transformation of individuals (who often appear in annual studies and reports as ethnographic representatives underscoring the experts' narratives) attention is shifted from larger political and economic interests of the development organizations and their agents to the local people's themselves. Following the organizations' interventions, the poor are seen as (empowered) authors responsible for their own condition. In a 2004 article, Glyn Williams poignantly observed:

The ways in which participation is located within the wider operation of development projects and programs usually means that, while sensitively conducted PRA activities can 'uncover' aspects of local power relations, seldom if ever are the marginalized able to turn the focus of attention on to the development process itself.[336]

Thus, what may at first glance appear as open and emancipatory forms of engagement, they become technical operations that transform such community oriented projects into de-politicized endeavors supportive and uncritical of the status quo by shifting the focus away from the systemic causes and power dynamics. A similar trend that underscores participation and collaboration with local marginalized communities as a form towards their empowerment has also characterized several contemporary socially engaged art projects in post-socialist countries supported by European and American international development organizations and foundations.

In this section, I closely analyze two long-term community-oriented art initiatives, *Art For Social Change* in Bulgaria and *cARTier* in Romania, which I argue employ participatory modes of engagement in order to enact a depoliticized social practice. While, the mechanics of social capital are utilized to carry out both of the projects, they fall short of contributing to and accumulating political capital for the involved groups, revealing Bourdieu's conception of social capital as leading to apolitical and socially exclusionary forms of communities. An in-depth analysis of these two case studies, which are approached from within the problematic forms of their official institutionalization, becomes relevant in our contemporary global neoliberal condition. Increasingly, neoliberalism as a political ideology has been appropriating and transforming formerly politicized forms of engagement into apolitical community collaborations, such as these, aimed at legitimizing existing power relations by blocking, for example, any attempts and initiatives focused on challenging injustices at the systemic level.

4.1.1 *Art for Social Change*: The rhetoric of social exclusion as forms of legitimation

Initiated in 2000 in Sofia, the four-year program *Art for Social Change* was coordinated in the first two years by the local Soros Center for the Arts and since April 2002 implemented by

the Red House Center for Culture and Debate, which is an outgrow of the first with a majority of staff transfer to the latter. As stated on its website, the Red House' mission statement defines the institution as:

> A multifunctional socio-political center in Sofia, which provides an opportunity for the youngest generation to participate in public life, brings together young artists who are ready to question the prevailing perceptions and offers them a place to realize and present their projects.

In its long-term structure, the *Art for Social Change* program represents an instance of a participatory development initiative that uses forms of art to engage various community members in what Andrea Cornwall had called an *invited space*. These are usually spaces created by organizations or programs that bring together people, who might not associate or assemble otherwise and who have different interests, accountabilities and responsibilities, implicitly creating differences in power relations inherent in such spaces. *Invited spaces* are the opposite of *popular spaces*, which typically emerge spontaneously as people, mostly with similar interests, gather together in collective action.

Art for Social Change was a collaborative project that grouped together various visual and performing artists with psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and art managers into interdisciplinary teams in order to apply artistic means to engage with institutionalized children and young people at risk. The aim was to "enable them to overcome the social and cultural isolation, marginalization and disorientation resulting from their separation from society and to prepare them for active participation in community life and civic society."[337] Over the course of four years, the program involved over fifty interdisciplinary artist teams working with five hundred children from twenty-one institutions in thirteen different locations, such as homes for

children deprived of parental care, vocational boarding schools and homes for mentally challenged children and adolescents throughout Bulgaria.

As described in detail in several grant proposals, the program's four target groups included: professional and non-professional artists from different fields, such as performing art, visual arts, literature; children and youth at risk living in state institutions and schools with criminal records, street children, victims of violence in the family or in their social environment; the staff from the state specialized institutions for children, such as educators, school psychologists, social workers, medical staff; and the local community – such as civic organizations, the population of the village or town, representatives of the local councils – and Bulgarian society at large.

In 2004, two percent or approximately 31000 of Bulgaria's children lived in special care state institutions that are mostly situated at the outskirts of towns and cities (a remnant of the former socialist regime that eliminated from public view society's problematic families and children) and are below the international standards of both physical care and educational programs. According to the program's initiators, the staff lack specialized educational and psychological training, which greatly contributes to the children's further marginalization. Through the use of community-arts, albeit its meaning never defined by its initiators, the program defined its role as introducing a model of training for both social care workers in state institutions as well as for local contemporary artists, for whom socially engaged and participatory art were still seen as unorthodox art practices.

As part of the overall structure of the *Art for Social Change* program, the interdisciplinary artist teams were systematically trained by medical professionals into using various techniques, such as those reflecting and enhancing group dynamics through interactive

games, as well as socio-drama techniques exemplified through role-playing, doubling of a character, sculpting a character, theatrical scenery and props, among other aspects. There were monthly and weekly training sessions on various such themes and topics, most often proposed by the artist teams based upon their specifically encountered concerns in their process of working with children.

Rather than a detailed presentation of the entire program in all its activities, my goal here is to analyze the overall structure and aims of the programs through the work of the only three-visual artist team, Taka-Company for Visual Arts (Irina Karakehayova, Dessislawa Morosowa and Daniela Tzvetkova). In contrast to the other teams that were predominately comprised of performing artists who engaged the participation of thirty to ninety children, Taka worked with the least number of children, between four and twelve at a time who came from normal state middle and high schools, rather than from state-subsidized homes for children deprived of parental care as was the case with the other initiatives.

Similar to most of the other teams within the *Art For Social Change*, Taka has continued to work throughout the program's four years of existence. Within the first two years, 2001-2002, the three-artist group worked with eight children of ages eleven and thirteen from the 39th Comprehensive High School Petar Dinekov in Sofia. During the school year, they met the children once a week for three hours after regular school time followed by weekly meetings with two-social care professionals who supervised and trained the artists. Taka's initial activities centered on various spatial configurations with the artists making use of individual and intimate cabins (the size of changing booths) where children could enter and draw. Being their first encounter with the children, the artists provided these enclosed spaces as sheltered environments for the children, where no one could enter unless invited by the child.

The next stage consisted in the artists replacing the cabins with screens set up in the room and designing activities involving both sides of the screen: "The children were working either squeezed behind the screen, individually on one side, set far apart or divided in couples at the opposite sides of the screen."[338] In these process-oriented activities the artists' goals were to gradually involve the children in a process of sharing: their personal space, their problems and their art works, implicitly "communicating their ideas and acquiring confidence that their problems matter and their input is valued."[339] Artistic means, such as drawing and sculptural and spatial configurations, were employed as aids in the children's self-expression rather than with a scope of creating specific objects.

Taka's *Project 10* during the spring and summer of 2003 represented the most active and productive year. Their activities took place in the Budnina Community Space (Chitalishte) in the district of Mladost 4 in Sofia as well as in different locations in the city and around Sofia. Taka worked with ten children, ages nine to fourteen from several public schools in the district. In their activities, they employed various visual art media such as drawing, painting, clay, photography, and collage to design interactive projects for and with the children. If in the previous years, the artists met with the children only once a week, during this time, the group met up to sixteen times a month for at least three hours. The team also organized various trips to places such as Shipka, famous for the country's largest rose farms, the Vitosha mountain resort in the vicinity of Sofia and the historic town of Plovdiv. In each of these locations, children were engaged in a particular activity and explored an artistic medium. For instance, while in Shipka, they joined local farmers in picking rose pedals, an activity, which was followed by art sessions in which they drew rose petals.

The artists saw these open-air activities and field trips as modes of facilitating informal group solidarity based on mutual dialogue and communication among the children. "The children worked willingly. They could spend more time together, which strengthened the links between them. More and more often they shared personal stories and problems. During the trips they showed solidarity to the common actions whatever they were."[340] At first glance, the long-term institutionalized commitment is among the first indicator of the artists' accumulated social capital that takes time and effort to build. Representing core mechanics of social capital, trust and reciprocity between artists and children may be implied to have occurred considering the group's on-going work for four years. There is also a gradual change in their activities from initially creating sheltered environments for children to organizing days-long field trips, illustrating a carefully orchestrated series of engagement that progressively opened the dialogue between children and artists. This implicitly not only affected transformations in children but also in the artists themselves.

However, the artists encountered several obstacles that reveal the problematic aspects of such large-scale and long-term forms of institutionalized community arts. The groups of children that Taka worked with changed from year to year and even from month to month. In a 2004 report submitted by Taka to the Red House for Culture and Debate on the composition of their group, the artists explain: "Dimitar Filchev – since the very beginning, Martin Popov, Ilian Kamenov-since April 2003, Hristo Dimitrov, Dimitar Kamenov, Fikrie Ismailova – in the last phase. We expect three new children to join the group." Moreover, in the last moment, some children declined to join the artists on their field trips and after their first year of working in School 39's sports hall they were asked by the school administrators to leave, which determined the artists to seek assistance from representative of the local government.

While such obstacles and shifts in behaviors may be inevitable when working with children, the overall structure of the program played a leading role in sculpting the process of Taka's activities. First, the children were not selected organically by the artists, but rather by school psychologists who were contacted beforehand to choose children from their schools who experience difficulties in communication to participate in after-school activities with the artists.

Second, the artists were under constant supervision by experts – psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists – who either met weekly with the artists, in the case of social-care professionals assigned to each team, or organized training meetings, thematic seminars and workshops, all aimed at identifying techniques for the artists to use in their work with children. In such context, artists were deployed as instruments for implementing the program's targeted goals rather than establishing an equitable collaborative relationship between artists and social workers. The stated long-term goal of the program was "to try to define the role of the artist as an agent of social and cultural transformation [...] art-making as a means for personal enrichment and growth."[341]

Third, the detail-oriented and close managerial supervision of all the program's activities catered to the funders' requests, which further undermined a reciprocal relationship between the collaborators. For example, financial support from the European Community's Phare 2000 Access Programme was contingent upon the *Art for Social Change* program monitoring, tracking and measuring such process-oriented and shifting manifestation as "the influence of the artistic activities upon the children" and "the attitudes of the society towards the young people at risk," aspects which obviously are impossible to measure.

Moreover, not only in Taka's activities but also throughout the program, emphasis was placed on enhancing children's "self-esteem as citizens and their consciousness as part of the

community" through the creative means of visual arts, which were considered to help them "learn new patterns of communication and feedback, teamwork and decision making."[342] Terminology, such as "personal growth", "self-esteem" and also "teamwork" as pre-requisites for inclusion into the larger society, underscores the differences in power relations inherent in an *invited space*. In contrast to sites which, for example, marginalized groups voluntarily claim to further their rights, the goal of community-arts, such as those initiated by the *Art for Social Change* program is rather to bring the dysfunctional and asocial members into the prevailing order by educating them and finding them a place within the already existent societal patterns. It is here that the mechanics of social capital leads to a depoliticized social practice. More specifically, it falls to lead to a transformation into political capital for the participants, which would enable a path to agency that would challenge existing patterns of exclusions.

Significantly, the overall program makes use of participation and collaboration as vehicles to shift the focus from the structural and systemic causes of Bulgaria's growing problem of poverty, which leads to numerous children deprived of parental care to reside in state institutions, to the moral and cultural reintegration of the marginalized children and by extension their families. In such a context, the poor are blamed for their failure if unable to make use of the trainings and techniques offered and taught to them by the foundations in the temporarily constructed spaces. Among the acknowledged obstacles or "risk factors" that were seen to impede the program's state goals were the adverse social climate formed by "acts of violence and violation" of children's rights by both their families and the staff of state institutions. The program's structure, approaches and representatives are thus cleansed of any responsibility for its failure or unsustainability in the long-term.

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If it were indeed true to its stated aims, instead of unilaterally centering on activities for children's socialization as well as on their moral and cultural integration into society, the community-arts program could have, for instance, organized open forums for competing critical views to be expressed involving the children's parents, school teachers, local and state representatives to address the political and economic marginalization of such families and to both articulate the deeper causes and identify possible and reliable mechanisms for improvement. In a final report on their activities, Taka noted:

> By the end of the process, the team felt in a state of "idyllic isolation," having no feedback for their work except from the children, and having no real interest in the opinions of psychologists, parents, and teachers.[343]

Furthermore, the program's stated political impact is limited to managerial and administrative aspects rather than aimed at provoking systemic changes. According to the Red House for Culture and Debate's *Action Plan 2004* for the *Art for Social Change* program, the House "established contacts" with representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the State Agency for Child Protection and Ministry of Education in order to communicate "the impact and results of the different projects" of the program. Yet, how can art's impact on the children's process of socialization into society be measured? Similarly, how are process-oriented activities expected to yield quantifiable results?

Such aspects reveal the paradoxes inherent in the institutionalized and foundation-funded forms of community-arts that superficially and naively adopt the rhetoric of participation and collaboration. These only serve as moral legitimations for the global neoliberal capitalism aimed at forming entrepreneurial individuals responsible for their own (personal and socio-economic) condition.

Both through its developed community-arts programs and as an institution, the Red House for Culture and Debate, in fact, functions as an ideological bastion of what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello called "the new spirit of capitalism." Here spirit represents ideology – understood as "a set of beliefs inscribed in institutions, bound up with actions, and hence anchored in reality"[344] – that justifies engagement with capitalism. Since its inception in 19th century, capitalism managed to expand because it continues to argue and emphasize that individual profits and interests automatically serves societies' greater good. One of the most powerful modes through which such justification and legitimation of the economic accumulation process takes root is capitalism's projection of civic life, understood in terms of "institutional solidarity, the socialization of production, distribution and consumption, and collaboration between large firms and the state in pursuit of social justice."[345] Cleary, as we have seen, the *Art for Social Change* program represented a successful legitimization initiative of neoliberalism, which is the latest reincarnation of capitalism, rhetorically portraying itself as a site for civic engagement and social justice. Implicitly, such achievements also serve to fed off anti-capitalist critique (or make it more challenging for the opponents) as well as provide moral motivation for people to engage in its order, as economic accumulation is quintessential for the system to function.

Another illustrative example of the Red House for Culture and Debate as a haven for neoliberalism's justifications in terms of civic engagement represented the November 2001 seminar titled "Culture and Civil Society: A Promising Relationship or a Missed Opportunity?" co-organized by the Council of Europe, Bulgaria's Ministry of Culture, the Soros Center for the Arts – Sofia and the Red House for Culture and Debate. The seminar's stated goals were to find new ways to "empower civil society and increase its participation in the democratic life of the

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country" by encouraging closer interaction between arts and business, arts and the state and regional governments and the arts' role in tackling social exclusion. In particular, the role of the contemporary artist was understood as a "unique agent of social and economic change" in that it contributed to the empowerment of the individual living in a group or community.[346] Such a mission emphasizing a fruitful collaboration between arts and businesses wonderfully fulfills the quintessential tenets of capital accumulation at the core of capitalism that advocates individual prosperity as leading to the larger society's well-being.

It is noteworthy that historically, community-arts initiatives that developed, for example, in the UK in the 1970s, initially had powerful political impacts acting as anti-authoritarian forces. Although each community-based art project has its own specificity, all have been characterized by a belief in bringing about empowerment through participation, a dislike of institutional hierarchies, a belief in co-authorship of work and in the creative potential of all sections of society. As Sally Morgan observed:

> Some went further and believed that community arts provided a powerful medium for social and political change; that through accessing existing artistic media, acknowledging previously 'low-status' forms such as carnival, women's crafts and non-European art, and working in the area of social and political issues, community arts could provide the blueprint for a truly participatory and egalitarian democracy.[347]

Yet with the early 1980s, under Margaret Thatcher's conservative government (1979-1992) funding for such artists' initiative had gradually vanished, eroding the community-arts movement's political and social impact and increasingly transforming its practitioners from active agents into obedient employees of government organizations and international development agencies.

When seen from the perspective of the dematerialization of the art object into social processes as a way to stand against the hierarchies of the elitist art world materialized in museum

and galleries, or the affective transformations of all the participants as a result of a collaborative process, Taka's educational projects with children, developed within the *Art for Social Change* program, can been seen as belonging to the art historical genealogy of early community-arts. However, there is a significant difference. The contemporary artists' initiatives no longer served as a critique to the dominant order, since their activities have been rigidly institutionalized, incorporated or culturally assimilated within the 'new spirit of capitalism' where they now function to strengthen the system's moral justifications and satisfy, at least partially, its detractors. Discussing the transformation of community-arts movement in the UK from its heyday in the 1970s to its disempowerment starting in the 1980s and continuing into the present, art historian and critic Claire Bishop noted:

> Mopping up the shortfalls of a dwindling welfare infrastructure, community artists became professionalized, subject to managerial control, and radical politics were no longer necessary or even helpful to their identity and activities. An egalitarian mission was replaced by the conservative politics of those who controlled the purse strings.[348]

4.1.2 *cARTier*: Entertaining "Community" with cultural activities

A similar strategy foregrounding community arts as vehicles for urban renewal and social regeneration but void of political agency for its participants can be seen in the three-year program *cARTier* (2004-2007) in the north eastern Romanian city of Iasi. Organized with funds from the Swiss Cultural Program in Romania Pro Helvetia/ SDC, it was initiated by the local Vector Cultural Association (directed by visual artist Matei Bejenaru), collaborating with Iasi's City Hall, the local Pro Women Foundation and the Athenaeum Culture House in the working-class housing district of Tatarasi.

Retaining a similar educational intention as seen in the *Art For Social Change* program, the *cARTier* community-based project also saw the role of art as leading to the betterment of a

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community space "as a place for establishing social connections and of reinventing a public space."[349] An initial sociological study, titled "Culture and Education" that followed both qualitative methods, such as interviews with focus groups and quantitative methods, such as the use of a questionnaire format was conducted by the Pro Women Foundation during July and August 2003. The study had identified the local inhabitants' desires for particular cultural activities to take place on the Oancea Esplanade the in their district. These included: 39% expressed interest for concerts in the open, 37.75% for youth activities, 27.75% for theater plays, 16.5% film projections and 17.25% activities for children.[350]

The nature and diversity of *cARTier*'s cultural activities were conceptualized by Bejenaru based on the results of the sociological study, a training session by a specialist on social and cultural problems from Pro Helvetia Zurich, as well as following close consultation with the funders – the representatives of the local office of Swiss Cultural Program Pro Helvetia. Once conceptually designed and approved (at the top), cultural activities were organized, coordinated and carried out by "cultural animators," who were both paid sociologists, sociology students, local art teachers, artists and student volunteers. Their target groups included children (twenty-five students from the elementary School no. 10), youth (ten teenagers from the L.I. Cuza High School), middle age working people (about fifteen) and senior citizens (approximately twenty, although in the last two years of the project their number decreased with women being in majority). Each group met weekly with their respective cultural animator to engage in discussions and activities. As described by Bejenaru:

> The children's group has organized exhibitions, has taken part in creative workshops, the young people have published the district magazine Linia 1/3, have organized artistic events in the Tatarasi Athenaeum, while the senior citizens have tried, through photo exhibitions to reconstitute the memory of Tatarasi from their personal memories.[351]

Visual artists, such as Bogdan Teodorescu, Dan Acostioaei, Dragos Alexandrescu and Cristian Ungureanu, who were members of the Vector Association, painted the facades of several apartment blocks with murals of diverse figurative representations, such as sunflower fields, cacti, swimming scuba divers, parachute jumpers, all depicted on deep-blue backgrounds, covering the grey and dilapidated socialist housing. Other visible activities included annual cultural festivals, such as cARTfest, which featured theater plays, dance and music shows on an open-air stage placed in the Oancea Esplanade, considered the center of the Tatarasi District as well as in the local cultural house. An annual film festival, cARTfilm featured documentary films on various social topics as well as a film contest for young local artists and workshops on the role and representation of social issues in documentary film. Visual art media, such as drawing, painting and photography were among the most commonly employed by the cultural animators in their work with children, who were also engaged in staging theater plays, fashion shows and painting workshops.[352]

Similarly to the *Art for Social Change* program, direct participation and collaboration with the local residents were seen as fundamental strategies in carrying out such positivist activities organized within the *cARTie*r framework. Recalling the jargon used by the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) strategy of international developmental foundations and agencies, cultural animators perceived their role as "fine sensors, very receptive to the needs of the Tatarasi community."[353] The project's initiator and organizers saw their responsibility in animating the creation of a cultural platform that was expected to ignite a "civic spirit," to empower locals to organize themselves in order to "effectively solve those problems that depend on their own competence and resources," instead of waiting for the City Hall to handle their concerns.[354] It is this emphasis on self-reliance and self-administration that participatory and

collaborative practices are seen to lead to individually responsible citizens for their own everyday lives.

The community-arts initiative, *cARTier* was considered a success by both its funders and organizers in that it helped transform the working class housing district of Tatarasi into a "Romanian creative district" by involving collaborative activities between local artists and residents.[355] Moreover, the authorship of visual artists, primarily in their roles as mural painters painting each summer a façade of an apartment block, positively erodes and blends within the projects' activities that stimulate creativity to achieve community development. From active instigators, artists become neutral good doers leaving undisturbed the political incompetence of the local and state governments in handling many of the residents' everyday challenges.

As seen, the artists in the *Art For Social Change* program were primarily perceived as implementing activities already conceptualized and decided upon by the institution's leaders and administration, who had no or minimal background in visual art. For instance, the program's main coordinator and director of the Red House for Culture and Debate, Tzvetelina Iossifova holds an MBA and a degree in theater studies. While a similar tendency can be seen in the Romanian project as well, especially regarding the role of the mural painters, in contrast to *Art For Social Change*, *cARTier* was initiated by the Vector Cultural Association whose president, Matei Bejenaru, is a locally active and internationally known contemporary artist. In 1997 he organized the *Periferic Festival of Performance Art*, which in 2001 transformed into the *Periferic: International Biennial for Contemporary Art* that ended in 2008, due to lack of financial support.

It is noteworthy, that between 1997 and 2001 Bejenaru along with a small group of artists organized the Periferic Performance Art Festival through an artist' run and self-organized

horizontal and collective structure, based primarily on voluntary work. The Vector Association was legally formed as a non-profit organization only in 2001 and since 2004 had five artists employed (one full-time and four part-time) to work within the pilot project *cARTier*.[356] From an independent and self-run artist initiative in the late-1990s to early 2000s, Vector Association transformed into an institutionalized structure, where artists, as members of the Association, increasingly performed managerial duties in their coordination and organizations of cultural and marketing activities both within *cARTier* as well as the Biennale.

For the duration of *cARTier*, the Vector Gallery (2003-2007, a project initiated by the Vector Cultural Association) was also formed, likewise with financial support from the Swiss Culture Program Romania – Pro Helvetia / SDC. It organized workshops, debates and art exhibitions of contemporary art by local and international artists. Yet, instead of on-going and consistent cross-overs initiatives and multi-layered engagement between the community-based activities in the district and contemporary art manifestations in the Vector Gallery, an unstated yet implied separation was maintained between the two realms. For example, in its four years of existence, the art gallery dedicated only a few short weeks in October 2006 to the organization of a series of contemporary art events tiled "Personal Settings, Young People in Context" for young people in the Tatarasi district as part of *cARTier*. It is also illustrative that the Vector Gallery was located in the city center approximately thirty minutes walking distance from the Tatarasi district, the location where the participatory interactions and activities with the residents occurred.

On one hand, this tacit separation between two forms of contemporary art reveals Bejenaru's and the other local contemporary artists' tendency to approach and understand socially engaged community arts not as a form of contemporary art but rather as an after-school

and voluntary work, required to secure funds, and thus lacking critical meaning or political impact. This underscores a traditional understanding of art that while, it reflects social reality it nevertheless should maintain its distance from the socio-political context and transcend environmental contingencies.

On the other hand, *cARTier* was considered primarily as a publicity venue for the contemporary art exhibitions at the Vector Gallery and the concurrently happening *Periferic: International Biennial for Contemporary Art*, which were actively promoted through various PR strategies, as a way to "strengthen the Vector institution."[357] The Biennial in particular, with specifically invited international artists and guest-curators was meant to "gain and allow international visibility"[358] to Iasi's and Romania's local and peripheral scene of contemporary art.

The presence or absence of international financial support greatly influenced the nature and length of most local programs. Until 2007, the year, which marks Romania's and Bulgaria's entrance in the EU, European cultural foundations and organizations, such as Pro Helvetia, Alliance Françoise, the Goethe Centers and the British Council, eagerly funded initiatives in EU prospective post-communist Central and Eastern European Countries. Earlier in the text, I considered in depth this topic through the discussion of specific socially engaged forms of public art in Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia.

Once countries became part of the EU, international support has decreased considerably, affecting the existence of many local contemporary art initiatives. For instance, the Vector art Gallery closed its doors when the *cARTier* project concluded in 2007. It was assumed that, following the multi-year training in administrative procedures and grant writing offered by the funders to the representatives of local initiatives, would provide the latter with the skills to

compete for funding in the global neoliberal order, along with their European and/or American peers. In such a context, Bejenru's intention to make use of *cARTier* program as a channel for strengthening Vector Association's institutional image at the both local and international levels is understandable.

Yet the underlying subtext of *cARTier* (not unlike the *Art for Social Change* in Bulgaria) and, one could argue by extension of the Vector Association, is that of addressing social exclusion through depoliticized socially engaged cultural and educational activities. The working-class housing district of Tatarasi was built in the early 1970s during the heyday of communism after the regime demolished two thirds of the locally existing houses. Currently the district houses 80% of the entire city's residents. Despite this staggering concentration, the main cultural centers, such as the opera, major museums, and theaters, are all located in the center of town, away from the district residents. Bejenaru, as the initiator of the program, saw *cARTier* as aiding in the social regeneration of the district through the staging of cultural activities in the local Cultural House Athenaeum. Rebuilt by the City Hall in 2003, the new building rests on the memory of the historic Athenaeum active before World War II but closed down during the communist period following a fire incident. As it stands today, the renovated Athenaeum houses a theater stage, a library, an internet room, a film screen that sits up to 300 people.

At first sight, the motivation for the project could be seen to empower the periphery by building upon local resources and implicitly by bringing the center's activities to the margins. However, social inclusion and community regeneration through cultural activities, such as dance and music shows, children's exhibitions, theater plays and colorful art murals of sunflowers and scuba divers, are rather naïvely moralizing in their attention on rectifying behavior. As such, they are intended to ignite a "civic spirit" in submissive citizens who are taught to assume

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responsibility for their local parks and benches, rather than addressing society's structural differences, which continue to allow district residents to struggle economically. For instance, most elderly continue to be unable to afford an entrance ticket to a theater play at the newly renovated and opened local Athenaeum.[359] Such cultural activities turn into cosmetic projects, that function as protective veils to the existing inequalities between the economically marginalized district and the rest of the city's residents. The latter, although only 20% of the city's inhabitants, reside in the center and are economically and socially privileged.

By entertaining a sense of "community" through cultural activities held within their locality, *cARTier* implicitly further neutralizes the role of the government to address the district and its residents' inherent marginalization, by ignoring its structural causes, such as impoverished and dilapidated housing conditions, employment opportunities for the younger generation or adequate pension funds for the elderly, whose lives unfolded under the communist regime. Thus, differences between social groups and existing divisions in the city are glossed over in the promotion of community development through art and culture.

Such politically neutralizing and cosmeticized cultural and artistic activities recall the 1980s craze for what were then perceived to be the new forms of public art as manifested in New York City's urban landscape. Defined in terms of its utility and function in public spaces, the new public art, aside from a beautiful object, provided people in the city with places to sit, to play, to eat and to read. Through its usefulness to an already existing architecture, developers, corporations, financial institutions as well as the municipal governments and New York City's mayor championed such forms of art. By conflating social benefit with utility, the new public art, essentially established public consent as a way to gloss over broader issues of uneven

development in the neoliberal accumulation of capital and massive urban gentrification seen in the city. In Rosalyn Deutsche's words:

> The new public art [...] moves 'beyond decorations' into the field of spatial design in order to create, rather than question, the coherence of the site, to conceal its constitutive social conflicts. [...] What has been eliminated from the new 'site-specific' art is not 'individualism' as opposed to teamwork but rather political intervention in favor of collaboration with the dominant forces.[360]

Similarly, cultural activities based on direct participation and collaboration with the local residents were meant to provide public spaces for delectation and entertainment seen as homogenizing vehicles of instilling in residents a civic responsibility for their physical aspect of their district. In its politically neutralizing effect and its emphasis on the social benefit of the community, it is not surprising that, both the funders and local governmental officials considered the three-year *cARTier* program a success.

4.1.3   Participation and collaboration as apolitical engagement strategies

The political impact of *cARtier* was naively seen in the City Hall's initiatives, such as refurbishing small children's playgrounds (when I visited one in 2010 the renovations were barely visible) the setting up of an information center, where residents could pay their local taxes and get information on cultural events happening in their district and in the mayoral office preserving, after the conclusion of *cARTier*, some of its strategies, like the open-air stage for outdoor cultural activities.[361] A similar depoliticized outcome was also seen in the case of the *Art for Social Change*. Art and artists were used as unquestioning vehicles to implement managerially and *a priori* set up goals and agendas. The program's political impact was articulated in terms of creating a platform for conviviality among the sector of civil society and

the state's organizations joining forces to address the increasingly deprecating conditions of children living in state institutions. Although as a follow-up to the program, the Red House of Culture and Debate has applied for funds to implement the new program *Civil Partnership in Support of Children in Institutions* that would create a network of communication among the more of 30 NGOs (in 2004) in Bulgaria working towards both the improvement of care for children living in state institutions and their prevention, and Bulgaria's state organizations, *Art For Social Change* had only cursory adopted the rhetoric of political impact. As seen, its main concerns were centered on transmitting unquantifiable results (of process-based community-arts activities) to the state's various ministries and child protection agencies.

At the core of both *cARTier* and *Art for Social Change* lies a generalized and homogenizing understanding of community and the marginalized. Both projects brushed over the power dynamics inherent in any community fabric. For instance, the majority of children living in Bulgarian state institutions are of Roma ethnic origins, which implicitly creates conflict situations both between Roma and non-Roma parents (and sometimes children) and between Roma children and non-Roma institutional staff caring for them. The latter, most often than not, view and act based on nationally ingrained stereotypes towards this minority ethnic group, which is perceived as an inherently socially deviant and uncivilized group, unable to change or reform, that only contributes to Bulgaria's negative image internationally, an attitude common across most post-communist Central and Eastern European country.

Likewise, in the Romanian city of Iasi and specifically in the district of Tatarasi where the project *cARTier* unfolded, the community fabric retains divisions and conflicts among its inhabitants, which remained unacknowledged in the program's activities over the course of its three years, despite its explicitly stated socially interventionist nature. That these conflicts and/or

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tensions exists were revealed in a 2004 sociological study conducted by sociologist Dan Lungu, visual artist Matei Bejenaru and sociology student Gentiana Baciu and. Interviewing close to twenty participants, most – either directly or indirectly – defined the problems arising in the district from the presence of Roma individuals, who are seen as trouble causing youth gangs harassing passers-by or as thieves on public busses. One 62 years old retired biology teacher stated:

> They should do something with these gypsies ... they are people too, but God, they should build them housing projects somewhere on the outskirts of the city and leave them all there. They don't have a place among people! They can't become like them. They destroy. In our district they destroy everything, including houses...[362]

Such negative perceptions are widely spread and deeply held amongst both the district's residents and the Romanian population at large. Instead of positivistic humanitarian efforts of community development through arts and culture, *cARTier* could have, for example, organized activities, workshops, and events that focused on addressing such conflicts from different perspectives as a way to break and challenge stereotypically held views by the majority of population towards this particular ethnic group.

Conform to their Western funders' directives and objectives, both *cARTier* and *Art For Social Change* reveal a civic republican tradition where civil society is defined in terms of associations and activities that lead to consensual and non-oppositional forms of community composed of like-minded individuals. Such programs employed art and cultural activities as vehicles for socializing and rectifying behavior of existent community members. The role of accumulated social capital, most vividly seen in the weekly activities that gradually lead to gaining trust between artists and children and between artists and the elderly respectively, is seen here to produce in the participants moral commitment and generalized forms of trust in

government. This recalls Putnam's theory, which was based on the idea that a "vigorous" civil society is key to a stable democracy and this is achieved through social capital generated through voluntary participations in associations. Thus, terminology such as "empowerment," "community," "collaboration" and "participation" has been emptied of its radical potentials as achieving collectively identified interests. Appropriated by dominant foundations and organizations, the rhetoric of participation and collaborations become both moral justifications and practical vehicles for empowering individuals to become self-sustaining and competitive entrepreneurs on the neoliberal market economy.

4.2   VISUALIZING POLITICAL CAPITAL IN *INSIDE OUT* AND *DISOBBEDIENTI*

If in the two previous projects, *Art for Social Change* and *cARTier*, I argued that participation and collaboration represented strategies of engagement leading to the formation of social capital in convivial, non-oppositional yet exclusionary societies, the Budapest-based artist collective Big Hope (Miklós Erhardt and Dominic Hislop) between the late 1990s and the mid-2000s had initiated participatory projects that could be seen as transforming accumulated social capital into political capital for its participants. If the previously two long-term community arts initiatives with the poor and marginalized subscribe to the use of cultural activities as ideological technologies for conciliatory and homogenizing concepts of community, fulfilling international development foundations and agencies' goals, Big Hope's locally funded, interventionist socially engaged projects activate marginalized groups in the city, facilitating their own self-representation through artistic techniques.

4.2.1   Addressing homelessness: A comparative look at Big Hope and Martha Rosler

In the 1998 project *Inside-Out* Big Hope gave forty disposable cameras to different homeless people sleeping in overnight shelters, women's and youth shelters as well as to people in the subway stations all across Budapest. The participants were asked to "record whatever is interesting or important to you in your everyday life (in the knowledge that their photographs will be publicly exhibited)." With each participant, the artists arranged to meet within a week to collect the cameras. A further meeting was arranged to return copies of the photographs at which point the artists interviewed each photographer about their images.

As documented on the project's website, each individual participant is identified by his or her name, several images and text, which collectively forms an intimate connection between the viewer and each of these individuals as well as between the participants themselves. Rather than simply and symbolically representing the homeless, the artists surrendered their creative autonomy and authority in the process of creation. The final result is comprised of the close to one hundred photographs and texts authored by the homeless photographers. It is also relevant that Big Hope considered important to pay a fee, slightly larger than the minimum wage, to their collaborators for their work as photographers. The resulting images communicate intimate (or in some cases more general) aspects of the collaborators' own identities, such as in the case of Ilona Gáspár's photographs and comments relating to moments in her life before becoming homeless. Among Ilona's ten photographs, one is of a car she said she had previously owned and drove at high speed. At the same time, the photographers' work can also be seen as a tool for framing and the framer, as who is to say that, for example, Ilona's story is not an intentionally invented one for the presumed audience?

The project's intention has been to challenge simplified and homogenized representations

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of the homeless, officially seen as socially delinquent and irresponsible individuals. Such images function to separate the condition of homelessness from the larger socio-economic causes and acute societal transformations during the post-1989 transitional period. Officially, until the early 1990s, homelessness in Hungary was a rare site. Under the communist state's planned economic system, the socialist housing model ensured a place to live for virtually all of its citizens. While the one-party state strictly controlled the income of its citizens, it also provided them with free housing, education and health care. At the same time, the party-state closely monitored the building of new housing and private forms of housing construction were controlled with restrictions of building supplies and house loans. Nevertheless, under the state's protective wing, citizens in communist nations were employed, had a place to live and had no difficulties in paying rents, mortgages and utility bills.[363] In fact, unemployment and homelessness were considered criminal activities, and people living on the street were collected by the police and put in prisons or mental institutions.

With the collapse of the socialist state several people lost their jobs and their homes, as workers' hostels, which until 1989 housed the potentially homeless people, were closed down and local governments were no longer able or obliged to provide housing. Between 1998 and 2002, under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, the leader of rightist party Alliance of Free Democrats (FIDESZ), which was governing the country in coalition with the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Independent Small Holders Party, Hungary saw the acceleration of market-oriented reforms. While this orientation was not unanimous since it was opposed by the Hungarian Socialist Party, whose members were interested in maintaining and expanding the political and economic connections among the former members of the former Council of Mutual Economic Assistance of the eastern bloc,[364] neoliberalism as both a political ideology and specific

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economic policies had been dominating the national restructuring.

As I discussed earlier in the text, the meaning of the political left and right was convoluted after 1989 due to the oppressive communist legacy, which eliminated for instance, the left's emancipatory historical legacy (i.e. the 1960s civil rights movements, the student protest movement and the environmental movement) that exists in the west. Instead it assured that society at large equated the left with communism, totalitarianism and centralized forms of government, which implicitly also meant opposing any form of social democracy or welfare state.

Almost by default, democracy meant access to the neoliberal market maneuvers, such as price liberalization (the elimination of government protection and controls on prices), state deregulation (the distancing of government from guarding citizens' interests to shielding the interests of big businesses) and privatization (the selling off the state-owned enterprises and public services to private corporations). In 2005, activist filmmaker, Joanne Richardson based in Romania bluntly pointed out:

> [...] what is hidden behind communism and the language of normalization is the assumption that everything that is going wrong today is purely the product of hangovers from the communist past. The visible defects of the transition to capitalism are attributed to the defects of communism; they are not viewed as flaws of capitalism but as flaws of not having enough capitalism and of not having it quickly enough.[365]

As such, the successful post-communist transition would lead to a democratic normalization, which was understood as fully embracing capitalism or neoliberalism, as its latest incarnation. It is thus not surprising that market-oriented housing policies and the lack of a governmentally implemented social and political mechanism to protect the poor, led to an increased number of homeless people not only in Hungary but also in all of the former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

In addition to the privatization of state-owned social housing units and the influx of foreign capital into the city, local urban renewal projects, likewise, represented a significant factor affecting the rise of homelessness in Budapest following the collapse of the communist regime. In the Hungarian capital, in contrast to cities in Western Europe and America, urban redevelopment initiatives have been undertaken by state organizations in partnership with private investors rather than solely by corporate institutions. In the 1990s, following more than forty years of a centralized government, Budapest embraced a highly decentralized form of administration. Each of the city's districts is administered by a local governmental body, which has greater authority and autonomy in the management of the particular district than the city government. As such, each district's local government is solely responsible for providing social services for its residents. Faced with insufficient financial resources, as Hungarian sociologist Csaba Jelinek pointed out, local districts "implement some kind of 'urban rehabilitation' policies to attract private capital by 'beautifying' their districts and to decrease their social expenditure by changing the inhabitants' social composition."[366] Residents of subsidized social housing (which are typically poorly constructed, small one-bedroom, one kitchen apartments with no bathrooms) are thus faced with a choice of either relocation to a different yet same size (slightly renovated) flat, usually on the outskirts of the city, or taking a sum of money for the value of their apartment. In most instances the promised flat is provided not only after a long waiting period but also in a less desirable location away from the city center, where in their original district the opportunities for jobs were higher. The official rhetoric promoted by local leaders portrays urban renewal projects and the relocation of residents as the only answers to social and urban decay. In actuality, this translates into a mass displacement of residents contributing to increasing social inequalities and personal traumas. Jelinek closely analyzed Budapest's 9th district concluding

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that approximately 2,600 families "were relocated by the local government and numerous others were displaced – either directly or indirectly – because of the rising rents and real estate prices."[367] Although displaying different mechanisms, such local versions of forced urban renewal projects are illustrative of a broader gentrification phenomenon unfolding worldwide for the last couple of decades.

Similar to the post-socialist Hungary of the 1990s, the US of the 1980s under Ronald Reagan's era – the decade that saw both the emergence and expansion of neoliberalism from the US to the rest of the world – homelessness was seen as a moral evil. Reports[368] in the media presented homelessness as the result of ignorance and even personal choice. For example, Reagan himself believed that people sleep on grates because they like it.[369] Its causes were presented as being divorced from the effects of economic forces and urban gentrification under the power of corporate entrepreneurial class. However, with the flowering of "new urbanism" as then the latest architectural trend directly communicating neoliberalism's ideology, working-class neighborhoods were converted into luxurious condominiums. As a result, large numbers of people were forced out of their homes. As alternative housing was not provided, many of the evicted residents found themselves on the streets.

American artist Martha Rosler believed in a social function of art that dislocates the normative political image of the homeless and in her work in the 1980s proposed alternative representations by engaging with the specificity of the context, its histories and its inhabitants. As expressed by Big Hope in a 2009 e-mail conversation with the author, the artists were inspired by Martha Rosler's work. They have also seen a similarity between the Hungarian and American contexts during the 1990s and 1980s respectively in terms of socio-political and economic changes affecting homelessness. As such, I believe it is valuable to offer here an

expanded discussion of the two projects in a comparative analysis.

Although different in the strategies employed, yet similar in their goals to raise consciousness and inspire change by offering critical counter-representations to the normative perceptions of homelessness, *Inside Out* recalls Rosler's 1989 *If You Lived Here.* Rosler's project, which consisted of museum exhibitions, panel discussions, poetry readings, film screenings, workshops and forums. The project's title appropriated a slogan from a real estate advertisement of the late 1980s: "If you lived here, you'd be home now," which aimed to attract the managerial middle-class to move to back to the city. The museum component of the project consisted of three exhibitions.[370] The second exhibition, titled "Homeless: The Street and Other Venues" along with its related events focused entirely on homelessness, in a format that aimed to avoid the usual dichotomies of "us" and "them." It was exhibited at the Dia Art Foundation, in Soho, New York. Through the exhibition venue, Rosler aimed to reveal the socio-political function played by the newly formed contemporary art galleries in the broader urban redevelopment and gentrification process, which ultimately played a role in the displacement of residents and subsequently the homeless.

The words "here" and "you" in the title of the exhibition clearly communicated the project's aim to directly address its audience and create a sense of place. This is further emphasized in the installation, which transformed the "white cube" art gallery into a casual and informal space that encouraged audience participation and engagement. Couches and rugs were placed in front of video monitors; billboards originally found "in the street" were hung on the gallery wall; the reading room for *Homelessness: Conditions, Causes, Cures* was reconfigured into a shelter of empty beds, and the table against the wall contained a variety of materials, including flyers for demonstrations and protests, brochures for tenants and homeless people,

activists and volunteers, lists of private and public shelters, soup kitchens, counseling and employment services, which were available to be taken away.[371]

A pair of texts placed side-by-side on the gallery wall argued for and against photographing the homeless. One was an excerpt from Rosler's 1981 essay "in, around and afterthoughts (on documentary photography)" that accompanied her phototext *The Bowery in Two Inadequate Descriptive Systems* (1974-75). In this specific work Rosler offered a critique of typical liberal documentary photography, or "victim photography," which, for example, in photographs of the homeless ultimately supports the viewer's sense of superiority, as the images simply reproduce the situation of "us looking at them." The other text "On Photographing the Homeless," photographer Mel Rosenthal argued for photographing the homeless, because he considered that "images of real individuals can dispel the numbness many people feel."[372]

By introducing in the exhibition the tension between the "for" and "against" positions of photographing the homeless, the project questions the institutional impact in transforming such photographs into "art photography." Although the installations aimed to depart from the traditional gallery space – by filling up the space with a dense volume of photographs, text, film and video and also by placing a poster on the gallery's entrance door that said "Come On In – We're Home"[373] in large red letters – most work in the exhibition was authored, framed, carefully hung, and labeled. Yet, this was essential in order to be able to speak from within the art institution and set up the tension between this context and its excluded other. Additionally, in parallel with manifestations by various activists groups, Rosler invited well-known artists such as Krysztof Wodiczko who in his "Homeless Vehicle Project" (1988) emphasized the nomadic existence of the homeless; and the architect group Mad Housers from Atlanta whose huts aimed to provide minimal space and temporary stability for the homeless, were erected in Brooklyn and

Manhattan during the exhibition period. Bypassing her role as artist or curator, Rosler become organizer of informative and communicative situations. Her If *You Lived Here...*is a multi-layered collaboration of unknown homeless artists, activists groups, architects, and well-known artists strategically invited to perform their activities from within the art institution.

Both *Inside Out* and *If You Lived Here* are illustrative of the *new genre public art*, coined and theorized by Suzanne Lacy, that began to be articulated in the early 1990s in reaction to the craze in the 1980s for public art, seen as offering amenities or beautifying the city as part of the broader urban redevelopment. In contrast, the politically and socially engaged *new genre public art* emphasized the process of production where strategies of engagement become its artistic and aesthetic features. Opposing the normative conception of art in which the space between the artist and the viewer is occupied by the art object, in collaborative works of art, that space is filled with the relationship between artists and public, where the process of communication and collaboration are central artistic strategies. As opposed to the individual model for art production, participants create the work and their voices are often communicated through the artwork itself.

In projects that engage a specific community, it is important to address the problematic inherent in the relation between the artist, as representative for the specific community. Art historian and critic Grant Kester developed his concept of a "politically coherent community," in response to the forms of negation that can occur when artists view their collaborators as raw and inert material to be transformed or improved in some ways.[374] According to Kester, the strength of a project lies in its ability to create a space of dialogical exchange, where both the artist and community is transformed and where the artists no longer occupy the superior position of creative master.

Unlike the institutionalized forms of community-arts managerially implemented in programs, such as *Art For Social Change* and *cARTier*, *Inside Out* provided a platform of communication for the homeless, through which their identities are continuously undone and re-formulated. The artists involved participants through dialogue as direct forms of communication, supplemented with interviews as a direct mode of documentation. Big Hope's work existed within and through a discursive form of collaboration among various singularities and politically coherent communities, which eliminates the possibility of misappropriation and misrepresentation of its collaborators.

Moreover, if the previous two community-arts programs featured the accumulation of social capital in exclusionary and depoliticized forms of community groups, *Inside Out*, although short-term, small-scale and minimally funded, brought attention to the political conditions influencing the construction of social capital, seen for example, at the level of privatization and capital accumulation leading to the marginalization of the majority. The artists foregrounded the city's homeless through their own individualized self-representation, thus revealing the multiplicity of causes leading to homelessness. Such an approach challenges the predominant tendency to view the poor and the marginalized as isolated incidents divorced from the profit-oriented contemporary neoliberal condition.

Big Hope's work with the homeless differs in crucial ways from international initiatives, such as the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, focused on aiding the poor on a global scale. For example, the main strategies recommended for attacking global poverty represent: *promoting opportunity*, defined in terms of providing jobs, electricity, road and markets; *facilitating empowerment*, seen in institutional responsibility that allows poor people's participation in political processes and local decision making; and *enhancing security*,

seen in the role of governments to protect the poor from worldwide economic shocks or weather-related disasters. Significantly, these all center, essentially, on providing the poor access to the market by allowing greater expansion for market forces and hence profit accumulation:

> [...] promoting opportunity through assets and market access increases the independence of poor people and thus empowers them by strengthening their bargaining position relative to state and society. It also enhances security, since an adequate stock of assets is a buffer against adverse shocks.[375]

Such strategies underscore the global expansion of market forces that implicitly obscure their inherent role in further perpetuating and widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots, thus being the cause for the condition of the poor that it initially meant to combat. For example, the World Bank's above-mentioned recommendations do not specify the sort of jobs, payment and job security made available for the poor through the proposed expansion of market forces in less-developed areas such as South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia and Pacific. Also, participation of the poor in the political decision making processes is generalized so that when implemented at the local levels, as seen, for example, in the two community-arts programs, the marginalized are allowed to speak – through participatory activities or their voices are reproduced as ethnographic boxes in international reports – but not allowed to be heard. As Andrea Cornwall observed: "The very act of soliciting the 'voice of the poor' can all too easily end up as an act of ventriloquism as 'public transcripts' are traded in open view."[376]

It is here, in the use of participation and collaboration as cosmetic devices on one hand and as activators that challenge the institutional status quo on the other, that the crucial differences in scope, modes of development and modes of reception between the two sets of socially engaged forms of art are most directly revealed. Such differences set apart the interventionist socially engaged projects by artists such as Big Hope, Martha Rosler, Krysztof

Wodiczko and Michael Rakowitz from the institutionalized forms community-arts seen as strategies for community development.

Not unlike Rosler's *If You Lived Here*, *Inside Out* set up sustained tensions between the dominant cultural systems and their inherent exclusions, illustrated in the project's installation within the space of an art gallery. The artists insisted to present the photographs and accompanying text of each of the 40 homeless individuals as art objects to be interpreted within the art institution. At the same time the exhibited works were considered as moments of communication and less as forms of representation. Big Hope relinquished their roles as artists – their name does not appear in any of the museum label or publication – and the marginalized homeless community speaks through the work.

Realized on a smaller scale than Rosler's project, Big Hope aimed to produce a public space where tensions and differences are made visible and maintained rather than eliminated. The work was installed in two separate venues. One was the Budapest Galéria, where close to one hundred photographs, three to four images by each participant, were exhibited.[377] According to the artists, besides the usual art crowd, close to half of all participants and social workers attended the exhibition opening. The other exhibition was installed two weeks later in the main lobby of the FSZKI Dózsa György út homeless shelter, the largest homeless hostel in Budapest. Similar to the installation within the art gallery, the photographs were displayed on cardboard mats with the accompanying text/comments in the center of the board. This allowed the work to be seen by other homeless people in the shelter, creating a sense of togetherness within the broader community of the homeless. At the same time, it provoked audience members who have never entered a homeless shelter to enter an unfamiliar space, pointing to the inherent social and political relations that exist between various contexts.

4.2.2 *Disobbedienti*: An attempt at reviving leftist activism in Hungary

A similar intention to "facilitate communication between the local contemporary art scene and other marginalized social spheres"[378] in society on one hand, and among various international social activist groups on the other motivated Big Hope's 2002 *Disobbediaenti* project. Composed of Dominic Hislop, a Scottish artist residing at the time in Hungary, and Miklos Erhardt, a younger generation Hungarian artist active after the fall of communism, Big Hope's works in Budapest were among the first to attempt to open discussion on the relationship between the social role of art and activism in an art institutional setting. If *Inside Out* was rooted in a Marxist critique of the aggressive privatization of the nation's publicly owned resources and services, which continues to fuel the increasing number of the poor, their collaborative and transnational project *Disobbedienti* addressed and questioned the nature and scope of locally existent forms of activism.

The *Disobbedienti* project consisted in Big Hope recreating in Liget Gallery in Budapest, the environment – a room in the building that housed the Senza Frontiere Cooperative located in Torino, Italy – in which the Torino Disobbedienti (the disobedients), a local arm of the nationwide network of leftist activists, held its weekly meetings. The gallery recreation, which evoked the atmosphere of an activists' club, consisted of stenciled wall drawings of the different logos used by the group, posters, pamphlets, wall paintings, 4x6 color snapshot photographs reproducing sections of the Disobeddienti meeting room were placed on the Hungarian art gallery walls next to the life size reconstructions.

The Disobbetineti, an Italian nationwide network of leftist political activists, emerged in 1998 as a continuation of the former Italian activist group Tute Bianche (white overalls) known for wearing white overalls and black masks and seen for the first time in the public space in

1994. Wearing white, "to refer to the diversity of production subjects and the conflict in post-Fordist and postindustrial society," Tute Bianche was a public symbol protesting and fighting against the contemporary workers' precarious labor conditions, and championing and advocating the freedom of movement of immigrants. Although neither Tute Bianche nor the Disobbedienti have had a clear political program that one can join, both believed in challenging neoliberalism's power structures through peaceful forms of disobedience, that range from people throwing balloons and flowers, painting walls with slogans, distributing pamphlets or marching in the public space.

Significantly, the change from Tute Bianche into the Disobbedienti marked a change within the broader social protest movement from civil disobedience to social disobedience. As Luca Casarini, the spokesperson for the Disobbedienti said in a 2002 documentary film: "The Tute Bianche were a subjective experience, a little army. For us, the Disobbedienti is a multitude, a movement."[379] No longer only a symbolic march in the public space by a visible few, dressed in white, the Disobbedienti ignited a large-scale social disobedience, which included not only the self-proclaimed members of the activist group, but also members of the larger society. For example, their January 2002 action that ended in dismantling the immigrant detention camp in Via Mattei in the Italian city of Bologna was directly possible through a mass social disobedience. Along with the presence of other Disobbedienti groups from diverse regions in Italy, who took apart one by one any removable parts from the detention center structure, lawyers joined the cause in the long-run by defending the rights of individual immigrants and local nurses offered their care to injured protesters resisting the police force with their bodies. Such activist actions were provoked by the right-wing national legislation on immigration, most vividly represented by the Bossi-Fini act (two different right-wing political party members

Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Fini) that passed in 2002, which allows the detention of individuals – mostly immigrants – of up to sixty days. This is despite the fact that the Italian constitution forbids the imprisonment of an individual for more than forty-eight hours, if the person did not commit a crime.[380]

A similar nationalist and corporatist context, dominated by a rightist national government has also characterized Hungary during this time. In line with several Western democratic countries around the world, as seen, the Hungarian government led by FIDESZ enthusiastically promoted market-oriented policies while distancing itself from the interests of the people and accelerating the elimination of social services so vital in a period of transition between different economic and political systems. That the society at large supported the rightist government, which also advocated measures for the country's entrance into the EU, is not surprising. The government's actively promoted rhetoric of the left as an abusive and oppressive political orientation was further substantiated by the societal experience of the recent communist past. This implicitly facilitated the advancement of the market-oriented right while discrediting the left *en masse*.

Big Hope's gallery recreation in Budapest of the interior of an active leftist activist group aimed to both introduce and provoke in the Hungarian public an awareness of such activities in Western Europe as a way to recover the meaning of the left with its legacy of western social activism since the 1960s and 1970s (such as anarchism, feminism, the cultural movements against consumer culture and the student movement and the creation of anti-universities) from the direct experience of communism. The participatory aspect of Big Hope' gallery project represented two interviews. One was done with local Hungarian activists and the other with members of the Disobbedienti group in Turin, whom the artists met earlier while working on

their previous project *Re:route*, which I discuss earlier in the text. Both the Hungarian and Italian participants were asked the same questions that inquired about the scope and composition of their activist groups, their different strategies of protest employed and their connection with other activist groups both nationally and internationally. The taped interviews were then exchanged and played in Budapest and Turin as a way to establish connection or at least, bring awareness of activist initiatives between the two different contexts. Even on a small scale, the project, ignited within the local context as Hislop observed: " a kind of communication that can be a key to exposing some historical baggage and understanding how to move forward."[381] According to the artists, the project highlighted the depoliticized Hungarian context where activists groups were both disunited and apolitical.

In the recorded video interview at the Liget Gallery, the Hungarian activists from various groups, such as the locally emerging Indymedia, ZÖFI (Zöld Fiatalok – Green Youth) and Eötvös Loránd University-based environmental ELTE Klub, resisted identifying their activist activities as politically engaged. As discussed in the first part, in Hungary as in most post-socialist CEE countries, at least in the first decades of transition, politics had solely been understood in terms of party politics, of belonging or championing for a political party. Politics or acting politically as forms of critique challenging the effects of exclusionary power relations was lacking. For instance, one participant, Balázs Horváth expressed his activities as part of Indymedia network to be beyond politics as aiming to raise public consciousness about the effects of the nation's increasing neoliberalization and the moral impact of corporate businesses upon its workers, silencing them into an obedient and temporary workforce. Similarly, Gábor Csillag, a cultural anthropology professor and member of the ELTE Klub, bluntly stated that his and his group's goals are neither left nor right oriented, but rather forward oriented since their

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concerns are strictly with the protection of the natural environment, which in his view, has nothing to do with politics.

On one hand, such conscious apolitical orientations anchored within moral and ethical concerns, recall Konrad's politics of anti-politics as the basis for a civil society that, as I showed in the first part, formed the conceptual basis of the 1980s and the early 1990s social and political dissident forces, which contributed to the dismantling of communism and the triumphalism of the right. On the other hand, a similar conception of civil society understood in terms of strict opposition to the state with its claims to represent all of its citizens' interests, has also characterized the concurrently occurring 1980s oppositionist environmental activism, which played a crucial role in the process that lead towards the regime change.

The Hungarian activist movement emerged with the Duna Kör (Danube Circle) in the early 1980s. Initially it coalesced around the journalist Janos Varga that lead a small group, composed of journalists, social scientists, artists and natural scientists, who published articles opposing the damming of the Danube River at Nagymaros, 50 km north of Budapest. It gathered a wider following, culminating in the 1988 public demonstrations in Budapest – first in May of nearly 2000 people and then in October with a torchlight protest procession of over 5000 – against the single and unified cause of stopping the construction of a hydroelectric power system on the Danube River that would endanger the drinking water supplies of five to eight millions of people.[382] Although a strictly environmental cause (that nevertheless succeeded to stop the construction of the dam), the importance of the Danube-inspired environmental activism lies in that it extended into as a platform for critique of the centrally governing socialist party-state on cultural and ecological grounds, while calling for access and participation in the decision-making processes at the political level. As Krista Harper observed:

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> Underground newspapers, discussion circles, and demonstrations against the dam system created a space for debate and criticism of the government. Looking back, many participants in the Danube movement characterize their 1980s activism as their introduction to 'civil society.[383]

If one can speak of a politically dissident and unified environmental activist movement in the 1980s, after the collapse of communism, the Hungarian environmentalist movement, just as activism in general, became increasingly fragmented, splitting into different factions and groups. Some of the groups include: the Zöld Nôk (Green Women), Hungary's only eco-feminist group focused on health problems and feminist issues, the Levegõ Munkacsoport (Clean Air Group)[384] advocating, for example, for public transportation, the ELTE Klub, with working relationships with nature protection groups, peace activists, religious organizations and international environmental NGOs, ZÖFI and the Green Circle of the Budapest Technical University. While diverse in their locally specific causes provoked by the country's privatizations as part of its entry into the neoliberal market economy, nevertheless, these groups identified, at least in broad terms, with global social protest movements, such as the 1999 Seattle protests against the meeting of the World Trade Organization. For instance, in May 2000 members of the ELTE Klub, the Green Circle and the Clean Air gathered in Budapest, on the banks of Danube in the vicinity of the Vigado concert hall protesting the convention of the International Chamber of Commerce by singing "Remember Seattle!"[385]

Despite the chanted slogans of solidarity with global protest movements, Big Hope's 2002 interview with some of the Budapest-based activists revealed the latter's hesitation to define their goals in terms of any political orientation or organization. Moreover, it highlighted the fragmented nature of the groups when compared with the Disobbedienti group with more or less defined goals and plans of actions. In a recent conversation, Erhardt recalled the event:

> The basic difference was clear from the outset that while the Italian group was a real unit, people working together on a regular basis, with a focused activity while the Hungarian, although all knew each other and worked together on issues, was far from being a real group.[386]

At the same time, there is a deeply problematic aspect in the implied desire and categorization of efficient activist groups in terms of unity against a common enemy, rather than unity through shared principles, such as, for instance, democratic principles of equal rights. If the diversity of social protest movements, while each anchored around a locally specific issue are also part of a global network, are understood in terms of unity against a common enemy – that is neoliberalism, as both political ideology and economic order – than, such common solidarity automatically incorporates into its ranks the overtly discriminatory and xenophobic protests groups, such as the neofascsists, who likewise oppose neoliberalism, albeit for different reasons (championing nationalist purity). As Richardson poignantly said:

> There is an important difference between being united by common principles, even though ideas about practices and goals differ profoundly, and being united through an opposition to the WTO, which creates a superficial sense of commonality among groups (like church activists, anarchists, and communists) whose principles are otherwise in fundamental contradiction.[387]

It is relevant to consider here the different uses of social capital as both a tool and accumulated collaborative networks and its transformation into forms of political capital within the Disobbedienti group and its lack among the Hungarian activist groups. In the video footage of a meeting among the members of the Disobedienti group, social capital can be visualized as emerging from within the dialogical interactions unfolding amongst the members discussing modes of organizations for their upcoming protests against the Torino immigrant detention center later that month. Such regular dialogic and relational encounters as well as forms of written and virtual communications gradually lead to social trust and diverse forms of reciprocity

among the participants. Their accumulated social capital however, does not lead to exclusionary groups, where it is limited to its current members, but instead expands into the creation of networks of social engagement among various local groups and communities across the entire country. Most importantly, through their networked actions, the Disobbedienti have been able to transform social capital into forms of political capital by asking and facilitating access to legal rights for the thousands of immigrants in Italy. The process of morphing social capital into political capital can be visualized in the activists' collective actions in the public space advocating the closing of the detention center in Turin. The Disobbedienti a priori rehearsed peaceful protests activities employed diverse forms of social disobedience that included dancers dressed in pink ballerina skirts that comically performed dances directly in front of the lined up Police officers, while other held up written banners, played drum music, and painted of the detention wall in bright colors and logos as a way to attract attention to the structure.[388] Moreover, such almost carnival-like forms of peaceful social disobedience lead to the wider public's direct participation into the ranks for the protesters, who implicitly became more receptive to the cause.

In contrast, the Hungarian activist scene in 2002 was still nascent and their use and contribution to forms of social capital was limited to inner group socialization and written responses to the local forum of Indymedia. During this time, the Hungarian activists in their declared apolitical orientation eliminated the possibility for social capital to morph into political capital. Moreover their protest strategies were much less articulate when compared to the Disobbedienti. The latter, as expressed by its members in the interview conducted by Big Hope, employed diverse forms of communications ranging from stenciled logos on walls of public buildings or as subversive small stickers, radio programs, pamphlets, videos and internet

postings. Hungarian activists, such as those associated with the local network of Indymedia, were in the process of confronting disorganization, lack of communication, common goals and disunity that characterized the national activist scene, obstacles that need to be overcome before concrete strategies of protest can be formulated.

It is here, in the introduction of the Disobbedienti group's activities into the Hungarian context – through the gallery recreation and video representation of a working meeting and interview – that Big Hope's project can be seen to provoke a politicized understanding of social capital. Specifically, it opened discussion on the larger political framework and historical legacies that conditioned the formation of social capital at the level of the local activist movements. As seen, the social protests movements of the first decade of post-communism and before Hungary's entrance into the EU, had been clustered around moral and ethical environmental issues divorced from overt political orientations. The general resistance towards directly embracing a leftist tradition was fueled by both the current rightist and market-oriented FIDESZ government and the society's recent experience with socialism, which made any socialist or leftist ideas be equated with the former communist regimes' oppressive policies.

Thus, the transformation of social capital into political capital unfolds within such collaborative and participatory socio-politically engaged art and activist projects at two levels. On one hand, through the various strategies of engagement employed, which emerge from existent forms of social capital, the work gains political capital for its participants or for those on whose behalf they advocate. On the other hand, the work calls attention to the political conditioning of social capital, while advocating for contentious public spheres.

Big Hope's *Disobbedienti* project emerged from the social capital the artists accumulated through their previous projects, *Re:route* in Turin and *Manamana* in Budapest through which the

artists established social connections with various individuals and groups. In particular, the 2001 *Manamana* project provided a communicative platform among the various independent activities by both social groups and contemporary artists. In an Hungarian-only, 8x10, 20-page newspaper format, published in four issues of 400 copies each, *Manamana* was first initiated as part of the collaborative project *Klímaszerviz* installed in the fall 2001 exhibition *Szerviz* at the Műcsarnok in Budapest. *Klímaszerviz*, involving several artists, including Tibor Várnagy, Miklós Erhardt, Dominic Hislop, Viola Ferjentsik and Andreas Fogarasi, was a wall installation comprised of newspapers, articles, flyers, and manifestos posted daily on large boards and weekly discussions that the museum visitors could join without paying an entrance fee to the gallery. While the open discussions held in the museum by the artists were poorly attended, the *Manamana* series of self-produced newspapers connected not only disparate individuals involved in independent activities, but also international issues with local concerns. It included articles on corporate globalization, neoliberalism, the impact of the increasing number of NGOs in Hungary as well as it featured translated articles from the international dissident press on events such as the G8 summit in Genoa and the September 11, 2001 terrorist bombing in New York.

The significance of such collectively and self-produced art project realized in 2001, lies in its early and active role in establishing a network of individuals and groups engaged in experimental and independent activities, at a time when later well-known and widespread networks, such as Indymedia, were non-existent. Through regular discussions, newspaper contributions and meetings organized as part of the museum project, Erhardt and Hislop, who also worked under the collective name Big Hope, established forms of generalized social trust and reciprocal relationships, on which they built in their later *Disobbedienti* project in order to attempt, as we have seen, to morph the accumulated forms of social capital into political capital.

At another level, projects such as *Manamana* and the *Disobbedienti* represent important historical precursors in their incipient endeavors challenging the pristine space of the art gallery and museum that locally was perceived as displaying traditional art media, such as painting, sculpture and craft objects. In particular, the *Klímaszerviz* installation that *Manamana* was part of at the Műcsarnok/ Kusthalle museum transformed the traditionally, state-funded modernist exhibition space. It morphed it into a living and meeting space that evoked the environment of a club where the haphazard amalgam of posted paper, flyers, newspapers, wall diagrams and paintings functioned as traces of works-in-progress. Although the *Disobbedienti* project displayed a similar visual presence, at the Liget Gallery (also state funded), however, the work became part of the gallery's alternative history as a space opened during the communist regime that has continued to act and function as "a bridge for neo-avant-garde artists to the international art world."[389] While such process-oriented forms of exhibitions are certainly not new within the international contemporary art scene, as we have seen in Rosler's work as an example of institutional critique, their consciously adopted modest and messy appearance was innovative within the local Hungarian context.

Within the first post-1989 decades characterized by a multi-layered and unstable transitional period, artists' initiatives, such as those of Big Hope, however small, represented important driving engines towards expanding and transforming the museum and gallery space into public platforms for open communications. Artists challenged traditional and nationally oriented forms of art championed by the still functioning Artists Unions and funded by the currently nationalist governments.

Through a close examination of three artists' initiatives in Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria, the section offers a discussion of different forms of artists' self-institutionalization seen

as counter forces to an increasing re-centralization of art spaces by right-wing, nationalist governments within a neoliberal era. Instead of leading to exclusionary forms of organizations, access to forms of social capital among various independent and experimental contemporary artists, I contend, lead to political capital materialized and visualized in forms of institutionalization that offer a corrective to both institutionalized Western genealogy of institutional critique and the local traditional art practice.

4.3 ARTISTS' SELF-INSTITUTIONALIZATION AS SOCIO-POLITICAL PRACTICE

Dinamo (2003-2006), which morphed into IMPEX (2006-2009) in Budapest, E-cart's *Department for Art in Public Space* (2009-2010) in Bucharest and 0GMS in Sofia (2009-present) represent three different forms of a younger generation of, what I call, artists' self-institutionalization in different post-socialist contexts. Here, institutionalization is not understood in terms of mimicking the top-down and authoritarian power relations that typically characterize traditional art institutions, such as museums and (commercial) art galleries, equipped with boards of directors, managing directors, curators, fundraisers and administrative staff. Rather, institutionalization, from a practical perspective, refers to the self-organized meetings and art programs that become somewhat regularized over a period of time and their internal operation becomes, to a certain extent, systemized. Conceptually, institutionalization, here, also implies a consciously collective form of organization that is visible and powerful enough to enact and pursue its own goals within the public sphere along with or in parallel with the official institutions.

I contend that while each artist-run and autonomous space portrays different strategies of institutional critique and their motivations of grouping together vary greatly, they all represent attempts at challenging national policies of art museum and institutional practices by offering a working alternative that ultimately emerges as a corrective to locally existing forms of institutionalization. Moreover, in contrast to the generally negative and separatist approach of contemporary politically informed artists in western democracies vis-à-vis the institution of art, artists in former socialist CEE nations, through their informal modes of self-institutionalization reveal a more constructive approach. Implicitly, by seeing their role as filling in an absence characterized by a lack of spaces dedicated to contemporary art engaged with broader socio-political concerns and movements, each of these initiatives, in different ways, reveal the complexly shifting relation between alternative spaces and state and/or privately funded official institutions.

Curator and art critic Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez refers to forms of artists' self-historicisation and self-institutionalization as representing two strategies of institutional critique specific to Eastern Europe under totalitarian regimes. Artists and collectives such as IRWIN's *East Art Map*, Tamás St. Auby's *Portable Intelligence Increase Museum* and György Galántai and Júlia Klaniczay's Artpool Art Research Center in Hungary, through their archiving projects illustrated modes of self-historicisation that emerged as responses to the absence of local art institutions dedicated to documenting, preserving and presenting experimental neo-avant-garde forms of contemporary art.[390]

While the three initiatives in the 2000s that I discuss in this section, continue their predecessors' drive, their activities and motivations stand in marked contrast. I argue such recent self-institutionalized initiatives challenge both locally official institutional practices and western

forms of institutional critique, while also adopting some of the characteristics of the "new institutionalism" curatorial trend emergent in the mid-2000s.

4.3.1   From Dinamo to Impex: Expanding the institutional framing

Founded in Budapest in 2003 in a former auto repair shop, by artists Katarina Sevic and Hajnalka Somogyi, Dinamo was active until 2006 as space that was both alternative and semi-official. Its rather unusual status emerged from Dinamo's functional symbiosis with Trafo – House of Contemporary Art in Budapest,[391] an important cultural space – equipped with exhibition spaces, production studios and stages for theater, dance and art performances – funded by the Municipality of the city of Budapest and other local governmental agencies. While Trafo covered Dinamo's overhead costs and technical requirements, the latter was free to implement its own programs and devise its own activities. Although a physical space, Dinamo functioned more like an organically evolving multi-dimensional project that incorporated art exhibitions, lectures, screenings, conversations, and one-night events.

If during the first year, 2003-2004 Sevic and Somogyi organized programs based on proposals submitted by local artists to their open call for entries, in the later years activities emerged naturally from different sources as various people frequented and physically meet in the space. Among the participants and series of events featured, the Lumen Photography Foundation with presentations and discussions on photography, the Hints Foundation, a collective of female artists and sociologists engaged in participatory projects, local green activist groups such as Green Youth, Recyclemission Hungary and Fair Trade Bufe, as well as regional and international artists such as Michael Rakowitz and Rozalinda Borcila.

In its atypical position as a space housed within a large, state-funded cultural institution, while free to develop its own programs, Dinamo manifested a constructive approach to institutionalization while calling into question the institutional framing, a strategy of institutional critique employed by well-known 1960s and 1970s artists, such as Marcel Broodhaers, Daniel Buren and Hans Haacke. For example, Haacke in his several works focused his attention on exposing the inner framing and logic of the art museum and the economic and political forces' instrumentalization of the institution of art by using the very mechanisms of the institution he called into question.

In contrast to a rather deconstructive approach to the institutional framework seen in the first wave of the institutional critique artists of the late 1960s and 1970s, Dinamo, through its ad-hoc activities among young and experimental contemporary artists housed within an official institution, constructively expanded the framing possibility of the very institution in which it was housed. As an alternative space within the public realm of civil society, Dinamo gained political capital because of or despite of its location within a state-supported institution. This illustrates, what social scientist Michael Walzer called the paradox of civil society, where the state both frames civil society and occupies a space within it. According to Walzer, the state is an integral component in producing and reproducing civil society no matter how many forces within civil society aim to resist the state directives. This is because "civil society requires political agency."

While revealing two different strategies of institutional critique separated by almost four decades and different cultural contexts, both Haacke and the two artists behind Dinamo seem to share a belief in the art institution as such, in its ability to reform and become a meaningful and transparent site of public sphere receptive to its diverse publics. More than a physical exhibition space, nonetheless alternative, Dinamo functioned as a discursive space continuously activated

by its participants who were most often both producers of activities and their audience. As Romanian-born and US-based artist Rozalinda Borcila, whose "common_places" travelling archive on collectives and collaborative art practices was presented at Dinamo in 2005, said about her visit:

> Dinamo is occasionally referred to (by its keepers, participants and friends) as a studio, workshop, laboratory, autonomous cultural zone, think-tank, hub, attitude, hang-out, while its official mission is 'a space for work, presentation, experiments in the field of art, culture and communication, outside the established realm of art practice.[392]

Nevertheless, Sevic and Somogyi stretched their programing as far as their parent institution was able to expand and initiated its transformation after three years of activities. While Dinamo closed its doors in the early 2006, its founders along with the involvement of Buczko Bence, Kalman Rita, Laszlo Gergely, Szemerey Samu and later Balint Monika morphed its structure and established in October 2006 IMPEX – Contemporary Art Provider in a different location, outside of Trafo's institutional shelter. In its new location, as a new organization and funded by both state and private resources, IMPEX continued to develop a diverse series of programs, which in addition to exhibitions, discussions, screenings and workshops it also hosted an international artist residency program.

Most importantly, IMPEX as an autonomous space now visibly separated from a state institution filled an absence within a local context characterized by a lack of support and spaces for young experimental forms of contemporary art. "The reason Impex was such a hit, there was a great demand for such an accommodating space." At the same time, IMPEX became an almost nondiscriminatory platform hosting numerous and varied artists' projects and programs, while the seven co-founders gradually emerged as the space's gatekeepers and administrators accommodating others' initiatives. As Rita, one of the co-founders, said: "For me the Futo Street

period [2006-2008] was indeed like a treadmill, like a centrifuge. One project after another, and we couldn't stop, we couldn't get out."[393]

The discursive networks informally fused during both the years at the Dinamo and IMPEX conferred upon these spaces their alternative character, almost in the sense of a salon de refuse. The spaces gained an image, an identity through the sustained forms of social capital enacted through the presence of its participants. However, just as the spaces changed and morphed into one another, so had their initiators' visions and priorities. The accumulated discursive experiences culminated in a final phase of self-institutionalization, when IMPEX lost their temporary space in 2008 and began to function as an explicitly project-based structure, occupying temporary spaces. By eliminating a physical location and refocusing its direction on "a topic-centered operational strategy"[394] IMPEX thus revealed a form of self-institutionalization anchored within a textual and self-historicisizing framework. In this instance, the initiators renounced their earlier roles as hosts accommodating content, opting instead to generate projects themselves. IMPEX's last and most recent project represented the publication *We are not Ducks on a Pond but Ships at Sea, Independent Art Initiatives, Budapest, 1989-2009* (2010), which provided a much needed compendium of the several autonomous and alternative art spaces in Budapest in the last two decades. The research for the publication was gathered through informal conversations among local artists and former participants in the Dinamo and IMPEX's programs, further underlying the potential of networks of social capital for agency.

> This book [...] aims not to historicize but to illustrate. [...] Informal rather than academic, the research behind this book was based on personal experiences on the one hand, and on numerous conversations with participants of the self-organized scene of the last twenty years, on the other.[395]

Thus, from a physical spatial presence, IMPEX, as the collective name of an interdisciplinary seven-member group, made use of the accumulated forms of social capital developed through its multi-year activities and programs to self-institutionalize and gain political capital in a local context that continues to lack infrastructure and support for alternative and independent initiatives. In order to understand the urgent need and critical importance of such collective and informal forms of self-institutionalization as well as earlier initiatives, such as those of Big Hope discussed in the previous section, one needs to take into consideration the highly politicized local context.

4.3.2   Hungarian cultural institutions: Stage for populist right-wing narratives

Cultural policies enacted in Hungary under the right-wing FIDESZ government with its leader Viktor Orban as the nation's Prime Minister (1998-2002 and 2010-2014) has gradually led, first, to an aggressive de-communisation by condemning all left-oriented post-communist manifestations and parties as regressive and totalitarian. Second, it initiated a re-centralization and re-nationalization of the nation's major art museums. Such political directives materialized first in the early 2000s in Budapest's urban landscape with the strategic opening of key cultural institutions, such as the Terror Haza Muzeum (The House of Terror Museum) and the new Nemzeti Szinhaz (the New National Theater) as part of the Palace of the Arts complex, which also includes the new location of the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art, on the banks of the Danube and visible from most major bridges in the city.

The House of Terror Museum, whose director Maria Schmidt is an advisor to Viktor Orban, opened on February 24, 2002, shortly before Orban's first term in office was concluded. The museum was intended to both write the official national history and act as a memorial for

the victims of the Hungarian National Socialist Arrow Cross Party and the Communist Secret Police, both of which shared the same building that now houses the museum. It includes numerous exhibition rooms with theatrical stage-sets, spectacle-like scenes, loud music, vibrant colors and strong spot lighting – reminiscent to a Halloween version of a Disney Park. The rooms illustrate various themes, such as: "Hungarian Nazis," "Double Occupation," "Gulag," "The Fifties," "Life Under Communism," "Peasants," "Hall of the 1956 Revolution," and "Reconstructed Prison Cells."[396] Political scientist, Emilia Palonen poignantly observed:

> The political logic of the exhibition [...] was to make a distinction, which had been influential for the Hungarian postcommunist right, between the Nazi years and the Interwar period, and to highlight the terror of the Communists. [...] what is not described in the exhibition but implied in the way in which it is closely associated with FIDESZ and the Hungarian right, is that the [contemporary version] Hungarian Socialist Party is an inheritor of the Stalinist and the Nazi legacy.[397]

Another example from the early 2000s that illustrated the political maneuvers of the right wing political party to use cultural institutions in a process of nation building represented the building of the New National Theater, most vividly articulated through its architectural style. The Theater features an eclectic and awkward mix of organic elements, post-modern and historicist style architecture. The building resembles a ship at the front of which a neo-classical façade is submerged under water, while a fire flame burns on top of it. On the building's walls and in the small surrounding garden numerous figurative plaques commemorate national authors, actors and actresses. Through such kitsch imbued historicist-style architecture, this cultural building communicates FIDESZ's nationalist vision of a new Hungary and a new Hungarian identity.

It is significant that the new National Theater is part of the Palace of the Arts, which also includes the Ludwig Museum – Museum of Contemporary Art. Founded in 1991, as Hungary's

first institution concerned with international contemporary art, the museum moved to its new location in 2005. As mentioned on its website, the museum is a "central government-funded body" under the supervision of the Ministry of the National Cultural Heritage. While its collection is centered on post-1960s international and Hungarian art with a particular focus on new media, the museum's core mission is the "protection of cultural heritage." As such, the field of contemporary art has been officially inscribed under the nationalist directives of governing political parties.

Moreover, while in its former location, the museum had carved out a small space Kis.terem – Project Room, under the curatorial initiative of Dora Hegyi that showcased young and emerging contemporary artists, in its new location the museum eliminated this initiative. In such a context, autonomous artists' self-institutionalization into collectives and various forms of self-organizations not only act as a counter-force against the right-wing party's populist and nationalist narratives but also provide critical platforms for artists' projects engaged in alternative and experimental forms of art practice.

Such initiatives are all the more crucial within a local context that continues to be culturally and politically morphed under the directives of the second time appointed Prime Minister Viktor Orban (2010-2014). Since 2010, the aggressive re-branding, re-structuring, re-centralizing and major downsizing of institutional staff in all of the country's major theaters and art museums represents some of the measures taken by the current right-wing government in an attempt to "clean" the cultural institutions' offices of liberal-minded and left-leaning intellectuals. Concomitantly, streets and square names, such as Moszkva Ter and the Budapest Ferihegy International Airport in 2010 changed their names into Szell Kalman Square, which

was the square's initial name from 1929 until 1951 named after the then prime minister, and Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport, respectively.

Within the art field, the government's aim to re-centralize culture is most directly evident in passing legislature that, for instance, aims to merge the country's most important museums, the Museum of Fine Arts and the Hungarian National Gallery. Also the directive would transfer the responsibility of the provincial art museums from regional to the central government, a move that would jeopardize the over two hundred cultural institutions' collections by removing from under the care of local curators. Such maneuvers are also financially motivated as the downsizing of staff is, arguably, considered a necessary measure to weather through the nation's economic crisis. Yet at the same time, the right-wing government does not shy away from generously supporting cultural events, such as summer festivals of arts and crafts showcasing folk dancers in national costumes.

4.3.3   Self-institutionalizing discursively: Challenging the left's official condemnation

A somewhat similar conservative and nationalist context ignited the formation of the *Department for Art in Public Space* program in Bucharest, Romania by the E-cart foundation in March 2009 under the leadership of local artists and curators and financed by local branches of major European organizations, such as the Goethe-Institute Bukarest and the European Cultural Center –Sinaia.[398] Considered as the logical continuation of the *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest 2007*, which I discussed previously in section 3.2, the program's mission, as stated in its press release, was to:

> Continue to encourage discussions on the public sphere in Romania, to realize interventions within the city's urban and social structure and to problematize the roles of art and artists in a society with democratic aspirations.

In the two years of its existence, the *Department for Art in Public Space* functioned through several platforms titled "Café-bar Manifest," which were nomadic, free and thematically structured meetings intended for a larger and interested public that gathered in different locations, such as cafes, clubs, cantinas – both central and peripheral – in Bucharest as well as other cities.[399]

The themes of the first three nomadic "Café-bar Manifest" events centered on the recent communist past with its post-1989 interpretations, continuations and condemnations. For example, the first edition, in March 2009, was titled "Communism hasn't happened ... yet!" and had as its main participants the Romanian writer Vasile Ernu, French anthropologist, philosopher and professor Claude Kamoouh, Romanian visual artist Ciprian Muresan, Romanian writer and journalist Costi Rogozanu and Romanian author and translator Ciprian Siulea. The dialogic exchange put into focus the two main and current interpretations of the Romanian communist past. On one hand there is the official vision of communism materialized in the report and book titled *Tismaneanu Report*, which is short for the *Reportul Comisiei Prezidentiala pentru Analiza Dictaturii Communiste din Romania* (*Presidential Commission Report for the Analysis of the Romanian Communist Dictatorship*) published both on-line and in print in 2006. On the other hand, there is the opposing interpretation most vividly presented in the publication *The Anticommunist Illusion: Critical Lectures on the Tismanueanu Report*, published in 2008 as an anthology of several essays all deconstructing and pointing out the important short comings of the *Tismaneanu Report*. While the first benefited from widespread exposure and mass distribution thus colonizing public opinion, the latter had a limited edition of 800 copies and had only been discussed in on-line forums and marginal editorials.

The *Tismaneanu Report* was commissioned by the Romanian President, Traian Basescu (president since 2004) at the request of close to 700 individuals and members of civil society organizations (the people who voted him in power) who signed a letter to the president asking him to officially declare the Romanian Communist Regime as "illegal and criminal." The commission was led by the Romanian-born and US-based political science professor Vladimir Tismaneanu, who was directly appointed by the president to select the group of experts and researchers to compile, coordinate and publish the report. The report consists in over 600 pages structured in three major chapters with subsections, such as, "Workers' Protests in Communist Romania," "Dissidence in the communist regime," "General Considerations: dissidence, resistance, exile and cooptation," and the "Situation of the National Minorities," all focused on homogeneously emphasizing communism as "illegitimate and criminal" regime.[400]

It is noteworthy and, I claim, no mere coincidence that in January 2006, the Council of Europe based on the Swedish parliamentarian Goran Lindblad's report, adopted the 1481 Resolution, which essentially states the necessity of an international condemnation of all crimes committed by the totalitarian communist regimes.[401] As such, the presidential initiative for an official condemnation of the Romanian communist past as a criminal regime is seen in line with the European directives and is in great part also motivated by the prospect of speeding up the country's process in becoming official member of the EU (Romania became an EU member in 2007).

However, while the report was meant as a moral, cultural and political condemnation of the communist past as an "illegitimate and criminal regime" in terms of the violation of human rights and crimes committed by the totalitarian regime, it remained purely on a symbolic level with no concrete political outcomes. For example, one of the concluding recommendations in the

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Tismaneanu Report is the implementation of the lustration law – which would initiate investigations on all the individuals suspected to have collaborated with the communist secret police and actively contributed in the communist state's oppressive measures – has not yet been put into law. The report was essentially a tool for political image making, not unlike the 2002 opening House of Terror Museum in Budapest that, as we have seen, was initiated and supported by the Viktor Orban's right-wing FIDESZ political party as a populist vehicle to write the country's official history of the recent past.

Moreover, most contributors to the *Tismaneanu Report* were members of the Group of Social Dialogue (GDS),[402] which, as I discussed earlier in the text, was among the first post-1989 initiatives championing an apolitical form of civil society based on a critical anti-communist position. By having as the report's contributors self-declared anti-communists, president Basescu has implicitly gained a much sought after politically popular image sympathetic to both a local and European public oriented towards a neoliberal ideology and market economy. However, as one of the participants in the March 2009 "Café-Bar Manifest" pointed out, the anti-communist position has shifted in meaning from the early 1990s when it functioned as a critical socio-political force as seen in the GDS, to the late 1990s that continues in the present, when anti-communism has become pure rhetoric that lacks any criticality and functions as simple strategy for political advancement. As such, the *Tismaneanu Report* was initiated primarily as a symbolic gesture, which transformed the communist legacy into a rhetorical populist parade, in order to strengthen the president's political image as devoted anti-communist.

It is such official manipulations of the collective past in the public discourse that the *Department for Art in Public Space* aimed to unravel and confront. "Communism hasn't happened ... yet!" which included three of the four coordinators of the *Anticommunist Illusions*

that critically challenged the validity of the *Tismaneanu Report*, debated, even if at a symbolic level, the problematic inherent in the state's condemnation of the communist past as a form of writing official history.

One of the most significant accusations of the *Tismaneanu Report* by its critics is its *en masse* condemnation of the entire leftist thinking. For example, Romanian writer, philosopher and editor Ovidiu Tichindeleanu in his essay "Condamnarea Communismului ca folclor urban" ("The communist condemnation as urban folklore") commented on the Report's wholesale negation and reduction of not only communism but also the left to an almost fantastic and disease-filled past. The socialist ideology is simplistically reduced to inconsistent lists of names and numbers of victims and perpetrators. Also, the text is peppered throughout with major discrepancies between chapters' themes, as well as with the misuse of terms and concepts, such as, dictatorship, totalitarianism, or the Marxist-Leninist dogmas, which are never defined in the Report but rather used as symbols for a "biological pathology" that stand in as the cause of all evils. Moreover, Tichindeleanu drew attention to the historical distortion promoted in the Report, in which the several workers' forms of resistance prior 1989 are seen as both inferior and separate from the intellectual dissidents. Thus it only recognizes an elitist form of dissidence from the top while dismissing the significance of resistance at the grass-root level that emerged from within the ranks of the working class.

Most importantly, as a whole, the *Tismaneanu Report* negates the possibility of any form of communist modernization and closes any discussion or recuperation of some of the everyday benefits the communist regimes offered its citizens. Instead, paradoxically after two decades since the [Romanian] revolution "communism" continues to be blamed for the country's high levels of corruptions, the super-rich oligarchs and the widening gap between the rich and the

poor. Serving as a form of legitimation for the right-wing president and its party, the Report's clear anticommunist ideological stance is deeply entrenched in what Tichindeleanu called "eurocentrism" and "capilocentricim."[403]

The *Department for Art in Public Space*, while not a directly self-declared, but certainly implied, leftist initiative, functioned as a public platform for articulating, voicing and challenging the state inflicted monocultural environment in which embracing neoliberalism as both ideology and economic order continues to be seen as an unquestioned requirement towards the country's perceived modernization and democratization. It is significant, that the social capital formed among its participants throughout the several public series of events lead to political capital materialized in further forms of self-institutionalization. For instance, three of the participants in the March 2009 "Café-Bar Manifest:" Ernu, Rogozanu and Siulea went on to form in late 2010 the leftist group CriticAtac, an on-line magazine and public forum concerned with addressing "discrimination and privileges, inequality and equal opportunities, employees and employers relations, relations between the society and the state, the state's role, recent history, and future of the political system."[404]

The discursive spaces that allowed such critical and contrary attitudes to be expressed towards the officially sanctioned discourse have been enacted as part of the *Department for Art in Public Space*. As the title indicates, this was an art initiative that easily subscribes itself to what has been called social practice, another term for the contemporary socially engaged art current. Curator and art critic Maria Lind defines:

> Social Practice as works with multiple faces, turned in different directions – toward specific groups of people, political questions, policy problems, or artistic concerns; there is an aesthetic to organization, a composition to meetings, and choreography to events.[405]

As an outgrow and continuation of the 2007 exhibition *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest 2007* which saw tangible and visible artistic interventions in the urban space of the city, the *Department for Art in Public Space* went a step further into the dematerialization of the art object. It became a multi-dimensional platform where art was conceptualized as a tool in enacting a public sphere directly engaged with broader social and political concerns.

On one hand the nature of the discursively constituted public sphere where people gather in cafes and bars recalls Jurgen Habermas' conception of the (bourgeois) public sphere. In Habermas' discussion, the public sphere (which emerges first within the literary public sphere and then transforms into the political sphere in the public realm) is both an actual space and it also exists at the level of discourse, in social conversations while embedded within specific economic and social conditions.[406] Yet, the spatio-temporal terrain, such as the salons, coffee shops, literary circles, where citizens participate in political dialogue and decision-making and, which constitute the public sphere in fact represses debate. This is because participation was limited to those individuals who were property owners and educated, while excluding everyone else. One could argue that the public spheres enacted through the "Café-Bar Manifest" discursive events are also exclusionary. Participation, although publicly advertised as open to everyone, was limited to a few leftist intellectuals privileged enough to have access to education and information as well as being able to articulate critical positions. It maybe illustrative in this sense that the event's location, the Control Club, was a centrally located trendy bar, mostly frequented by students, artists, musicians, philosophers and young faculty from the nearby universities, thus implicitly addressing and contributing to a selective group of potential audience members. "Café-Bar Manifest" did not envision itself, for example, as a speaker's corner, where people from all walks of life could come and participate, its physical location by default imposed a tacit

distance between itself as a publicly open and free discursive event and the majority of the city's population that lives at the periphery, in the vast seas of crumbling socialist apartment blocks.

On the other hand, however, in a local context in which the nation's president controls the writing of official history that is seen as actively contributing to the formation of a homogenized public culture championing neoliberalism as the only possible path forward, the apparently restrictive circle of individuals debating in clubs and cafes in Bucharest represented in fact an important critical and alternative force. It is significant that such debates occurred under the *Department for Art in Public Space*, which was a form of self-institutionalized initiative within the framework of the E-cart foundation. Rather than fleeting conversations, the dialogic exchanges gained substance and historical presence by the very fact of being initiated from within an (self-institutionalized) artistic framework. The *Department* advertised the events through creatively produced posters that visually communicated the theme of each of the event and then recorded and archived the exchanges in its library. For example, the poster for the first "Café-Bar Manifest" event titled "Communism hasn't happened ... yet!" depicts former President Richard Nixon and former President Nicolae Ceausescu as black and white silhouetted figures, smiling and toasting with full glasses against a vivid red backdrop.

While such artist-run, alternative initiates are common sites in Western democracies, in the former CEE socialist nations they continue to be scarce. Those such endeavors are important, and thus one needs to take into consideration the local context. As we have seen in Hungary, cultural institutions in Romania, such as history museums throughout the country are asked to communicate state's directives. For example, as recommended by the *Tismaneanu Report*, they are expected to stage didactic displays and exhibitions illustrating in a uniform manner the criminality of the communist regime.

In contrast to artists in western democracies, such as the collective Yes Men or the Critical Art Ensemble that aim to challenge the institution of art, for instance, by leaving it behind and devising various tactical media strategies that allows them to operate outside the institution of art, collective initiatives such as *Department for Art in Public Space* in a post-communist context challenged the officially mandated national cultural policies through the very process of their self-institutionalization. This provides them with a legitimate voice and a platform, however small and/or symbolic, to articulate their contrary stance. It is no longer a matter of being against the institution as such, since you must first need to have institutions before you can critique them, but of advocating for institutions strong enough to be receptive of critically diverse positions. Such an attempt of self-institutionalization that directly aims to recover and revive a leftist thinking and position within a rightist, nationalist and corporatist local context, represents a form of institutional critique, which, in Andrea Fraser's words, "allows to judge the institution (of art) against the critical claims of its legitimizing discourses, against its self-representation as a site of resistance and contestation, and against its mythologies of radicality and symbolic revolution."[407]

4.3.4   0GMS' self-institutionalization: Performing institutional critique from within

Similar to the *Department for Art in Public Space*, in its interventionist scope yet adopting a more subversively playful approach, the three-artist (Steven Geurmeur. Ivan Moudov and Kamen Stoyanov) initiated and evolving project 0GMS in Sofia makes use of irony-filled strategies of institutional critique. Their aim is to challenge the institution from within through their self-institutionalized and self-funded alternative space. As a collective project, it was conceptually initiated in 2009 through a video created by Stoyanov and presented in an

exhibition at the Salzburger Kunstverein and at the Vienna Art Week, in which the artists feature 0GMS (the letters are the initials of the artists' last names) as an initiative ridiculing the art market. In its next phase, 0GMS materialized in 2010 as a nomad art gallery space installed in a drawer. At the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)-Sofia in Bulgaria, where now it has an almost permanent home, it was inaugurated in May 2010 in the top drawer the Institute's kitchen cabinet, leaving the rest of the cabinet drawers for the original kitchen use to store utensils. Its first presentation was a solo exhibition by the young Belgian artist Adrien Tirtiaux who exhibited a video about his interventions in the public space that played on a small monitor visible once the viewer pulled out the drawer.

Until the spring of 2012 when 0GMS gallery-drawer staged its first group show curated by Vladiya Mihaylova and Ivan Moudov, the space showcased solo exhibitions by young Bulgarian and international artists, such as Vikenti Komitski, Stela Vasileva, and Kiril Kuzmanov. The majority of exhibitions displayed new works or site-specific projects designed by artists specifically for the space of the gallery-drawer. For instance, the young Bulgarian artist Kuzmanov's May 2011 solo exhibition, *(Dis)appearance of Content* consisted in a conceptual gesture. The artist removed the bottom of the 0GMS gallery-drawer so that the apparent void was filled with a richly-textured content that incorporated the gallery kitchen floor along with each of the viewer's bodily presence who activated the work by pulling open the drawer. In its ten solo exhibitions in the ICA's kitchen drawer, 0GMS exhibited artists working in a wide-range of media, such as drawing, painting, sculpture, mixed media installation and video. For example, the solo exhibition *Guns and Roses Oil* (October-November, 2011) of the young Bulgarian artist Mariela Gemisheva featured a drawer filled with Kalashnikov 47 cartridges emanating the scent of rose-oil mixed with small quantity of explosive. Within seconds of pulling open the drawer

the viewer's nostrils were inundated by the pungent perfume of guns and roses while taking in the site of scattered cartridges rolling around as the drawer was pulled open.

While, under Moudov's initiative, the 0GMS gallery-drawer was also temporarily presented at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich and Galerie Skuc in Ljubljana, at the ICA it continues to exist in a kitchen-drawer on an on-going basis as a gallery space and entity tucked inside the larger gallery. Although each of the three artists behind the 0GMS collective project proposes two artists for a gallery exhibition, the selection is done through a rather ad-hoc and organic manner either by extending invitation or welcoming project proposals from artists, thus eliminating the hierarchical power-relations between director, curator, dealer and artist inherent in virtually any (commercial) art gallery and museum.

Nonetheless, the existing institutional framework within which the 0GMS gallery-drawer inserts itself is vital for the latter's existence as a (self)-institutionalized gallery. For instance, the host institution extends its resources to promote and include in its programing 0GMS and its artists featured within its space. Each artist's solo show has a press release, is featured on the website and is included in any of the educational guided tours offered by the Institute on its current exhibitions on view.

At one level, both the 0GMS artist collective and the artists featured within its gallery become amassed and appropriated by the larger institutional framework, benefiting from representation and exposure through the Institute's local and international network. As such, one may argue that the potential for critique enacted by a self-initiated and artist-run institution evaporates and neutralizes though its absorption into the hosting institution.

At another level, however, 0GMS has its own identity as an institutionalized gallery space, which, in this context, functions similar to a protective shield against exterior forces. It

resists a fully institutionalized appropriation by the very fact that it is already self-institutionalized with its coherently and *a priori* stated goals and aims. Its main mission is to offer a platform for young artists and recent graduates, both local and international to meet and to exhibit their work in a local context that drastically lacks spaces supportive of emerging artists. At the same time, at the ICA and other locations, 0GMS functions as an art object, further blurring the boundaries between the space of the host institution and the individual gallery space within its framework. As such, it acts as parasitic interventions by making use of its hosting institution to promote itself and thus, implicitly, complicating its apparent institutionalization. Moreover, 0GMS's role as a fleeting parasite is most directly communicated in its participation in commercial art fairs. For instance, at the May 2010 Vienna Fair it took over a desk drawer in the booth of the Skuc Gallery, where its conceptual core hovered visibly between presence and absence, between subversively critical gesture and playfully tangible art object for sale.

In 2011 0GMS gallery-drawer transformed into a physical gallery space at the initiative of Geurmeur and Stoyanov, who jointly took out a bank loan to purchase an apartment in central Sofia to open 0GMS gallery. This phase marks a turning point from 0GMS' initial conceptualization. It no longer functions as a parasite or chameleon, subversively intervening into established institutionalized spaces, while shrewdly evading them at the same time. Now, as a commercial art gallery actively participating in art fairs where it rents and sets up a booth displaying art for sale, 0GMS gallery enters the circuit and spectacle of neoliberal art market. At the same time, as Moudov said in a recent conversation, 0GMS is among the very few (two by one account) contemporary galleries in Bulgaria to participate in art fairs, thus representing an important platform for local, young Bulgarians to be exposed to the international art market. Thus, regardless of the shift in its direction, 0GMS's strength lies in its ability to transform their

accumulated social capital into an active and supportive platform and network for young artists to create, interact and exhibit locally and internationally.

At the same time, the opening of the physical gallery space also led to an only internally visible split among the members of the collective regarding the scope of 0GMS, with Geurmeur, for example, emphasizing the commercial presence of the galley while Moudov continuing 0GMS gallery-drawer interventions at the ICA as a parallel activity. Moreover, as part of his own personal artistic practice, Moudov devised a cabinet with four drawers which he titled 0GMS-cabinet that he exhibits in his sole exhibitions, most recently at the Sariev Contemporary gallery (2011) in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, at the W139 gallery in Amsterdam (2011) and at the Prometeogallery in Milano (2012). In the context of the artist's solo exhibitions, the 0GMS-cabinet functions both as an art object, as part of Moudov' artistic oeuvre, as well as a gallery space featuring the work of other artists within its cabinet drawers. Again, these artists are mostly young Bulgarian artists who willingly take part as a way to gain exposure through Moudov's international participations and network.

The artist both provides an exhibition venue for other artists to show their projects and simultaneously makes use of them to create his own conceptual artwork. The minimalist aesthetic of the cabinet standing in an almost empty gallery space, as seen in a photograph at the W139 gallery in Amsterdam, easily conveys the image of a well-crafted, ready-made art object. It remains an authored art object until its contents are activated by the presence of the viewers who decide whether or not to open the drawers. Once the content becomes exposed, the 0GMS-cabinet inverts the viewer's expectation of art objects authored by Moudov through an ironic strategy of confusion, as the names of the other artists both emerge and submerge within the collective initiative 0GMS. As Bulgarian curator Dessislava Dimova observed, "The question

about the show's author – whether it is Moudov himself, the three artists behind 0GMS or the four artists presented in the drawers – remains open."[408]

While preserving the name 0GMS, the collective initiative, whether directly commercial or subversively critical, remains intact. However contradictory 0GMS's parallel manifestations may at first appear to be, collectively they represent a self-institutionalized, artist-run initiative that performs a form of critique that is continuously shifting and changing, as to evade both the institutional and commercial appropriation of all new art production. Instead of exiting the art institution, as seen in internationally known artists working in the US for example, 0GMS, emerging within a post-communist context, intentionally enters the institutions. First, in order to benefit from its institutional framework through the exposure it offers. Here it is important to highlight the nature of ICA, which I discussed earlier in the text, as a unique local venue for showing contemporary art in Sofia. Second, as a way to challenge the institutional structure by injecting young and unknown artists who otherwise would not have a presence in its gallery spaces. Third, to expose the inherently contaminated nature of institutional critique performed in western democracies. Forth, to offer an alternative to a limiting local context that lacks a support system for young artists in particular and experimental contemporary art in general.

In a 2006 essay, "The Institution of Critique," Hito Steyerl spoke about a first wave of institutional critique emergent in the 1970s, which challenged the authoritarian role of the cultural institution that contributed to the legitimation of the nation-state "through the construction of a history, a patrimony, a heritage, a canon, and so on." This is distinguished from a second wave of institutional critique, which emerged in the 1990s with the rise of institutions guided by right wing, neoliberal market-focused priorities, where "institutions no longer aimed to materially represent the nation-state and its constituency, but only claimed to represent it

symbolically. [...] the second wave of institutional criticism was integrated not into the institution but into representation as such."[409] This is exemplified, for instance, by the multiculturalist international trends that only symbolically aim to represent minority groups, while maintaining the inequalities and their marginalization at the systemic level intact.

Moreover, in a similar fashion to what, as we have seen, occurs in both Hungary and Romania, in Bulgaria cultural policies devised by the nation's right-wing president and the leading governing party – GERB, an acronym that stands for Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria – are formulated as to subscribe to European, neoliberal market-oriented directives. For instance, the 2011 opening of a Contemporary Art Museum in Bulgaria by the state's Ministry of Culture functioned primarily as a symbolic gesture for the country's national image at the European level, since Bulgaria was the last country in the EU without a museum for contemporary art. As discussed earlier in section 3.2, the museum was seen to exist essentially only as a newly renovated building with no permanent collection and with no connection to the, however small, local contemporary art scene. The museum is part of the Bulgarian state's most recent attempt to re-centralize the country's major cultural institutions under its direct control and management. The museum conglomerate includes: The National Art Gallery – Sofia, the National Gallery of Foreign Art, the newly formed Museum for Contemporary Art and also the newly formed Museum for Socialist Art. The latter, for example, represents the officially sanctioned vision of the recent communist regime as a homogenously oppressive past presented in displays that, for instance, collapse differences and transformations among the various socialist decades. The 1950s were certainly not the same as the 1980s.

Such national recentralization trends visible recently in various countries in the region, in fact illustrates Steyerl's argument that the second wave of institutional critique has been

occurring at the level of representation as such, rather that within the institution. Subversive, ironic and confusing initiatives such as 0GMS physically intervene into the space of the institution as a way to expose its symbolic representations, just as the public platforms enacted through the *Department for Art in Public Space* attempt to deconstruct it discursively. Such artist-run, self-institutionalized initiatives that are able to transform their accumulated social capital into political capital championing for their rights, offer a significant critical alternative against the hegemony of an aggressive re-centralization of local cultural institutions.

4.3.5 Artists' self-institutionalization: *New Institutionalism* and the *Paracuratorial*

Each of the three artist-run initiatives presented in this section, Dinamo and IMPEX in Budapest, the *Department for Art in Public Space* in Bucharest and 0GMS in Sofia self-institutionalize and make use of different strategies to critique and improve the institution of art. In Budapest they challenge the institutional framing as such, through Dinamo's transformation from a space existing in a symbiotic relationship with a state-funded institution into IMPEX as nomad, project-defined space. In Bucharest, participatory and dialogic exchanges become valuable strategies for enacting a public sphere that enables a critical corrective of the official monopolization of public discourse. And, in Sofia, the collectively initiated 0GMS in its intentionally subversive open-endedness essentially exposes the hegemony of both the western genre of institutional critique and the local national recentralization of cultural institutions used to function as symbolic representation for the state.

While at the core of each of these initiatives, critique of local institutions and official discourse has been a primary goal, each concomitantly struggled for visibility and legitimacy, most directly seen in their programs and exhibition that featured international artists, critics and

curators. In certain aspects, they reveal features of the "new institutionalism," a curatorial trend popular mostly in Europe since the early 2000s. With historical antecedents in the western discourse of institutional critique exemplified in works by artists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher and Daniel Buren, 'new institutionalism' refers to contemporary institutional attempts to transform from within, a tendency that emerged under the increasingly dominant contemporary trend of participatory and relational socially engaged art practices and against the ubiquitous biennale culture. In a 2004 article, curator and art critic Claire Doherty said: "New Institutionalism is characterized by the rhetoric of temporary / transient encounters, states of flux and open-endedness." Doherty further observed the possibly problematic nature of 'new institutionalism' in its risk of setting up "an unnecessary polarization between self-reflexive, open-ended practices and those works which do not subscribe to a 'post-medium' condition." Moreover, often there emerges a discrepancy between the stated participatory nature of socially engaged projects presented in the institution and the actual viewers' negotiation and experience of the work.[410]

The forms of artists' self-institutionalization, discussed in this section, both subscribe and escape the trend of new institutionalism. On one hand, the three initiatives make use of participatory, open-ended and discursive models of engagement centrally geared towards direct and increased audience involvement. Also, incorporating international artists, curators and critics into their programs and exhibitions, each aims for visibility and legitimacy both within the local and international art scene. On one hand, while, essentially, also sharing with the "new institutionalism" a belief in institutions to reform from within, these artist-run initiatives, through their very self-institutionalization, offer an alternative to already existing institutions, both local and international. Rather than being incorporated within existing institutional structures in order

to contribute to their internal transformation, as has been the case with organizations like Kunstverein Munchen under curator Maria Lind's leadership, artists' initiated spaces act as local critical platforms for artistic interventions, curatorial practice and critical debate in a post-communist context dominated by conservative cultural institutions.

In fact, more than an apparent alignment with *new institutionalism*, the self-institutionalized practices discussed in this section, reveals the critical potentials of what has recently been termed, by curator Jens Hoffmann, as the *paracuratorial*. In a 2011 discussion with Maria Lind, Hoffmann defined the *paracuratorial* as encompassing "lectures, screenings, exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects without ever producing anything that could be exhibited."[411] Curator and critic Livia Paldi, further elaborated the concept, drawing out its subversive potential by emphasizing the *paracuratorial* activities' deeply contingent nature as they are defined by the specific locality within which they emerge and take shape. In her 2011 article "Notes on the Paracuratorial" in the *Exhibitionist* magazine, Paldi exemplifies her argument through the curatorial duo Aleya Hamza and Edit Molnar's 2008 initiative *Tales Around the Pavement* in Cairo. The project consisted in various ephemeral events, "some lasting more than a week other only a few hours" that aimed to "acquire knowledge about how publicness and public places exist in downtown Cairo."[412]

In similar fashion, yet in different cultural and geopolitical contexts and using varied strategies, the three initiatives presented in this section illustrate the potential for agency inherent in the often fleeting and short-lived *paracuratorial* activities. Artists become curators of ephemeral exhibitions, instigators and mediators of workshops and public debates in public places and organizers of alternative spaces for other artists to present their work. Whether In Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia or Cairo, where a scarcity of institutional support for contemporary

experimental art making continues to be an everyday struggle, such artists' and curators' (most often) self-funded initiatives that seldom produce "anything that could be exhibited," act as counter-forces and open up spaces for exchange in a context defined by neoliberal ideology and an increasingly nationalized and conservative institutions.

5.0   CONCLUSION: SITUATING CONTEMPORARY SOCIALLY ENGAGED ART WITHIN AND BEYOND POST-1989 EUROPE

Throughout these three major parts, my aim has been to trace the emergence and evolving discourse of socially engaged art in the post-communist period, from the early 1990s to the late 2000s, while also acknowledging its historical genealogy in the 1960s-1980s neo-avant-garde practices. The case studies presented here have been interlaced with and embedded within the broader post-1989 transitional context of societal changes that juxtapose a multitude of competing tendencies. These range from renewed forms of conservative nationalism, aggressive neoliberalism, regional communal belonging at the European Union level and the emergence of incipient yet alternative forms of collectivity, especially envisioned by an increasing number of contemporary artists responding and reacting to the rapidly shifting socio-political changes.

Some of the key themes that transpire throughout the text are the tensions between: provisional, singular or apparently disconnected artistic manifestations in various localities and the envisioning of a broader contemporary form of belonging in an era of neoliberalism; an interventionist drive to provoke change at the local level and a desire to become visible and participate within the international and global art circuit; and the artists' works continuous oscillations and negotiations between a concern for aesthetic form, socio-political content and the ethical dimensions of their relationship with participants and collaborators. Moreover, the simultaneously underlying narratives that crisscross the text represent the rise and fall of local

institutions and their changing roles in extending or eliminating support for socially engaged forms of art as well as the roles played by various curatorial practices within and outside established institutions.

Certainly, such concerns are not limited or relevant only for artists working in or emerging from the post-1989 European context, but are wrestled with across the world within both practice and theoretical debates on the current of socially engaged art. In particular, two contemporary art critics and historians, Claire Bishop and Grant Kester have been at the forefront of this debate as illustrated in their most recently published influential books.

In her 2012 book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, Bishop takes to task what she considers to be the dominant critical tendency to treat artists' practices not *as art* but rather as social achievements outside the realm of art. Sociological discourse is preferred over aesthetic discourse. Collective authorship and horizontal collaborations with participants are favored over individual authorship and project conceptualization by the single artist. The predominant criteria for analysis of such practices are framed in terms of ethics rather than being concerned with an aesthetics communicating a politics of social justice. As privileging the creation of social situations and engaging socially excluded minority groups towards inspiring or implementing constructive social change, Bishop contends that:

> This led to a situation in which socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond.[413]

Arguing against the interpretive and theoretical approaches based primarily on ethical judgments put forward by such critics as Grant Kester and Maria Lind, Bishop advocates for a treatment of

socially engaged practices *as art*. She understands this to mean a focus on the visual, conceptual and experimental realizations of the projects, where some of the artistic achievements are seen in the artists making social dialogue a medium or in their dematerialization of the work of art into social process. Second, drawing upon Jacque Ranciere's discussion of the relation between aesthetics and politics where an emphasis on moral and ethical judgments triggers "the collapse of artistic and political dissensus in new forms of consensual order,"[414] Bishop argues that "unease, discomfort or frustration – along with fear, contradiction, exhilaration and absurdity can be crucial to any work's artistic impact."[415]

One of her primary guiding principle in selecting and assessing participatory socially engaged art is anchored upon drawing the tensions "that (on one hand) pushes art towards 'life' and that (on the other) separates aesthetic sensoriality from other forms of sensible experience."[416] Bishop illustrates this through the British artist Jeremy Deller's 2001 work the *Battle of Orgreave*. It was a performance that consisted in re-enacting a 1984 violent crash between miners and policemen in the Yorkshire village of Orgreave, ignited by Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal measures affecting the local mining industry. Bishop emphasizes a particular aspect in Deller's work that shifts the project away from the ethical domain, which she sees as establishing the problematic binary between good (collective) and bad (individualized or artist led) collaboration, into the aesthetic realm. By conceptualizing the project's structure individually and beforehand and not in direct collaboration with the participants, while simultaneously allowing ample space for improvisation and informal input from his collaborators, Deller's work, according to Bishop, was able to retain the aesthetic potential of individual authorship while becoming a platform for political dissensus in choosing a topic with relevant contemporary resonance.

It is Bishop's privileging of individual authorship, in which the artist conceptualizes or designs the structure of his/her project as an *a priori* activity and where subsequently participants are enlisted to interact or participate, that art critic and historian Grant Kester critiques in his 2011 book *The One and The Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in A Global Context*. Kester focuses on "site-specific collaborative projects that unfold through extended interaction and shared labor, and in which the process of participatory interaction itself is treated as a form of creative praxis."[417] In fact, Kester argues against an absolute prioritization of collective production over the individual author and instead sets out to identify the interplay between these apparently divisive notions; this tension-filled interplay constituting the core of most of the creative practices that he discusses.

If Bishop favors participatory practices that maintain a critical distance from the viewer by often communicating confusion, estrangement or discomfort as essential for the project' to be categorized *as art* and have, albeit symbolically, political resonance, Kester identifies the locus of artistic praxis as socio-politically transformative action within exactly the contaminated space of collaborative production and collective authorship. Instead of "procedures or distanciation and destabilization," the projects analyzed by Kester not only have an important physical and aesthetic component, but also locates the artistic content of their work: in the various dialogical processes endangered; in the shared labor between artists and collaborators in both the conceptualization and construction of a specific project; and ultimately in revealing the constructed nature of social, political and cultural identity formations and their inherent potential for transformation.

An illustrative socially engaged project, detailed in the book, is the contemporary Indian art collective Dialogue's hand pump sites and children's temples created in conjunction with

Adivasi tribal and peasant communities in central India over the last eight years. Dialogue's initial collaborative workshops resulted in the construction of practical constructions surrounding the water hand pumps, where the village's women and children go a dozen times a day to fetch water for consumption and daily use. The constructions, while decorated with local motifs and symbols, were functional. They provided a place for women to rest their vessels as they lift them to their shoulders, while also functioning as drainage canals for disease-filled run-off water.[418] For Dialogue these physical objects and the multi-layered interactive and collaborative processes and exchanges among members of the village that led to these end products carried equal importance.

Kester argues that instead of seamlessly undisturbed and consensual forms of working together with the local community, Dialogue's work existed through "a kind of toggling back and forth between inside and outside, engagement and observation, immersion and reflective distance."[419] Their sustained site-specific projects over the course of several years allowed the artists to grasp the deeply ingrained social structures of the site with its gender and caste divisions and the hierarchical role that crafts play within the traditionally patriarchal village community. Through their multitude and long-term social interactions, Dialogue implicitly ignited new forms of social interactions that allowed established customs and identities to be "reshaped, redeployed and experientially tested."[420] It is here, in the artists' practices that become sites of "working through" such tensions rather then dissolving them into a consensual form of community, that Kester highlights the close interdependence between the political, the ethical and aesthetic concerns inherent in collaborative practices.

While the on-going debates on how to best approach contemporary participatory and collaborative socially engaged art has concerned a number of critics and a multitude of practicing

artists around the world, it is not insignificant that neither Bishop nor Kester include examples of such work in post-1989 CEE. Bishop's book includes a chapter, "The social under Socialism," on art practices under socialism, discussing socially oriented, performance-based actions in communist Czechoslovakia and Moscow. Bishop considers such participatory practices within a socialist context characterized by surveillance and insecurity, where participation was deployed among trusted group of friends and as a "devise to mobilize subjective experience in fellow artists and writers, rather than with the general public."[421] This certainly may be the case in certain local contexts at different points in time throughout nearly fifty years of the communist period, but Bishop's assessment lacks sustained evidence. As I illustrated in section 2.2, there have been a number of socially engaged art practices that directly engaged the participation of the viewers and members of local communities, as seen in the work of Miklos Erdely, Tomas Szenjoby, Ana Lupas and the City Group. These artists, similar to the society at large, made use of various resources within informal social networks that comprised a hidden yet active second society during communism. Most importantly, Bishop's analysis does not extend into the period after the fall of communism.

My aim with this study has been to contribute to this on-going discourse by highlighting a number of artistic practices in post-1989 Europe. Developing their socio-political, participatory projects in the aftermath of collapsing communist regimes and emerging democracies, at the core of several of these artists' works has been a dual process of building autonomous subjects while contributing to a form of collectivity comprised of variously linked communities. Within their localities, different practitioners, such as artists' collectives Big Hope and h-arta, employ overt activist strategies in their works, acting like miniaturized versions of anti-neoliberal global activist movements. They had been engaged in strengthening informal and alternatives forms of

cultural activities and experimentation as ways to reclaim public life and opening up public spheres. Their works become interfaces of building empowered subjects equipped with the tools to claim their rights while simultaneously connecting and engaging within linked social networks at local, regional and global levels. This imbricates ethical and juridical notions in a process of continuous negotiation of what Enwezor defined as "the recognition of the given fact of natural right regulated and legitimized by the law."[422]

Although my study includes various case studies of socio-politically artistic practices from the last two post-1989 decades, which are evidence of a slowly developing trend, this art current has not been considered a predominant artistic tendency in the region and, as such, has been given minimal critical attention at best. For instance, the most recent book, *Art and Democracy in Post-Communist Europe*, by Piotr Piotrowski, one of the leading and influential Polish art historians in the region, presents some of the artists that I discuss in my study, yet he does so within the framework of what amounts to a survey of contemporary art production in post-communist Europe. Without distinguishing their practices as belonging to a specific artistic current or tendency and hence featuring specific methodological characteristics, the author schematically discusses, for instance, art projects by Big Hope and Luchezar Boyadjiev as rather uncomplicated responses to current political and societal issues.

Piotrowski sees these artists' works as exemplifying a shift from "the politics of autonomy," which functioned under the communist regimes "as a defensive shield against political manipulation," to the "autonomy of politics" in the post-1989 period, when a number of interventionist projects aimed at a re-politicization of the public space. Moreover, drawing upon Chantal Mouffe's concept of "agonistic democracy," the author advocates for a form of democracy that accommodates rather than eliminates dissensus and conflict. For instance,

Piotrowski approaches Big Hope's 1998 work with the homeless in Budapest, which I discuss in section 4.2, solely in terms of exposing a neoliberal reality based on consensus that strategically occludes the "interests of the hegemonic political class, which comprised an astonishing coalition of post-communist political factions, now redefined as social democrats and the right-wing parties."[423] While such aims are certainly part of the artists' goals, their work's content resides elsewhere. It emerges from sustained interactions with various homeless people with whom the artists gradually engaged either directly or through the help of local organizations and homeless shelters over several meetings. As I outlined in my discussion, ethical implications and the project's aesthetic dimension represented core concerns for Big Hope, which Piotrowski entirely omits from his analysis.

A similar approach characterizes Piotrowski's presentation of Boyadjiev's 2003 *Hot City Visual* that I present in section 3.3, which he sees as a visual critique of the exclusionary function of contemporary advertising. The author refers to the work as "an action with civic character" where the artist made use of the Roma minority group to expose the homogenizing power of free-market advertising. Who the people actually represented in the large public billboard are; how the artist came to engage with them; how the work impacted the participants; and what resonance it had within the broader local context; these represent just some of the important aspects inherent in Boyadjiev's work, which Piotrowski's fails to address.

Such participatory, socio-politically engaged forms of contemporary art are not, or should not be, defined solely in terms of offering visual responses that challenge the status quo, exposing exclusionary power mechanisms. Their inherently more diverse and complex content emerges when one considers the artists' diverse methodologies and strategies of engagement. As such, interactions, participations and collaborations that unfold over long periods of time or

within pre-determined spatial-temporal parameters, become the artworks' contents. The artists often favor collective authorship and processes. The artwork is no longer grounded in its medium-specific materiality or dependent upon the gallery, museum or architectural context for its legitimation. Instead, in their process-oriented projects, artists prefer situations, events and exchanges that often transform the traditionally passive consumer of art into participant producer. Ultimately, they envision forms of collective belonging comprised of open public spheres in which socio-political, individual and group claims can be expressed and pursued as part of a democratically functioning civil society.

As the sections in my text reveal, socially engaged art has emerged and evolved at specific moments in time throughout the post-communist period, oftentimes with the presence of both financial and institutional support from the USA and EU nations. Most, if not all, artists showcased in exhibitions initiated and funded by the Soros Centers for Contemporary Art in the early 1990s had developed participatory socially engaged projects only for these particular exhibitions, returning soon after, for example, to their earlier studio-based work in painting and sculpture. Academically trained under the communist regime, while also part of small underground artistic enclaves in the 1970s and 1980s, this generation of artists was active in the early 1990s. They envisioned a renewed form of belonging defined in clear opposition to socialism and the communist past. Almost by default, liberal democracy championing individual freedoms and market capitalism were embraced as the principles for moving forward toward a democratic society. The SCCAs gained their symbolic and cultural capital exactly from framing their institutional presence in the CEE region in clear opposition to the communist ideology.

Emerging tensions between the curated exhibitions' frameworks, seen as public manifestations of these local art centers, and several of the commissioned artists' practices reveal

the conflicted nature of such foreign-funded and short-lived institutions. While curatorial themes were inspired by and selected according to international (especially American) initiatives that showcased socio-political art interventions employing collectivist methodology to challenge the neoliberal status quo, the local CEE artists' works were critiqued for their lack of political engagement. Rather than receptive to locally emerging alternative forms of art, however apolitical these might have appeared to be, the SCCAs cultivated the image of a progressive institution supportive of experimental contemporary art as practiced in western democracies. Moreover, in an attempt to internationalize the local scene, curators were asked to introduce a topic unexplored or unfamiliar within the local context as a way to provoke artists to produce art similar to international developments. Although not adequately political when compared to international criteria of engaged art characteristic of the early 1990, several of the small and short-lived artistic practices, developed in various localities in the region, began a still on-going process of reclaiming public life. Initially, from state communist ideology and then from market focused neoliberal ideology, as a prerequisite for a public sphere and civil society where competing political claims can be articulated and pursued rather than silenced or marginalized.

I identified a second phase within the current of socially engaged art during the early to mid-2000s with the presence of European Union funds for local and regional cultural initiatives. Exhibitions of art in public spaces, staged in various CEE cities, symbolically embodied the notion of a transnational public sphere promoted at the EU level. At the same time, artistic and curatorial public manifestations reacted against nationalist forces emerging within local contexts, which increasingly began to question their countries' integrations into the EU. Such exhibitions have been part of a broader process of Europeanization where culture has been functioning as a vehicle towards economic integration and cooperation.

Curatorial frameworks revealed EU's inherent paradox. On one hand they juxtaposed the ideal of a transnational form of belonging enacted through cultural initiatives that both preserve the color of their national specificity and trade it for a European identification. On the other hand, EU's oblique emulation of nationalist strategies in its process of creating a regional political identity serves as forms of legitimation for its exclusionary measures towards non-EU citizens and for its legislative maneuvers that enable a borderless territory for an unrestricted neoliberal market economy. It is such measures that confines the free movement of individuals that artists, such as Big Hope and Matei Bejenaru, have challenged in their works in Torino and London, respectively.

A younger generation of artists, formally trained during the first post-1989 decade as well as in Western European countries and the US, marked a concomitantly occurring tendency within the socially engaged current in the region. In contrast to the earlier generation, which was guided by the credo of anti-politics envisioning a form of collective belonging in strict opposition to socialist ideals and a full embrace of right-oriented democratic principles; this younger cohort of artists and curators consciously aimed to recover a sense of community inspired by leftist ideals. This was explicitly communicated, for instance, by the initiatives organized within the framework of the *Department of Art in Public Space* in Romania, in their effort to offer a corrective to the officially rightist condemnations of the recent communist past with all its socialist-inspired principles by creating open platforms for communication and debate in public spaces. Such initiatives have been part of subversive forms of self-institutionalization, where local artists, critics and curators group to form, oftentimes small and short-lived, alternative institutions and organizations, as a way to enact legitimate public platforms to challenge measures taken by rightist, nationalist and corporatist local governments.

Such self-institutionalized initiatives represent what Terry Smith calls *infrastructural activism*, which comprises of activities beyond the established museum circuit conducted by curators and artists "committed to experimentality, to opening out possibilities for all participants in art making."[424] While Smith identifies this curatorial form within western democratic societies, the concept of infrastructural activism has a particular resonance and impact within local contexts where experimental forms of contemporary art are struggling against scarcity and lack of any structured and sustained support. Such self-institutionalizing practices play a pivotal role in challenging constraining national cultural policies and collectively work towards bringing about positive social change. Infrastructural activism marks the latest phase within the curatorial narrative that forms part of the subtext of this study. It extends from the notion of artist as curator and curator as artist seen in the set of exhibitions of the early 1990s, to the notion of the paracuratorial and new institutionalism in the early to mid-2000s, which designated a renewed form of exhibition making in which public debates, workshops, meetings and presentations most often become the content of exhibitions. The often independent and alternative forms of self-institutionalizations ignited by a number of infrastructural activist artists and curators become subversive strategies in the struggling localities of developing democracies.

ENDNOTES

[1] Grant Kester, "Introduction: The Semantics of Collaboration" in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

[2] Gregory Sholette and Blake Stimson, "Introduction: Periodizing Collectivism," in *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, eds. Gregory Sholette and Blake Stimson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 2.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Okwui Enwezor, "The Production of Social Space as Artwork: Protocols of Community in the work of Le Groupe Amos and Huit Facettes," in *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945*, eds. Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 225.

[5] Ovidiu Tichindeleanu, "Non-Capitalist Economies and the Postcommunist Transition," in *Over the Counter: The Phenomena of Post-Socialist Economy in Contemporary Art*, ed. Judit Angel (Budapest: Mucsarnok, 2010), 118-9.

[6] "The wall embodied the abstract border with a manifestly arbitrary physical barrier, cutting off traffic along what were busy streets. To the global metropolis it meant a shift of continents, a freezing of the compass." Sibelan Forrester, Elena Gapova and Magdalena J. Zaborowska, "Introduction: Mapping Postsocialist Cultural Studies," in *Over the Wall / After the Fall*, eds. Sibelan Forrester, Elena Gapova and Magdalena J. Zaborowska (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 8.

[7] *After the Wall, Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, exh. cat., eds. David Elliot and Bojana Pejic (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 159-205.

[8] Adrian Cioroianu, "The Impossible Escape: Romanian and the Balkans," in *Balkan as Metaphor, Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, eds. Dusan I. Bjelic and Obrad Savic (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 210.

[9] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 5-16.

[10] Orientalism can be considered a precedent for the Balkanist discourse. In his 1978 book *Orientalism* Edward Said traces the origins of "orientalism" to the centuries-long period during which Europe dominated the Middle and Near East and, from its position of power, defined "the orient" simply as "other than" the occident. Said pointed out that Orientalism could be considered as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient, that is Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 4.

[11] Maria Todorova, "Balkanism and Orientalism: Are they Different Categories," in *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3-21.

[12] It's relevant to note that the notion of Central Europe had already been present in the interwar period. For example, Friedrich Naumann's 1917 concept of "Mitteleuropa" was envisioned as a European area with Germany at its center and the other nations tied to it whether through settlement, trade, hegemony, or conquests. Naumann (1917). Another was Tomas Masaryk's notion consisting of a region of small states, from which Germany and Germans were excluded. Masaryk (1972). Both of these conceptualizations were premised on the idea that people had a unique national identity and thus deserved a national territory.

[13] Iver B. Neumann, "European Identity, EU Expansion, and the Integration/Exclusion Nexus" in *Constructing Europe's Identity, The External Dimension*, ed. L.E. Cederman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001), 150.

[14] Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe" (1984) in *From Stalinism to Pluralism, A documentary history of Eastern Europe since 1945*, ed. Gale Stokes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 217-23.

[15] A strand of Hungarian historiography features a similar categorization, as can be seen in Jéno Szücs's study "Three Historical Regions in Europe," where Europe's history was treated as a tripartite affair with developments of "Western," "Central," and "Eastern" (that is mainly Russian) spheres being separated. Jéno Szücs,"Three Historical Regions in Europe" in *Civil Society and the State*, ed. John Keane (London: Verso, 1988), 291-331.

[16] Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1997), 160.

[17] Roxana Marcoci, "'What Happened to Us,' interview with Dan Perjovschi by Roxana Marcoci", in *States of Mind: Dan and Lia Perjovschi*, ed. Kristine Stiles, exh. cat. (Durham, NC: Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2007), 166-67.

[18] There is also a third category, which will not be address in this paper that includes exhibitions, such as *Europa, Europa: das Jahrhundert der Avantgarde in Mittel – und Osteuropa* (Kunst und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn, 1994), *Reduktivismus: Abstraction in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, 1950-1980* (Museum Moderner Kunst Stifung Ludwig, Wien, 1992) and the fifty or so publications produced by ifa-Galerie in Berlin, that attempt to establish continuity with the pre-communist past, specifically with the interwar avant-garde period, in order to demonstrate the universal character of visual arts produced in the East while ultimately aiming at the construction of the "self-as-European."

[19] Kevin Consey, "Foreword," in *Beyond Belief: Contemporary Art from East central Europe*, ed. Laura J. Hoptman (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1995), VI.

[20] Bojana Pejic, "The Dialectics of Normality," in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, eds. David Elliott and Bojana Pejic (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 17.

[21] David Elliot, "Introduction," in (Nersesova n.d.)*After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe*, eds. David Elliott and Bojana Pejic (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 11.

[22] In her article, Lisa Nersesova pointed out that Brener was disturbed by Wenda's Gu work that was at the center of the exhibition, thus infringing upon the premise of the exhibition meant to establish open dialogue among Eastern European artists. "Third World Artist: The Performance Art of Alexander Brener," accessed November 3, 2012, (Denton, TX: UNT Digital Library), http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc84348/.

[23] Boris Groys, "Back from the Future," in *2000+ArtEast Collection: The Art of Eastern Europe, A selection of works for the international and national collections of Moderna Galerija Ljublijana*, ed. Zdenka Badovinac and Peter Weibel (Vienna: Folio Verlag, 2001), 9-14.

[24] For an insightful critique of Manifesta, see Okwui Enwezor, "Tebbit's Ghost" in *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, eds. Elena Filipovic and Barbara Vanderlinden (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 175-85.

[25] IRWIN, "General introduction" in *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. IRWIN (London: Afterall, 2006), 14.

[26] *Mind the Map! History is not given: A Critical Anthology Based on the Symposium (Leipzig, 13-16 October 2005),* eds. Veronika Darian, Marina Grzinic, and Gunther Heeg (Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006), 18.

[27] See Terry Smith's response in "A Questionnaire on 'The Contemporary': 32 Responses," *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 46-54, accessed October 10, 2012, http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/octo.2009.130.1.3.

[28] Such as "retrosensationalism" most evident in works by Damian Hirst, Jeff Koons, Takasi Murakami, "remodernism" illustrated in works by Richard Serra and Jeff Wall and "spectacularism" conveyed in works by Matthew Barney and Cai Guo-Qiang

[29] Representative works are those of Shirin Neshat and William Kentridge, subREAL and IRWIN in post-communist Eastern Europe post-colonial critique and Zoe Leonard, Allan Sekula and Thomas Hirschhorn concerned with a critique of global industry and post-colonial critique.

[30] For example, artists belonging to this current are primarily working in collectives and are engaged for example in direct action at local levels, such as Park Fiction in Hamburg or Wochenklausur in Vienna; or in small-scale interventions, such as Krzysztof Wodiczko's public projections or his sculptural and functional devices.

[31] Hoffmann, Jens and Maria Lind. "To Show or Not to Show." *Mousse Magazine*, no. 31, November 2011. http://www.moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759#top.

[32] Terry Smith, "Curatorial Practice Now" in *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International), 232.

[33] It was conducted by Richard Rose and Christian Haerpfer in 1995; a total of 10,441 people were interviewed

[34] Cited in Marc Morje Howard, "The weakness of postcommunist civil society," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no.1 (January, 2002): 158-60.

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Political scientists James Cohen and Andrew Arato characterized civil society by: (1) plurality: families, informal groups and voluntary associations whose plurality and autonomy allow for a variety of forms of life; (2) publicity: institutions of culture and communication; (3) privacy: a domain of individual self-development and moral choice; and (4) legality: structures of general laws and basic rights needed to demarcate plurality, privacy, and publicity from at least the state and economy. Andrew Arato and Jean L. Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 346.

[36] Robert D. Putnam, "Social Capital and Institutional Success," in *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 171-72.

[37] The Danish Cooperation for Environment in Eastern Europe (DANCEE) lists 2,700 environmental NGOs in 15 CEE countries. For example, in Hungary there were 973 environmental organizations in 1998, out of which 141 had been founded before 1990. Cas Mudde, "Civil Society," in *Developments in Central and East European Politics*, eds. Judy Batt, Paul Lewis and Stephen White (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 213-28.

[38] Galina Koleva, "Dominant approaches to civic participation," in *Civil Society, Citizenship and Civic Participation in Bulgaria*, eds. Galina Koleva, Siyka Kovacheva, Petar-Emil Mitev, Nikolai Tilkidjiev, and Stefan Videv (Plovdiv, Bulgaria: MAKROS Publishing), 23-28. She draws this information from the International non-governmental organization CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and implemented in more than 50 countries. In Bulgaria, Balkan Assit Association (BAA) implemented the project from December to March 2005. Incipient forms of civil society in the early 1990s could be seen in non-political movements, such as the Committee for Environmental Protection to address the pollution in the city of Russe as well as the movement for the projection of human rights especially as related to the ethnic Turkish minority and the reversal of the name change process that occurred in the 1980s as well as the Roma minority.

[39] Norman Uphoff, "Grassroots Organizations and NGOs in Rural Development: Opportunities with Diminishing States and Expanding Markets," *World Development* 21, no.4 (1993): 607-22.

[40] As Foley and Edwards point out, proponents of the Western European new left in the 1970s and 1980s, while sympathizing with their contemporary Central Eastern Europeans' reformist notions, conceptualized civil society in opposition to the status quo represented by the corporate market forces reorganizing European society at the time. Within civil society they created 'action spaces' where various organizations and institutions representing the interests of such groups as environmentalists, feminists and peace movements. Ultimately, by seeking to achieve collective good through collective action, they implicitly challenged conservative notions civil and democratic societies. Bob Edwards and Michael Foley, "The paradox of civil society," Journal of Democracy 7, no. 3 (July 1996): 38-52.

[41] Specifically, his recipe to achieve civil society includes the following measures: (1) a decentralized state, so that there are more opportunities for citizens to take responsibility for (some of) its activities; (2) socialized economy so that there is a greater diversity of market agents, communal as well as private; and (3) a pluralized and domesticated nationalism, on the religious model, so that there are different ways to realize and sustain historical identities. Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy: Pluralism, Citizenship, Community*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: Verso, 1992), 103-07.

[42] Howard, "Weakness," 161-63.

[43] He defined social capital rather broadly, as "a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988): S98.

[44] Coleman, "Social Capital," S100-S108. Arguing that the existence of social capital, defined as a set of relations at the family and community level, offset some of the social and economic disadvantages of a child, for Coleman social capital was useful to individuals to advance their own goals. The existence of social capital contributed, for example to the accumulation of the student's human capital, which subsequently aided in his/her future accumulation of economic capital. As John Field rightfully observed, Coleman adopted a rational choice sociology, which considers that individuals ultimately pursue their self-interests and if they choose to cooperate, it is because it is in their interests to do so. See John Field, *Social Capital* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 24. Moreover, because of its public good quality (i.e. the benefits of individual investments into social capital are experienced collectively by a group of people rather than the single individual who invested in it) most forms of social capital "are created or destroyed as by-products of other activities." See Coleman, "Social Capital," S118.

[45] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 171-3. Similarly, in his later work Putnam defined social capital as "the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" that ultimately "enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives." Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), 19.

[46] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 176. Moreover, in *Bowling Alone* Putnam argued that since the 1960s the united American community has been coming apart seen in the rapidly declining membership numbers in civic associations. The culprits for this unfortunate decline of community-mindedness are the spread of entertaining technologies, especially television, which takes away the time and interest to engage in civic activities, two-career families, the urban sprawl and generational change. Putnam used the bowling league as a metaphor for a type of association that brought relative strangers together on a regular basis and over time built a set of networks and values among its members, which implicitly led to general reciprocity and trust resulting in mutual collaborations. See also Field, *Social Capital*, 32.

[47] Pari Baumann, "Sustainable livelihoods and political capital: Arguments and evidence from decentralization and natural resource management in India," paper prepared for Overseas Development Institute (London, 2000), p. 21

[48] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education,* ed. J. Richardson (New York, Greenwood, 1986), 241-58.

[49] Ibid., 252.

[50] Ibid., 248-49.

[51] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 122.

[52] Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 102.

[53] George Konrád, *Antipolitics: An Essay*, trans. Richard E. Allen (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984), 230.

[54] Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1990 Václav Havel*, ed. Paul Wilson (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 150.

[55] Petr Kopecký, "Civil society, uncivil society and contentious politics in post-communist Europe," in *Uncivil Society? Contentious politics in post-communist Europe*, eds. Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde (New York: Routledge, 2003), 5.

[56] Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley, "Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 1 (1998): 10-11.

[57] Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-Communist Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 150.

[58] Neera Chandhoke, "The 'Civil' and the 'Political' in Civil Society," *Democratization* 8, no. 2 (2001): 8.

[59] Ibid., 14.

[60] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 121-22.

[61] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991).

[62] Claire Bishop, *Participation, Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006)

[63] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012)

[64] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (CA: University of California Press, 2004)

[65] Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1994)

[66] Timothy Garton Ash, "Eastern Europe: The Year of Truth," in *The New York Review of Books* 37, no. 2 (February 15, 1990): 17-22.

[67] Vaclav Havel in "Rival Visions" by Vaclav Havel and Vaclav Klaus with commentary by Petr Pithart, *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (January 1996): 12-23.

[68] Tichindeleanu, "Non-Capitalist Economies," 112.

[69] Vaclav Havel, "The Post-Communist Nightmare," trans. Paul Wilson, *The New York Review of Books* 40, no. 10 (May 27, 1993): 8.

[70] Writing in 1993 political scientists Valerie Bunce and Maria Csanadi pointed out that there were two factors influencing developments in Eastern Europe, "strong pressures in support of a 'great leap forward' into capitalism

and liberal democracy (or revolutionary change) and, second, pressures in the direction of continuing elements of the state socialist past and modifying these over time (an evolutionary approach to change)." Valerie Bunce and Maria Csanadi, "Uncertainty in the Transition: Post-communism in Hungary," *East European Politics and Societies* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 240-75.

[71] Janusz Bugajski and Maxine Pollack, *East European Fault Lines: Dissent, Opposition and Social Activism* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1989), 7.

[72] Havel, "Power," 186.

[73] Elemer Hankiss, "The Second Society: Is there an Alternative Social Model Emerging in Contemporary Hungary?" *Social Research* 55, no.1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1988): 22-32.

[74] Ibid., 36.

[75] Ibid., 37.

[76] Ibid., 39-40.

[77] H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and an Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 163.

[78] Ibid., 164.

[79] Bugajski and Pollack, *Fault Lines*, 18-19.

[80] Božidar Zrinski, introduction to The *29th Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana* catalogue (Ljubljana: International Centre of Graphic Arts, 2011).

[81] Miklós Peternák, "Conversation with Miklós Erdély, Spring 1983," *Argus* 2, no. 5 (1991): 76-77.

[82] Konrád, *Antipolitics*, 198.

[83] Quoted from a text written by Božidar Zrinski to accompany the honorary award given by the 29th Ljubljana Biennial to Miklós Erdély, "Honorary Award « The 29th Biennial of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana," last modified September 24, 2011, http://29gbljubljana.wordpress.com/2011/09/24/honorary-award/.

[84] As an artist, writer, theorist, poet and architect, Miklos Erdely is considered "the father of the Hungarian neo-avant-garde" of the 1960s and 1970s. He was an especially influential figure through his experimental teaching studios and workshops that combined avant-garde practices, new theories of creativity and educational methods influenced by Eastern philosophical traditions. From 1975 until his death in 1986 he led three conceptually and methodologically related courses in art: "Creativity Exercises," (in 1975-76 together with Dora Mauer and Gyorgy Galantai"Fantasy Developing Exercises (FAFEJ)" and "Inter-Disciplinary-Thinking (Indigo)." See the study compiled by Sándor Hornyik and Annamária Szőke, "Creativity Exercises, Fantasy Developing Exercises (FAFEJ) and Inter-Disciplinary-Thinking (InDiGo). Miklós Erdély's art pedagogical activity, 1975–1986," ed. Annamária Szőke, last modified July 30, 2009, http://monoskop.org/images/1/1e/INDIGO_summary.pdf.

[85] Emilia Palonen, "Political Polarization and Populism in Contemporary Hungary," *Parliamentary Affairs* 62, no. 2 (2009): 318-34.

[86] Bugajski and Pollack, *Fault Lines*, 20.

[87] George Schopflin, "Opposition and Para-Opposition: Critical Currents in Hungary, 1968-78," in *Opposition in Eastern Europe*, ed. Rudolf L. Tokes (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 142.

[88] Most authors writing on the Hungarian neo-avant-garde of the late 1960s and early 1970s agree on three main artistic manifestations: the Iparterv group, the Szürenon, and the Balatonboglar Creative Studio. Iparterv (industrial planning) group was the first unofficial manifestation of the neo-avant-garde in Hungary. It was organized in 1968 in the banquet hall of the Inner City headquarters of a construction company. Subsequently Iparterv became the name of an entire generation of artists. The show was shut down within the first couple of days and a second exhibition was staged in 1969. In the introduction to the catalogue of the 1968 exhibition Hungarian curator and art historian, Péter Sinkovits stated that the goal was to link up with "the best in the international avant-garde" and "this exhibition is an attempt to create an opportunity for the clarification of the newest experiments." Led by Attila Csáji, Szürenon was a self-organized group of artists, who worked in a surrealist and organic non-figurative aesthetic, organically rooted in the domestic soil. Gábor Andrási, Gábor Pataki, György Szücs and András Zwickl, *The History of Hungarian Art in the Twentieth Century*, trans. John Bátki (Budapest: Corvina, 1999).

[89] The following summer, while the programs increased in number and diversity so has the close attention of the county authorities, which requested that artworks be juried prior to being exhibited. György Galántai, "Hogyan tudott a művészet az életben elkezdődni? / How was art able to begin its existence?" in *Törvénytelen avantgárd: Galántai György balatonboglári kápolnaműterme 1970-1973 [Illegal Avant-garde: The Chapel Studio of György*

Galántai in Balatonboglár 1970-1973], eds. Júlia Klaniczay and Edit Sasvári (Budapest: Artpool-Balassi, 2003), 43-90.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid. For instance, the Szürenon group led by Attila Csáji, comprised of artists of different generations, such as Sándor Csutoros, László Haris and István Haraszty who were concerned with articulating an art form emerging from the local Central-European traditions and worked in a style that combined surrealist with organic, non-figurative forms. At Balatonboglár in 1970 and 1971, they exhibited next to the Iparterv artists, such as István Nádler, Imre Bak and Tibor Csiky, who worked with highly abstract, geometric-minimalist forms and were primarily concerned with aligning themselves with current Western developments. The fusion of these groups was already facilitated by the R-exhibition (at the R-building of the Technical University, Budapest) in December of 1971.

[92] Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945 – 1989* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 276.

[93] Ibid., 272-73.

[94] Konrád, *Antipolitics*, 119.

[95] John P. Jacob and Tibor Várnagy, *Hidden story: samizdat from Hungary and elsewhere* exh. cat. (New York: Franklin Furnace Archive, 1990).

[96] Sol LeWitt, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds., Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 846

[97] László Beke, "Conceptual Tendencies in Eastern European Art," in *Global Conceptualism Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* exh. cat., eds. Luiz Camnitzer, Jane Farver and Rachel Weiss (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), 42.

[98] Gábor Tóth, email correspondence with the author, June 2010.

[99] Jozsef Ladanyi, *A Helyettes Szomjazok Szenvedélyes Élete / The Passionate Life of Substitue Thirsters* exh. cat. (Székesfehervar, Hungary: Istvan Kiraly Muzeum (King Stephen Museum), 1990).

[100] János Sugár, "The Újlak Group as a Working Method," (Dunaújváros, Hungary: The Institute of Contemporary Art).

[101] Other similar, collectively staged exhibitions in alternative spaces were Blue Steel (summer 1989), Blue Pencil (1989) and Blue-Red (1990), which "were affiliated with three trends in the art of the eighties: underground art, avant-garde parody and the Post-Conceptual approach." Andrasi, *History of Hungarian Art*, 251.

[102] Havel, "Power," 193.

[103] Skilling, *Samizdat,* 6.

[104] Skilling, *Samizdat*, 33-34. Also, closely related to *Beszelo* an independent publishing house called *AB:Fuggetlen Kiado* (AB: Independent Publishers) was established in 1981, which initiated a series of publications on themes such as: Hungarian literature, Hungary in 1956, Hungarian minorities and other opposition in other Central East European nations. Another journal, *Magyar Figyelo* (Hungarian Observer) appeared in 1982 with articles on similar issues. AL (Actual Letter or Artpool Letter) edited by György Galántai of Balatonboglar and his wife Julia Galántai was published since 1983. It contained up-to-date information on artistic and political events as well as on published material in the country. See Jacob and Várnagy, *Hidden Story*.

[105] It even made connection with the Greens in Germany and was awarded the Swedish "alternate Nobel Prize." Skilling, *Samizdat,* 184.

[106] Palonen, "Political Polarization," 323.

[107] Also several members of the Association were trained in Oxford on Foundation scholarships. George Soros, *Underwriting Democracy* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 10.

[108] Jacob and Várnagy, *Hidden Story*.

[109] Konrád, *Antipolitics*, 198.

[110] Steven Sampson, "The Informal Sector in Eastern Europe," *Telos* 66 (Winter 1985-86): 52.

[111] The aesthetic of socialist realism, exemplified by bright portraits of factory workers and collectivized peasants, functioned as the Party's visual language meant to hide the surrounding reality with the ideological (non)reality of a utopian communist future.

[112] Bugajski and Pollack, *Fault Lines*, 14. Also, on the front page of its third issue in 1961, *Arta Plastica*, the only official Romanian contemporary art magazine during this time, featured a photograph of Gheorghiu-Dej and his entourage visiting a contemporary art exhibition. Appearing in the place where usually a portrait of Lenin or Stalin would appear, the presence of local Party's leadership symbolized Romania's independent and nationalist road to

Socialism. Magda Carneci, *Artele Plastice in Romania, 1945-1989 / Plastic Arts in Romania, 1945-1989* (Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 2000), 54.

[113] Bugajski and Pollack, *Fault Lines*, 26.

[114] Carneci, *Artele Plastice*, 52.

[115] Ibid., 85-86.

[116] Ibid., 108-09.

[117] Certainly, this generation of young artists oriented towards international contemporary art trends was in conflict with the official artists creating a nationalist-communist form of art.

[118] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds., Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (United Kingdom: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 835-845

[119] Olos also collaborated with Joseph Beuys at the Documenta 6 in 1977 in a performance titled *The Gordian Knot* (Nodul Gordian) in which Beuys had to cut "the gordian knot by selecting a small sized module like a knot that was duplicated several hundred times in Olos' sculpture. Ileana Pintilie, *Actionism in Romania During the Communist Era* (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Idea Design and Print, 2002), 35-37.

[120] Interview with the artist, "Ana Lupas: In afara intrebarii De Ce si Pentru Cine nu exista arta," "Ana Lupas: Outside the Question "Why and For Whom," author's translation from Romanian into English, *Munca* newspaper (Bucharest, Romania), August, 22,1972, 24.

[121] These questions were posed by Romanian art historian and critic Magda Carneci in regards to Ion Grigorescu's works during the 1980s that engaged in an exploration of the banal, everyday social reality that surrounded him. But this observation could very easily be applied to Lupas' and Olos's works as well, since they were of the same generation.

[122] Alexandra Titu, "Experimentalism in Romanian Art after 1960," in *Experiment in Romanian Art since 1960* (Bucharest: Soros Center for Contemporary Art, 1997), 10-29.

[123] Pintilie, *Actionism*, 8-9.

[124] Sampson, "The Informal Sector."

[125] Ibid., 50.

[126] Ibid., 62.

[127] Neo-Orthodox or Neo-Byzantine art was another artistic trend that evolved during the 1980's as a spiritualization of the experimental drive initiated by artists such as Paul Gherasim, Constantin Flondor and Horia Bernea. Cirneci pointed out that at the time of its appearance, the movement has been seen on the international art scene as a regression and a stylistic backwardness because it employed an outdated religious iconography. However within the Romanian local context, the religious inclination of this artistic trend has been felt as an alternative orientation and was considered as an act of moral courage against the communist propaganda and ideological limitation. Carneci, *Artele Plastice*, 58-62.

[128] Moreover, individual oppositional protests were also evident. For example, Radu Filipescu, an electronics engineer produced and distributed leaflets in May 1983 in Bucharest calling upon citizens to stage peaceful demonstrations against the regime. Spontaneous workers' demonstrations over falling living standards and wage cuts were held in Brasov in November 1987. Close to 10,000 workers from two major factories marched through the streets and challenged the local Party headquarters before being forcibly dispersed by the police. The authorities effectively dispersed such public deviances, with its leaders and organizers imprisoned. In November 1985, the Romanian Democratic Action, a small anonymous and explicitly political group, appeared with the publication of a policy document. Signed by thirteen political dissidents using pseudonyms, it called for democratic pluralism and the restoration of a mixed economy, rather than an internal restructuring of the State-Party. See Bugajski and Pollack, *East European Fault Lines*, 137-38.

[129] Ibid., 8.

[130] Ibid., 22-23.

[131] The first big official break with the style of socialist realism occurred in 1961 with the first exhibition of Young Artists, whose works showcased a variety of modernist styles including abstract tendencies. Part of the artists of this generation became powerful leaders of the UBA and the rest went in an inner emigration while holding public jobs as graphic designers for local magazines and newspapers in order to make a living. Based on author's interview with Bulgarian art critic Diana Popova, November 2011, Sofia, Bulgaria.

[132] UBA kept lists of artists' names (that included professors of art in the National Academy of Fine arts, their students, artists associated with the Ministry of Culture association) whose works such exhibitions the State should purchase. Ibid.

[133] According to the Gallery's website, its collection includes: "the art of distant lands, of exotic tribes and nations, of old and new ages coexists with the modern European tendencies, with traditional and religious pictorial principles in the chronological span of a millennium." "National Gallery for Foreign Art ," accessed November 11, 2011, http://www.foreignartmuseum.bg/en/about.html.

[134] Iara Boubnova, "In the Local Discourse, as in the International Context" in *After the Wall" Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, eds. Bojana Pejic and David Elliott (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 56-59.

[135] The presence of a large number of artist groups and collectives in the late 1980s and early 1990 emphasize the aim of the practitioners of developing a local scene of contemporary art capable to compete at an international level. By the mid-1990s however artists groups began to disintegrate. *N-Forms: Reconstructions and Interpretations* exh. cat., eds. Nikolay Boshev, Boris Klimentiev, Diana Popova and Svilen Stefanov (Sofia: Soros Center for the Arts, 1994).

[136] The courtyard and hallways of Sofia University, an abandoned brewery and the roof of UBA were some of the alternative spaces artists staged their activities. See Boubnova, "Local Discourse," 56-59.

[137] While in Turgosvishte *The Road* was performed in courtyards and on dirt roads on the outskirts of the city by artists dressed in self-made and mixed-media costumes, in the other location it unfolded on the city's public streets with artists crossing city roads as a unit held together by their clasped hands. Other works by the Turgovishte Group include: the happening *In the Studio* (1987), the happening *Ecology* (1988), the exhibition *Big Photography* and *Labyrinth (*1989), the action *Big Print* (1990). Other works by the Dobrudzha Group include: the happening in Albena *The Dress* (1988), and the installation and two performances *The Dress* (1989). See *N-Forms*, eds. Boshev et al. Art critic, Diana Popova in her former position as an art journalist of UBA travelled throughout the country during this period to report on artistic activities. She witnessed the happening of May 1986 in Turgovishte by a young and middle generation of artists whose collective gesture materialized in an outdoor mixed media exhibition that included an eclectic installation of paintings and painted wood objects. While both a humorous and serious gesture the artists challenged the traditional special dimension of a gallery space. Author's interview with Diana Popova, November 2011.

[138] Maria Vassileva, "The Outset of the Bulgarian Avant-Garde?" in *Art in Bulgaria: Magazine for the Visual Arts*, no. 17 (1994): 6-8.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Boubnova, "In the Local Discourse," 56-59

[141] Collective activities of the City Group include: *The City?* (1988) exhibition in Sofia, *The Tower of Babylon* (1989) , a 9 meters high and over 50 tons metal sculpture in front of the House of Humor in Gabrovo, Bulgaria, the public action *Chameleon* (1990) in front of the National Palace of Culture, the *Attic Exhibition* (1991) in a private studio, which was the last joint City Group exhibition. See *N-Forms*, eds. Boshev et al.

[142] Vladiya, her article on the City Group.

[143] From 1989 until 1991 the C(e)YA provided a framework of legitimacy for basically any artist working with "non-conventional forms" of art. Popova, "N-Forms" It endorsed non-conventional forms of art, initiated changes within the UBA and promoted and supported the founding of groups, galleries, and organizations outside the UBA's jurisdiction. See Diana Popova, "Happy End" (1991) in *Art in Bulgaria: Magazine for the Visual Arts*, no. 17 (1994): 16.

[144] Author's interview with exhibition curator Diana Popova, November 2011.

[145] *East Art Map: Contemporary Art and Eastern Europe*, ed. IRWIN (London: Afterall, 2006).

[146] In 1988 a group of Bulgarian dissidents formed the Independent Association for the Defense of Human Rights to seek international support for civil rights. Radio Free Europe Research, Bulgarian Situation Report/6, 14 July 1988, item 4, and Radio Free Europe Research, Bulgarian Situation Report/5. 27, May 1986, item 1, cited in Bugajski and Pollack, *Fault Lines*, 139-40.

[147] Milada Anna Vachudova, *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration After Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 11-34.

[148] Tismaneanu, Fantasies, 145-48.

[149] Konrád, *Antipolitics*, 231.

[150] Mark Howard, *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe* (Cambridge, UK: University Press Cambridge, 2003), 148-52.

[151] Ash, "Year of Truth," 20.

[152] *22: publicaţie săptămînală editată de Grupul pentru Dialog Social* 1, no. 1 (1990), quoted in Gail Kligman, "Reclaiming the public: A Reflection on Creating Civil Society in Romania," in *East European Politics & Societies* 4, no. 3 (September 1990): 395-96, doi: 10.1177/0888325490004003002.

[153] David Harvey, "The Construction of Consent" in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 42.

[154] David Harvey, "Introduction" in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

[155] David Harvey, "The Neoliberal State" in his *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 78.

[156] Pejic, "Dialectics," 17.

[157] Karl Raimund Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies, Vol. 1: The Spell of Plato* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971)

[158] *Polyphony: Social Commentary in Contemporary Hungarian Art*, exh.cat., eds. Barnabás Bencsik and Suzanne Mészöly (Budapest: Soros Center for Contemporary Arts,1994), 14-18.

[159] Palonen, "Political Polarization," 323.

[160] The definition was from a dictionary of the Hungarian Language, 1980, Vol. 5, p. 89. See *Polyphony,* eds. Mészöly and Bencsik, 18.

[161] Ibid.*,* 301.

[162] Ibid.*,* 14.

[163] Soros, *Underwriting Democracy*, 131.

[164] Ibid., 10.

[165] *SCCA: Bulletin 1991-1994*, eds. Suzanne Mészöly and Andrea Szekeres (Budapest: Soros Center for Contemporary Arts, 1994), 11.

[166] *Polyphony,* eds. Mészöly and Bencsik, 291.

[167] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 60.

[168] *Polyphony,* eds. Mészöly and Bencsik, 31-36 & 317.

[169] Edit András, (1997) "High and Low: A Painful Farewell to Modernism – Difficulties in the Period of Transition," in *After the Wall, Art and Culture in Post-Communist Europe*, exh. cat., eds. David Elliot and Bojana Pejic (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999), 126.

[170] *Polyphony,* eds. Mészöly and Bencsik, 164.

[171] Ibid., 272.

[172] See IPUT's project proposal published, in Ibid.*,* 257

[173] IPUT's proposal was shaped by one of their earlier work in 1970, which was "an audio-tactilist visual-poem for the blind," and Balazs Beothy's rejected proposal to the same exhibition. Moreover, their participation in the exhibition was part of the Parallel Union's Art Strike 1990-1993 for "the impossible economic and legal circumstances of artists working in the cultural sphere." Ibid.

[174] Edit András, "An Agent that is still at work: The Trauma of Collective Memory of the Socialist Past," in *Writing Central European Art History. Pattern_Travelling Lecture Set 2008/2009. Erste Stiftung Reader # 01.* (Vienna: Erste Stiftung, 2008), 5-21.

[175] Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 171-72.

[176] Moreover, the numerous artist groups such as the Ujlak and the Hejettes Szomjazok, formed in the late 1980s and in the first couple of years of the 1990s were another form of working collaboratively in staging spontaneous art events and one-night exhibitions in abandoned buildings to an eclectic public.

[177] *Polyphony,* eds. Mészöly and Bencsik, 291.

[178] Gail Kligman, "Reclaiming the public: A Reflection on Creating Civil Society in Romania," in *East European Politics & Societies* 4, no. 3 (September 1990): 395-96

[179] Calin Dan, *Exhibition 01010101…*, exh. cat., ed. Calin Dan (Bucharest: Soros Center for Contemporary Art, 1994), 10.

[180] Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *Politica Dupa Communism* (Politics after Communism), author's translation (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2002), 34-41.

[181] Although the National Peasant Party (NPP), which organized a meeting of protest in order to block Iliescu and other former communist leaders from running in the May 1990 election, ignited the protest, the street protestors broke their alliance from NPP in the second day. Daniel Beland and Julia Brotea, "'Better Dead than Communist!' Contentious Politics, Identity Formation, and the University Square Phenomenon in Romania," *Spaces of identity* 7, no. 2 (2007): 78.

[182] Tismaneanu 1990: 16-19.

[183] Beland and Brotea, "Better Dead," 87.

[184] Suzanne Lacy, "Debated Territory: Toward a Critical Language for Public Art," in S. Lacy (ed.), *Mapping the terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 171-188.

[185] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 123.

[186] Dan, *Exhibition*, 13 & 66-68.

[187] Lucian Boia, *Romania, Tara de Frontiera a Europei* (Romania, Borderland of Europe), trans. by the author (Bucharest : Humanitas, 2002), 121.

[188] Dan, *Exhibition,* 53-64.

[189] Local art historical precedents of such collective actions include the ephemeral *Damp Installation* (1970) in Margau Village created by the Romanian artist Ana Lupas, which I discussed in detail the previous section.

[190] Adrian Timar was a student at the Art Academy in Cluj-Napoca, Romania at the time when Ana Lupas was professor there. In my conversation with the artist, he expressed the importance of local artistic figures like Lupas, especially when outside information was difficult to access. After being exposed to international artistic currents, Timar specifically cites Joseph Beuys' influence. Author's email correspondence with the artist, September 2011.

[191] Each morning (for four days) at 2am the artists picked up 200 newspapers from the newspaper printing press and worked throughout the night with the help of his friends to imprint an image for each daily run. At 7am Timar distributed the papers at the most central newspaper stands in the city, waiting around for people to buy them. In addition to the artist, there was a reporter from the local TV channel PRO TV to observe the artist action, and representatives from the SCCA in Bucharest taking photographs and filming the action. Ibid.

[192] Corneliu Popa, "The Art that gets out in the streets" ("Arta care iese in Strada"), in *Transylvanian Gazette / Gazeta de Transilvania* (Braşov, Romania), September 10-11, 1994.

[193] Author's email interview with Adrian Timar, September 2011.

[194] Dan, *Exhibition*, 18.

[195] Groys referenced Marshall McLuhans' distinction between hot media (i.e. writing, print, internet that requires a higher degree of concentration from the viewer) and cold media (i.e. television that does not require specialized knowledge or intense power of concentration) arguing that the aims of exhibitions of computer installations is in fact to cool hot media, such as the internet, by eliminating the possibility of full concentration on one computer screen, since the viewer moves from one screen to the next. Boris Groys, "A Genealogy of Participatory Art" in *The Art of Participation, 1950 to Now*, ed. Rudolf Frieling (New York: San Francisco Museum of Art and Thames & Hudson, 2009), 31.

[196] Alexandra Titu, "Cine mi-a pus ridichea asta de luna in bocanc?," *Contra punct : săptămînal editat de Uniunea Scriitorilor din Romănia* (Bucharest, RO), November, 1994, 14.

[197] Erwin Kessler, "Alandalarta: A doua Expozitie Anuala a Centrului de Arta SOROS," *Revista 22*, no. 45 (Bucharest, November, 1994): 15.

[198] Mungiu-Pippidi, *Politica Dupa Communism*, 34.

[199] Boia, *Romania*, 123.

[200] Calin Dan, "Soros – The Dictatorship of Goodwill," last modified May 10, 1997 (2:58:29 pm), accessed on February 10, 2005, http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-9705/msg00050.html.

[201] "At the end of 1999, the members of the SCCA Network created ICAN: International Contemporary Art Network, registered in the Netherlands as a public benefit association. C3: Center for Culture and Communication, which was registered as an independent foundation at about the same time, is a founding member of ICAN." See "SCCA," accessed November 11, 2011, http://www.c3.hu/scca/index.html.

[202] "ICCA – The international center for contemporary art," accessed November 11, 2011, http://www.icca.ro/home_en.htm.

[203] "The Red House Center for Culture and Debate – Sofia," accessed November 11, 2011, http://www.redhouse-sofia.org/Content.aspx?id=1.

[204] Irina Sandomirskaja pointed out "that words such as 'identity,' 'subjectivity,' 'stereotype' and 'critique' are part of an international language of critical representation in which the After the Wall exhibition, for example, chose to convey its own intentions." Her article "The Wall After the Wall," *ArtMarginsOnline*, last modified October 26, 2000, http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/2-articles/437-the-wall-after-the-wall. The same words were picked up by Eastern European artists from the package of application materials to the Soros Foundation. It can be concluded, therefore, that in general the Eastern European artist, in order to enter the international art scene, would adopt a dominant international vocabulary, exemplified by North American contemporary exhibition practices.

[205] In Bucharest the video art exhibition was titled *Ex Oriente Lux* (1993), in Sofia it was titled *Video and Hart* (1995) and in Budapest *SVB VOICE* (1991).

[206] Paul O'Neill, "The Curatorial Turn: From Practice to Discourse," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedgwick (Chicago: Intellect Books, 2007), 13-28.

[207] Daniel Buren, "Where are the Artists?" in *The Next Documenta Should be Curated by an Artist*, ed. Jens Hoffmann (Frankfurt: Revolver, Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2004), 26.

[208] Pejic, "Dialectics," 24.

[209] Alexander Kiossev, "The Transition as a Sight" in *Visual Seminar: Interface Sofia*, ed. Alexander Kiossev (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2009), 279.

[210] Philip Zhidarov, interview with the author, November 2011, Sofia, Bulgaria.

[211] Similar actions in public spaces happened simultaneously in other cities across Bulgaria, such as the Turgovishte Group's *Big Print* action in 1990 in the city's public square where the artists collectively etched plates, painted and printed prints.

[212] Kiossev, "Transition," 283.

[213] Blaine Harden, "Bulgarian Activists in Tent City of the Streets Demonstrate Power," *Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), July 21, 1990.

[214] John D. Bell, "The Radical Right in Bulgaria," in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 233-55.

[215] These demonstrations spread throughout the country and the president was forced to resign causing a deadlock in parliament over the election of a new president since no party has the necessary majority. The parties that have dominated Bulgarian politics since the 1990s are the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP, formerly the Bulgarian Communist Party), the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF, a coalition formed in 1989 as opposition to the Communist government), and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF, representing the Turkish minority). The newest major party is the Simeon II National Movement (SNM) founded by former king and prime minister Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in 2001.

[216] The exhibition was staged as a continuation of the earlier *Earth and Sky* exhibition, also on the rooftop terrace of the UBA gallery on the Shipka street number 6. The *Beach Exhibition*, organized by Diana Popova and Orlin Dvorianov, was part of the Club of the eternally Young Artist (C(e)YA) series of exhibitions organized on the ground floor, first floor and the rooftop of the UBA building. The exhibition included various programs, such as a seminar titled "ABC of the Avant-Garde," performances and casual conversations. Orlin Dvorianov and Diana Popova, "The signs of the times," in *Art in Bulgaria. Magazine for the Visual Arts*, no. 17 (1994): 15.

[217] In his study on the *Polish Orange Alternative*, Polish sociologist Bronislaw Misztal emphasized the movement's unpredictability, flexibility and aim to "socialize the people to the situation of protest," by bringing "fun into the street scenes." Through the use of colorful clothing – orange and red – as well as posters and banners, they provoked laughter and mockery of the entire system. Bronislaw Misztal, "One Movement, Two Interpretations. The Orange Alternative Movement in Poland," *British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 1 (1992): 55-79.

[218] Kiossev, "Transition," 281.

[219] Koleva, "Dominant approaches," 23-30.

[220] Kiril Prashkov, interview with the author, January 2012, Sofia, Bulgaria.

[221] The first location was a compact one-room exhibition space on Milin Kamak Street; its other initial branches were a space in the Sheraton Hotel in central Sofia, a space at 3 Karnigradska Street and 25 Hristo Belchev Street. Iara Boubnova, *5 Years Ata-ray Gallery*, anniversary catalogue (Sofia: PolyTech Ltd, 1996).

[222] Critic and author Alexander Kiossev, curator Iara Boubnova, artist Ivan Moudov, artist Kalin Serapionov, artist Kiril Prashkov, artist Krassimir Terziev, artist Luchezar Boyadjiev, curator and art historian Maria Vassileva, artist Mariela Gemisheva, artist Nedko Solakov, artist Pravdoliub Ivanov and artist Stefan Nikolaev.

[223] Victor Misiano, "The Institutionalization of Friendship" in *Transnacionala, Highway Collision Between East and West at the Crossroads of Art*, ed. Eda Cufer (Ljubljana, Slovenia: KODA University of Ljubljana, 1999), 183-184

[224] *N-Forms: Reconstructions and Interpretations* (1994), Raiko Alexiev Gallery, (the UBA gallery) Sofia; *Video and Hart* (1995), National Museum of Archaeology – Sofia; *Evidences. The Real Diversity* (1996), Sofia City Gallery; *Formal – Informal* (1998-1999), Central Post Office – Sofia; and *Culture – Subculture* (Sept. 1999), Varna, Bulgaria

[225] Kamen Balkanski, introduction *N-Forms: Reconstructions and Interpretations* exh. cat., eds. Nikolay Boshev, Boris Klimentiev, Diana Popova and Svilen Stefanov (Sofia: Soros Center for the Arts, 1994).

[226] Iara Boubnova and Maria Vassileva curated the Soros Art Center's 1997 annual exhibition *Ars Ex Natio*. In line with the Center's quest for supporting local contemporary and experimental art, the exhibition underlined the dichotomy between the traditional and the modern, the national and international in local contemporary art especially in the choice of the exhibition venues. The 19th century rival houses in the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv featured as the spaces of the exhibitions. Courtyards, interiors and exterior walls featured as exhibition spaces for the 32 artists of several generations in the exhibition. It was an opportune location not only to highlight the difference between the contemporary and the traditional forms of art but also the existing connection between national and internationally oriented elements in contemporary art. Although among the several individual artworks in *Ars Ex Natio* were present in the public space none were participatory in the sense that it involved direct participation from the passersby. Rather, public art projects such as the (the minimalist sign of 1997, the door or the wooden sculptures of Prashkov) in their form and location emphasized their search for contemporaneity in its often ironic fusion of both international forms and national content. The 1997 sign not only spoke of the date of the exhibition but also became a symbol of the changes in the country when the UDF came to power.

[227] SCA provided support for various local galleries initiated by artists such as Gallery XXL that began in 1996, the Process – Space Festival of Modern Art in Balchik that began in 1992 as a festival of artistic experiments, "oriented towards the new wave" and the International meetings of photography in Plovdiv in 1994, especially important since according to the local artistic genres, photography was not considered as a form of visual arts. See *Art in Bulgaria, Magazine for the Visual Arts* (Sofia: az Advertising Agency, 1994).

[228] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, UK: Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, first published in English, 1977, 16th printing 2002), 183

[229] Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, habitus, power: basis for a theory of symbolic power" in *Outline of a theory of practice* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 24th printing)

[230] In the same email exchange, Peizer expressed that the strategy of the Soros foundation was to "provide resources to people with vision and implementation skills who do not have them because the resources are so limited. Local institutions are loath to provide funding for projects with no track record (e.g. new ideas) that could fail. Once a project is a proven success though, we expect others to continue its funding." Jonathan Peizer, "The Ins and Outs of the Soros Internet Program in Former Eastern Europe," in Geert Lovink, *Uncanny Networks: Dialogues with the Virtual Intelligentsia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 148-53.

[231] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 75.

[232] Jacques Ranciere, *The Emancipated Spectator* (New York: Verso, 2009), 13.

[233] Gail Kligman, "Reclaiming the public: A Reflection on Creating Civil Society in Romania," in *East European Politics & Societies* 4, no. 3 (September 1990): 395-96, doi: 10.1177/0888325490004003002.

[234] Boris Buden, "Public space as translation process," *buden | public space as translation process,* last modified 12/4/2003 5:33:58 pm, http://www.republicart.net/disc/realpublicspaces/buden03_en.pdf.

[235] Judit Bodnar in "Public Space and Representation," seminar (November, 23-24, 2002) excerpts published in *Moszkva Ter (Gravitacio) / Moscow Square (Gravitation)* exh. cat. (Budapest: Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003).

[236] He emphasized that despite the curators' provocation most of the artists failed in creating socially and politically engaged art interventions of the caliber initiated and developed contemporaneously in the USA. Contrary to this, I argued, as seen in the previous chapter, that when considering the specificity of the local context of a society newly emerging from a highly controlling political regime, several of the artists projects, on however temporary and small

scale, directly engaged members of the city's publics as a way to bring to public light the existence of privately developed webs of social capital, vital to the populations' everyday existence before and after 1989. In other words, their socially engaged art was highly contingent upon the context from which they emerged rather than appropriating models of art practices developed in a Western context.

[237] It should be noted that in addition to *Polyphony*, other local precursors to the *Moszkva Ter Gravitation* include the exhibition *Szerviz* curated by Judit Angel in 2001 at Mucsarnok, Budapest. It featured artists rendering various 'services' for the audience within the space of a museum or 'services' targeting the exhibition making process by proposing, for example, non-traditional ways of audience surveying. Taking place in the institutionalized space of a museum, *Szerviz* aimed to "bring the local art scene and society closer together" and to "fulfill the need for works of art based on direct connection between art/artist and audience." See Judit Angel, "Introduction," in *Szerviz* exh. cat. (Budapest: Mucsarnok, 2001). Another exhibition was *Budapest Box: Hidden Scene of the 1990s* curated by Dora Hegyi and Katalin Timar in 2002 at the Ludwig Museum for Contemporary art in Budapest. It featured a series of artists-initiated projects from the alternative scene in Hungary since 1989, some primarily oriented towards direct audience participation.

[238] Similar to its inception in 1988 when it was called the Association of Young Democrats (with membership restricted to those of 16-35) and FIDEZ after winning the first free election in 1990, the party was based on an oppositional stance, defining its direction and political principles in terms of binary opposites between old and new and between communism and anti-communism. Palonen pointed out that FIDESZ was initially a liberal party, which then moved to the conservative right in 1998, by entering in coalition with MDF (Hungarian Democratic Forum) and the Independent Small Holders party, which were united by a search for nationhood and a distrust towards the cosmopolitan Budapest led by a left government. Emilia Palonen, "Reading Budapest: Political Polarization in Contemporary Hungary," (PhD diss., Essex, AC, UK: University of Essex, Department of Government, 2006), 173.

[239] Other architectural manifestations include the following buildings: the House of Terror Museum and the New National Theater. Moreover, Orban instituted his own Mayoral Office, which basically functioned as a super-ministry, and had a significant role in the city's policies in order to articulate FIDESZ's discourse of progress between 1998 and 2002. Ibid.

[240] Tismaneanu, *Fantasies*, 38.

[241] Dora Hegyi, "Art as Gift, Public Art versus Art in the Public Realm" in *Moszkva Ter (Gravitacio) / Moscow Square (Gravitation)*, exh. cat. (Budapest: Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003).

[242] In addition to financial support from EU's Culture 2000 program, the exhibition was also received funds from the Hungarian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and the Cultural Committee of the City Municipality.

[243] "Summaries of EU legislation," Official website of the European Union, Europa: Summaries of EU Legislation, Culture, last modified October 4, 2009, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/index_en.htm.

[244] Ibid.

[245] Most importantly, EU's economic interest overshadowed the European leaders' moral obligations and the "Yalta guilt" complex, when the West had 'abandoned' Central and Eastern Europe to the Soviet power. Iván Berend, *From the Soviet Bloc to the European Union: The Economic and Social Transformation of Central and Eastern Europe since 1973* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 84-86.

[246] Ibid., 86.

[247] First, in the field of information policy the EU commission took up the idea of cultural branding, which featured EU as the guarantor of the well-being and quality of life of the citizens of Europe. Second, in the attempt to Europeanize national educational systems EU's ERASMUS and SOCRATES, acronyms of two major educational exchange programs, are examples of EU officials' aim to invent Europe as a category of thought in the education sector. And the third site is the identification of women as a key target for EU cultural-binding activities, exemplified by the 1987 created award "Women of Europe Award" that aimed "to honor a woman from each Member State who, in the previous two years, has helped to increase European integration among citizens of the European Union." Cris Shore, "Citizenship of the Union: the cultural construction of a European citizen," in *Building Europe: The Cultural Politics of European Integration* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 66-86.

[248] But at the same time the European Man evoked a darker conception of modernity, as a European identity historically only crystallized in oppositions to non-European 'other' such as Africans, Asians, Americans, and Muslims. Ibid., 60-67.

[249] "'Culture 2000' Programme," Official website of the European Union, Europa: Summaries of EU Legislation, Culture, last modified January 3, 2007, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/culture/l29006_en.htm.

[250] Hortensia Völckers, "Projekt Relations . Know relations . Initiator," relations e.V., German Federal Cultural Foundation, last modified June 1, 2005 8:49:37 am, http://www.projekt-relations.de/en/know/initiator/start.php?menuopen=5&lang=en.

[251] Iara Boubnova, "The City and the Visual Seminar," in *Visual Seminar: Interface Sofia*, ed. Alexander Kiossev (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2009), 9-33.

[252] Ibid., 17

[253] Kiossev, "Transition," 289.

[254] Ibid., 291

[255] Luchezar Boyadjiev, "Communal and private (and/or public and personal)," in *Visual Seminar* newsletter (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, August - December 2004): 1, accessed December 5, 2011, http://ica-sofia.org/en/archive/visual-seminar/publishing-programme/item/316-vs-newspaper-4.

[256] Fraser, "Rethinking," 71.

[257] Marius Babias and Sabine Hentzsch, "Introduction," in *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* exh. cat., ed. Marius Babias and Sabine Hentzsch (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Idea Design and Print, 2008), 7-8.

[258] Raluca Voinea, "press – Spatiul Public Bucuresti," e-cart.ro, accessed December 9, 2011, http://www.spatiul-public.ro/eng/press/press.html.

[259] Tismaneanu, *Fantasies*, 4.

[260] "Mayor paints town red - and yellow and blue," BBC News Europe, last modified November 9, 2001 (6:38 pm), http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/1645077.stm.

[261] Dan Perjovschi, "Monument" in *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* exh. cat., ed. Marius Babias and Sabine Hentzsch (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Idea Design and Print, 2008), 107.

[262] Marius Babias in conversation with Timotei Nadasan, "Gaining Hegemony over the symbolic and the Imaginary in Central Culture" in *Spatiul Public Bucuresti / Public Art Bucharest* exh. cat., ed. Marius Babias and Sabine Hentzsch (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Idea Design and Print, 2008), 14.

[263] Looking at the Dutch government measures towards immigration, the authors speak of *neo-liberal communitarianism* where neo-liberalism no longer only governs through individual responsibility (i.e. emphasizing individual rights and actions) but also through community (i.e. visible in policies of migration control "for it is in the demands placed upon new citizens that efforts at 'cultural revitalization' become most apparent. Willem Schinkel and Friso van Houdt, "The double helix of cultural assimilationism and neo-liberalism: citizenship in contemporary governmentality," The British Journal of Sociology 61, no. 4 (December 2010): 696-715 , doi: 10.1111/j.1468-4446.2010.01337.x.

[264] Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski, "European Nationalism and European Identity," in *Multiplicity of Nationalism in Contemporary Europe*, eds. Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski and Andrzej Marcin Suszycki (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2010), 66-67.

[265] Vassil Prodanov, *Bulgaria in Global Processes* (New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2004).

[266] Corina Suteu, "The importance of a Cultural Approach Towards the Accession Process," *Policies for Culture Journal*, April 2002, http://www.policiesforculture.org/resources.php?id=87&idc=23&t=h.

[267] Alexander Kiossev, "Otherness, Again: Notes on Self-Colonizing Cultures (1998)" in *After the Wall: Art and Culture in post-Communist Europe* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1999): 114.

[268] Luchezar Boyadjiev, "Hot City Visual, 2003" in *Sofia as a Sight. Visual Seminar: Resident Fellows Program 1* (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2004), 9-10.

[269] Ljudmila Dimova, "I think with my eyes. An interview with Luchezar Boyadjiev," in *Sofia as a Sight. Visual Seminar: Resident Fellows Program 1* (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2004), 41.

[270] Over the years, the artist maintained contact with Stephan as he expressed in an interview: "I just know him and when I can find some job for him – to repair somebody's roof, to rearrange the parquet floor, paint some walls, etc. That's the real type of service offered in Bulgaria, people are helping each other for minimal pay." Ibid., 39.

[271] The artist's project also included a *Hot line for Visual irregularities*, which comprised of series of digitally manipulated photographs of various buildings in Sofia that were sent to a list of about 200 media contact persons with one question "Do you see Sofia?" and were invited to respond by email or telephone, both provided by the artist.

[272] János Sugár, quoted in Hedvig Turai "Special Section Focus: Public Art in Hungary,"Art Margins, last modified August 10, 2003, http://www.artmargins.com/index.php/archive/250-special-section-focus-public-art-in-hungary.

[273] Grant Kester, "Community and Communicability," in *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 161.

[274] h.arta, "project space: a.concept,"(blog) February 26, 2004 (04:39), http://projectspacebucharest.blogspot.com/search/label/a.concept.

[275] Maria Lind, "The Collaborative Turn," in *Taking The Matter Into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, eds. Johanna Billing, Maria Lind and Lars Nilsson (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 26-27.

[276] h.arta, "project space."

[277] Michael Warner distinguishes between three senses of the term public: "the public," which designates a social totality, or the people in general, "a public" or a concrete audience, also forming a totality but is defined by an event or a shared physical space, and "a public that comes into being only in relation to texts and their circulation." Warner, *Publics*, 66-67.

[278] Matei Bejenaru, *Matei Bejenaru: Situatii/Situations* (Suceava, Romania: Galeria Possibila, 2007), 37.

[279] Lia Perjovschi in a video documenting the projects in the exhibition.

[280] Dan Perjovschi, "Alone for the Others: Lia Perjovschi," in *Again for Tomorrow* (London: Royal College of Art, 2006), 119.

[281] Zdenka Badovinac, "Interrupted Histories" in *Interrupted Histories*, ed. Zdenka Badovinac, et al. (Ljubljana: Museum of Modern Art, 2006).

[282] Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, "Innovative forms of archives, part two: IRWIN'S East Art Map and Tamas St. Auby's portable intelligence Increase Museum," in e-flux, no.16 (May 2010), accessed December 10, 2011, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/innovative-forms-of-archives-part-two-irwin%E2%80%99s-east-art-map-and-tamas-st-auby%E2%80%99s-portable-intelligence-increase-museum/.

[283] Lia Perjovschi, "Interview with Ion Grigorescu by Adrian Notz and Lia Perjovschi" in *Dada East: The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire*, ed. Adrian Notz and E-cart.ro (Bucharest: E-cart.ro, 2007): 118.

[284] Among the present guest were "the director of the National Art Gallery, the director of the Art Gallery in Rousse, the chairperson of the Union of Bulgarian Artists, the rector of the National Arts Academy, the ambassadors of Belgium, Britain and Italy, the director of the British Council, representatives of Goethe Institute Sofia." See section titled "A Chronicle of Manipulation" in Ivan Moudov, *The City as Museum: Resident Fellows Program* (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2005): 15.

[285] See section titled "The City through the Window of the Museum" in Moudov, *The City as Museum*, 9. As stated in his "A Chronicle of Manipulation" the artist initially intended to transform the railway station to look like a museum but after speaking with the PR officer of the Ministry of Transport who mentioned that the railway station will be refurbished during that time, the artist changed his project as to actually become the advertisement for the opening of the museum. From "A Chronicle of Manipulation" in Moudov, *The City as Museum*, 11-14.

[286] Diana Popova, "MUSIZ from Inside and Outside Perspective" in *The City as Museum: Resident Fellows Program* (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and the Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, 2005): 25.

[287] Nancy Fraser calls *subaltern counterpublics* the various discourses of competing publics that function as contestatory forces and are engendered by subordinated and marginalized social groups, such as women, workers, people of colors and gays and lesbians. She notes that in some cases these subaltern counterpublics are explicitly anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian – one could point to the rise of extreme right-wing organizations and parties in Eastern Europe.

[288] See chapter "Public and Private" in Warner, *Publics*, 56.

[289] Alexander Kiossev, "Three explications and some problems: Once again on the Museum for Contemporary Art in Bulgaria, in *Visual Seminar. Museum issue* newsletter (Sofia: Institute of Contemporary Art Sofia and Centre for Advanced Study Sofia, March - November 2010): 3, accessed November 15, 2011, http://ica-sofia.org/en/projects/item/180-visual-seminar-museum-issue.

[290] Ibid., 4.

[291] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991): 29.

[292] The artists prefer not to use the collective name of Big Hope for this particular project as to keep with their use of individual names in the context of the 2002 Turin Biennale.

[293] "Treaty establishing the European Economic Community, EEC Treaty – original text (non-consolidated version)," Official website of the European Union, Europa: Summaries of EU Legislation, Institutional affairs,

Building europe through the treaties, last modified October 26, 2010, http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/institutional_affairs/ treaties/treaties_eec_en.htm.

[294] Cris Shore observes the freedom to reside within any EU Member State is subject to numerous exceptions, as in the case of pensioners, students or any others that might become a burden on the member state's social assistance programs. Moreover, a citizen of a EU- member state residing in an another EU state does not have the right to vote in the national elections of the respective state only in municipal elections. Shore, "Citizenship of the Union," 66-86.

[295] Etienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe: Reflection on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 171-72.

[296] Ibid., 177

[297] The biennale extended an invitation to artists under 35 to "play together at changing society" through art in a citywide event that included art in various urban sites, performances staged by visual arts organizations and collaborations with numerous local organizations, both for and non-profit. According to its artistic director Michelangelo Pistoletto, the event "is not about *applied art*; it is about *implicated art*." BIG Torino 2002 Biennale Press Release. "BIG Torino 2002 – b i g g u e s t . n e t – about," accessed December 8, 2011, http://www.comune.torino.it/ gioart/big/bigguest/info/bigsocial_e.html.

[298] Thomas Sheidebauer (biennial curator), interview with the author, November 2011. It may also be noted that the idea of a borderless territory in the form of the Internet that is locally anchored and activated through a "net-of-people" in Italy in 2002 is particularly timely in light of the tightening of EU's actual borders to prevent mass immigration.

[299] Donald Carter and Heather Merrill, "Inside and outside Italian political culture: immigrants and diasporic politics in Turin," GeoJournal 58, nos. 2-3 (2002): 167-75.

[300] Miklos Erhardt of Big Hope, email correspondence with the author, December 2010. The following groups have offered assistance to the artists: Ass. Diafa Al Maghreb; Ass. La Tenda; a.titolo; Boa Urban Mobile – a mobile van which distributed medical and food supplies to homeless people and immigrants; Casa del Mondo Unito; Centro Franz Fanon – where immigrants could receive psychological counseling; Chinese Culture Club – cultural association that provided contact to Chinese immigrants; CICSENE, Cooperativa Senza Frontiere / Disobbedienti – political activist group campaigning for immigrant rights; CTP – Via Bologna – a school where immigrants could receive free Italian language lessons, From the Nile Culture Club – cultural association that provided contact to immigrants from Kenya; Centro Sociale Bligny 18 – political activist group campaigning for political rights for immigrants; The Gate, ISI, Kirkuk kaffe – cultural association that provided contact to Kurdistan immigrants, Parrocchia San Luca, Petra, Ufficio dei Nomadi, Ufficio Stranieri, Scuola Parini, Sermig. Dominic Hislop of Big Hope, email correspondence with the author, February, 2011.

[301] "Associazione Diafa Al Maghreb," accessed December 10, 2010, http://www.diafaalmaghreb.ideasolidale.org/ index.asp?IDCAT=12.

[302] Dominic Hislop of Big Hope, email correspondence with the author, February, 2011.

[303] The last series of meetings with the participants occurred between March and May 2002, when the biennale officially opened. Miklos Erhardt of Big Hope, email correspondence with the author, December 2010.

[304] The participants' real names have been intentionally omitted for protection of privacy. Only stand-in names, chosen by the collaborators themselves have been used. Big Hope website: "participant list," accessed December 10, 2010, http://reroute.c3.hu/participant_list_e.html.

[305] Carter and Merrill, "Inside and outside,"167-75.

[306] This ordinary concept of community can be exemplified for example by Benedict Anderson's notion of imagined community, where people can belong to the same community without ever meeting one another. Andrew Mason distinguishes between an ordinary sense community and a notion of community in the moralized sense, which also includes solidarity between its members and excludes exploitation. *Community, Solidarity and Belonging: levels of Community and Their Normative Significance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 27-40.

[307] Miwon Kwon observes that the notion of community carries weight in debates ranging from education and health care to housing policies and zoning regulations. "From Site to Community in the New Genre Public Art: The case of "Culture in Action," in *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2004), 112.

[308] Flavia Stanley illustrates this through ethnographic studies conducted at an immigrant service organization (Servizi per Immigrati) in Rome. She argues that the process of citizenship making in Italy and Europe is based on the active creation and protection of racial privilege on the part of the Italian nationals. "On Belonging in/to Italy

and Europe: Citizenship, Race, and the "Immigration Problem" in *Citizenship, Political Engagement and Belonging: Immigrants in Europe and the United States*, eds. Caroline Brettell and Deborah Reed-Danahy (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 49-50.

[309] Ibid., 56-57. Moreover, considered as an instrument for instilling European consciousness among the masses, Chris Shore argues that citizenship in the context of the European Union at the time of his writing (2000) is more a cultural than a political project. Shore, "Citizenship of the Union," 77.

[310] The exhibition curators were Ben Borthwick and Kerryn Greenberg, Assistant Curators. "Level 2 Gallery: The Irresistible Force | Tate," accessed December 22, 2010, http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/theirresistibleforce/.

[311] Saskia Sassen, *A Sociology of Globalization* (London: W.W. Norton & Co, 2007).

[312] Balibar, *We, The People*,177.

[313] "About us – Romanian Cultural Institute in London,"accessed December 22, 2010, http://www.icr-london.co.uk/aboutus.php.

[314] The Romanian Cultural Centre, Romanca Society, Romani in UK, Romani-Online UK, and Diaspora Romaneasca.

[315] Matei Bejenaru, email correspondence with the author, December 2010.

[316] Ibid.

[317] This notion was developed by Grant Kester in response to forms of negation that can occur when artists view their collaborators as raw and inert material to be transformed or improved in some ways. According to Kester, the strength of a project lies in its ability to create a space of dialogical exchange, where both the artist and the collaborator is transformed and where the artist no longer occupies the superior position of creative master. Kester, "Community and Communicability," 161.

[318] Robert D. Putnam speaks of norms of reciprocity and networks of civic engagement that lead to social capital and social trust. Critical to the formation of civil society, generalized reciprocity refers to a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any given time unrequited or imbalanced, but that involves mutual expectations that a benefit granted now should be repaid in the future. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 171-72.

[319] "Societatea Romanca – patru ani de voluntariat in interesul communitatii" in <u>Diaspora Romaneasca</u>, no. 305, July 3-9, 2009.

[320] Heather Grabbe, "Regulating the Flow of People across Europe," in *The Europeanization of Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Frank Schimmelfenning and Ulrich Sedelmeier (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005): 113.

[321] The last page of the *Travel Guide* mentions the increased security measures taken in UK with the introduction of a Nationality Identity Scheme announced by the Queen in her May 17, 2005 speech. The Identity Cards Act became law in March 2006 with the first IDs being issued to British citizens in 2009. At the same time, biometric residence permits were introduced for foreign nationals in 2008. Matei Bejenaru, *Travel Guide* artwork, trans. Alex Moldovan (London: Tate Modern, 2007).

[322] In an interview with the author in May 2010, the artist stated that the text was based on his conversations with three Romanian citizens and their friends who illegally crossed the border into UK. For confidentiality reasons their names have been withheld. Matei Bejenaru, interview with the author, May 2010.

[323] Henry Lefebvre speaks about the idea of "an explosion of spaces" which emerges (outside of the city, in shantytowns, favelas, and barrios) as *abstract space,* or what he calls the capitalist space, imposes itself on the social space of everyday life. This is possible because of the contradictions inherent within the *abstract space,* which is: hierarchical, divided into centers and peripheries, and is at once homogeneous so that it can be controlled and exchanged as well as fragmented into parts so that it can be sold as commodities. So a *differential space* emerges from within the contradiction of *abstract space*. This activity, an exercise of what he refers to as "the right to the city" includes the struggle of expelled groups to occupy and control space. *Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

[324] Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (2005): 278-83.

[325] According to Miklos Erhardt their intended cluttered mode of presentation "went against the framework of a biennale," where the artists try to make projects that can make sense to a global audience, all the while feeding or appropriating aspects from the local context as a way to legitimate their participation in a global yet locally sited biennale exhibition. Email interview with the author, December 2010.

[326] Significantly, Erhardt & Hislop visibly changed *Re:route*'s installation when exhibited three years later at the Kunsthaus Baselland in Basel, Switzerland. Composed of carefully arranged photographs and hand drawn maps of the city on the white gallery walls, *Re:route* becomes an artwork that engages with the worldwide contemporary condition of migration, where in every first world city a third world exists.

[327] It is perhaps no coincidence that *Impreuna/Together* articulating an ideal of belonging was conceptualized and performed at a major European art institution in 2007, the year that also marked the official entry of Romanian in the EU.

[328] The other branch of the Russian avant-garde was Suprematism led by Kazimir Malevich. Not everyone within the Constructivist camp had a unified vision of the art's role in society. Several debates about the form and function of the art object following the October 1917 revolution took place at the Moscow Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) in 1920-1922. The main divide occurred between those supporting Wassily Kandinsky's focus on the spiritual and psychological effects of art and those who advocated Rodchenko's and (later) Tatlin's visions and beliefs in an "antisubjective materialism" adopting a stance against an individual, personal and psychological approach to art. See Christina Kiaer, "The Socialist Object" in *Imagine no Possessions: The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 1-40.

[329] Ekaterina Degot, "Dreams That Money Can Buy: Creativity versus Art" in *The Phenomena of Post-socialist Economy in Contemporary Art*, ed. Judit Angel (Budapest: Mucsarnok, 2010), 20-25.

[330] David Harvey, "Introduction" in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 2.

[331] Andrea Fraser, "From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique (2005)" in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of artists' writing* eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009): 416.

[332] Andrea Cornwall, "Spaces for transformation? Reflections on issues of power and difference in participation in development" in *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformations? Exploring new approaches to participation in development,* ed. Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan (New York: Zed Books, 2004): 85.

[333] Judith Butler, "For a Careful Reading," in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, ed. Sylvia Benhabib, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell and Nancy Fraser (New York: Routledge, 1995), 134-36.

[334] Robert Chamber, "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience," *World Development* 22, no. 9 (1994): 1253.

[335] Ibid., 1255.

[336] Glyn Williams, "Evaluating Participatory Development: Tyranny, Power and (Re)Politicisation," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2004): 563.

[337] Quoted from the "Art for Social Change: Training Program and Series of Artistic Events in the Community" successful grant application to the Embassy of the United States of America, Sofia, Bulgaria – Democracy Commission Small Grants, 2003.

[338] Irina Karakehayova, interview with the author, November, 2011, Sofia, Bulgaria

[339] Quoted from the "Art for Social Change – Play Against Violence" successful grant application to the European Community, Phare 2000 Access Programme, Project BG 0010, 2002

[340] Quoted from Taka's project report submitted to the Red House for Culture and Debate, 2003.

[341] Quoted from the "Art for Social Change" program's *Action Plan 2004*, subsection "The Goals." Compiled and archived at the Red House Resource Center – Sofia, Bulgaria.

[342] Quoted from the "Art for Social Change – Play Against Violence" successful grant application to the European Community, Phare 2000 Access Programme, Project BG 0010, 2002

[343] Quoted from Taka's activities report submitted to the Red House for Culture and Debate, 2004.

[344] Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, "General Introduction: On the Spirit of Capitalism and The Role of Critique" in *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (New York: Verso, 2005): 3.

[345] Ibid.,18.

[346] Report from the seminar "Culture & Civil Society: A Promising Relationship or a Missed Opportunity?" co-organized by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Culture of Republic of Bulgaria, the Soros Center for the Arts – Sofia and the Red House for Culture and Debate – Sofia. Sofia, Bulgaria, 2002.

[347] Sally Morgan, "Looking back over 25 years," in *Artists Handbooks, Art with People*, ed. Malcolm Dickson (Sunderland: AN Publications, 1995), 18.

[348] Claire Bishop, "Incidental People: APG and Community Arts" in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 188.

[349] Matei Bejenaru, "cARTier, A Story about Tatarasi," in *cARTier 2004-2007* (Suceava, Romania: Grup Musatinii Suceava, 2007), 12.

[350] See "Culture and Education: A Sociological Study" realized by the Pro Women Foundation and funded by the Pro Helvetia Foundation, July-August, 2003

[351] Bejenaru, *cARTier*, 13.

[352] "I have learned many things from the people that I worked with" interview with Iulia Tencariu by Livia Pancu in *cARTier 2004-2007* (Suceava, Romania: Grup Musatinii Suceava, 2007), 24-26.

[353] Livia Pancu, "On Assuming Responsibility," in *cARTier 2004-2007* (Suceava, Romania: Grup Musatinii Suceava, 2007): 18.

[354] Bejenaru, *cARTier*, 14-15.

[355] See Petra Bischof "cARTier: Community development through arts and culture" introductory essay in *cARTier 2004-2007* (Suceava, Romania: Grup Musatinii Suceava, 2007).

[355] Bejenaru, *cARTier*, 12-15.

[356] Livia Pancu "Becoming an Institution: Vector Association," in *Vector, 1997-2010* (Suceava, Romania: S.C. Musatinii S.A. Suceava, 2010), 21-24.

[357] Matei Bejenaru, email correspondence with the author, October 2012.

[358] Pancu, "Becoming an Institution," 25.

[359] Several elderly people that were interviewed mentioned their tight pensions that do no allow them to purchase tickets to local cultural events. See *Tatarasi memoria unui cartier (Tatarasi, the memory of a district)*, trans. by the author, ed. Gentiana Baciu, Matei Bejenaru and Dan Lungu (Iasi, Romania: Editura Universitatii AL. I. Cuza, 2007).

[360] Rosalyn Deutsche, "Uneven Development: Public Art in New York City," in *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 68-69.

[361] Matei Bejenaru, email correspondence with the author, October, 2012.

[362] *Tatarasi*, 62. Quoted text is author's translation from Romanian into English

[363] Sándor Erdősi, Eszter Somogyi and Iván Tosics, "The analysis of homelessness in Hungary" (Budapest: Metropolitan Research Institute, 2003).

[364] Laszlo Karsai, "The Radical Right in Hungary," in *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1998), 141.

[365] Joanne Richardson, "The Radical Left in the Postcommunist epoch," accessed September 1, 2012, http://commonplaces.org/blog/?p=56.

[366] Csaba Jelinek, "The Phenomena of Displacement and Relocation during the Process of Gentrification in Budapest," *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai – Sociologia* 55, no. 2 (July 2010): 108.

[367] Ibid., 109.

[368] For example: Steven V. Roberts, "Reagan on Homelessness: Many Choose to Live in the Streets," The New York Times (New York), Section A, Page 26, December 23, 1988.

[369] Ronald Reagan told David Brinkley in (a sort of exit interview in December (1988). Martha Rosler, "Fragments of a Metropolitan Viewpoint," in *If You Lived Here: The City in Art, Theory and Social Activism* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1991), 21.

[370] The first was "Home Front," conceived as a set of representations (which included statistical graphs, charts displayed above eye level in the gallery equivalent of "waste space," juxtaposed with real estate ads for luxurious housing in Manhattan, the prose and the poetry of profit and loss) of contested neighborhoods. The third exhibition "City: Visions and Revisions," conceived the production of urban space as a product of economic and social decisions and a complex "metasignification."

[371] Rosler "Fragments," 36.

[372] Several of Mel Rosenthal's photographs, such as his South Bronx images were published in activist and grass-roots magazines. Ibid., 34.

[373] Also ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power) put up posters on AIDS and homelessness. For the "Homeless" component, housing activist and artist Stuart Nicholson painted a text comparing shelters to refugee camps on the sidewalk in front of the door. Ibid., 40.

[374] Kester, "Community and Communicability," 161.

[375] See "Attacking Poverty: Opportunity, Empowerment, and Security" in *World Development Report, 2000/2001 Attacking Poverty* issued by the World Bank (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 7.

[376] Cornwall, "Spaces for transformation," 82.

377 In conjunction with the exhibition, a twenty page black-and-white catalogue that included one photograph and text by each participant was produced.

378 Miklos Erhardt and Dominic Hislop, "Big Hope: 'Disobbedienti', Liget Galéria, Budapest, September - October 2002," interview by Keiko Sei, *Umělec*, Prague, no. 4 (November 2002).

379 Luca Casarini, *Disobbedienti*, digital video, 54 mins., directed and produced by Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler, 2002.

380 Federico Martelloni, *Disobbedienti*, digital video, 54 mins., directed and produced by Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler, 2002.

381 Miklos Erhardt and Dominic Hislop, *Umělec*.

382 "Environmentalist groups prevent the construction of Danube River dam, Hungary, 1984-1989 | Global Nonviolent Action Database," *Global Nonviolent Action Database,* accessed October 29, 2012, http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/ content/environmentalist-groups-prevent-construction-danube-river-dam-hungary-1984-1989.

383 Krista Harper, "Wild Capitalism: Environmental Activism and Postsocialist Political Ecology in Hungary, " *ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts – Amherst, Anthropology Department Faculty Publication Series, 2006), 10, accessed October 29, 2012, http://scholarworks.umass.edu/ anthro_faculty_pubs/81.

384 The Group was initiated in November 1988 by the Green Circle of the Budapest Technical University, the Nature Conservation Club of the „Eötvös Loránd" University and the Esperantists' Nature Protection Organization. Today it is an umbrella organization of 45 NGO's. "Clean Action Air Group," accessed October 29, 2012, http://www.c3.hu/ ~levego/lmcs_ang.htm.

385 Harper, "Wild Capitalism," 17.

386 Miklos Erhardt, email correspondence with the author, October 16, 2012.

387 Richardson "The Radical Left."

388 Dominic Hislop further recalled how despite the general peaceful Disobbedienti protesters, other Torino activists, such as the 'black block' group who objected to what appeared to them a diluted form of protest that relied on simply calling attention to the detention center, calling for "smash the wall not paint the wall." Dominic Hislop, email correspondence with the author, November, 2012.

389 Review article in Time Out Budapest. Reuben Fowkes, "Riding the Cutural Tsunami," translocal.org (April 2012), accessed May 2012, http://www.translocal.org/writings/tsunami.html

390 Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez, "Self-Historicisation and Self-Institutionalisation as Strategies of Institutional Critique in the Eastern Europe," in *Conceptual Artists and the Power of their Art Works for the Present*, ed. Alenka Domjan and Marina Gržinić (Ljubljana: Center for Contemporary Arts, 2007), 23-27. Also see her "Innovative Forms of Archives," e-flux, no. 16.

391 Trafo was established in 1998 by the Municipality of the city of Budapest as the successor of the Young Artists' Club (FMK), a key space between 1960 and 1998 during the Kadar period for showcasing important art happenings, officially unacceptable art forms and a gathering space for artists with provocative gestures. See *We are not ducks on a pond but ships at sea. Independent art initiatives, Budapest 1989-2009*, eds. Rita Kalman and Katarina Sevic (Budapest: Impex – Contemporary Art Provider Foundation, 2010), 28.

392 Rozalinda Borcila, "Groups / Spaces in Budapest: Trafo and Dinamo," DINAMO (July 2005), accessed October 2012, http://www.impex-info.org/dinamo_web/english/2005/common_places_02.html.

393 "Import – Export, Self-Interview," in *We are not ducks on a pond but ships at sea. Independent art initiatives, Budapest 1989-2009*, eds. Rita Kalman and Katarina Sevic (Budapest: Impex – Contemporary Art Provider Foundation, 2010), 71.

394 Ibid., 76.

395 Katarina Sevic "Introduction: Between the Theater and the Museum" in *We are not ducks on a pond but ships at sea. Independent art initiatives, Budapest 1989-2009*, eds. Rita Kalman and Katarina Sevic (Budapest: Impex – Contemporary Art Provider Foundation, 2010), 7.

396 *House of Terror, Budapest, 1062, Andrassy ut 60.*, museum cat., ed. Maria Schmidt (Budapest: Public Endowment for Research in Central and East-European History and Society, 2008). See also House of Terror visitor's pamphlet.

[397] Emilia Palonen, "Chapter 4, Reading the Fidesz Discourse in Budapest: Creating the frontier, occupying space," in "Reading Budapest: Political Polarization in Contemporary Hungary," (PhD diss., University of Essex, Department of Government, 2006).

[398] The team of the E-cart.ro foundation includes: Dorina Anghel, Eduard Constantin, Madalin Geana, Veronica Leca, Angelica Iacob, Simona Nastac and Raluca Voinea.

[399] Veronica Leca, *The Department for Art in Public Space, Press Release: Café-bar Manifest*, E-Cart.ro, March 2009. http://www.e-cart.ro/asociatia/ro/noutati/comunicat-revolutia-final.pdf.

[400] *Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist dictatorship in Romania*, ed. Dorin Dobrincu, Vladimir Tismăneanu and Cristian Vasile (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007).

[401] Florin Abraham, "The Tismaneanu Commission Report: A Historiographical Analysis," in *The Illusion of Anticommunism: Critical Writings on the Tismaneanu Report*, eds. Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Siulea, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu (Chişinău, Romania: Cartier, 2008), 7-41.

[402] Radu Filipescu the president of GDS, Sorin Illiesiu, Marius Oprea Horia-Roman Patapievici, Stelian Tanase members of the GDS. Ibid.

[403] Ovidiu Tichindeleanu in his essay "Condamnarea Communismului ca folclor urban" ("The communist condemnation as an urban folklore") in *The Illusion of Anticommunism: Critical Writings on the Tismaneanu Report*, eds. Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Siulea, Ovidiu Tichindeleanu (Chişinău, Romania: Cartier, 2008), 243-57.

[404] "Despre | Critic Atac," CriticAtac, accessed November 14, 2012, http://www.criticatac.ro/despre-noi/.

[405] Maria Lind, "Returning on Bikes: Notes on Social Practice," in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, ed. Nato Thomson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012), 49.

[406] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of Public Space*.

[407] A. Fraser, "Critique of institutions," 417.

[408] Press Release by Dessislava Dimova for Ivan Moudov's Solo Show at the Sariev Contemporary Art gallery on view May-June 2011. "Sariev Contemporary," accessed November 2012, http://sariev-gallery.com/exhibitions/ view/ Solo_Show/.

[409] Hito Steyerl, "The Institution of Critique," in *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of artists' writing*, eds. Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009): 489-90.

[410] Claire Doherty, "The Institution is dead! Long live the institution! Contemporary Art and New Institutionalism," *Engage 15: Art of Encounter* (Summer 2004): 6-13.

[411] Hoffmann in Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind, "To Show or Not to Show," *Mousse Magazine*, no. 31 (November 2011), http://www.moussemagazine.it/articolo.mm?id=759#top.

[412] Livia Paldi, "Notes on the Paracuratorial," *The Exhibitionist*, no. 4 (June 2011): 71-76.

[413] Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 13.

[414] Ibid., 28.

[415] Ibid., 26.

[416] Ibid., 29-30.

[417] Kester, "Introduction," *One and the Many*, 9.

[418] Grant Kester, "Autonomy, Antagonism, and the Aesthetic: From Text to Action," in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 27.

[419] Grant Kester, "The Genius of the Place," in *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 90.

[420] Ibid., 93.

[421] Claire Bishop, "The Social Under Socialism" in *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012), 130.

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