

“Tactical Networks” as Agents of Social Transformation and Cultural Resilience in the Post-Yugoslav Region

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Abstract

In the context of the post-Yugoslav region, arts and culture organizations in the civil sector are still facing challenges in achieving sustainability, since critique of the dominant system of values is a part of their social engagement. Inadequate financial and organizational conditions for the work of the independent cultural scene are drivers of its engagement in cultural policy and political action, mostly through intensive collaborative platforms and tactical networks that promote the critical function of culture in social production. Based on two different examples of tactical networks, one from Serbia, the other from Croatia, this article detects different uses of strategic essentialism (Gayatri Spivak) as well as these strategies' consequences for the sustainability and resilience of these tactical networks.

Im Kontext der postjugoslawischen Region stehen Kunst- und Kulturorganisationen im zivilen Sektor immer noch vor der Herausforderung, Nachhaltigkeit zu erreichen, zumal Kritik am dominanten Wertesystem Teil ihres gesellschaftlichen Engagements ist. Unzureichende finanzielle und organisatorische Bedingungen für die Arbeit der unabhängigen Kulturszene sind die treibende Kraft für ihr Engagement in der Kulturpolitik und im politischen Handeln, vor allem durch intensive kollaborative Plattformen und taktische Netzwerke, die die kritische Funktion der Kultur in der gesellschaftlichen Produktion fördern soll. Anhand von zwei Beispielen taktischer Netzwerke, eines aus Serbien, das andere aus Kroatien, werden unterschiedliche Verwendungen des strategischen Essentialismus (nach Gayatri Spivak) diskutiert sowie die Folgen dieser Strategien für Nachhaltigkeit und Widerstandsfähigkeit von taktischen Netzwerken aufgezeigt.

Keywords / Schlagworte

Transformation, cultural organizations, advocacy, social cohesion / Entwicklungsprozesse, Kulturbetrieb, Lobby, Sozialer Zusammenhalt

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1. Introduction: The Independent Cultural Scene in the Post Yugoslav Region

After the civil society organizations of the post-Yugoslav cultural sphere during the nineties formed from the “resistance to the chauvinist government and the affirmation of civil society’s values” (MIŠKOVIĆ 2011: 34), since the early two-thousands, the contemporary independent cultural scene has been engaged in creating conditions for collective action in the field of culture and affirmation of the aesthetic dimension, “which actually dissolves the nationalistic culture that continues to dominate as a cultural paradigm” (MIŠKOVIĆ 2011: 34). The independent cultural sector’s initiatives arise from below and, in times of culture’s opening to the market, their logic is not the one of profit, so the dependence on the financial support from the foundations affects the scope and nature of their work (KENNY et al. 2016: 37). At a time when available resources are not sufficient, and the working conditions are inadequate, cultural workers have been turning to political action, which is achieved through new forms and models of collective and critical engagement.

One of these new models is intensive collaborative platforms and tactical networks. According to Višnić (2007: 11), the main features of these new socio-cultural practices are expanding the definition of cultural activities and the development of new collaborative practices and models:

With regard to the issues dealt with (public domain issues, social transition, the hybrid model of public-private partnerships, intellectual property, etc.) as well as the methods used (activism, association of citizens, advocacy, the transfer of technology, and other practices to the area of culture, socio-theoretical activities), collaborative platforms greatly expand the area of culture, defining it not as arts and heritage [...] but as an area of intense interaction between the social, technological and the artistic.

Such collective networks promote the critical function of culture in social production. Due to its multimodal, diversified, and pervasive character, such cultural networks are more open to cultural diversity than any other public space that existed before (CASTELLS 2009: 302). Further on, this article proposes that directing their own organizational culture towards collective action becomes a political choice, i.e., the resistance to the dominant individualistic paradigm of work in culture which sets them apart from other cultural networks in this context.

Some networks that have been tactically trying to redefine their marginalized position in the overall cultural system succeed in expanding the area of their activity, while some become absorbed by the dominant

apparatus. The research questions posed in this article are: Why do certain networks whose organizational culture is formed on the values of collectivity, solidarity, and participative democracy disperse into extinction? Which of their tactics generate controversy among members of the network? How do the tactics of these networks relate to concepts of cultural sustainability and resilience?

In the early 2000s, the networks *Clubture* (*Klubtura*) and *Other Scene* (*Druga scena*) appeared in Zagreb and Belgrade, both intending to impact the processes of the regulation of the development and implementation of cultural policies in Croatia and Serbia. In the first part of this research, the materials about the two networks are obtained and analyzed through the desk research in their printed form or through the internet sources, with an emphasis placed on the data about the networks' sustainability and resilience with the use of interpretative approach as the most common method of case study analysis. The second part of this research draws on semi-structured interviews conducted with four current and former founding members¹ of the two networks in order to detect different uses of strategic essentialism tactics as well as its consequences for the sustainability and resilience of the two networks presented as case studies.

2. Networks of the Post-Yugoslav Independent Cultural Sector and the Use of 'Tactics'

Though culture is a highly contested term, it can be said that in the context of sustainability, it is important to understand it as an autonomous and central space of sociality, as well as a concept that involves more than a few related, but not exclusive, definitions. In that sense, culture is also a system of values that gives meaning to life in general, and a collective "way of life" (WILLIAMS 1981: 32). The value of diversity of cultural expressions is included in the field of cultural sustainability, i.e., culture as a factor of sustainability. Sustainable cultural diversity means that all groups of people have a collective choice to cultivate their culture and, equally important, a collective choice to determine the nature and means of cultural change. Because cultural diversity is one of the key factors

1 For ethical reasons, the interviewees remain anonymous in this article, although they may be recognized from their statements.

of cultural sustainability, culture should not be viewed as a means of achieving higher goals, but as an inseparable element of development. While elaborating on the sustainability of the independent cultural sector in the post-Yugoslav region that promotes such cultural diversity, former president of European Cultural Foundation, Gottfried Wagner, claimed it was built “through ‘deep’ networking” (WAGNER 2013: n.p.).

Although different definitions and interpretations are often attached to the independent cultural sector, the scope of this paper does not allow a broader elaboration of this term or initiating a theoretical argumentation in favor of a particular opinion nor does it allow an attempt to develop a new definition. According to Kenny et al. (2016: 35), there are several terms to describe this sector: the third sector, the non-profit sector, the civil sector, non-profit, non-governmental, independent, charitable, socio-cultural, etc. but none of them fully conveys the sector’s complex nature. Still, most authors agree that the independent or third sector has three key functions (ibid.). It guarantees, protects, and ensures the right to free assembling of people around common interests, promotes values and ideas, and introduces new initiatives in the existing cultural system. The third sector also provides control to ensure public interests are met within institutions of public sector and, in this manner, this sector partly guards the trust of the citizens in their society and its institutions.

In so-called post-socialist Europe, the third sector in culture mostly began to develop along with the appearance of the civil society, often being a part of it (DRAGIČEVIĆ ŠEŠIĆ/DRAGOJEVIĆ 2004: 23). It has been supported by the international community within the different financing schemes, mostly through the programs of democratization, human rights protection, civil emancipation, civil society building, etc. Since the public opinion in these countries has developed extremely firm attitudes towards the NGO sector, taking positions on the issue cannot be avoided, ranging from extremely positive to extremely negative attitudes.

According to Eckenhausen (2019: 209), ‘independent culture’ in the post-Yugoslav region emerged as the cultural antipode of its ‘independent media’. Therefore, he concludes that “like in media, independence in culture implies: integrity; transparency about incomes and spending; party-political impartiality; absence of bias and (self-)censorship; the goal to be an uncompromising and corrective mirror to society” (ibid.). The independent cultural sector in this article is used interchangeably with the independent cultural scene that Eckenhausen understands as a “lived context and the discursive fabric” in which this community of

independent cultures exists (ECKENHAUSSEN 2019: 229) and which Bennet and Peterson link to the Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of "field" and Howard Becker's (2004: 3) idea of "art worlds".

Within this context, "tactical networks" appeared in the post-Yugoslav region in the early 2000s as agents of social change and cultural sustainability. Two networks will be analyzed as case studies in the following chapter, in order to reach a better understanding of how the employment of certain tactics facilitates the resilience and sustainability of the marginalized cultural actors. Both networks respond to the definition of a "tactical network" for which Celakoski lists four key characteristics that differentiate them from other cultural networks in the civil sector. The first relates to activities based on the project type, which means that their priority is not just the exchange of information and communication, but structurally driven processes designated by thematic, procedural, or other interests of the network members. Following such a direction, another characteristic implies directing towards social and/or political agenda. The third refers to interdisciplinarity, or to a connection with other areas beyond primary cultural and artistic activity. It is clear that this role of tactical networks requires a complex organizational structure (the fourth feature) that will be based on "communication and management principles, regulations and protocols" (CELAKOSKI 2006: 397).

Their main activity has been advocacy for a stronger position of the independent cultural sector in the overall cultural system, supported by the argument of cultural diversity as opposed to the dominance of the mainstream, nationalistic culture. The first network did not achieve its sustainability due to a lack of resilience to ideological-political processes, while the second network's achievement of sustainability was facilitated by the use of certain tactics, such as strategic essentialism. This tactic, by which divisions within a group are temporarily minimized and unity assumed in order to achieve political goals (SPIVAK 1996: 74), will be more thoroughly elaborated in the article.

Concerning the description of networks as "tactical," Michel de Certeau has written extensively on the topics of strategy and tactics in reading the daily practices of consumers, finding in them the mechanisms of evading the dominant regime, and pointing out that "tactics of the *weak* within the order established by the *strong* lead to the politicization of everyday practice" (de CERTEAU 2003: 38). In the practices of daily life, de Certeau believes that "the space of a tactic is the space of the other" (de CERTEAU 2003: 40). This is a type of social

practice where the application of tactics enables maneuver interventions and actions against the entity which is located on the opposite side. It is a surprising, unpredictable, unexpected, and ingenious resistance to the governing mechanisms, with the goal of achieving particular effects, whether it is a mere reliance on the entrenched practices and models, or the achievement of specific interests of those who resort to such type of interventions that will ensure changes of the dominant order. Unlike tactics, strategies are actions that are established on the basis of the relationship and distribution of power, with regards to the place of power, the territory of power, and the physical place (de CERTEAU 2003: 90).

Tactical interventions that de Certeau found in practices of everyday life are also applied to numerous actions of civil disobedience and they are an inevitable part of the culture. They are unique oppositions to state institutions and their purpose is to disturb them and trigger a reaction and appreciation of participants on the other side. The dominant values are provisionally accepted, or they offer resistance depending on the power and capabilities of subordinate groups, i.e., their “perspectives are linked and limited to direct and practical interests or specific situations” (CLARKE et al. 2003: 34). But for the fight and the resistance to the ruling procedures to be possible and effective, transformative and pervasive, it is necessary to carry out the mobilization of resources (material and human), to establish an organizational structure with clear procedures and protocols, and to firmly set the requirements and raise awareness of the political influence in the negotiation process.

By expressing and developing this character and with fresh actions, innovative social forms can be created and the group gets a chance to redefine their subordinate position, but at the same time, it can also be absorbed by the dominant apparatus. Which of these two directions shall prevail depends on the direct connection with the historic moment in which the group and its associated tactical interventions occur.

3. Strategic Essentialism as a Tactic for Achieving Cultural Sustainability and Resilience

Cultural sustainability can be seen as a cultural change because it has arisen precisely from the need for different thinking of the world around us. According to Ayestaran (2011: 76), cultural attitudes are in their basis value-driven and for this reason, the process of sustainable development should take into account cultural values that will trigger

the necessary changes in the individual and the social behavior. Attitudes that support advocacy for cultural sustainability are similar to the arguments concerning biodiversity, that is, the sustainability of the natural environment, which is seriously endangered by global warming, climate change, and other consequences of the Anthropocene. Cultural sustainability means that it is necessary to ensure the quality of life for all people as well as cultural well-being, equal access to cultural resources, and cultural protection.

The concept of cultural sustainability is, therefore, only emerging as a new multidisciplinary approach in reflecting on topics and challenges for involving culture in developmental principles and policies. The influence of different parameters of globalization, "production of uncertainty" in the "risk society" (BECK 1998: 12) for achieving cultural sustainability is apparently clear. However, although ideals of survival and cultivation of "diversity in harmony" should show their resilience to the globalization processes and ideological-political aspirations, it is not always the case.

Where sustainability is challenging to achieve, the concept of "resilience" is emphasized as a "second side of the same coin", i.e., a key to finding sustainable, long-term solutions to our major social, political, economic, and ecological problems (MACASLAN 2010: 12).

In the work of Gayatri Spivak, who defines herself as a "practitioner of Marxism, feminism and deconstruction" (SPIVAK 1996: 12), the centrality of resistance to the concept of cultural change seems to rapidly erode in favor of resilience. The presence of resilience in contemporary political, economic, and psychological discourses is significant. Resilience emerges as a keyword from the 1980s onwards and is brought to bear on a strikingly wide array of thematic areas (such as ecology, economy, psychology, or political regimes) as well as distinct levels of analysis (from the macro-level of systems to the micro-level of selves). The Oxford English Dictionary (2021: np) defines resilience as 'rebouncing; recoiling; returning to the original position' and 'tending to recover quickly or easily from misfortune, shock, illness, or the like; buoyant, irrepressible; adaptable, robust, hardy', and resilience is usually characterized as the ability of something or someone to bounce back and return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed, or bent. Early articulations of resilience emphasized persistence, that is, the capacity to absorb or buffer shocks while maintaining structure and function (FOLKE 2006: 253). This early notion of resilience has been elaborated and modified through an emphasis on transformability as well as adaptability (FOLKE 2006: 259).

The rise of resilience, and its entrenchment at the basis of common understandings of human agency, is part of a neoliberal ‘worlding.’ Neoliberal, not only in terms of political economy, but also as a cultural project bent on reshaping the structure of social relationships and subjectivities (BERLANT 2011: 23). Resilience, therefore, becomes the other face of sustainability and the very matter of which agency is made in neoliberal times: structural pressure, including oppression, is expected to be met with individual elasticity, rebounding, and adaptation.

One of the tactics to achieve this kind of adaption is “strategic essentialism,” a term proposed by Spivak. Her work is mostly concerned with the issues of post-colonialism and marginalized populations and she, in the wake of these problems, coined this term which refers to “the ways in which subordinate or marginalized social groups can temporarily put aside local differences in order to encourage a sense of collective identity with which they form political movements” (SPIVAK 1996: 72). So, it’s about extracting the main characteristics of the group and highlighting the common in order to create solidarity, strengthen its visibility in society, achieve resilience and cultural sustainability.

The objectives and actions associated with the term “strategic essentialism,” have prompted much debate, particularly within the themes of feminism and indigenous cultures as strategic essentialism often gets used to define these groups. Ignoring the differences between populations due to the formation of a homogeneous identity often carries the risk of essentialization. It is very challenging to strike a balance between the benefits and hazards of using strategic essentialism. Of course, the crucial difference is the answer to the question of who in a certain situation has the authority to use strategic essentialism – whether a particular identity is established from the group or attached to the group from the outside.

From Spivak’s definition of strategic essentialism, it is implied that the marginalized populations formulate their own identity themselves in order to, in some way, improve their communities. In other words, these are internal and conscious decisions. However, it is clear that essentialist identities are not only internally formulated, as is the case with feminism, but also imposed on certain communities. It is therefore important to stress that in the case of this article, strategic essentialism is viewed as an internally formulated mode of action, i.e., a tactic that marginalized groups are using for the improvement of their communities’ position.

4. Case studies: Other Scene (Belgrade, Serbia) and Clubture Network (Zagreb, Croatia)

Two 'tactical networks' that appeared in the region in the early 2000s will be analyzed as case studies in the following chapter in order to reach a better understanding of how the employment of certain tactics facilitates the resilience and sustainability of the marginalized cultural actors. Both networks belong to the context of the independent cultural sector in the post-Yugoslav region elaborated above and respond to the definition of a 'tactical network,' visible in Table 1, which compares the four key characteristics that differentiate tactical networks (CELAKOSKI 2006: 397) in the civil sector and the networks' goals and fields of activities.

Their main activity has been advocacy for a stronger position of the independent cultural sector in the overall cultural system, supported by the argument of cultural diversity as opposed to the dominance of the mainstream, nationalistic culture. As already addressed, the dichotomy of the cultural sector between the public and the civil sectors is still also visible in the way local and national cultural policy bodies deal with austerity measures imposed on the cultural sector. According to Mišković (2013: 25), a large amount of public resources is still invested in maintaining the status quo of the cultural framework, its infrastructure, and paying the salaries of a high number of administrative, technical, and artistic personnel. On the other hand, a smaller amount is invested in cultural programs of the independent scenes. Therefore, the independent cultural sector is trying to achieve cultural sustainability through strategies such as advocacy and the use of tactics. The first network did not achieve its sustainability due to a lack of resilience to political processes, while the second network's achievement of sustainability was facilitated by the use of certain tactics, such as strategic essentialism.

The first one, project Other Scene (*Druga scena*) was a joint initiative of eight independent artistic and cultural organizations and informal groups in Belgrade², active in the fields of contemporary performing and visual arts, theory of art and culture, gender and queer activism, and artistic and cultural policy issues in the context of post-socialist transition. The project was active as a self-organized initiative between 2005 and 2012, independent from agendas (expectations and requirements)

2 Members of Other Scene at the time of its establishment were: The Walking Theory – Centre for performance theory and practice, Station – Service for contemporary dance, PRELOM Collective, The Hyper Media Institute – TECHNE, QUEER Belgrade Collective, Stanipanikolektiv SFW – NEW DRAMA and other organizations (Official website Other Scene, 2006, n.p.).

Characteristic of tactical networks/ Networks' characteristics	Project based missions	Direction towards social and/or political agenda	Interdisciplinarity and intersectional collaboration	Complex organizational structure
Clubture goals and field of activities (Source: Statute from 2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Development of cooperation between organizations of independent culture and youth culture in Croatia and the region" • "Development of the capacity of civil society organizations in the fields of culture and youth in Croatia" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Advocacy for the cultural policy measures which serve the stability of the independent scene in Croatia" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Advocacy within the Cultural Policy; Youth Policy and other related policies" 	Participatory decision making based on direct democracy principles
Other Scene goals and field of activities (Source: Statute from 2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Providing or lobbying for a physical space (new, hybrid venues) that would remain open to young artists and new practices, and which will ensure infrastructural continuation of independent scene's activities, and whose organizational protocols and procedures of work will be structured in a way of full participation of self-organized cluster of involved groups" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "More fruitful and two-sided collaboration with local authorities," • "Influencing cultural policy regulations on the local and national level, assumed as a legal competence of independent scene and NGO sector in general" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Better visibility and recognition of contemporary arts practice and theory on the local level, as a relevant, competent, and influential social practice whose critical insights intervene in actual social relations" 	Participatory decision-making based on direct democracy principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Re-thinking existing and creating new forms of collaboration and networking, forms that emerge from below"
Revised Other Scene goals and field of activities (Source: Statute from 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Action in the field of cultural policy through exerting pressure and dialogue with the competent/higher institutions on matters of organization, support and (re)presentation of the autonomous, i.e. independent art and culture ; • "The fight for free access to the content in the field of art and culture and for communication between institutions, authors and users, through free licenses and protocols that are not privately owned" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Critical reflection on society as a whole and commitment to repoliticization of art and culture" • "The fight against all forms of structural and individual discrimination" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "The process of connecting theory, art and culture with various forms of left-wing cultural and political activism" • "Cultural policy that critically intervenes in the dominant state- market concepts such as national culture, cultural industries and the establishment of market criteria in the field of culture and education" 	Participatory decision making based on direct democracy principles

Tab. 1: Goals of networks Other Scene and Clubture Network according to the four characteristics of tactical networks (LETUNIĆ 2021).

put out by Belgrade City Council for Culture, Ministry of Culture, or international foundations. As one of the informants interviewed for this research stated, the members of Other Scene were dedicated to "critical analysis and political evaluation of neoliberal processes which were happening in Serbia at the time," accompanied by the distortion of collective memory. Other Scene was created as a response to the problems faced by independent organizations in terms of the lack of a stable infrastructure for autonomous artistic-cultural work and research outside of the existing (mainstream) institutions. Also, independent organizations of the Other Scene pointed to a lack of formulation of a clear and transparent cultural policy in Serbia, which referred even to the state institutions, and the acknowledgment of the relevance and the position of the independent scene in the cultural and artistic map of the country. At the beginning of its work, the Other Scene stated the research, creation, and implementation of an efficient model of cultural lobbying or advocacy, in the specific political and cultural conditions as its main objective. Practically, their intention was to set up a ground for the establishment of the basic physical and, more importantly, organizational infrastructure for the independent artistic and cultural scene in the city of Belgrade, which would empower it beyond the actual collaborators of the Other Scene project in the future. Its vision was "the development of a relatively consistent platform competent to participate in the process of development regulation and implementation of cultural policies in Serbia" (*Other Scene* 2005 n.p.).

A few years after, in 2011, the network revised its principles in the direction of a sharper left-wing political articulation as visible in the table above. Through negotiations and forms of direct democracy, new principles of Other Scene were established. Shortly after the articulation of the new principles, the platform began to disappear. Regardless of the fact the Other Scene no longer exists, it is important to acknowledge that its activities around the space of Magacin (<<https://kcmagacin.org/en/in-short/>>) in the center of Belgrade, which now operates as an occupied space that is free (with minor participation in basic operating costs for anyone who wants to work in the independent cultural sector), are among the most relevant emancipatory practices in recent history. While the organization was active, it organized protests as acts of resistance, published analyses and reactions to current events and, thus, produced knowledge that is still applicable. Although formally extinguished, Other Scene still has significant heritage regardless of the fact it was denied official recognition.

In 2002 in Zagreb, Clubture Network was founded and, unlike the Other Scene, it is still operating. The network was initially designed as a collaborative platform for organizations and informal initiatives of independent culture in Croatia with the goal of decentralization of the cultural production in the country, which was to be accomplished through a model (created specifically for the network) of exchange of programs between different organizations and environments, as well as their cooperation on certain projects. Hence, the idea Clubture originated from is formed in the phrase “culture as a process of exchange,” which is also a subtitle of the publication issued in 2007 on the occasion of the network’s fifth anniversary. Višnić explains the key program of Clubture Network as follows:

Programs are realized exclusively through direct cooperation of organizations, in a way that they create their own, more or less permanent, networks gathered around certain projects. Thereby, they choose their partners completely independently – regardless of the organizations’ previous engagement in Clubture. The cooperation is carried out based on the preset structural model which simultaneously enables the stabilization and further development of existing cooperations, but also the dissemination and building of the new ones, including an ever-growing number of participants who operate in different fields and through different forms. (VIŠNIĆ 2007: 15)

In the first five years of the network’s activity, eighty organizations from all over the country participated in the linkage, and “over a hundred programs have been realized, with over a thousand diverse public events which have taken place in more than fifty towns” (VIŠNIĆ 2007: 15).

Until the emergence of Clubture (Savez udruga Klubtura), Croatian “independent culture” was fragmented, i.e., there was no cohesion between organizations. With the establishment of Clubture in 2002, a network on the national level was formed, and Croatian independent culture started to function as a scene. Although the associated organizations are diverse in their programs and management, for the first time in the country’s history, their networking denoted a creation of the critical mass of organizations which find the mutual denominator in the application of similar models of action and common problems that originate from their position in the entire cultural system.

Given the diversity and variety of contents, topics, cultural activities, and artistic expressions which are present among the independent organizations participating in the cultural field, as well as their fragmentation, the establishment of the Clubture Network is considered to be the first relevant actuating pulse in the formation of the scene of “independent culture” on a national level, because those who share

similar views, organizational and functioning manners, connect and fight a mutual battle for the betterment of their positions.

With including Clubture in their platform, the Policy Forum Network assumed "an important role in strengthening the influence of this scene and defining national and local cultural policies" (VIŠNIĆ 2007: 11). Clubture also played a vital role in linking the organizations of emerging cultures on a regional level which, out of initial intention to create a stable financial framework for program exchange in the region, overgrew into advocacy activities in the field of cultural policies on European and regional levels. For example, Clubture, together with other independent cultural organizations in Croatia, successfully advocated for the creation of Foundation Kultura Nova, an arm's-length foundation established by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia. The Foundation's goal is to develop civil society organizations in the field of contemporary culture and the arts, and its creation clearly exemplifies the impact of a civil society initiative towards a public policy. Also, as one of the interviewed informants stated, Clubture has been regularly taking part in various public acts of resistance, i.e., actions in the fights for the common and public spaces and goods which also include culture in the broader sense.

5. Advocacy as a Form of Action: Diverging Perspectives

When observing the relationship between the two networks, a former member of the Other Scene said in an interview that initially, the goal of the platform was "to be as Clubture and more than that." Indeed, the vision of the Other Scene was articulated as the development of a platform competent to participate in the processes of regulation of the development and implementation of cultural policies in Serbia, which is very similar to the vision of Clubture.

Furthermore, both collaborative platforms of organizations and informal initiatives of independent culture initially cited the promotion of advocacy as a method of action in the field of cultural policy as their aim. The main objective of Clubture in 2008 was lobbying the authorities in the region and Europe to support independent collaborative initiatives in the region (PAVIC 2011: 22) which are formulated in the Clubture's statute as "advocacy of cultural policy measures conducive to the stability of the independent cultural scene in Croatia" while the first principles of Other Scene cite "influence on the regulation of cultural policies at

local and national levels” and “lobbying for spatial resources that will be open to young artists and new practices.” When discussing an inner reconstruction of south-eastern Europe, Čopič (2011: 35) claimed its key is a strong state and the strong civil society model, achieved through advocacy as a form of action. Several studies, such as the one on bottom-up cultural policy by Višnić (2007), elaborate on how the independent cultures had to uphold an effective flow of advocacy in order to reach out to the public and enter the public discourse.

Precisely on the issue of advocacy, significant ideological disagreements evolved between the members of Other Scene that caused the rewriting of its’ principles in 2011. In an interview conducted as a part of this research, an informant directly rejects this course of action: “Within Other Scene, there were organizations that refused any forms of pragmatism and models of advocacy. When translated into our language, the English word *advocacy* gets an interesting semiotic and syntactic precision – advocacy would mean that one advocates the other while the third one does something behind your back. We advocate while everything important happens without our knowledge. So, I also belonged to this fraction that was, in these contextual circumstances, the anti-advocacy one.”

Relating to this interpretation of the concept of advocacy, there is an interesting distinction that Višnić (2007: 50) makes between advocacy and hidden lobbying, which Vesić perhaps equates in the previous statement. Specifically, she argues that to “choose public advocacy over undercover lobbying is a fundamental issue in order not to accept interference through personal interest, still common in our society, nor solutions negotiated behind closed doors in half secret meetings with individuals who are currently in power” (VIŠNIĆ 2007: 50). As an alternative to this improper way of lobbying, Višnić is committed to addressing problems in a way that can be viewed within the entirety of the system, i.e., to get out of certain problems and needs by articulating requirements set as long-term, structural and model-based solutions that will, if they are once performed, have a positive impact not only on individual organizations gathered in the coalition but also on the sector as a whole. This is why these requirements should be articulated to the general public, not only to decision-makers, and the discussion should include as many participants to which they refer, and therefore get their more or less direct support.

6. Strategic Essentialism and 'Historic Moment'

The dispute around the concept of advocacy is a symptom that one of the interviewees names as the main reason for the disappearance of Other Scene: its outspoken anti-neoliberal narrative that has very sharply opposed the ideological shift and the cultural policies of those times.

Another former member of Other Scene, says the platform, "broke up because it was not able to fight against a very broad spectrum of political opponents the platform set for themselves." In terms of tactical action and relationship to the dominant values, Clarke (2003: 40) claims that they are provisionally accepted or they are offered resistance, depending on the power and the possibilities of subordinate groups, meaning their "perspectives are linked and limited to direct and practical interests or specific situations" (CLARKE et al. 2003: 42). In fact, in situations of resistance such as the activity of Clubture and Other Scene, the group has a chance of improving their subordinate position, but it can also be absorbed by the dominant apparatus, as it happened with Other Scene. What decides the direction in which the resistance of a group will develop is the historic moment in relation to which the group tactically operates. When translated to the cultural policy field, this "historic moment" can be understood as a policy window, which is a confluence of events that allows advocates to push their policy solutions to problems onto the political agenda (KINGDON 1984: 282). In this situation marked by a clear lack of such a policy window, an informant states precisely this link with the historic moment as the reason for the disappearance of Other Scene:

Objective historical circumstances have happened, such as the rush of the conservative offensive of capitalism and chauvinism. In other words, waves of the capitalist crisis lapping on the shore of the capitalist periphery. (KINGDON 1984: 282)

Furthermore, another informant states that the fact the tactical network was mostly seen as hermetic and highly exclusive was an important reason for the termination of the Other Scene. The so-called exclusivity allegedly manifested itself through the issue of language, i.e., the use of socialist and utopian jargon which is why the network remained less accessible to new generations.

As noted above, the change of jargon occurred in 2011 when there was a need to move from a broader set of principles and enter a form of joint agreements that would "declare tendencies more significantly and not only be a form of easy regulation of membership in the network," as one of the informants stated. Pragmatic reasons that led to the

dissolution of Other Scene began with the articulation of new principles which were much more politicized than the previous ones in terms of highlighting certain tendencies. Namely, a large number of members “wanted the operation of the network to be blatantly marked and clearly articulated politically and not just through, so to speak, neutral and non-violent principles of horizontality and inclusiveness”, in words of one of the founding members of Other Scene.

The intention of standing up for a clearer articulation of the political left and the existence of different cultures is evident if we compare the principles of Other Scene from 2006 to the ones the network articulated in 2011. An informant also lists the key differences between processes on the independent scene in Belgrade and Zagreb: “Participants in Belgrade found it difficult to deal with the lack of certain constructiveness that existed, for example, in the model of Clubture in Zagreb. There existed, in the concrete steps, i.e., in the execution, a certain pragmatism – this meant that members would come to terms with certain formulations, expressions, etc. but will try to fight for a better position in relation to the current situation.”

With regards to the phenomenon of “conciliation with certain formulations” (such as the one of advocacy) mentioned by the informant above, another informant from Clubture points out that the production of a stable community is a key prerequisite for the success of all other tactics and strategies. In Clubture, there was always insistence on the constant finding of common interest, i.e., a common denominator around which the organizations gather, and which comes from their position in the overall cultural system. This informant emphasized the work on “frequent, open and critical communication (through regular and extraordinary meetings, personal conversations, mailing lists, and other ways) allowed the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust, which in turn guaranteed the long-term maintenance of unity. It is important to point out that the identity of individual organizations and people is not lost in togetherness, but still exists in their activities. [...] It is also important that the organizations hold more or less similar positions in relation to the system (that they are able to identify and articulate), and are therefore also connected with similar needs.”

The informant from Other Scene, by contrast, emphasizes the differences of professional identities that existed among the members of Other Scene: “I was against this constructive-pragmatic model of action because, in concrete experiences that I had during the meetings with various bodies that might be able to support the development of

the situation, I recognized the situation falling, i.e. transition from the position of artist or intellectual to the position of manager in culture (who is yet to be specifically trained for it) who would teach illiterate capitalists to be literate capitalists in order to achieve a minimal ability to fight against them. That is why it all seemed like a process where movement is not possible."

The phenomenon of "conciliation with certain formulations" and insistence on constantly finding a common denominator around which the members of the network gather instead of focusing on their opposing views can be viewed as strategic essentialism. On the other hand, according to an informant from Belgrade, what took place in the Other Scene was the so-called, political factionism. The production of togetherness through the connection by similar needs regardless of the identity of members of different professional groups, which happened in Clulture, means "temporarily leaving aside local differences in order to encourage a sense of collective identity with which they form political movements", i.e., strategic essentialism (SPIVAK 1996: 74).

7. Conclusion: Towards Sustainability of Marginalized Cultural Actors

As a differentiating characteristic to other cultural networks, the self-established collective networks encourage interaction between the artistic, cultural, technological, political, and social fields, and they appear in the transformation of the cultural everyday life as implementers of the process of emancipation of the public sphere in which socially engaged and critical action in diverse directions is possible. Thus, these individuals and groups start a permanent struggle against conservatism and open up a new area of social engagement, they are looking for a different type of social communication, and they are striving for free expression of diverse views, adhering to the principles that are based on the language of solidarity and inclusion, i.e. of openness towards the Other, the different, the minority and the marginalized, thus echoing Castells' idea of openness of cultural networks more "than any other public space that existed before" (2009: 302). In other words, they are adhering to the value of diversity of cultural expressions as included in the concept of cultural sustainability.

Owing to the participation in the production of discourse on cultural policy, in the turbulent context of the post-Yugoslav region "they moved

the system in a direction where the cultural field of action included also their activities where the values they represent became the values of the entire system, where their working methods and topics were recognized as legitimate in the field of culture,” or “by dealing with cultural policies, they realized the possibility of dealing with culture” (MIŠKOVIĆ 2011: 38).

However, the fact that they are involved in the cultural system also as a separate category does not “necessarily mean the fulfillment of all benefits arising from that status” (MIŠKOVIĆ 2011: 38). Hence, here lie the key reasons for inadequate financial, organizational, and professional conditions for the work of the participants in “independent culture” which are, as already mentioned, the key drivers of their engagement in cultural policy and their articulation of, more or less, precisely worded requests for specific changes. The case studies analysis of the two networks within this article has shown how the use of certain tactics, such as strategic essentialism, contributes to heightening their resilience and reaching sustainability of their organizations. On the other hand, the consensus on the use of such tactics is one of the decisions that, in unfavorable historical moments such as the one in early 2011, must be made by the independent cultural organizations with full awareness of the risk of making their own identities essential. Unfortunately, even nowadays these organizations are still forced to act tactically rather than strategically, since they act “in the space of the other,” although gradually progressing beyond resilience into sustainability.

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