

**Independent culture and  
new collaborative practices in Croatia**

**The Force of Example**  
Publication Series **No. 3**

**A bottom-up  
approach  
to cultural  
policy-making**

a Case Study prepared by **Emina Višnić**  
with a contribution by **Sanjin Dragojević**

policies for culture



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# A bottom-up approach to cultural policy-making

## **Independent culture and new collaborative practices in Croatia**

a Case Study prepared by **Emina Višnić**  
with a contribution by **Sanjin Dragojević**

policiesforculture  
AMSTERDAM / BUCHAREST / ZAGREB  
2008

This case study was originally based on a Policies for Culture action project *CLUBTURE — Policy Forum: Towards a new position for the independent, non-profit and non-institutional cultural sector in the policy-making process*, developed between July 2002 — January 2004, and on subsequent follow-ups and connected initiatives undertaken up to 2007

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# Introduction

This is the third case study of the publication series “The Force of Example” relating to Policies for Culture associated activities, projects and their follow-up throughout South East Europe. The case study was originally based on the action project *CLUBTURE – Policy Forum: Towards a new position for the independent, non-profit and non-institutional cultural sector in the policy-making process*, developed between July 2002 – January 2004. Both this action project and the present publication benefited from the support of the Policies for Culture programme, jointly developed by the European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam and the ECUMEST Association in Bucharest (more details about PFC are available in the Programme framework section). However, the current text covers a longer period than that of the project itself as it presents in some detail the various actions and phases of the advocacy process undertaken until 2007 by a wide coalition of independent cultural and youth sectors in Croatia. We hope this will give an accurate picture of best practice in the field of local cultural development in South East Europe.

During the last few years, the independent cultural scene in Croatia, and especially in Zagreb, has been actively engaged not only in cultural policies, but also in other public policies that are relevant to this field. Its players can be recognised as the key (and maybe only) force to continuously press for participatory cultural policies – policies that include as many stakeholders as possible in the decision-making processes and in monitoring their implementation. This kind of engagement has to be a consequence of the context within which the players have had to operate, one which is significantly influenced by the dominance of the public cultural sector (public institutions system). This means that cultural production, as well as new organisational forms rising and developing out of the system, are being pushed to its outer margins. Thus, independent players have to secure for themselves a stronger position within the wider cultural system reflecting the role they actually play. Moreover, key independent organisations have also directed their advocacy activities at other public policies that are either directly or indirectly connected to issues of cultural policy, namely urban policies, policies of space management and youth policies. All advocacy practices are based on at least two essential elements: joint



networked action and a strong plea for citizens' participation in the decision-making processes.

In the first part of this publication we look at the context in which the independent cultural scene in Croatia has arisen and in which it is now operating, while also presenting an overview of its development. We have tried to point to relevant factors that have influenced, at a general level, the orientation of the cultural field towards active networking and its joint efforts in the struggle for participation in the creation and implementation of cultural and other public policies.

As result of critically reflecting not only on their own, but also international, European collaboration practices, independent players have worked for a long time on the setting up of a new model of cooperation, i.e. new ways of networking. These have become paramount to part of their programmes and to all their advocacy activities. Thus, the second part of the publication is dedicated to the presentation of this model, both on a conceptual level and in practice. In the section entitled *Collaborative platforms / tactical networks* we provide an overview of the basic premises and characteristics of these new networking formats. This is followed by three successful examples of such collaborations: the national network Clubture, the advocacy platform POLICY\_FORUM and the local collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000. The section concludes with a text by Sanjin Dragojević, one of the most important European experts in cultural policies and non-profit management, who places these new networking formats within the larger European context.

In the third and final part, we present the advocacy experiences of the Zagreb initiative. There is no doubt that this will be useful to all those engaged in participative policies, and especially to those who share a similar institutional framework and cultural inheritance. Here we have in mind the region of South East Europe and especially the countries that have inherited from the former joint state the same or a similar cultural system together with the problems that arise from it. Therefore in the initial section we describe the key orientations and characteristics of the Zagreb initiative. After that we give an overview of the strategies, tactics, methods and forms of action used. The section ends with a chronology of this initiative.

# 1

(New) independent  
culture in Croatia –  
the context of activities  
and the dynamics of  
development<sup>01</sup>

### **An institutional heritage untouched by the transition processes**

As in most of the post-socialist countries of South East Europe, the general cultural landscape in Croatia is dominated by the so-called 'official culture' created by the more powerful state institutions as well as by an unwieldy system of cultural bodies in the ownership and under direct control of the state administration (central, regional and local). The public cultural sector, in spite of rapid and deep changes at political and economic levels as well as in everyday life, has not as yet experienced a significant structural transition. Even today, it functions, more or less, in accordance with outdated and inadequate principles inherited from a previous era.

However, it should not be forgotten that the politics of preservation and conservation have some positive aspects, among which the most significant is the protection of the cultural infrastructure. Hence the majority of public spaces have retained their public purpose and have not been abruptly transformed into commercial arenas. As much as one can be rightly unsatisfied with the administration and programmes of the public institutions which run these venues (cultural centres, museums, theatres, etc.) it is extremely important that they continue to exist.

On the other hand, such politics have resulted in an institutional framework, that effectively prevents any attempt at stepping out towards proactive cultural strategies and policies, which could support diversity, dynamism and cultural development instead of continually reinforcing national identity through tradition and traditionalism. One of the results of this way of thinking, and at the same time an indicator of its unsuccessful outcome, is the still largely unaltered system of public financing. A large amount of public resource is invested in keeping the cultural framework afloat, i.e. in maintaining its infrastructure and paying the salaries of a high number of administrative, technical and artistic personnel. A smaller

01 The text partially relies on the supplements of Policy\_Forum published in a cultural magazine Zarez and in the papers of Policy\_Forum participants during public debates, round tables and similar activities.

amount is invested in cultural programmes, mostly in the minimal programmes of these institutions. "Such a policy cannot significantly advance the development of a cultural and social capital." Its only rationale can be to maintain the functions of the public cultural sector, i.e. to maintain the status quo.

### **Self-determination: an independent culture**

Despite this, in Croatia an independent cultural scene operates alongside the established or dominant system, promoting new cultural and artistic content together with innovative work practices. The term "independent culture" can in its widest sense refer to all those organisations that (a) have not been set up by the state or by other external organisations but have established themselves; (b) that independently decide on their organisational structures, bodies and processes of decision-making and management; and (c) that depend neither on the state or any other entity for their programme content or finances. In this context we are referring to a specific field of cultural activities that can be distinguished on several levels following three criteria: the form of the organisation, the manner in which it works/is organised, and the contents and orientation of its activities. As it is impossible to give a more concise definition of this term we shall try instead to describe the cultural field to which it refers.

Hence, we are talking about non-profit organisations, informal initiatives and artistic organisations that operate through new forms and work practices and are open to wider public participation. In addition, these structures are mostly characterized by dynamism and flexibility, a direct community approach, and a readiness to react quickly with a mixture of professionalism and enthusiasm and voluntary work. They are also characterized by activities developed in very diverse fields of culture and arts as well by a mutually creative interaction (contemporary arts in all fields, popular culture, contemporary theory, new media and new technologies, youth culture, etc.), involving a wider social consciousness and activist orientation which are now very evident. Inter-sectoral connections and overlapping programmes are very common (e.g. within the youth sector), as well as a strong orientation towards cooperation (at local, national, regional and international levels), mostly with other complementary cultural organisations but also with social organisations from other fields. A working relationship with the public and private sector is also common, although to a lesser degree.

Despite the possible clumsiness and ambiguous interpretation of the term "independent culture", we prefer this to "alternative culture", "youth culture", "urban culture", "sub-culture", "contra-culture", and so forth. These and other similar terms may be seen as referring only to one aspect of the cultural field. In other words they can be taken to mean a specific social function (e.g. youth cultural activities or the urban cultural pattern of

leisure) or they may refer to a time-related understanding of what constitutes “mainstream” culture and describe a culture which is not mainstream but in opposition to it (“alternative” or “contra” culture), or a minority culture (“subculture”). By using such terms, these new and different forms of cultural activities may be interpreted solely in the degree of their contrast to the so-called “dominant” culture, thus restricting their application. In more favourable interpretations, “independent culture” can be seen as an opportunity for potential innovation, which with time will be transposed and adapt to the existing dominant system while also influencing it. Those who are not likely to believe in such a process may view “independent culture” as irrelevant, operating “on the edge” and lacking in content. However, in all cases “independent culture” is seen as being in opposition to the dominant culture, and is either patronized, ignored or given no value by the dominant faction.

The “independent culture” we are talking about has not developed in opposition to any other field nor is it given as an alternative to an indefinable “mainstream”, nor is it exclusively related to so-called new, fresh, young forces, nor is it marked by an urban character in comparison to some other “non-urban” one. It has appeared and is constantly evolving, stimulated by its own, and other forms and practices of cultural-artistic and wider social engagement. Thus, in terms of contemporary cultural policies it should be viewed as a separate field, and not as something else that exists and acts primarily in opposition to another field. This is why it is also worth mentioning that the key players of the field are referring to the field itself by using precisely the term “independent culture”.

“What used to be considered as “alternative” yesterday is now mainstream, the main current of creative forces and possibly the only productive cultural force capable of maintaining an equal footing with the rest of the world and of following contemporary artistic debates relating to new social and media theories. It is the type of cultural force which not only absorbs influences from abroad but also processes the information it gleans. It is capable of reflecting on the global situation, and of disseminating to a foreign audience, in different media formats, the results of its own creative thinking and work. For example, during the last few years some of the most interesting contemporary theoreticians, artists and curators have visited Zagreb at the initiative of and guided by independent cultural initiatives, especially when compared to previous decades. The importance of these exchanges and influences on new generations of artists will only become evident in the years to come”.

### **Independent culture – primary growth and development**

The beginnings of the development of the current cultural scene, which has moved away from the extreme social and political polarization of 1990s, can be traced to the end of this period. New organisations and initiatives producing specific programmes appeared, giving rise to a diversification in the field of cultural activities. The organisations were mostly self-centred they worked more or less independently, and the whole field of independent culture became atomized. Other forms of collaborative practices, programmes built on partnerships or joint public activities – apart from those addressing social issues through the cultural and artistic guilds – did not exist. National, as well as local cultural policies had not been developed, and cultural policy was still dealing with the issue of representation. Public authorities either were not aware of or ignored the activities of the independent cultural scene, and therefore they neither financed nor supported them.

In a second phase, whose beginnings can be pinpointed to the turn of 2001/2, several organisations from the independent cultural scene started to collaborate among themselves. The process of strengthening these initiatives has continued and the number of participants is increasing. The scene includes diverse informal initiatives, non-governmental organisations, non-profit clubs and artistic organisations, thus creating a specific field of interactivity and diverse practices: contemporary culture and arts of the most diverse form and content, social activism, theory, education, new media, public activities, etc. This kind of scene produces a new cultural and social capital and thus becomes recognizable in the larger cultural and social context in which it operates. In comparison to the first phase, when individual organisations were mostly inward-looking and concentrated on creating specialized fields of activities, now the overriding tendency is one of interaction and collaboration with the aim of (or consequence of) producing a framework within which the independent cultural scene can operate. The most prominent examples, at national level, are the programme network Clubture, and at local level, the collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000.

In this phase, over recent years, both the national and several local cultural authorities have started to recognize the legitimacy of the independent scene by opening funding lines for their projects and programmes. Hence, the former Council for Media Culture (presently the Council for New Media Cultures) was established as part of the Ministry of Culture, and the Commission for Urban and Youth Culture (now the Council) was established as part of the Office for Culture of the City of Zagreb. No matter how significant a step this may prove to be, only a limited part of the financial resources dedicated to culture has been granted to the independent scene, which clearly shows its continuing marginalization. The programmes of the independent cultural scene are also financed within the frame work of

the “traditional” fields of activities, such as theatre and dance, visual arts, film and audiovisual media, etc. However, these independent players are discriminated against within these activities and the funds allocated are several times lower compared to those granted to the established institutions or to other participants closer to those in power.

### **An unfavourable framework endangers further development**

National and local cultural and other relevant public policies have become increasingly important for the survival and further development of the independent cultural scene, since previously neither the necessary conditions for the sustainable development of an independent culture nor the basic resources for the stability of individual organisations were in place. Their importance grew with a sudden increase and withdrawal of international funds at the end of the first phase of transition and democratization (at the beginning of the 2000s). This affected not only the financing of programmes (almost the only instrument used in establishing cultural policies), but also wider legislative changes (e.g. tax deductions) as well as basic changes in the system of planning, selecting and evaluating.

However, as has already been emphasised, the existing institutional framework for cultural activities in Croatia is still not development-oriented. It is not based on programme logic nor is it significantly determined by the evaluation of a programme. It is service-oriented, based on the closed logic of providing for existing institutions – as such it is located in a vacuum far removed from the sphere of social dynamics. Moreover, this framework makes impossible the long-term planning of programmes and activities. Among the various instruments used to define cultural policies it only draws on the financial ones. (Legal, economic, organisational and value elements are neglected.) In this way, not only is the independent scene (which is internationally recognized as the stimulus for new cultural content and the dynamic element in wider cultural production) placed in a disadvantaged position, but also the system itself, with its strict division between the institutional and uninstitutional cultural fields, does not encourage competitiveness and the development of either of these two fields.

In spite of the newly created funding policy instruments, the independent cultural scene is still lacking recognition and support for its new models of cultural production and collaboration. It is still seen as “alternative”, to the institutions of the so-called dominant culture, and remains in a subservient relationship in which public authorities “provide for” the realization of the programmes and “support” individual actors. Its transformative potential cannot be recognized by the current cultural system, partly due to its own organisation. This system, in its current form, follows a service sanctioned logic and cannot respond to transformative needs. Primarily geared to meet the ongoing and unmitigating social and infrastructural needs of the public cultural institutions, their programme development is also not supported.

On the other hand, public support provided for the independent scene solely at the level of the limited financing of programmes cannot have a significant positive influence on its stability, sustainability and long-term development. The existing system does not allow institutional monitoring to safeguard sustainability. The independent scene is often seen as an amateur, voluntary and hobby-oriented sector, and not as a professional one. This is also reflected in the system of finance being given solely for programmes. The inability of the public sector to provide multi-annual funding for projects and programmes, particularly in this field, closes the door for strategic programme planning and development. Almost in all cities the limited availability of space resource – unsolved problems of existing (or recently existing) independent spaces and the lack of adequate venues for the activities of a number of other organisations, forced to work in private apartments or in premises paid at market prices (using up a substantial part of their programme budgets) or temporarily using spaces with limited access owned by other institutions – causes a specific form of instability and can lead to the disappearance of these organisations. This situation makes impossible not only the long-term stability of the organisations but also the development of any long-term programming.

### **New networks and policy initiatives at grassroots level (a bottom-up approach)**

By mid-2004 a new, third phase of development in the independent scene can be discerned. Following individual projects and activities of various organisations, and then joint ventures under the auspices of platforms or individual partner projects, the independent scene gained “legitimacy” for its existence and established its credibility. After clearly analyzing the situation and making efforts to ensure its visibility to a wider audience as well as within the system, the independent scene should focus its efforts on changing the system in order to have its transformative potential recognized and accepted. In its own rapid and dynamic way, the independent scene has entered a phase of pursuing a different policy within the overall cultural scene. Since the system cannot recognize the dynamic models of programming and collaboration, the key players of the independent scene in Croatia have begun to understand that they need to start talking in terms that the system “understands”. By engaging in the infrastructure and institutional framework, by proposing possible long-term solutions, by organising public debates and media campaigns, the independent scene will not only ensure its own development but also act as a transformative player within the overall cultural system. The key point is that the independent scene continues to be integrated into already established and successful networks and platforms (e.g. Clubture, Zagreb-Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000) and at the same time create new ones (e.g. the initiative Right to the City), all the while developing and testing the basic model of its activities: tactical networking.





# 2

New forms of  
networking and joint  
action

## 2.1. Collaborative platforms / tactical networks<sup>03</sup>

Intensive collaborative platforms, i.e. tactical networks, represent a new form of emerging socio-cultural practice with two main purposes: expanding the definition of cultural action and developing new collaborative practices and models.

If we consider the issues they deal with (public domain, social transition, hybrid models of public-private partnerships, intellectual property, etc.) as well as the methods they employ (activism, civil association, advocacy, transfer of technological and other practices into the cultural domain, socio-theoretical activities), we can safely say that they greatly expand the cultural domain by defining it not as arts and heritage, which is the traditional approach that has dominated European culture for decades, but rather as a domain of direct interaction between social, technological and artistic levels. In this way they help to create the potential for culture to re-assume its proactive, dynamic and critical function in society.

When compared to other models of networking and collaboration, their potential exceeds the type, complexity and intensity of activity being developed elsewhere. It might therefore be more appropriate to refer to them as collective networks or intensive collaborative platforms. They have several levels of activity, structure and procedure that are aimed at achieving common goals by different means. This distinguishes them from simple cooperative projects where two or more entities try, through cooperation at production or some other level, to achieve particular artistic or cultural attainments. They represent complex socio-cultural endeavours.

Based on these characteristics, intensive collaborative platforms require four basic prerequisites to effectively deal with complex problems:

<sup>03</sup> Text describing the concept of collaborative platforms is taken from the documents of the collaborative platform: Zagreb \_ Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000.

1. Aims and goals need to be set up that are suitable for the type of project, including a socially relevant agenda and strong policy of intent;
2. Themes and material need to be oriented toward genuine collaboration;
3. Transdisciplinary activities are required to bring together participants from different artistic, cultural and social fields to collaborate and work together;
4. Multi-level, modular and complex structures with defined protocols and procedures need to serve: (a) as a method of building informative and communicative governing formats and (b) as a transformative approach toward achieving targeted aims and goals.

The format of intensive collaborative platforms needs to differ from the membership networks, the agencies that provide programme content, the grant-giving or operational foundations, the simple collaborative projects, projects that provide touring packages, distributive touring models, the wide platforms with no clear agenda and only a suggestion of a common ground behind similar types of activities, etc. A more basic distinction needs to be drawn between intensive collaborative platforms and the current membership based networks. These networks are based on the representative logic of identity – they produce a demagogy of decentralization while at the same time creating a new level of centralized, non-effective bureaucracy that fails to produce effective programmes or projects.

In the following chapters, the collaborative platforms Clubture and Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 are presented as examples of tactical networks. Furthermore, examples of collaborative policy and advocacy activities – POLICY\_FORUM and Zagreb's initiative of independent culture and youth – are highlighted.

## 2.2. The Clubture<sup>04</sup> network<sup>05</sup>

### **Culture as a process of exchange**

Clubture is a non-profit, participatory network of organisations, which aims to strengthen the independent cultural sector through programme networking, raising public awareness, encouraging organisational development within the sector, as well as promoting change in the institutional framework.

*Culture as a process of exchange* remains Clubture's core concept.

Clubture was conceived as a catalyst to bring about the long-term strengthening and linking of the independent cultural scene into a cooperative network, encompassing a series of non-profit, independent civil organisations, their clubs as well as informal initiatives, with a shared view of permanent and direct collaboration evidenced by an exchange of programmes, partnership building and combined work on projects.

The core of the network is in jointly conceived programmes and projects. This, in fact, means that the network cannot exist without mutually realized programmes, which are carried out on a direct ("peer-to-peer") level between organisations in accordance with an innovative structural model set in advance. At the same time as enabling the stabilization and further development of existing collaborations, the model supports the expansion and establishment of new cooperative ventures, thus drawing in a greater number of participants, active in various fields and forms. Since the model is based on a highly participatory process of mutual decision-making in terms of strategy, programme and finance, the traditional, inadequate principle of evaluation based on closed and outdated aesthetic and poetic criteria is avoided. On the contrary, the key evaluation criteria are a set of socio-cultural values which form part of a specific programme, i.e. the potential to positively influence the development of a socio-cultural capital.

<sup>04</sup> [www.clubture.org](http://www.clubture.org)

<sup>05</sup> Part of the text is taken from the publication *Clubture:Data*

Together with the development of small, mobile, flexible organisations that can quickly adopt new communication practices, which in technological and media terms can hybridize and mix, one of Clubture's basic aims is the development of innovative models for the gradual decentralization of cultural production. By creating less expensive, more diverse and frequent programmes Clubture encourages free interaction on the basis of programme need, thus facilitating the transfer of knowledge and experience among diverse organisations and various active communities.

### **Network management through participatory decision-making**

The Clubture network has developed a specific participatory decision-making model so that all the organisations and initiatives that wish to propose programmes can evaluate them by means of a transparent and accurate scoring and voting system. Furthermore, an Assembly, made up of the representatives of all active members of the network, is the decision making body of the organisation. When it comes to main programme activities, every organisation participating in the programme can build up its own small network within which it can share its programmes. All other activities are approved by the Assembly and are designed in two ways: (1) the specific organisation develops its own set of activities in a specific context and takes responsibility for their implementation (for example in local advocacy); (2) on the other hand, there are some activities that are designed to serve the network as a whole (or the independent cultural scene in general) and are implemented by staff in cooperation with network members (such as the portal or the magazine).

The network is based on a participatory and dynamic model, a fundamental achievement that distinguishes Clubture from any other form of member-based network be it a content-providing/distribution agency or grant-giving/fund-redistribution organisation. The membership is built on an open model of inclusion based on programme participation. Each organisation that initiates and implements a programme becomes a full network member, while each organisation that hosts a programme becomes an associate network member. Moreover, there is no central authority to organise cultural content distribution. The network functions on a "peer-to-peer" principle, which means that the organisations plan and implement programme activities in direct collaboration with one another, whether or not they are network members, while Clubture itself functions as the overarching platform that encourages programme sharing and project partnership. Furthermore, everyone who proposes a programme can also evaluate other programmes being offered. In this manner, the selection of programmes is facilitated as well as the decision on financing particular programmes from a common budget.

## **Reacting to a narrow cultural context – connecting isolated independent initiatives**

In 2001 the Multimedia Institute [mi2] (Zagreb) initiated the formation of a platform of independent cultural organisations, initiatives and non-profit clubs in response to the general situation prevailing at that time. The Croatian cultural scene was then primarily marked by sluggish and traditional production from the existing cultural institutions and by non-recognition of new, innovative, independent cultural and artistic practices. These were being ignored not only by the so-called official culture, but also by the media and the wider public, and also through the non-existence of any stable and sustainable practice of interaction, collaboration and networking. Later on, as we have already seen, this initiative resulted in the establishment of the network Clulture. The process started at grassroots level (a bottom-up approach) in that the first circle of the more stable organisations (15 of them throughout Croatia) gathered and, based on their existing needs and problems, defined their key goals, activities and a new model of cooperation and mutual decision-making. Based on their proposed action plan a three-year partnership with the Open Society Institute – Croatia was subsequently established. The first activities started in February 2002. Three months later (May 2002) the first formal meeting of the network's Assembly was held.

In five years of continuous activity, the network has gathered over 80 organisations and initiatives from all around Croatia and a stable platform has been created. The platform enables a mutual cooperation and interaction between groups from diverse fields such as urban culture, social activism, performing arts, new media and technologies, visual culture, music, contemporary art, theory, comics, youth culture and so on. In this way the platform not only represents new forms of collectivity and self-organisation, but also generates a specific social solidarity, realized through an open collaborative system and the stimulation of critical thinking.

## **Transition period and further development**

The Clulture network was primarily established with one very specific goal. The driving idea was to strengthen cultural organisations (and the independent cultural sector as a whole) by developing a model that would stimulate intensive programme and project collaboration between the network members as well as other structures interested in sharing the different content produced. However, the implementation of such an ambitious and demanding model led to a structural analysis, which indicated several levels of deficiency in the organisations participating in the network. There were two assumptions that, in practice, have proved to be wrong. The first was that the greater quantity and quality of artistic content on offer, along with wider public awareness and diversification of activity, would also lead to an increased stabilization and strengthening of capacity. But, what in ef-

fect happened was that, only where they received extra support did the programme and project content lead to the substantial development of the individual organisations. Furthermore, it was assumed that the organisations would achieve a greater impact on the relevant public (local and national) decision-making bodies and that they would more easily be able to exert influence on the improvement of their own framework of activities through the expansion and visibility of their programmes. But again this did not happen automatically. The gain in public awareness (primarily in local communities) provided only a marginally solid background for organisations to be able to start advocacy activities in order to improve their (primary) local institutional frameworks.

On the other hand, there are a number of circumstances that have prevented the more rapid development of the non-governmental cultural sector. A huge, stable and inert public cultural sector (public institutions) did not undergo any sort of transformation, while, at the same time, continued to waste huge public resources. Because of this inertia no allowance was made at the general cultural policy level that could make the overall system more dynamic. An inadequate institutional framework (state and local administration, culture legislation, financial and fiscal limitations) precluded the independent cultural organisations from securing any adequate institutional mechanism for monitoring, financial support and evaluation of their activities.

At the beginning of 2005, after three years of permanent programme activity and several efforts to consider public awareness and the cultural policy (the most noteworthy activities being under the auspices of the Policy\_Forum), the network started its transition process and expanded the scope of its engagements in several directions.

Organisations from diverse communities of all sizes have now acquired a basic knowledge of cultural policy-making – lobbying, advocacy and monitoring of public policies. Of even more significance is the fact that they have started advocacy activities, while continuing to act directly in their own local communities, where they have achieved concrete results and acquired significant experience which they have spread throughout the network. Apart from this, a relevant number of organisations are now equipped for the strategic planning of their own organisational and programme development. They have also acquired other relevant knowledge in terms of non-profit cultural management, which has significantly strengthened their own stability and further development as individual organisations, as well as the overall scene. On the other hand, through established media programmes, a new public arena is now being accessed. Not only is independent cultural production becoming more visible in this arena, but space for different and critical reflection on relevant socio-cultural contexts is being created and a more adequate discourse is being shaped. Simultaneously, further development and expansion of programme ex-



change and project cooperation between organisations in Croatia is continuing to grow. At the same time, the process of an internationalization of programme activity has also been initiated. Consequently, Clubture has set up a regional programme platform which has resulted so far in eight collaborative projects connecting organisations from Croatia with organisations from Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. All these processes have been accompanied by intensive organisational development and a strengthening of the network's capacity.

### **The five pillars of Clubture**

Since Clubture was conceived as a programme network, the bases of its existence are its projects and programmes. Throughout its five-year existence, the network has developed five main programmes, some of which have changed, some are in their final phases, while others are a fundamental part of the further strategic development of the organisation:

1. CLUBTURE HR – PROGRAMME EXCHANGE
2. CLUBTURE'S REGIONAL INITIATIVE
3. MEDIA PROGRAMME
  - a) Kulturpunkt.hr
  - b) o4 megazine
4. KULTURA AKTIVA
5. EDUCATION FOR STRATEGIC CULTURAL MANAGEMENT

#### **1. CLUBTURE HR – PROGRAMME EXCHANGE**

Programme exchange is a key activity of the Clubture network and one of the main reasons for its existence. It is based on the direct collaboration between individual members (non-governmental organisations, informal initiatives and artistic organisations), which share cultural content and/or mutually create projects and programmes. The key to the five-year success of this programme is that it ensures genuine collaboration between a large number of participants and a greater diversity of material. The model defines collaboration according to two criteria: time frequency and one of two possible forms of collaboration – geographical dispersion or co-production of content. In order to meet these criteria four categories can be inferred through specific activities: Programme exchange, Project cooperation, Exchange of parts of festivals, Exchange of parts of projects. It is important to emphasise that the fundamental criteria remain unaltered, while their application in possible categories alters, changes, widens or narrows depending on needs and possibilities. Thus, the stability and efficiency of this programme, as well as of the whole network, are based on two seemingly contrasting traits: firm criteria and fundamental values on one hand and dynamism and flexibility on the other.

Apart from the above mentioned, these are, in genre terms, unconditionally created programmes that enable and stimulate a combination of

diverse types of activity. Thus, individual programmes may be presented in diverse forms (new media and multimedia programmes, exhibitions, film programmes, music performances, workshops, dance and theatre plays, lectures, etc.). Similarly, they can cover diverse fields of activities (performing arts, new media and technologies, visual culture, music, contemporary arts, theory, comics, urban culture, youth culture). It goes without saying that, long-term planning and joint applications to existing funds as well as the model of mutual decision-making remain extremely important.

Significant results that are easily measured and visible, even on a quantitative level, have been achieved. Thus, in the first five years of activity, more than 80 organisations and initiatives from all around Croatia have become involved. It is important to note that almost half these organisations and initiatives have been active as leaders of the programme, while others have taken part as host partners. The result of the cooperation between these organisations is more than 100 programmes, including around 1200 diverse public events that have taken place in more than 50 cities. It is important to notice that all cities participate on an equal footing, regardless of size. In spite of a general tendency for most cultural events to take place in the capital, through this programme the network has managed to achieve its aim of decentralization, which has resulted in more than 80% of the events taking place outside of Zagreb.

In addition to the direct application of basic policy principles, such network programming enables not only more frequent programmes, but also a high level of financial efficiency: relatively small financial assets can yield a quality and quantity of cultural product distributed in several places on a continuous basis.

## **2. CLUBTURE'S REGIONAL INITIATIVE**

The Clubture network has taken the lead in the process of creating a shared regional programme and a network for project collaboration in several ex-Yugoslav countries. The basic idea of the programme is to establish a regional collaborative platform within which independent cultural organisations can collaborate on joint programmes. Although the Clubture network initiated this programme, a wide circle of organisations and potential partners, from Croatia as well as other countries, have been involved in defining its basic aims and goals. At the same time, there has been no intention of simply applying a collaborative model that functions in Croatia throughout the region – the model was created on the basis of a concrete partnership project implemented during the programme's pilot phase. This cooperation was not founded on already obsolete and inefficient representative models of bilateral cooperation, but has introduced a new, more dynamic, more cost-effective and more efficient model of programme-based networking. It reflects the programme collaboration and decision-making participation principles that were built into the Clubture HR model.

The pilot phase, together with the programme activities, started in March 2006. There were eight different collaboration projects that have been implemented as partnership programmes between organisations from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia and Macedonia, leading to events that have taken place in all these countries.

If we consider the fact that in this area there are no other forms of organised long-term cultural cooperation, then we can see that the independent cultural scene now has the opportunity to assume a pioneering role in establishing a solid and sustainable model of cultural exchange in the region. Thus the final goal of this programme will be the setting up of a network for independent, polycentric, regional programme cooperation.

### 3. MEDIA PROGRAMMES

The Clulture network plays an important role in raising public awareness of the specific qualities of the independent cultural scene and its greater presence in the public arena. In the first development phase, the events organised for a wider audience presented programmes and contributions by the network as well as by the entire cultural scene. The most noteworthy event to mark the beginning of the second development phase, was the exhibition *Clulture:Data* (produced in partnership with What, How and for Whom – WHW, Platform 9.81 and the Multimedia Institute as a part of the Zagreb – Culture Kapital of Europe 3000 project), when the results of two years of networking activities were presented. The exhibition drew public attention to the discussion of the marginalization of the independent cultural scene and the promotion of its successes.

As a reaction to adverse media coverage in Croatia, Clulture then started several media programmes in order to improve the information dissemination process and the visibility of the whole sector not only at public level but also within the sector itself (developing the website, web portal, printed magazine, mailing lists, communication and PR activities).

#### a. Kulturpunkt.hr

In 2005 the portal Kulturpunkt.hr was started with the aim of promoting and presenting firstly, the cultural production of independent scene, and secondly, the civic initiatives connected to it that are running the process of public advocacy focused on wider social issues. Apart from these aims, Kulturpunkt.hr encourages an analytical and critical approach towards cultural themes in general, taking care to avoid the tendency toward a culture of sensationalism.

Apart from being an information service, the portal Kulturpunkt.hr displays articles and interviews from a widely defined area of culture, including popular culture, follows the Croatian daily newspapers' cultural sections, and shows theoretical texts on cultural policies in South East Europe. Apart from this, the portal systematically publishes information on various project calls and opportunities thus becoming a useful point of in-

formation for students and professionals in the field of culture and arts. The content structure of Kulturpunkt.hr, set up in this manner, creates media space that supports communication and the freedom of expression. At a time when space given to cultural topics is diminishing or completely disappearing from other media, Kulturpunkt.hr is becoming an important site for obtaining comprehensive information on culture in Croatia.

In spite of the wide spectrum of themes which the portal Kulturpunkt.hr offers its audience, it is recognized as a place that particularly promotes and supports youth culture, urban and club culture, contemporary arts and culture, social activism, new technologies, alternative economies, free software and so on. In this way, the portal has become an important window for this scene. Furthermore, by interpreting the scene's context and manner of activities it draws in a wider audience, at the same time engaging the interest of other media. Simultaneously, the portal brings contemporary themes, which it analytically develops and explains, to the attention of a wider audience.

#### b. 04 magazine

"04, magazine for reality hacking", was a magazine, founded in 2004, surveying independent cultural production in Croatia (primarily directed towards a wider social engagement), and setting it in the context of similar international trends, especially in the immediate region. At the same time "04" has pursued broader social issues by encouraging cultural diversity and pluralism and by following themes related to the theoretical and social reception of contemporary domestic and foreign culture, civil initiatives, etc. Primarily addressing a younger audience, "04" has created a space for intensive communication between the producers and consumers of cultural programmes, as well as a balance for the commercial youth magazines. By creatively connecting and critically discussing contemporary youth, popular and urban culture, and by placing it in the context of broader social tendencies, "04" has brought a freshness and novelty to the existing independent media scene. With its content and design "04" has filled a void in the Croatian media as the only independent critical magazine for youth to inform, educate and encourage young people to actively participate in and create their own culture.

At the beginning of 2006, the magazine entered a new development phase, and it was published regularly on a monthly basis until the middle of that year. However, it has become evident that in the current environment there is little to ensure the support for this type of development (insignificant public resources for funding, non-availability of dedicated international funds, lack of space for bigger commercial sponsorships or sales of adverts due to the critical content and activist orientation of the magazine, non-profitability and so on). In the last few years the media and publishing fields have become increasingly dominated by the commercial market and activist-orientated, socially and economically critical maga-

zines cannot survive in such conditions. This is further borne out by the general situation in the entire public arena, where non-profit media publishing mostly manages to survive only on the internet. The production of print media which is not solely commercial and profit-oriented has become almost impossible.

#### **4. KULTURA AKTIVA**

The programme consisted of various advocacy and monitoring activities, aimed at improving the institutional framework relevant for to the cultural sector. Most of the activities are aimed at developing transparent cultural policy models in local (regional and city) administration. In 9 cities and 4 counties, local organisation coalitions have continued to implement diverse advocacy activities. The issues of public policy that have been addressed can be divided into two specific fields. Firstly, those that relate to local cultural policies, more specifically to those that directly involve the needs of the independent cultural scene, such as working space, or the method and durability of funding programmes, and questions of evaluation and visibility of the achievements of this sector in the local environment etc. Secondly, those that relate to the functioning of local culture and the public sector as a whole (implementation and/or application of procedures, transparency and participation in decision-making processes, more transparent and more effective decision implementation, cooperation between public institutions and the non-governmental sector, etc.). On the other hand, a field that can be regarded as complementary to the one already mentioned, is that of the public policy for youth, especially in regard to problems of leisure and youth culture, informing and participating in the decision-making process, etc. The programme also had an educational section, where, through workshops and training as well as the exchange of experience, the organisations have acquired relevant knowledge and skills in the field of policy processes, most notably in the field of advocacy.

#### **5. EDUCATION FOR STRATEGIC CULTURAL MANAGEMENT**

Clubture develops and implements educational programmes whose aim is strengthening the capacity of non-profit, independent organisations in the cultural field, and which can be applied not only at national but also at international and regional levels. In 2005 the programme Education for strategic cultural management was initiated. This programme directly responds to the needs of the whole non-profit cultural sector, where the primary need is to acquire knowledge and to apply this in the fields of organisational development, strategic planning, cultural management and cultural policies. These programmes are implemented with the aim of improving capacity in terms of human resources, finances, space and technical resources, the stabilization of activities and the realization of more favourable influence in the public and cultural sectors at local, national, regional and international, particularly European, levels.

## 2.3. POLICY\_FORUM<sup>06</sup>

The POLICY\_FORUM is a platform which brings together distinguished organisations and individuals who operate in the area of the independent cultural scene and/or are interested in creating new development models of cultural policies. POLICY\_FORUM is an informal, dynamic, “floating” platform. It works as a group which occasionally meets in order to monitor those public policies that influence the development of independent culture both at national and local level, and which advocates changes to a relevant institutional framework, both in practice and in legislation. The group gathered around the POLICY\_FORUM has an undetermined number and structure, which changes or “floats” in relation to the issues it deals with when addressing diverse subjects (the Clubture network, the collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, the initiative Right to the City, individual organisations and so on).

The POLICY\_FORUM was initiated by the Multimedia Institute [mi2] (Zagreb), which gathered together several non-governmental cultural organisations, in order to include both those affected by the implementation of cultural policies (diverse cultural players) as well as a wider community of experts in the process of decision-making. Equally, POLICY\_FORUM resulted from the need to publicly articulate proposals for institutional changes, to initiate these and to further monitor the development of the independent cultural sector.

Following its initial phase, POLICY\_FORUM was project-structured. It was proposed and implemented by the Multimedia Institute on behalf of Clubture and as a part of the *Policies for Culture* programme of the European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam) and of the ECUMEST Association (Bucharest). It is important to emphasise how POLICY\_FORUM was formed, but also that it has continued to work independently of the initial

project.

The POLICY\_FORUM as a project consists of several different activities that deal with specific issues of cultural policy and strategy in the non-governmental cultural sector and the activist scene. Namely, this means various events and actions, e.g. lectures, round tables and public debates, etc. that deal with specific policy topics.

The project was launched early in 2003, when the first meetings were organised. During those meetings the fields of action were defined, several other organisations and individuals were invited (at one point there were more than 25 people present) and three teams (one for each respective field of action) were set up: an advocacy and lobbying team, an events-organising team and a document-writing team.

The POLICY\_FORUM meetings are semi-private forums where different cultural policy issues and problems relating to the civil sector in culture can be thoroughly discussed: issues such as marginalization of the independent cultural scene by the policy and decision-making institutions at national and local levels; under-capacity of organisations with regard to staff and managerial skills (in terms of number and training) and to venues for public programmes; lack of financial resources especially at the time of the "second transition" when the Open Society Institute (the main non-governmental organisations' donor in Croatia in the 1990s) cut down and eventually terminated its funding, etc.

A basic, small-scale survey examining the independent scene was carried out: more than 20 organisations were surveyed and their activities, plans, structures and capacities were presented. Along with that information, a first text aimed at defining this cultural field was published in the supplement of a culture magazine *Zarez*. This supplement was distributed to independent organisations, individual experts and relevant governmental and local institutions. Afterwards, it was used in other actions and advocacy processes. Moreover, the Office for Culture of the City of Zagreb used the proposed definitions in their attempts to define the domain of independent culture in their cultural policy.

The POLICY\_FORUM still functions as an independent, informal body that gathers different organisations' representatives and individuals. More importantly, it takes a proactive role in influencing public policies, namely those in the fields of culture and youth. The public events that have been organised have gathered together a wider pool of experts, cultural operators and other interested parties and have brought some underlying problems into the public eye.

In March 2004 it acted very effectively, shortly after the Ministry of Culture started the process of changing the Cultural Councils Act in an inappropriate and non-transparent way with the intention of shutting down some of the existing councils and reducing their decision-making role in the matter of public cultural funding. The aim was to enact a law without

any public debate and following an urgent procedure in Parliament. The Clubture network reacted very rapidly (within 24 hours) and a civil initiative was set up under the auspices of the POLICY\_FORUM. More than 50 representatives of non-profit organisations from throughout Croatia gathered in Zagreb. The initiative sparked off public discussion on the planned changes. Finally, it succeeded in preventing the abolition of the council that was responsible for the new forms of cultural production. The independent cultural scene in Croatia showed, for the first time, that it is sufficiently strong and closely connected to impact on the relevant institutional framework not only within its own field of activity, but also on the institutional framework of cultural production in general.

One of the most important long-term effects of this action is the document proposed by the POLICY\_FORUM to the Ministry of Culture. This document defines the field of activity and the main evaluation criteria for a New Media Culture Council, the council responsible for new cultural forms. The document was first considered by the Council, which accepted the suggestions and sent it forward to the National Cultural Council, which also agreed on it. The repercussions were immediately visible. Namely, the following call for proposals for public funding for culture, and all subsequent ones, have, since then, been using new application forms. The form for the projects submitted to the New Media Culture Council is designed according to the criteria presented in the document.

In spite of overambitious aims set out at the beginning regarding the wider changes of cultural policies, which were not fully realized in the initial planned schedule, the POLICY\_FORUM, through its activities, has made at least one other further significant step forward. It has introduced and maintained the practice of all questions relating to policies affecting cultural development – cultural policies as well as other public policies (for example urban policies) – being discussed in public. Thus, for example, the public debates that started in 2005, accompanied by a series of actions dealing with the status and development of the independent cultural and youth sectors in the city of Zagreb, which have been ongoing ever since, were initiated through the POLICY\_FORUM.



## 2.4. Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000<sup>07</sup>

Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 is a collaboration platform created as a joint project of the Centre for Drama Art – CDU, Multimedia Institute – mi2, Platform 9.81 and What, How and for Whom – WHW. BLOK, Kontejner, Shadow Casters and Community Art joined the platform later on. The project was developed together with the German partner project 'relations', and with the financial support of the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (German Federal Cultural Foundation) and "Kontakt" – Arts and Civil Society Programme of Erste Bank Group in Central Europe. The Cultural Kapital fosters the collaborations – both between the project initiators and local and international initiatives – that address changes in social conditions for cultural production, develop the structural position of the independent cultural scene and question the dominant regimes of cultural representation. The Cultural Kapital programme activities have included conferences, art festivals, exhibitions, workshops, lectures, presentations, publications, media productions, etc. An important part of the project has been represented by cultural policy activities aimed at reforming the institutional setting for independent culture – increasing its influence and strengthening its resources.

The project aims at repositioning cultural production on a social capital, and less towards representative culture and a culture of identities. By redefining the representative model as the "cultural capital", the project questions the concept of a city in terms of the dynamics of interrelationship between "cultural capital" and "social and economic capital", thus offering an alternative model of reflection on cultural policies and strategies.

### **The Concept**

The basic conceptual premises of this collaborative network are implicit in the name it carries – an ironic wordplay on the European Capital of Culture. It simply states that "The concept of cultural capital is out of joint.

<sup>07</sup> [www.culturalkapital.org](http://www.culturalkapital.org)

A twofold ambivalence traverses the constitution of the project of cultural capitals – it is torn between the centrality of capitals and the transversality of Capital, and this is, in turn, reflected in an increased hybridity of cultural production pitted against the positions of national-cultural identities. The political economy of cultural representation has been transformed – immersed in globalized communicational exchanges, representation is no longer a matter of presenting a representative, dominant and (re)produced culture within the confines of a nation state to an abstract cultural consumer. It rather connects concrete subjects in specialized fields of practice and knowledge which act within a mutual context of global economic production – a production helped by the very means of sociality: communicational exchanges. And just as the domain of capital becomes social, so does social become the domain of culture”.<sup>08</sup>

This global trend manifests itself in a particular way especially in transitional societies: “In our transitional context, cultural capital reengages the question of social agency. If the process of transition has come to denote two things – surrendering to the pull of market forces and relinquishing social projects (or rather, the social as a project) – its foremost effect has become the uncontrollable and non-transparent assertion of private interest in the management of the public domain. The tangible absence of social legitimacy is mirrored in the depletion of public resources. And sometimes, as is best exemplified by our ossified institutional culture and its tributary system of public funding, maintaining the status quo means being at the forefront of this process. And while the only dynamics of change in the relation between the state and the institutions it supports which, despite different readings into the strategies of cultural development, remains the dynamics of particularized interests, special social and developmental relevance is acquired by those independent players who are able to rearticulate cultural agency in terms of social action, and social agency in terms of critical culture.”

The answer offered to the situation described above is “collaboration – a counter-proposition for cultural capital. The platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 has as a goal to reinforce the incipient collaboration between the independent cultural scene initiatives that investigate, each in its own and very different field of expertise, the changing conditions for cultural and social action, that have come about as a consequence of the growing local importance of regional economic and communicative exchanges, and that work on reforming the institutional framework to increase the presence and participation of the independent culture. (...) because cultural capital no longer means infrastructures, but rather collaborations, for collaboration is its infrastructure”.

<sup>08</sup> Quotations taken from the library texts, web-site and other documents of the platform *Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000*

### **Collaborative experience**

Cultural Kapital, as a project, started in 2003, and since then has effected a number of interdisciplinary collaborations on projects by: presenting and engaging in new group dynamics, new collective strategies and new working formats in cultural production; counteracting and hybridizing the control of productivity through intellectual property; advocating the protection of the public domain with regard to privatization, etc. The organisations which form the platform have realized together a number of cultural events in various forms. More information on these programmes as well as the organisations is available at the following web page [www.culturalkapital.org](http://www.culturalkapital.org).

Zagreb – Cultural Kapital 3000 holds a key place in initiating and implementing various activities which advocate participatory cultural policies, aimed at developing and strengthening the independent cultural sector, as well as those which are related to policies of urban development.<sup>09</sup> In spite of its commitment to local activities, this platform has tried to expand its influence over the borders of its own transitional context. Apart from taking part in a collaborative project “Peripherie 3000, Strategic Platform for Networked Centres” (Dortmund, 2006, [www.peripherie3000.de](http://www.peripherie3000.de)), Zagreb – Cultural Kapital actively joined in the discussion on European cultural policies. Thus, in October 2004 it organised a pre-conference for the Berlin Conference for European Cultural Policy under the title “Emerging collaborative practices – shaping European cultural framework” in cooperation with the Clubture Network (Zagreb), the Felix Meritis Foundation (Amsterdam) and the Art for Social Change platform initiated by the European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam). The presentations, meetings and discussions provided an opportunity to reflect on how innovative practices and platforms of socio-cultural collaboration and tactical networking in eastern Europe can be brought to bear on the agenda of European cultural policy and European political culture.

<sup>09</sup> Activities mentioned here will be presented later on.

## 2.5. On networks, platforms and participatory cultural policies

### New forms of cultural cooperation in the non-profit sector in Croatia

by Sanjin Dragojević

#### Description of European cultural tendencies from the 1970s onwards

The second half of the 1970s, and of the 1980s in general, was a period overlooked but nevertheless crucial to the deep inner structural crisis affecting national cultural policies in Europe. The crisis arose from the need to redefine, first and foremost, the role of public and institutional culture; at the same time there were demands for strengthening local regional development. A ready solution to counter the crippling blows threatening the established forms of cultural organisations and of the entire cultural system was to import Anglo-Saxon knowledge and skills, which since then have been codified under the terms of cultural management. The challenge was possibly too great, but it also implied necessary measures for the overall cultural dynamics both of individual states and of international cultural cooperation within Europe. A general answer at European level to this challenge was found in a network form of communication. Consequently, today we have more than 400 networks in the field of culture,<sup>10</sup> and this form of communication, networking, is considered today to be a vital global phenomenon.<sup>11</sup>

10 This number can vary depending on the source, since the term 'network' was then defined as the most diverse form of collaboration, including for example guide associations, national assemblies of institutions and so on. The provisions of the term are unclear and cannot be easily demarcated, especially if we consider the international level. For this reason a network is often negatively defined, i.e. "a network is not..." (Dragičević-Šešić, Milena; Dragojević, Sanjin. *Intercultural mediation on the Balkans*, Sarajevo: Biblioteka Univerzitetska knjiga / The Eye, 2004; Graovac, Ksenija. *European Cultural Networks*, Beograd, Balkankult, 2005; Jelinčić, Daniela Angelina. *Guide to the Culturelink Network*, Culturelink Publications, 3, Zagreb: Institute for International Relations, 2002)

11 Castells, Manuel. *Information Age I, The rise of network society*, Zagreb: Goldenmarketing – Tehnička knjiga d.d., 2000.

More than two decades of European networking, overnetworking and networking-out have resulted in a kind of fatigue and a caving-in. It seems to be generally agreed that networks can cater perfectly for the needs of introduction, the exchange of experience, and an overview of European cultural activities, but that they do not in themselves have sufficient capacity for the establishment and implementation of projects. Hence, the emphasis today is on project-oriented and operational networks rather than purely communicative networks.<sup>12</sup>

Concurrent with regional development there has been a strong intensification of city development. Cities consciously share the best European practices. Thus it is no accident that the greatest competitiveness among them becomes evident in the run-up for nominations for the status of European cultural capital.<sup>13</sup> Hence today supreme cultural prestige is not only reserved for the big European metropolis. Now middle sized and small cities express their own cultural potential and innovativeness and, in doing so, have also become centres in which true European collaborative projects are undertaken. Without any doubt, they are becoming the central generators of overall European cultural dynamics. Individual post-transition countries, primarily Poland and then the Czech and Slovak Republics, have joined this urban phenomenon.

### **A non-profit cultural sector in South East Europe and Croatia**

One cannot affirm that these practices are shared by all the cities and countries throughout South East Europe.<sup>14</sup> Quite apart from objective reasons such as the disappearance of former frequent steady contacts, the necessity for visas, continuous economic crises or an insufficiently dynamic development, mostly it is the lack of trust, longstanding disagreement and dwindling interest that affects them. If we add to these factors the withdrawal of the international organisations, the foundations and the project schemes from 2000 onwards, we can see that regional cultural dynamics

- 12 This is particularly evident in the current crisis of the Circle network, which has split in two directions: those who believe that the network serves no purpose and therefore should be abolished, and those who see its purpose as gathering together a pool of researchers in the production of knowledge.
- 13 Ever since the Greek minister of culture at the time – Mellina Mercouri – in 1985 established the scheme of the European cultural capital, the tendency to highlight the cultural development of some smaller and larger cities is becoming more and more powerful. Ever since Athens (1985), which was the first European cultural capital and particularly after the successful example of Lille (2004), this award has carried a significant prestige. Additionally, the cities which successfully implemented the projects in this framework have become centres of knowledge and gatherings.
- 14 It is very difficult to discuss sub-national regions in South East Europe because they are defined neither territorially nor administratively, economically or culturally. It is possible that some of the countries have strong traditional regional identities and try, primarily in Croatia and Istria, to operate within them.

and exchange has become weakened to the point of stagnation. One of the most important results of the cultural efforts and investments of the 1990s was the emphasis on the importance of the non-profit sector in all the countries of the region. Regardless of this clearly defined priority, first set out by the international organisations<sup>15</sup> and later in the national cultural policies, the dynamics of development, when compared throughout the region, has not been nor is it equal. In spite of the hope, that the potential equal development of the non-profit sector, both at regional and national level, would consequently lead to a general democratization not only of these societies but also of the inner stabilization of their cultural systems, the dynamics have only been sustained and developed mostly within the larger cities, or in the capitals.<sup>16</sup> Due to a relatively favourable situation, the example of Zagreb stands out in the region. Not only did Croatian national cultural policy become sustainable in 1997,<sup>17</sup> but from 2000 onwards, collaboration was developed at project level with a number of initiatives from the non-profit sector. Furthermore, the city authorities dealing with culture at that time understood the current and potential importance of the most diverse non-institutional initiatives. New schemes of co-financing were introduced in order to revive urban culture, which had a favourable overall effect on the development of the non-profit sector.

Due to an ongoing involvement in international cultural cooperative projects and an awareness of not only the trends of European cultural development but also of the crisis mentioned above, the members of Zagreb's non-profit cultural scene placed a particular emphasis on defining participatory cultural policies, primarily at national and city level.<sup>18</sup> Since the organisations from the independent sector clearly understand that this re-

- 15 A particularly good example is the Open Society Institute, i.e. the Soros Foundation, which was extremely active in the region during the 1990s, being almost the only donor that supported and considerably contributed to the establishment and further development of the independent cultural organisations throughout eastern Europe.
- 16 Probably the most important exception in this regard is Bulgaria, i.e. Sofia, whose cultural development has paralleled that of cities like Plovdiv, Varna and Burgas.
- 17 Since then, the public state resources for culture have been increasing; an analysis of culture at national level was undertaken thanks to the study "Cultural policy of the Republic of Croatia – National Report", prepared for the Council of Europe (1998); a partial legal decentralization of cultural policy has become reality and there is more direct international cooperation.
- 18 The emphasis on these two levels of activities is not a coincidence. The capacity to define and implement goals, instruments and measures of the general cultural policy of Croatia exists only at state and major city level. The so-called middle level of activities of the cultural policy in Croatia refers to counties which are too small and with inadequate resources particularly in terms of experts for defining and implementing independent cultural policy. The level of municipalities is the most problematic in this sense because almost 30% of them do not have a minimal fiscal capacity. Hence, not only are they not capable of having a programme of cultural development but also they cannot cover basic expenses related to the regular functioning of the public administration.

lates to the general framework of their activities, they firstly focus on a clear definition of the goals and priorities of cultural policies, while also advocating the need for procedural transparency. By becoming visible public players in this field, they have become aware of their own communicational and organisational weaknesses and inadequacies. For this reason, from 2001 onwards, firstly in phases and then systematically, they have continually worked on the organisational building and stabilization of the non-profit sector in Croatia. On one hand they label media activity and the enlargement of the public domain of decision-making as extremely important tools, on the other, the methods of strategic planning and organisational development. As a result, by taking into consideration the general dynamics of the process they have created new collaborative relationships and formats. In order to establish new contacts in the processes of decision-making in the cultural field, the independent cultural scene has set up a new form of network organisation known as an operational network. Initially the activities of these operational networks based themselves on the format of intensive collaborative platforms. The form of the platform is not determined in advance, but it mainly depends on (1) the expertise related to a specialized field of activities (e.g. implementing a specific action of lobbying and advocacy in order to find solutions for the infrastructural issues of the sector), (2) the clearly stated interest of the players involved and (3) coordinated methods and activities (public and media campaign, artistic and activist projects, involvement of wider public, defining of further operational activities). This combination of forms and methods of activity substantially enhances the process of defining and systematizing key knowledge and know-how. The process also brings with it a permanent and deep trust between the members of the operational network as well as a readiness to continue working productively together. This experience, publicly recognized and confirmed, at the same time supports the sustainability and development of the entire non-profit sector.

The relevance and significance of this process is recognized more in the wider European context than in the regional one. This is a relevant European cultural practice<sup>19</sup> – which is transferable.

19 The relevant European cultural practice consists of:

1. clearly defining a basic concept and then implementing methods related to it;
2. the capacity to transfer this codified knowledge not only to a narrow expert audience, but to a wider, possibly general audience;
3. the capacity to engage in a process and long-term activities;
4. the capacity and the openness to redefine all basic premises and methods of activities.

**Which way ahead?**

In the light of previous experience, the interest shown as well as the cultural resource base, the following priority activities can be defined:

1. The setting up of intensive collaborative platforms in fields where common interest and cultural development potentials have been defined, especially when defining the artistic and activist projects, capacity building, education of cultural professionals and activities addressing local cultural policies in the region;
2. The setting up of an adequate and well-equipped cultural infrastructure, particularly in Zagreb but also in other cities in Croatia, in order to enable the continuous and dynamic development of the non-profit cultural sector;
3. The establishment of new forms of organised activities in the field of culture, particularly in terms of vertical inter-sectoral development, i.e. cooperation between the public and non-profit sector;
4. On the basis of expert insight and interest shown, the establishment of horizontal inter-sectoral connections and cooperation projects particularly between the fields of culture, tourism, health, science, youth policies and development policies in the urban context;
5. To ensure the transfer of knowledge and relevant European practices both in Croatia and in the wider European context;
6. To impact on formal, academically recognized and informal programmes and forms of education in culture with a particular emphasis on the knowledge related to the development of participatory cultural policies.





# 3

Advocating change: the  
collected experience of  
the Zagreb initiative

## 3.1. A critique of the system and a request for change

### **Cultural and other public policies**

The actions of organisations within the independent cultural scene in Zagreb to address changes in the institutional framework affecting their work are an excellent example of clearly established, articulate, consistent and persistent public pressure in operation. Their starting point has been their plea for participation in the process of decision-making in terms of public policies relating to the sector. This persistence has mainly been directed toward cultural policies, but also to other public policies which more or less directly affect the stability, growth and development of the independent cultural scene. Among these it is necessary to draw attention to the urban, space management and youth policies.

It is obvious that **cultural policy** and its implementation directly affects the position and possibilities of programme and other development not only of individual organisations and other players (informal groups and individuals) but of the cultural scene as a whole, both at national and local level. Cultural policy in Croatia, at least in the area covering independent culture, is mostly dependent on a single instrument: state funding secured from central or local budgets. The use of this instrument became available for independent cultural production in Croatia as well as in Zagreb only a few years ago, and to a great extent it still does not function in a satisfactory way. In addition to several other critiques, key objections include: availability of only programme funding, lack of grants for multi-annual projects, and a lack of clear criteria and parameters in the evaluation process and awarding of grants. All these factors, together with the weak or non-existent use of other decision-making tools, still place independent cultural production in Croatia in a significantly less favourable position than the public cultural sector, represented by a group of institutions funded by local, regional or national state administration.

**Urban policy** is still only indirectly connected to the policies of cultural development. Only lately has it gained a more important place in the public domain. However, a comprehensive strategy especially designed to deter-

mine the long-term vision and direction of the city's development still does not exist. Hence, decisions on the development of Zagreb are often taken in a haphazard way, while the idea of maintaining the existing public spaces and creating new genuine ones very often remains a marginal issue. Consequently, for instance, commercial venues such as shops, bars and restaurants, are often presented as bearers of public functions while at the same time venues which should fulfil cultural and other social functions are disregarded. The issue of a systematic cultural development and particularly the development of independent culture and its subsequent role in the development of the city remains marginal.

All the cities of Croatia and particularly the City of Zagreb have at their own disposal valuable immovable assets, while, at the same time, they do not have clearly defined and transparent **policies of space management**. These assets are very diverse – ranging from massive buildings whose public functions are mostly not an issue (administrative buildings, cultural and sport venues, etc.), through smaller business or residential buildings, to large abandoned industrial buildings. The best indicator of how such assets are managed is the fact that there is no official public listing of what is owned by the Zagreb municipality, and therefore no transparency as to who, in which way and under what conditions uses a particular venue in the City's ownership. Consequently, there are no clear procedures for allocating particular premises, either for commercial or non-profit purposes. Precisely for that reason, the “cultural map” of Zagreb, in common with other cities, suffers from a shortage of public space open and available to cultural and social initiatives. There are no new official spaces for independent culture, while the existing ones (e.g. club Močvara – Swamp) represent the outcome of a favourable political moment or the expression of “good will” by individuals who at a particular time held a public position in the local (city) government. They are definitely not the outcome of defined and transparent planning.

The **youth policies**, defined within the national and city strategic action plan as inter-sectoral policies, partially refer to that segment of activity in the independent culture which is most commonly known as youth culture. These (on paper at least) support youth self-organisation, their creativity and their participation in cultural life, thus giving essential support to the advocacy activities of the independent cultural scene. This is particularly evident in the Zagreb initiative with the emergence of its tactical partnership with the youth sector. Even though a connection with youth culture has many advantages, there is still a danger which needs to be dealt with. More precisely the local authorities, with a tendency to oversimplify and understand issues in limited terms, tend to view independent culture as a whole as “youth culture”, thus dealing with this sector not through the more specific institutions and instruments of cultural policy but through a more general youth policy. This approach can lead to the complete exclusion of a most significant section of the independent cultural scene which

has nothing to do with the youth sector – nor does it represent cultural production meant only for young people or solely produced by them.

### **Through national to local activities**

In terms of the number of organisations and their capacity development as well as of dynamics and quality of programming, Zagreb's independent scene is the most developed one in Croatia. This is not surprising, particularly if one takes into consideration the socio-economic advantages which arise from its role as a capital city in a highly centralized system. After an initial phase of development of the independent cultural scene, funding mechanisms became available both at national level (Ministry of Culture) and at local level (City Office for Culture). The existence of such mechanisms showed that the independent scene had become recognized as a player in the cultural field, even though (then and still today) only a marginal one. At the same time (the beginning of the new century) the key international donor, who during 1990s had supported the establishment of this scene, started the process of withdrawal of its support. This relatively positive situation was used by Zagreb's organisations, taking the lead with others such as the Multimedia Institute, not only to strengthen themselves, but to also connect with other players firstly at national level (the Clubture network), and later at local level (the collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000). Thus a fundamental strategic decision was the result of the clear understanding that the success and further development of any individual organisation is necessarily related to the growth and development of the cultural scene as a whole. This could be done – and the initiators of new trends on the independent scene were fully aware of that – by introducing certain changes within the framework in which the scene operates, in this way generating new relevant public policies for independent culture. But in order to start these changes, it was necessary to take certain steps in order to strengthen the scene from within and to determine its role as a more or less significant player on the cultural as well as the whole social scene.

In this sense, as a first step, the Multimedia Institute in cooperation with other organisations from Zagreb initiated the national collaborative programme network **Clubture**. From its beginning (2001) until now, this network has been working on the strengthening of collaboration, on the dissemination of diverse programme content throughout Croatia, on the capacity building of organisations and, what is from this perspective a most important issue, on the strengthening of the visibility and recognition of this specific and new cultural scene by expert circles and larger audiences as well as by the donors. By creating new models of collaboration and networking, new cultural and social values have been formed and gradually transferred. In essence this builds the foundation for a new vantage point from which further requests for change can (or maybe must) be demanded.

As one of the first steps to actively engage in cultural policies, again at the initiative of Multimedia Institute, the **Policy Forum** was established as an informal group of individuals, experts and cultural operators, connected to the independent cultural scene. The Policy Forum is primarily related to the national network of organisations (Clubture) and at the beginning its activities were addressed at national level. Its key step forward and achievement was the action of saving the **Council for New Media Cultures**, an institution that functioned under the Ministry of Culture. This was followed by participation in the design of the Council's field of work as well as by the participation of individual players from the independent cultural scene in the work of the Council. Thus, a relatively stable support for independent programmes was ensured at national level, and an arena for activities at both levels (national and local) was opened. On one hand, there were "field preparations" for potential intervention in the system aiming at ensuring alternative mechanisms for the capacity strengthening of independent organisations. This resulted in the proposal to set up the Foundation for Independent Culture. On the other hand, the orientation towards local public policies was clear particularly in the capital. In addition to the primary need to make their activities more sustainable, Zagreb's organisations found other means of motivation as well. Being aware that through potentially successful implemented projects in Zagreb their experience could be transferred to less developed communities, these organisations worked in such a manner as to produce transferable models and structures, in order to share these with organisations from other cities through the Clubture network.<sup>20</sup> For this reason, organisations from other cities became associates and supporters of this initiative. Consequently, two national networks, Clubture and Croatian Youth Network, are very much in evidence in all Zagreb's activities.

### **Recognizing the social environment and its momentum**

We would like to point out that the timing and approach to the field of advocacy and assessment for certain policies has been neither arbitrary nor accidental. More specifically, the initiators of these actions have been very much aware of the context in which they are operating. On one hand, they understand very well the functioning of **their own sector**, as well as the work practices of not only their own but of other organisations as well. They have acquired this knowledge directly through collaborative practice, and they are perfectly aware of their own strengths and weaknesses as well as of the overall programmes of the scene. Moreover, these initiators are well aware that, although the independent cultural scene has gained legitimacy through its programmes and various actions, at the same time it is still treated as marginal. On the other hand, independent operators regu-

20 See the *Kultura Aktiva* programme in the chapter *The Clubture Network*.

larly and proactively monitor every change, even the smallest one, registered within the **cultural system**. They are very much aware that even the system (by using the dedicated funding mechanisms) has recognized their existence. However, they also clearly understand that, from the viewpoint of the same system which, for the foreseeable future, is unlikely to switch its focus from public cultural institutions, the desire of the independent scene to change its status from being “alternative” and to move away from the marginal position allocated to it, will not be so easily realized. Simultaneously, independent operators are aware that international funders are withdrawing their grants and also that foreign funds are becoming less and less accessible. They clearly understand the slow reaction and the low efficiency of most of the public institutions as well as the general inertia and lack of openness within the entire cultural sector, which apparently is still not ready for significant change. In this situation, slowing the development process becomes a real danger with the possibility of regression, if not of the complete destruction of a part or of the whole scene. On one hand, these circumstances represent a real obstacle for the development of the independent scene, on the other the resources for further development brought about by the new forms of cultural production still remain open.

Furthermore, independent cultural operators are undoubtedly aware of the other system to which they also belong, and, as civil society or non-governmental organisations, they take a proactive interest in the creation and implementation of **civil society** development policies. Hence, their own position is not based only on the specificity of their field of action – that of culture -, but they can enforce it since they are also part of a broader scene. This is one of the reasons why they are interested in developing co-operation projects with organisations from other sectors. In this way the credibility of the scene/organisations/individuals as players in the wider social field is also built up.

Moreover, these operators keep themselves well informed of new trends within the general **socio-economic environment**, and they identify the relatively fast development of the capital city not only as an important achievement but also as a potential danger. For this reason, they have expanded their field of activity so that they have become widely known players in the advocacy process for the preservation of existing and the creation of new public spaces and for the participation of citizens in the decision-making processes concerning these issues.

Even though they mainly operate at a local level, they are aware of their position in the **international context** and they work at strengthening their existing international connections while at the same time developing new ones. Thus, a key local project (the platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000) is defined as an international collaborative project. Additionally, the initiators of these advocacy processes are also engaged in larger advocacy activities, pleading for changes in European cultural policy by

participating in the “Berlin Conference for European Cultural Policy”. Thus, through international collaboration their own credibility at local level is also strengthened; they critically take part in international projects – they initiate the transfer of good European practices by adjusting them to their own environment but are also aware of their weak points which they openly criticise and try not to repeat.

The organised and well-synchronized Zagreb cultural scene both at national level (Clubture) and at local level (Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000), which enjoys well-established international relations, clearly and correctly recognizes the context within which it is active. With solid experience behind it, it is capable of recognizing and taking advantage of key political moments in which to call for action, in order to raise and keep vital issues concerning its own development (and survival) alive and in the public eye.

### **From a critique of the system to concrete solutions**

The Zagreb advocacy coalition has neither specifically addressed general issues relating to the cultural system, the decision-making process and its implementation in the general sphere of cultural policies nor limited its activities by attempting to satisfy the particular needs of individual organisations or groups. Moreover, even though the members of this coalition primarily address local issues, in their demands and arguments they tend to refer to the wider context of the whole system at national level. The issues they deal with are only at first sight on a local level. They are subsequently placed in a wider context and the demands and proposals of the independent scene nearly always provide long-term and structural solutions.

Following the setting up of a relatively stable framework for programme activities at national level through the Council for New Media Cultures, a more active engagement in local issues has been undertaken. At the same time, the network built up at national level (Clubture) has become functional and stable and its initiators have been able to set up **strong collaborative platforms at local level** by applying the same principle of tactical, operational and programme networking. The platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000 was created in this way and it has successfully functioned up to now. The Policy\_Forum is also related to it.

The existing “travelling”<sup>21</sup> policy platform is used as a name in itself or at least as a sort of label for an organised group of diverse independent players reflecting the cultural and wider social system in which they work – the producers of a new cultural and social capital, who articulate new concepts and values resulting from it. At the same time, the independent oper-

21 As listed in the text presenting this platform, the group around the Policy\_forum changes in terms of number and structure depending on the current focus and is thus connected with various projects (Clubture, the collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, the initiative Right to the City, individual organisations, etc).



ators involved in the platform actively criticise the system for not being capable of accepting new approaches to cultural production and social engagement, and thus not being able to apply new models with the aim of changing and reviving cultural production. They may decide to change tactics and orientation, whilst being aware of the shortcomings of their efforts because of a working environment which does not allow any interference with the existing system, and with the understanding that the needed change can only be achieved slowly (which inevitably means too long for the independent cultural scene) in order for crises and upheavals of the entire cultural field to be avoided. Starting from a critique of the system, they move on to **articulating concrete solutions** designed to ensure the survival and further development of the independent culture. These solutions are determined by three key aspects: (1) strengthening the capacity of the independent organisations by setting up additional funding mechanisms in order to cover needs that are not directly connected to the basic programme production (such as general infrastructural costs, financing of cooperation activities, education, etc.); (2) creating a framework for research and validation of the expertise gained by the independent cultural scene and a framework for the codification and transfer of knowledge; (3) ensuring adequate space resources. All include and emphasise collaboration as being essential – a cooperation not only between the organisations, but also between public and civil sectors at various levels: local, national, regional and international.

## **3.2. Strategies, tactics, methods, forms... - using the experience of the Zagreb initiative**

It is not our intention to create a manual with recommendations on how to successfully advocate for changes in cultural policy, but to explain the strategies, tactics, methods and forms which we believe to be the key assets of this initiative. In this respect we have selected the following ten key areas.

### **1. The setting up of a stable collectivity / Production of collectivity**

Drawing on experience gained so far, joint operations have become a key precondition for the success of all other methods, tactics, and strategies. The setting up, and maybe even more importantly, the preservation of sustainable collaborative platforms, which can work as advocacy coalitions and also bring in other organisations, has to be the basis for all future activity. The Zagreb local collaborative platform, as well as the national one, is based on the principle of permanent enlargement in concentric circles, while gathering together the shared interests of its members; in this kind of platform it is crucial not to neglect individual interests, but to correlate them and balance them with general ones. The frequent, open and critical communication between the platform members (through formal and informal meetings, personal talks, mailing lists, etc.) has created an atmosphere of mutual trust, which is the guarantee of the long-term preservation of collective groups. It is important to emphasise that the identity of the organisations and individuals should not be lost within the coalition since it also represents an important component of their activities. However, one should not forget that such collaborations cannot be arbitrarily established. The key component of sustainability is the gradual development of partnerships between different players who already share a system of values; their organisations are similarly structured, their activities and decision-making processes are similar and therefore they are compatible at programme level. It is no less relevant that they also share more or less similar positions in the system (which they are capable of understanding and articulating) and thus become even more closely connected through simi-

lar needs. Moreover it is important that the organisations involved in a collaborative platform have a permanent staff, i.e. they can count on individuals who are committed to the organisation and its programme on a long-term basis and who are also able and ready to react within a short space of time.

## **2. The visionary leader as part of the collective**

One cannot expect a group of people joined by common interests (which, we emphasise, include specific particular needs) to function on its own as it is naïve to expect that all the members of the group will all the time be equally committed and active. Always, and particularly in the case of advocacy groups, it is necessary to have someone (or perhaps a few people) able to articulate the vision which generates the group's actions, to identify and define the aims representing the majority of the group, and to motivate the members of the group to work together. In addition, it is important to have people who will want and be able to realize the group's ideas. In the case of Zagreb, this type of person will always exist, and it is not surprising that those who were the most fervent believers, who spread the word, who motivated others, who set up the aims and in the end implemented the actions, have all grown up in one organisation – the one which initiated most of these processes. At the same time, these people have not expressed the need to take all the credit nor to present the initiative as theirs. Precisely the opposite – at all levels, the emphasis has always been on collective action, leading to collective results, and on collaboration.

## **3. Tactical partnerships**

The Zagreb advocacy initiative is based not only on the connections among cultural organisations already described but also on the collaboration and work in common with yet another sector – the youth sector – set in place through a partnership with the Croatian Youth Network, the national youth umbrella organisation. The partnership between these two sectors was initiated in order to strengthen the position of both parties in accomplishing their mutual interests. Additionally, it was a natural consequence of the overlap in the area of activities, target groups and organisational practices, which have linked the independent cultural scene to the youth organisations and vice versa. It is important to emphasise that the relationship between the independent cultural organisations and youth organisations is characterized by an equality in partnership. Regardless of a possible imbalance in power arising from the number of people involved and the capacities of the organisations (the independent cultural scene prevails in these terms) and the role of process initiator (again the independent cultural scene), the Croatian Youth Network is included at all levels as an equal partner and not as just another organisation subsidiary to the existing initiative. In this way not only are the preconditions for long-term coop-

eration secured, but the position of the whole initiative is strengthened since the coalition can develop its arguments from two complementary perspectives.

#### **4. Public advocacy instead of undercover lobbying**

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. Such negotiations are not only unacceptable but also unlikely to be put into practice if we consider the content of the demands and their presentation. Problems should be addressed within the system as a whole which means that, based on a particular issue and need, a demand can then be fully articulated. This can be set out as in a long-term, structured solution which, once implemented, will have a positive impact not only on particular organisations gathered in the coalition but on the whole sector.<sup>22</sup> Thus, such a demand should be publicly articulated not only for the decision-makers (since we are referring to structural changes which cannot be solved by the simple intervention of one person regardless of their position of power), but also for the higher number of players who would be affected by the resolution of these demands, and thus win their more or less direct support.

#### **5. Media as the main ally**

Based on the above, it is clear that the media should be targeted as a principal ally. They are obviously the main connection with almost all the target groups. Not only do the media represent the most important means of communication with the wider audience, but through them key players in policy processes can establish themselves in opposition to those in power. In a context in which there is no clear institutional basis to allow the participation of citizens in decision-making processes, the media can represent the sole means of impacting on public policies even in the smallest way. Through many years of activities, a steady, ongoing communication, and upgrading of their skills in media communication, the Zagreb initiative and organisations involved in diverse advocacy activities have gained a legitimate position in the media and they continue to use them on a regular basis as a means of articulating their own needs and as an outlet for criticism.

<sup>22</sup> What precedes such articulation of demands is the process which takes place within a group, growing from individual voices to a chorus of agreement between the whole group so that eventually it can be seen and defined as reflecting the interests of the whole sector – on one hand the independent cultural scene and the youth sector on the other. However, the process does not finish here. It is necessary to see the wider social framework and to develop arguments which will attract the interest of the general public.

## **6. Diverse forms of activities - diverse target groups**

In advocating not only concrete solutions, but also the cultural and social values on which they are based, Zagreb organisations have used diverse tactics. In one of the most successful methods previously highlighted, actions developed in secret were then covered by intense media campaigns. In order to publicise messages resulting from these activities some elements of classic marketing, such as leaflets and posters, were used. However, communication through the media proved to be more effective through media conferences, announcements, statements and interviews, public debates, etc. Indeed, activities with high media coverage proved to be key not only in introducing certain topics to a wider audience but also in building up an effective opposition to the Zagreb authorities. However, it was also found to be important to organise a process of public debate and discussion within a narrower circle of targeted groups, apart from the wider circle of youth organisations and independent cultural organisations on one hand and representatives of the city administration on the other hand. An expert audience, other cultural workers and artists, politicians (in power and in opposition), members of associations from other sectors and media were also included in the public discussions and round tables. The conclusions of these discussions, as well as the articulation of needs and problems, were presented in documents and various publications, which were sent directly to the target groups and/or presented during subsequent activities. The whole process was presented, covered and documented on web pages, as well as on the mailing list that facilitates a substantial part of the communication process. Apart from these typical advocacy activities, Zagreb organisations did not forget their primary mission towards the development of joint cultural programmes and so far two big events have taken place under the title "Operation:City". These events have brought together a high number of participants, mostly young people, who thus have also become an important group supporting the demands of the coalition. Aside from all this, thanks to joint activities of this kind, the Initiative itself and its demands have gained additional media coverage.

## **7. Legitimacy of political activities**

A successful advocacy process may become caught up in the sphere of politics, as understood in its narrowest sense, since its aims include the affirmation of civil engagement in the definition and implementation of policy as well as concrete solutions for particular problems, set against a background of little or no participation of citizens. Since the sphere of political activity is relatively narrow, there is always a danger that any activism, which deals with issues that until now have been more or less under state authority and part of a specific party discourse, will be discredited precisely for entering a sphere to which, it is claimed, they do not belong, i. e. one they do not have the right to enter because their legitimacy does not

have any bearing on the system of democratic elections. Such attempts to “reveal the hidden political agendas” of individuals or particular groups or the accusations of partnership with political parties have very often been used as a means of counter-attack, and have been the city’s authorities answer to the criticisms publicly articulated by the Zagreb initiative. However, regardless of this danger, entering this field through a partial adopting of the discourse, strategic and tactical planning of political dynamics and an awareness of the political moment is absolutely necessary in order to open up the space for a stronger public influence on the authorities – even in the sphere of cultural policies. It is extremely important not to enter the political party scene, nor to join any particular political option but to persist in following the demands which have been set on the public agenda without accepting any deals that are sometimes offered in exchange. In this way the above mentioned and other similar accusations can at least be partly avoided, while preserving an independent position will help to reinforce an image of credibility, consistency and “correctness”.

### **8. Continuity and consistency**

Based on the experience of the Zagreb initiative activities, we can safely confirm the thesis which can be found in any manual on advocacy: namely, that to highlight problems openly in public and to keep it as part of a political agenda is one of the most important challenges for any advocacy initiative. After winning the attention of the relevant media and of public and political spheres for issues relating to youth and independent culture at local level (in the City of Zagreb) just before the elections, it was necessary to initiate and implement a series of activities (both in public and in cooperation with the city’s authorities), which kept these key issues in the public eye. It was crucial to have continuity, and to relate every public activity to the previous one. Apart from these permanent (and exhausting) activities, consistency in terms of demand and standpoint is extremely important. In order to firmly support all demands, it is crucial not to accept partial solutions and attempts at bribing organisations (or individuals) and to be ready to openly enter conflicts and accept negative practical consequences resulting from these actions, thus ensuring the position of an open, unrestrained and frank public voice which should be preserved at any cost. And this is precisely what has secured credibility and public trust in the Initiative. In this way themes which have become part of the public agenda, in spite of permanent resistance and attempts at obstruction by the city authorities, have remained current even after two years. Even though concrete results have still not been achieved in terms of institutional solutions, the topic has neither been overstated nor forgotten, and it still carries a certain social and political relevancy.

## **9. Mobilization of existing resources and insurance of new ones**

It is obvious that in order to implement such long-term, demanding and numerous activities it is necessary to involve a relatively high number of motivated people, an operational base, material and financial resources. The sustainability of the Zagreb initiative is extensively based on investment in the existing resources of the organisations involved. Most of the initiative leaders or those who have coordinated particular activities, as well as a high number of collaborators, work on a voluntary basis. The offices, technical and other similar resources are mainly provided by the organisations themselves, while financial resources are fundraised through appeals to national and international donors. Relying on the organisations' own resources, primarily on their leaders, assuredly ensures the success of any advocacy activity but it may also weaken the organisation. In spite of this, there have been no serious crises or collapses in any of these organisations since adjusting to the new working practices in terms of organisation and programme and including in their activities the advocacy process. Moreover, this initiative has strengthened resources in terms of education as well – either through learning by doing or through a knowledge and skills exchange, by organising training sessions, and by using available literature and experts in the field.

## **10. Faith, belief and confidence**

The faith that aims may be accomplished, the belief that it is possible to have an impact and that steps which at the moment seem impossible can be realized even when the process takes too long, as well as a confidence in the legitimacy of the demands made and soundness of the proposed solutions, form the basis not only for motivation and action but for any kind of envisaged influence. If such a belief does not exist any kind of initiative will die out very soon, enthusiasm will disappear and the theme will have been needlessly wasted.

### 3.3. Advocacy activities in Zagreb - an overview

#### The initiative

The Zagreb initiative was set up by three groups of organisations. These are independent cultural organisations gathered around the collaborative platform Zagreb – Cultural Kapital of Europe 3000, (Centre for Drama Art – CDU, Multimedia Institute – mi2, Platform 9.81 – Institute for research in architecture, What, How and for Whom – WHW, Local Base for Refreshment of Culture – BLOK, Kontejner | bureau of contemporary art praxis, Shadow Casters and Community Art). Included also are Zagreb's non-profit clubs that act at the same time both as cultural and as youth clubs (Mochvara/The Swamp, club of the Association for Culture Development – URK, Autonomous Cultural Centre – ATTACK!, net.cultural club MAMA, the club of the Multimedia Institute). Finally, there are the two key national networks (Clubture and Croatian Youth Network).

#### Chronology of events

— April 2005:

**The first press conference** was held to draw attention to the marginalization of the independent cultural and youth scenes in Zagreb. Once the initiative had been presented the process of public discussion began.

— April – May 2005:

**Public debates took place on the position of independent culture and youth in Zagreb**, including not only representatives from these two sectors but also politicians, city administrators, cultural workers and artists, media, experts and other interested members of the public. Three debates were held.



— May 2005:

The process of public debate resulted in the **declaration of the theme: “Independent culture and youth in the development of the city of Zagreb”**. In May, on the eve of local elections, the declaration was signed by the majority of political parties and election coalitions, among them the one which subsequently came to power. The declaration included an overall description of the current situation and nine subsequent measures, thus obliging all the signatories to implement them if they came to participate in the management of Zagreb. These measures envisaged solutions to the issue of space and the institutional framework necessary for the activities of the independent culture and youth scenes,<sup>23</sup> besides covering other issues which specifically dealt with the sector of independent culture,<sup>24</sup> and of youth.<sup>25</sup>

The fake “opening” of the **Centre for Independent Culture and Youth – Gorica** in the former factory complex Badel-Gorica when, in the frame of the cultural event organised for the occasion, the above declaration was presented to the public.

— May - September 2005:

Meetings between the independent cultural organisations and the preparation of the event Operation:City; negotiations with the City of Zagreb.

— September - December 2005:

**OPERATION:CITY** ([www.operacijagrad.org](http://www.operacijagrad.org)) was organised as a ten-day event during which the abandoned and unused space of the former factory complex Badel-Gorica and the pool of the ex-slaughter house – Zagrebčanka were filled with various cultural and entertainment items. The Association [BLOK] – Local Base for Refreshment of Culture and the Platform 9.81 organised the event, while the programme was the result of the collaboration of the wider Zagreb independent scene, which from September 8-17 moved its programmes to the above mentioned venues. As a result around 70 events took place, involving 26 associations, artistic organisations and initiatives. Also, during the course of the ten days the

23 The establishment of a centre for independent culture and youth as a shared institution with premises on different locations (poli-location character), co-founded by the City of Zagreb and an alliance of organisations; opening the existing infrastructure of the City’s cultural institutions to the independent cultural scene; solving the issues of lack of venues for the existing clubs and completing the reconstruction of the former factory Jedinstvo, which is partly used for these purposes.

24 The City’s participation in the funding of the foundation for independent culture.

25 The implementation of the strategy City Youth Action Plan, setting up of the administrative bodies responsible for its implementation and ensuring adequate resources from the City budget.

space was open to a wider audience who were offered diverse cultural events. Two festivals took place within the framework of Operation:City: *Touch me* and the *Urban Festival*. Eight thousand square metres of outdoor and five thousand two hundred square metres of indoor space was temporarily overtaken by culture. Operation:City was well covered by all the media and during those ten days it became the most popular place in the city. The project also found a significant response in the international community. The event was visited by around 15,000 people. The Operation was realized in cooperation with the City of Zagreb, and the event was opened and publicly supported by the mayor Milan Bandić. Duško Ljuština, a member of the City Council in charge of Education, Culture and Sport was present at the opening where he expressed his support not only for the event but also for the proposal to reconstruct the damaged factory and to site the Centre in its premises.

During Operation:City, an open discussion of the Policy\_Forum was held, during which the **Initiative Committee** for the Centre for Independent Culture and Youth was established. The members of the Committee are representatives of the organisations that initiated this process.<sup>26</sup> Since then, the Committee has remained an informal body which makes decisions and organises further actions relating to the requirements of the declaration.

At the end of Operation:City, the space was **temporarily abandoned** due in part to the rundown nature of the buildings, but also to an over-reliance on the events organised by city officials elsewhere. Since a relatively successful cooperation with the city authorities had been established during this event, it was felt that relations should not be impaired by a potentially illegal occupation of the complex. However, this proved to be a mistake and city officials started to block any further cooperation, while an important part of the complex Badel-Gorica was leased out (without notice) to individual private companies and turned into warehouse space.

Following the Operation, pressure on the City continued, and the lobbying activities aimed at **ensuring the financial resources** needed for the realization of the measures set out in the declaration continued. This was partly ensured in the city budget for 2006.

— From January 2006 onwards:

The City failed to start the realization of the planned financial resources. An **administrative blockade** followed as the result of the lack of political will and non-functioning of the city administration. It became obvious that

26 Two representatives of the networks and the platforms and one representative per club.

the city administration was not capable of any kind of structural activity in the implementation of its public policies, but that it was governed by the principle of “playing things down” and in infrastructural undertakings aimed solely at political self-promotion. The experience of the Zagreb initiative showed that the only way forward was to win the attention and the support of the most powerful city representatives, in particular the mayor. Thus, all those interested in participating in city development needed to primarily deal with him and not with their own activities. In such a situation the ability to act in the public interest was inevitably hampered by private acquaintanceships and connections. The reforms implemented in the city administration had resulted in the concentration of the executive power in the hands of the few, in the lack of any real opportunity to act operationally, and in the development of an attitude of clientelism. Hence, every attempt to initiate particular projects was brought to a standstill due to administrative obstruction and shortsightedness.

— July 2006:

Unsatisfied with this development and provoked by the campaign of a traditional cultural event promoting young artists (Youth Saloon), which covered the city with huge poster portraits of the mayor (who during his term had not done anything for the independent culture and youth scenes), at night a **secret operation** was organised to paper over the posters so that the mayor’s image was crossed out. After that, the initiative became publicly known as the **Right to the City** and since then it has severely criticised the lack of efficiency of the city administration and the false promises given by the administrators. The only reaction from the mayor was “He who is patient will be saved!”, which once again confirmed that the city authorities are not capable of giving an effective public answer, or any other, to the criticism launched against them. Right to the City reacted quickly to this message with a protest of collective photography entitled “**The end of patience**”, which gathered more than a hundred protestors in front of the Badel factory. These operations were recognized in public as a direct political attack, thus winning media space and wider public support for the initiative. Nevertheless, the claims that the initiative was the result of the influence of opposition political parties came soon after that, emphasising that it had entered a field which, since its representatives had not taken any part in the elections, it did not rightly belong to. In other words, the authorities did not understand and did not want to recognize the role of the public in defining their power, and hence as being legitimate players in the political field. Such political attacks were successfully rebutted, and the initiative was recognized as crucial to the relationship between the City authorities and its citizens, i.e. the right of citizens to participate in the decision-making process.

— July - December 2006:

After the culmination of attacks, a period of calm followed as well as a complete breakdown of communication with the city administration. The period was used for reorganisation, informing, communication with other players and further development of strategy. Thus, the initiative started to expand, developing in **two directions**: (1) in the direction of the needs of independent culture and youth and (2) in the direction of city development and city management.

— From August 2006 onwards:

The organisations gathered in the Initiative Committee formalized their partnership by establishing the **Alliance for the Centre for Independent Culture and Youth**, whose mission was to advocate and realize a long-term and sustainable solution for premises for the Centre, taking into account that the Centre for Independent Culture and Youth is a shared institution whose equal founders are the City of Zagreb and members of the Alliance of Youth and Independent Culture. At the same time, the Alliance for the Centre continues to be active in promoting all the other demands listed in the original declaration, meets regularly and plans further activities.

— From December 2006 onwards:

The initiative Right to the City joined forces with Green Action, the biggest and strongest association for the protection of the environment in Croatia, to work together on the issues of city development and protection of public spaces in the city. One of the key objectives was to include citizens in the process of decision-making. For this reason, the initiative was joined by GONG, an association which supports the active involvement of citizens in political processes. The operation “**Complete Sell Out**” was the start of a campaign against semi-secret, uncontrolled and significant takeovers of public spaces following the example of the devastation of one of Zagreb’s squares (Cvjetni trg – Flower square, or Square Petra Preradovića) which was to be turned into a trade and residential area and a residentially closed space. This operation was followed by a number of public announcements and other activities, as well an important petition “**Stop devastation of Cvjetni trg (Flower Square) and downtown**” during which 50,000 signatures were collected. In spite of this, the city authorities, who had obviously made an agreement with private investors, initiated changes to the guidelines and rules for the development of the city<sup>27</sup> in a way to suit private interests, in spite of clearly demonstrated opposition from citizens. At the time of writing it is still not clear how this process will finish, especially in the light of planned gatherings of citizens and protests.

27 General urban plan (GUP).

— April 2007:

The Alliance for the Centre organised an event **Operation City: Jedinstvo** (April 26-29) in the premises of the former Jedinstvo factory, which symbolically opened **A Temporary Illegal Centre for Culture and Youth Jedinstvo**. Unlike the first operation, the idea behind it was not to fill the space with a high concentration of programmes over a short period. On the contrary, this four-day operation acted as an introduction to future permanent use of this venue, which had been put forward as one of the locations for the Centre. During these four days, in the premises of the ex-factory, which includes the space so far used by the Association for Culture Development and Para-institute Indoš, as well as newly developed premises, 20 diverse programmes were offered in cooperation with 13 independent cultural and youth organisations. The event was visited by 5,000 mostly young people who reacted positively both to the contents of the programme and their venues.

— May 2007, ongoing:

After all these activities, the representatives of the City called for a **re-opening of talks**, and the Alliance for the Centre re-entered negotiations based on the specific items of the declaration. Even if the City reacts positively to all its suggestions, at this moment we cannot know for sure if any definite progress will be made, i.e. if the City will actually start the implementation of the proposed projects.

# Policies for Culture: programme framework

Policies for Culture was developed as a regional framework programme for South East Europe by the European Cultural Foundation (Amsterdam) and the ECUMEST Association (Bucharest). Since 2000, Policies for Culture has aimed at encouraging participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of effective new cultural policies throughout the countries of this region. Between 2000-2004 Policies for Culture supported more than 20 action projects all over South East Europe. These local initiatives promoted interaction and dialogue between citizens, the cultural sector and the relevant decision-makers. To date the principle of participative cultural policy-making is still being shared and further developed by a number of new follow-up initiatives all over the region and also beyond South East Europe.

### **Objectives & approach**

The programme is structured around a triangular working relationship between the non-governmental sector, the executive, and the legislature in the policy-making process affecting the cultural sector. It is based on the recognition that public policy in the field of culture can only have a sustainable impact if the civic stakeholders whom it is to affect can participate in its formulation. Emphasis is placed on finding channels of communication between these levels (which until recently have hardly interacted) and, by encouraging participative policy-making in the field of culture, on empowering the independent sector to voice its opinions. To this end initiatives inspired by Policies for Culture have engaged policy-makers and the cultural sector of South East Europe in a steady process of reflection on local and national cultural policies. They have encouraged all the participants to transform ongoing policy debates into concrete action that will contribute to a sustainable bottom-up strengthening of the cultural sector in the municipalities and countries of the region.

## Key areas of action

### PRACTICAL ACTION

Until 2004, Policies for Culture facilitated the development and implementation of a variety of local initiatives aimed at transforming theory into concrete action:

#### Albania

- “Why do Reforms Stop?” – Policies for Theatre & Film Production (2003)

#### Bulgaria

- Construction of a local cultural strategy for the city of Plovdiv and setting up an effective structure for active social dialogue (2001)
- Technological Park Culture I & II (2001-2004)
- Cultural Policy and Legislation: A New Approach to Sharing Responsibilities (2003)
- Cultural Policy and Legislation: A New Approach to Sharing Responsibilities (associated project: 2003)

#### Bosnia and Herzegovina

- “Together for Culture” – Cultural Strategy for the municipality of Prijedor (2003)

#### Croatia

- Participative Policy-Making: Cultural Strategy for the City of Zagreb (2002-2003)
- Clubture – Policy Forum: Towards a new position for the independent, non-profit and non-institutional cultural sector in the policy-making process (2003)
- Cultural Strategy for the City of Rijeka (2003-2004)

#### Moldova

- Launching a process of exploring, identifying and implementing new funding mechanisms for cultural institutions and activities in the Republic of Moldova (2003-2004)

#### Macedonia

- Policy Debate Centre, Skopje (associated project: 2001-2003)
- Empowering the Independent Cultural Sector & Institutionalising Participation in Local Cultural Policy-Making in the municipality of Prilep (2002-2004)



### Montenegro

- Platform for a New Impact of Culture in Montenegro (2003-2004)

### Romania

- A model of social dialogue for the construction of a regional cultural strategy for the Timis County (2001) & dissemination of results and methodology (2004)
- ARcult – an expertise and service support agency for Romanian independent cultural organisations and operators (2002-2004)
- Private-Public Partnership. Towards a Cultural Strategy for Arad County (2002-2003)

### Serbia

- Cooperation & Dialogue in building effective Local Cultural Policies in the municipalities of Kragujevac, Sabac, Sombor and Uzice (2002)
- Cultural Policy in Zlatibor County – a Second Step (2003-2004)
- Strategic Development of Suburban Culture, Obrenovac (Belgrade) (2003-2004).

## ANALYSIS & RESEARCH

The need for cultural policy research has been a recurrent theme in various programme activities in the last four years. Throughout the region there is an urgent need for independent research to evaluate policies and their actual impact, and to use research results as the basis for good quality decision-making. In 2004 and 2005, Policies for Culture specifically addressed this area by means of a **Task Force for Cultural Policy Research**. This endeavoured to use and further develop the rich pool of knowledge and expertise represented by the Policies for Culture network in order to respond to the strong need for consistent and professional reflection, analysis and research into the cultural policies of the region.

## INFORMATION & DOCUMENTATION

From the earliest days of the programme until today the Policies for Culture website has aimed to enhance the flow of cultural policy information and acquired expertise in South East Europe (and beyond) by developing and making available a variety of reports, publications and other information resources, namely:

- the programme website – [www.policiesforculture.org](http://www.policiesforculture.org) – which has developed into a virtual resource space in the field of cultural policies in South East Europe;
- **electronic periodicals** – two complementary publications providing news and information on the one hand (**e-bulletin**, published from March 2004 to December 2006), and analysis and opinion on key cultural policy issues throughout the region on the other (**InSIGHT**, published in 2004-2005);

- **case studies** of action projects developed within the framework of the programme;
- other reports and publications.

### **The Policies for Culture network**

Since its beginning, Policies for Culture has been based on a broad range of partnerships involving cultural operators, professional artists, local and national cultural authorities as well as administrators, parliamentarians, media, university institutions, cultural and policy research centres, cultural policy experts and policy institutions all over the region and the European Union. The professional ties developed through the programme continue to keep the goals of the programme alive throughout South East Europe and the wider EU sphere of influence. To date the numerous members of the Policies for Culture network continue to lobby and develop further action in the field of participative cultural policy-making in South East Europe.

### **Beyond South East Europe**

Since 2004, experience gained through Policies for Culture action in South East Europe has been used to promote and facilitate participative cultural policy-making also in countries outside South East Europe. In recent years the European Cultural Foundation has translated project knowledge acquired by Policies for Culture into numerous capacity development projects in Slovakia, Kaliningrad (Russian Federation), Turkey and Ukraine.

TO LEARN MORE about our approach and programme activities, and how to contribute to Policies for Culture please visit our web page or contact the programme team on: [www.policiesforculture.org](http://www.policiesforculture.org), [info@policiesforculture.org](mailto:info@policiesforculture.org).

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