COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

theory and practices in central and eastern europe

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art and community development

The topic – Art and Community Development – of the current issue of the Journal on Community Development in CEE seems to be quite controversial.

It is not only because "The arts are often considered to be at the periphery of the community development process..." as Alan Kay mentioned in 2000. As Teodor Mladenov discovers in his article here ("Community Development and Art: Welcoming the other within") there are a whole set of binary oppositions which build walls between "community development" and "art" – ethics vs. aesthetics; rational vs. emotional; public vs. private, etc.

But it is even more complicated. In Eastern Europe, as Svetla Kazalarska points out in her article ("Community-based arts in South-Eastern Europe: A double oxymoron?"), the concept of "community development" itself is more or less "imported" from the USA and Western Europe (mostly United Kingdom). And at the same time, "the arts" in the post-communist societies are considered in a narrowed context with a focus on "high arts" and with less emphasis on amateur or community arts.

Finally, at the level of community development practitioners one could easily feel the ill concealed undervaluation of the arts and culture. There are different reasons for that but one is obvious – there are only few organizations in Central and Eastern Europe which actively recognize the arts and culture not only as an instrument but also as a vital part of the community development processes.

In this context, when I was starting the preparation of the current issue of the Journal on Community Development in CEE few months ago, I decide to define three main aims:

First, to present a variety of practices and examples of using the arts as a tool for community development.

Second, to mark the main points of a methodological/theoretical framework which could allow further consideration of the complicated relations between "the arts" and "community development".

Third, to open a debate for the importance of the creativity as an integral part of the development process.

Obviously, these aims are quite ambitious and only the reader will have the final judgment if and how we managed to acheive them. But one thing is clear – the current issue of the Journal on Community Development in CEE brings together a real variety of viewpoints and theoretical/methodological considerations.

Some of the articles – as for example the already mentioned texts of Svetla Kazalarska and Teodor Mladenov – are more theoretical, or more precisely – "framework oriented".

But most of the texts in the current issue are directly linked to a concrete project which has specific "art and community development" experience. Some could be art-projects like "White School" presented by Momchil Tsonev, others like the "Fabric for Princesses" Dobrin Atanasov, have more "art" than "community development". At the same time there are other kind of projects such as "Communication" (Ana Adamovic) or "Art for Social Change" (Tzvetelina Yossifova), or the project "My street" (Diana Ivanova), where arts are important as instruments and the real aims are inclusion, social cohesion or empowerment.

These are two rather different approaches. But soon becomes clear that no metter whether artists pursue a social impact or not, their actions strongly influence the community. It could be the workers who could not stop to discuss the art-actions in their factory or the youth photographers in South Serbia who started to understand the power of art – in both cases arts bring changes in the lives of the involved people.

Another point of view which is focused more on institutions as agents of community development is presented in the Nadezhda Savova's interesting article. In her text we could find comparison between Bulgarian cultural community centers ("chitalishta") and the similar Cuban institutions ("casas de cultura") with a special accent on the topic how humor and collective laughing could be a tool for negotiating social issues.

And this is in the core of the current issue – art is fun (entertainment) but it is much more than fun or other kind of emotions. Art is about creation of meanings, construction of symbols and strengthening of identities. Arts and culture are the solder of our communities. And the creativity is the motor of our societies.

I suppose that we will need some time to recognize this and to accept the vital role of the arts in community development. One of the things, which could speed up this process, is a number of quality researches on social impact of the arts. Only a few researches of this kind are available in the region and one of them is presented here.

Working on this issue of the Journal on Community Development in CEE was challenge, but also a pleasure. I would like to thank to all of the authors and especially to the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation team for the possibility and privilege to be the editor of this issue.

Yuriy Vulkovsky

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Community-based Arts in South-Eastern Europe: A Double Oxymoron?

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The article investigates some of the challenges community arts practices in South-Eastern Europe are confronted to, against the background of parallel developments in the rest of Europe and worldwide. By offering examples from Bulgaria, the article demonstrates that the potential uses of contemporary art for community development have not been fully explored, and that 'clear-cut' community-based participatory arts projects are still few.

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It might not be unjustified to claim that the concept of community-based arts is an **oxymoron** in itself since modern art, as it is largely known, is individualist by definition in the very first place. Secondly, community-based artistic practices in the countries of South-Eastern Europe in particular appear even more oxymoronic in a region where the notion of art as 'high culture' is prevalent and shared by most of the population, and where for that reason art is considered a practice of the elite and mostly for the elite. The sustainability of this notion is further perpetuated, given the region's difficult economic situation in the post-socialist years, whereby the promotion of art is not among the top priorities of both governments and the general public. Starting from this rather generalized and probably exaggerated statement, with the obvious purpose of offering a provocation, in the present article I would like to explore some of the challenges that artistic practices used for community development in South-Eastern Europe are confronted to, against the background of parallel developments in the rest of Europe and worldwide.

It was sometime in the 1980s and 1990s when **community development** as such appeared as one of those magical and impeccably 'politically correct' words along with sustainable development, cultural diversity and others, that promised to

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solve a whole lot of problems, both in the 'developed' and in the 'developing' countries, both in urban and rural settings. Community development was undertaken above all with the purpose of catalyzing regeneration efforts in most importantly economic, but also in environmental, social and cultural terms. Community development was thus also meant to reinforce civil society, give back 'power to the people' by repairing the malfunctioning mechanisms of citizenship and democracy through putting to practice the principles of social inclusion and proactive participation. Furthermore, community development programs were expected to contribute significantly to building social capital, enhancing social cohesion, strengthening cultural identities on a local and regional level, as well as to fighting racism, ghettoization, segregation and exclusion, and sometimes even to preventing crimes, building peace, and other hardly achievable goals. The theory and practice of community development addressed the widely commented and lamented weakening of the notion of the 'social', manifested in the fracturing of communities and the estrangement of their members, interpreted often as corollaries of the processes of modernization and globalization of the past century. Community development projects in fact made a valuable input to the ongoing debates and revisions of the very concept of community in the social sciences and humanities, providing a tangible (to some extent) evidence for the possibility of rehabilitating the 'social' in new and innovative ways. The confusion over 'community' – is there such thing as 'really existing community', how we identify our own community and where we belong – yet persists.

The tensions and dilemmas faced by community development practice nowadays have been discussed at length elsewhere (Kenny 2002). Although not the focus of the current article, the most pertinent problems need to be taken into consideration nonetheless. Among these problems are: the widely acknowledged dangers inherent in the commodification and instrumentalization of culture and the arts; the growing bureaucracy surrounding externally funded projects in view of raised concerns with outputs, efficiency and accountability (eventually meaning more and more paperwork, and less and less time for social action); the 'professionalization' of community development work, sometimes coming into conflict with the grass-roots origin of this type of work; the introduction of market-based funding mechanisms based on contracts and competitive tendering, exerting a new form of disciplinary state power, etc.

Community arts ('community-based art' or 'dialogical art') came into being sometime in the late 1960s, then came into fashion in the 1970s, and grew steadily throughout the 1980s and 1990s after considerable attention had been paid to the social functions and effects of art. The emergence of community arts was made possible only after certain artistic developments from the recent past had paved the way for more democratic and socially engaged art forms. One could mention the influential work of artists such as Joseph Beuys who proclaimed as early as the 1960s that 'everyone is an artist' and that society as a whole could be regarded as a total work of art *(Gesamtkunstwerk).* Beuys did not in fact suggest that everyone should be engaged in artwork as such; rather that everyone should be applying creative thinking to his own life and area of expertise, that creativity was not a realm reserved exclusively for artists. Beuys' renowned concept of what he called 'social sculpture' thus addressed the idea of shaping or 'sculpting' human societies as an aesthetic challenge. Still earlier, the so-called Art Brut or 'Outsider Art' extended the concept of art so as to include art created outside the boundaries of the official art canon, such as the work of the insane, the disabled, prisoners, children, naive and primitive artists, and others. Anti-elitist and anti-institutionalist movements in modern avant-garde art (Dadaism, later on Fluxus, and others) also contributed to the dethroning of 'high' art, and made possible the development of community-based arts as a respectful and legitimate artistic practice today. While it is not the purpose of the present article to trace the history and evolution of

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community arts in detail, pointing at some of the above influences sheds light on the context of its emergence. The Western context is worthy of exploration, especially when compared to the South-Eastern European context where many of these factors and influences had been lacking, largely due to the region's totalitarian experience.

It is not that there hadn't been community art programs prior to the 1960s. The Federal Art Project, part of the New Deal reformist programs undertaken during the mid and late 1930s in the United States, and more specifically the Community Art Center program, launched in 1936, is one of the notorious examples that come to mind[1]. After all, culture has long ago been recognized as a powerful tool for managing and most importantly disciplining the masses. Early modernity in particular saw the large-scale instrumentalization of culture for political and social purposes. Community-based arts and public art, however, are not one and the same thing. What sets community-based arts apart is not only the principle of equal access to art but also the principle of active participation in art. In fact, we are witnessing a gradual abandonment of the term 'community arts' in favor of seemingly more neutral alternatives such as 'community-based arts' and 'participatory arts' (Matarasso 2007: 451). Furthermore, the uses of the word 'empowerment' in reference to community development work are becoming rare, since it suggests a simplistic and rather naïve approach. Another development in the recent years, according to Matarasso, is the individualization of community arts in the 1990s in Britain, where a gradual shift of the artists' concern with the 'development' of community as a whole to that of the individual has been registered (Matarasso 2007: 451).

Although until relatively recently the arts have been considered to play only a marginal role in community development process, nowadays artistic and cultural actions are often quoted as indisputably indispensable in any regeneration and revitalization project. The arts are proposed as a means for promoting urban regeneration, tourism, and the creative industries; furthermore, particularly in Western Europe, they are seen as a means for achieving various social objectives (Matarasso 2007: 449). Researchers often advise, however, that artistic projects, even if truly participatory in the best case scenario, are not a panacea for existing social and economic problems. Their effect is seen at its best only when taking place within the framework of a more comprehensive regeneration program.

As cautioned by a number of researchers (Newman, Curtis & Stephans 2003; Matarasso 1997; Merli 2002), **evaluating** the impact of the arts in terms of social gain presents considerable difficulties, greater than in any other field. The problems are not simply methodological, they also touch upon the issue of the extent to which creative processes could or should be managed and controlled, and their effects – quantified (Newman, Curtis & Stephans 2003: 310). Since the publication of Francois Matarasso's major study on evaluating the social impact of participation in arts activities, *Use or Ornament?* (Matarasso 1997), the issue is still high on the agenda, particularly provided that evaluation of social gain is often an important condition for funding. Key social benefits identified by Matarasso include benefits both on the individual and on the community level. Individual benefits are registered in two directions: first, benefits attributable to participation itself, such as growth in self-confidence, development of teamwork and communi-cation skills, extension of social networks, personal control, empowerment and a general sense of improved health, happiness and well-being; and second, benefits specifically attributable to the practice of arts, such as the development of artistic skills, imagination and confidence in creative

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[1] The Community Art Center program was "intended to engender the practical dissolution of the perceived antagonism between being in the subject-position of 'artist' and the subject-position of 'citizen'" (Harris 1991: 252). The success of the Community Art Center program is best illustrated in numbers – in 1940 eighty four Community Art Centers were in operation, with between 12 and 15 million people participating in various activities organized by the program, and with an average monthly attendance of about 350 000.

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areas (Matarasso 2000: 11). Benefits on a community level capitalize on individual benefits and thus often result in building local capacities, strengthening local pride and identity, promoting social cohesion and inclusion, and others (Matarasso 2000: 12). The acclaimed positive effects of community-based artistic projects for community development are sometimes accompanied by drawbacks and negative impacts, due to bad planning and bad execution of the projects (Matarasso 2000: 12). Whereas most evaluation studies are based on the Western experience, no major effort in evaluating the social gain of community-based arts projects in South-Eastern Europe has been made so far. The lack of a continual, consistent and systematic measurement of both the 'hard' and 'soft' impacts of community-based arts projects in the region would continue to play a decisive role in the future.

One thing that is somewhat striking is the very broad definition of 'art' applied to community-based arts practices. In fact, the notion of art often comes close to the notion of culture or heritage in general. Thus 'art' might encompass folklore, traditional arts and crafts, contemporary arts, music and dance traditions, performances, food culture, oral history, customs and public rituals, and what not. The **diversity** of community-based art practices world-wide may be illustrated from different perspectives, such as philosophy, art forms, types of organizations, types of projects, etc. Some specific forms of community-based arts are the community murals, community print shops, stencils, street theaters, and public festivals of varying kinds. It is probably the festival format that is most popular in South-Eastern Europe, although often times such initiatives are rather short-lived, and difficult to sustain over the years. In terms of types of organizations involved in community-based arts, one could single out local community arts organizations, specialist community arts organizations, mainstream arts organizations, voluntary arts organizations, independent artists and animateurs, as well as arts initiatives of organizations whose principal activities are not related to art (Matarasso 2000: 8-10). Some banks and financial institutions in South-Eastern Europe, for instance, have recently started up their own arts programs (collections, galleries, exhibitions, artist-in-residence programs, etc.), however, these are rarely community-based ones. An interesting example of arts-based community development practices are the rural touring networks in Britain, intended to improve the access of people living in rural areas to professional arts performances (Matarasso 2007: 451). Another typology of the organization models of community-based arts programs in the United States lists arts business incubators, artists' cooperatives, tourist venues, and comprehensive approaches (Phillips 2004). Apart from artists' cooperatives, although these are mostly cooperatives of traditional craftsmen working for their own profit and rarely involving the communities, none of the above organizational forms is still very developed in South-Eastern Europe. By and large, the types of community-based arts projects in the region are prevalently short-term, self-contained projects rather than long-term activities happening on a regular basis. This tendency is to a large extent attributable to the fact that funding is usually granted on a project basis, therefore long-term sustainability is difficult to achieve.

When discussing community development in **South-Eastern Europe**, one can not but point out that this is a culture imported from abroad, also, paradoxically, in a top-down approach, as part of the so called 'project culture' which inundated local cultural, social and political life. In this reference, some scholars speak of the tendency of East European cultures for 'self-colonization'. Self-colonizing cultures are cultures that "import alien values and models of civilization by themselves and (…) lovingly colonize their own authenticity through these foreign models" (Kiossev 1999: 114). As already mentioned, most research on community development practices draws on the Western experience, and only recently comparative studies, including South-Eastern European contexts, have been conducted. I wouldn't go as far as to suggest that this

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tendency presents a new form of cultural colonization or self-colonization, nevertheless, the external funding and management of community development programs in South-Eastern Europe, and community-based arts programs in particular, inevitably raises a range of critical **questions:** What interests and what needs do such programs serve? To what extent are the concept and the 'good practices' of community development imported from the West applicable to the post-socialist societies in South-Eastern Europe? Are there ways to overcome the lack of adequate language when addressing community development in the region? And after all, could community development as such grow on South-Eastern European soil?

The situation in South-Eastern Europe is often laden with arguments about the legacies of the **communist past** which is blamed for the current low levels of participation in community life, for the deficiency of social cohesion, solidarity and empathy as a whole. According to some, the word 'community' itself has become a dirty word in the region (Jindrova, Djorgov & Nizu 2003: 63). Even the programmatic Budapest Declaration on building European civil society through community development (2004), signed on the occasion of the accession of the ten new EU members, has not succeeded in turning the imperative of community development into more than a slogan.

Traditionally, however, some cultural institutions in South-Eastern Europe, such as the Enlight-enment-spirited *chitalishta*[2] in Bulgaria, or the 'cultural houses' created in the years of socialism, served similar purposes in the past – directed at the cultural and social consolidation of local communities, not so much at economic regeneration. The three-year "Community Development and Participation through the Chitalishte Network" project (2001 – 2004) with a total budget of 2 475 000 USD, generously granted by UNDP, the Bulgarian Ministry of Culture, the MATRA program of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the United States Agency for International Development, has achieved a somewhat ambivalent success in resurrecting *chitalishta* as active and vibrant modern community centers. Furthermore, the strong tradition of volunteer and amateur arts, rooted in *chitalishta*, and solidly supported by the state in the years of socialism, is now threatened to die out.

Despite the growing public for contemporary art in South-Eastern Europe, manifested in the steadily increasing rates of attendance in events such as 'long nights' of museums and galleries and public art festivals of various kinds, the **examples** of community-based arts initiatives are not that numerous. The majority of socially-engaged art projects are projects that promote art in the public space, projects that draw the attention of the general public to certain social problems and projects that possibly address these problems but rarely projects that intend to and succeed in involving the public or the relevant communities to take active part in them. A couple of examples from Bulgaria, the country I am most familiar with, would clearly illustrate this point. Public art projects in South-Eastern Europe on the whole abound, especially public sculptures, monuments, art installations and performances in the public space. Some artistic projects explicitly make a case for the public presence of socially-engaged art. The "Spoken Memories Map" (2004) project by the American cultural researcher and artist Sue Mark – an interactive oral history of Sofia, installed in a public subway for a week – empowered the city residents to speak out how they feel about the city's transitions. The "Mobile Studios" (2006) – a week-long series of discussions, artists' talks, performances, installations and other happenings on the Alexander Battenberg Square in Sofia – is yet another example. Artistic projects that raise the awareness of the public to social problems are also numerous – an exemplary one is Luchezar Boyadjiev's project "Do You See Sofia?" (2003), part of the Visual Seminar, which brought attention to the 'visual

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[2] The first chitalishta appeared in the 1850s as 'reading houses' and gradually became educational and cultural centers that played a critical role in the processes of national consolidation and modernization. A network of 3250 *chitalishta* covers the territory of Bulgaria nowadays, according to the National Chitalishte Register in the Ministry of Culture.

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irregularities' in the city. The few projects that make use of participatory art forms coupled with community commitment are the Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation's "KvARTal" project and Week of Community Arts (2004), the GoatMilk Festival of Memories taking place every May in the village of Gorna Bela Rechka since 2004, the Festival of Ancient Arts and Crafts (2006) organized by the "Oak Gate" Celtic Community in Sofia, the workshop "Dear Memories" at the Sariev Gallery in Plovdiv (2006), in which participants were invited to create jewelry out of objects associated with their memories, and few others. Whether and to what extent these projects achieved the community development goals they had initially defined needs further investigation. As long as these are only exceptions, however, one could claim that community-based arts in South-Eastern Europe are still in their dawn.

My **conclusion**, therefore, is that the potential of contemporary arts for community development in South-Eastern Europe is not yet fully developed. The tendency for promoting art in public spaces and other forms of socially-engaged art has notably encouraged participatory community-based projects in the recent years. What prevails at present, however, are short-term self-contained externally funded projects that don't fully capitalize on local cultural traditions. Despite the growing body of evidence for the positive impacts of community-based arts initiatives abroad, most importantly from Britain and the United States, there is a need for continuous and systematic effort in evaluating the social gain from projects initiated and implemented in South-Eastern Europe, as well as for illuminating the 'best practices' from the region. That community-based arts in South-Eastern Europe are not merely an oxymoron remains yet to be proved.

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In the Place of the Expression (The Art in a Social Practice)[1] or About Things that We do not Want to Remember

Tzvetelina Iossifova

This text shows an example of practical work in overcoming social isolation of young people through arts and creative means. It tells the story and the experience of a spontaneously emerged team of people coming from helping professions and artists with children deprived from parental care, living in state institutions or being home-less.

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The political changes in 1989 gradually brought major changes in many fields of the social life and economy in Bulgaria. They did not affect much or at all the conditions in which the so-called 'close' institutions in Bulgaria have had existed for many years then and now.

These institutions shelter people our society does not want to see or confess their existence. Prisoners, lonely elderly, people with mental and physical disabilities, unwanted children, orphans, homeless people… Social outcasts. Human beings, as we are, that our society does not want to remember. We are not used to meet them on street. We are not used to listening to their stories. We have never shown concern for their feelings and experience. They do not exist. There is no way that such people and lives get to the front pages – we conformably either neglect or put them under criminal section, for our own safety, heavenly dreams and better feeling. Their existence usually remains secretive and hidden, by us all – the majority with perfect lives and perfect front-page stories.

Plenty of such 'close' institutions are still in place in Bulgaria as if to encompass those thousands of denied lives. Locations of places where the institutions are apparently become a suitable

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[1] The same name **In the Place of the Expression (The Arts in a Social Practice)** was used for the first time as a title of the workshop presentation of David Ieroham, M.D. and Tzvetelina Iossifova during Tagung: Kunsttherapie Heute, 8-9 June 2007 at Sigmund Freud University in Vienna.

photo: Ivan Nikolov

way to escape the inner unconscious anxiety of our society, this of our own personal stories and lives. These institutions seem to be left far behind any human eye, expression and daily life – doom condemned to eternal forgetfulness. Desperate islands where invisible people live their invisible lives... As if we try to escape all our bad memories, at once. Denial by any means, denial versus own defence and security. Sweet dreams…

… Social homes for children deprived from parental care are classical example among those 'close' institutions. There are still hundred such institutions all over Bulgaria. Up till 2001 more than 32,000 children in Bulgaria (over 2,5 % of all children born) were living there for the time of their entire childhood and adolescence, until maturity. Just few have been reported complete orphans. Their families, because of various reasons (economic, social or other), have abandoned them.

The social homes for children deprived from parental care remained not reformed until late 90s. A reform in the social policy started with a delay and struggles – many urge needs and problems had to be resolved at the same time without previous experience and expertise. Apart from the poverty and the difficulty to cover the daily wants of the children in-there, the bringing up conditions are lacking any intention and context stimulating the development and improvement of social skills and abilities for personal growth and self-expression, autonomy and creativity. More than 11,000 children are still living in social institutions at present.

A real response to the need of humanisation of institutions was pending. Development of a supporting reality, parallel, to the one in which the children used to spend their lives, was needed. In 1999-2000 a spontaneously emerged group of artists coming from performing arts, visual arts, music, drama, etc. and professionals coming from helping professions (psychotherapy, psychology, social work, etc.) were inspired by the idea to act in a common effort in order to bring humanity to those institutions. Many activities and actions were undertaken. They aimed at involving children and young people, living for years in isolation, in group practices through various arts and expressive methods. For the eight-nine years now, more than 100 professionals were involved and trained in that practice. They have worked in 27 institutions all over Bulgaria with more than 900 children and young people.

In the meantime, from 1996 until 2004, **Art for Social Change**[2] programme - an international initiative of the European Cultural Foundation – emerged and existed. It was supporting and encompassing various creative initiatives with disadvantaged children and youth in the countries of South-Eastern Europa and Baltic region. The Red House Centre for Culture and Debate has been developing initiatives under the same name and within the same network between years 2000 and 2004.

As a natural continuation of that practice and experience, a **MA programme in Artistic Psycho-Social Practices** – a joint programme of the New Bulgarian University and the Red House - was established in 2002. It was one of the other major results inspired by that practice that tried to serve the meantime emerged educational need. The programme has been having six alumni now with more than 60 graduates and students.

Stepping on all that rich inheritance various projects have been further developed and implemented. The ones to be mentioned among those – Transitional spaces[3] (2006-07), Street theatre group[4] (2006-07), Let's Listen to Children's Dreams[5] (since the end of year 2005)

The methods and the practice

The basis of all that activities is a quite **new for Bulgaria model of psycho-social care and support through creative and expressive means.** It relies on methods for psychological and integrative work especially adapted for the needs of children and young people. These methods are rooted in psychotherapy and later they have found application in various other spheres like education, organisational development, social practices, etc. Their effectiveness in work with vulnerable groups and more specifically in psycho-social support for children and young people who experienced emotional deprivation, has been proven. Their application allows the effectively overcoming of the psychological deficits and traumas that children and young people living in social isolation of an institution suffer from. Indirectly these methods prevent from anti-social behaviour, addictions and psychic diseases among those juveniles. These methods are particularly very useful where sophistication and proficiency in words, language and verbal expression lack.

Our experience encompassed individual and group practice through various arts (theatre, drama, music, dance, drawing, etc.) and expressive methods (psychodrama, sociodrama, art-therapy, etc.) involving in joint creative processes children and young people living in state institutions for children deprived from parental care or being homeless. The core of the practice is to develop and enrich the ways the young people express and thus to reconstruct their personal stories and interpret them (send them back to their author) through various creative ways. The work occupies the space in-between social work, psychotherapy and artistic practice. This is also a way to promote the arts and the creative methods as an effective tool for support the growth of personality and reaching personal autonomy in social interactions. The art plays a very important role in that search simply because it allows easy expression of otherwise difficult themes and

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[2] The name **Art for Social Change** is created by the European Cultural Foundation and used as a name of a programme for the years of its existence (1996-2004). It has been further funded by Soros Center for Cultural Polices, Phare Access Programme of the European Commission and Democracy Commission Small Grants Program of the Embassy of the United States of America in Bulgaria.
[3] **Transitional spaces** project is supported by MATRA KAP programme of the Embassy of the Netherlands in Sofia.
[4] **Street theatre** group was supported by the State Agency for Youth and Sport.
[5] **Let's Listen to Children's Dreams** is part of the long-term social programme of Globul aiming at improvement of communication skills and socialization of underprivileged children.

unexpressed, deeply hidden feelings and emotions.

This is a mutual process. It never goes just for one of the parts. The nature of the work allows both the young person and the artists to change their roles, to undertake the perspective of various other social roles, different to the ones they had in their personal repertoire so far.

They are able to see themselves from a position and through the eyes of another one, testing them within the safe place of a group session. Thus, any person involved, regardless his/her position in the process, gets experience that would not happen otherwise. As in a theatre play the inner psychic scene, feelings and problems are put on the 'as if' reality of stage, with its all controversy, and seen from the outside by their author. Through enriching expression and getting experience, the work enhances and stimulates personal growth and autonomy of the young person. It makes individual being recognised by the others. The arts and the expressive methods are the finest possible to undertake and follow such a personal journey and investigation.

Both the strongest and the weakest sides of this work, at the same time, represent its effect of progression and development on personal level. It is all to be strictly questioned. The weakest side because the effect definitely does not come immediate; often it is not clearly seen by outsiders, it is also not easy confessed by the person. It is not to grasp it at once. The strongest side because the effect comes through feelings and experience. Sometimes it comes after years in the person's life, just when the person is ready to allow it to reveal. Sometimes it becomes visible and noticeable through the ways the person develops and makes choices in various social interactions. The all said above does not make those methods of work doubtful though, just on the contrary it comes to prove their power and uniqueness.

More common measurement of the effect of this particular work is individual descriptive and qualitative indicators. It reveals in various ways: through the way the young people change their language and words they use while telling their stories as well as what the most often stories are about. This is also about naming their feeling, ways and forms of expression they get to use, self-esteem and self-confidence level and its fluctuation, enrichment of personal experience, etc. This is about how 'big' the part of their thinking and saying inhabited by imaginations, ideas and dream is in comparison to their practical thinking and expression inhabited by material needs; how, whether and in what way that whole changes.

An outcome of a specific process of building up human relation observed at least on two levels: one that goes through the words and desires of the young people and another one that goes through the observations, desires and inscriptive saying of the people that work with them.

A reasonable end or instead of conclusion

Simple stories are easy to tell. On the contrary, the one above seems to be a difficult story, with lots of sudden and often controversial turns and curves, a life-long story that never ends. It may be that in order to get to know ourselves better we have to try to reach and know all the hidden, tensed inner spaces of our own and try to accept and integrate them in the best possible way… Thus, we might suddenly get pleasantly surprised. The art in our story remains the main character, the way to tell stories and relate to the others.

Understanding the Goatmilk Festival Impact on the Village of Gorna Bela Rechka

Yuriy Vulkovsky

The paper presents the results of a recent research about social and economic impacts of a contemporary arts festival in a very small village in Bulgaria. GOATMILK Festival takes place in Gorna Bela rechka since 2004, and since then the village slowly, but evidently started to change, and so did its inhabitants.

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Introduction

The Bela Rechka Project started as an initiative of several people, with different professional background and from different countries, who want to understand what the memories are, why the personal stories are important, and how all of this could help us to understand ourselves better.

The inspiration of the first visit to village of Gorna Bela rechka (Upper Little White River) in the autumn of 2003 and the interest of the local people lead to the idea to organize a yearly festival, which has been later named GOATMILK Festival.

The Festival takes place at Gorna Bela Rechka since 2004, and since then the village slowly, but evidently started to change, and so did its inhabitants. The festival has economic and social impacts - it even touches some environmental issues. But most impressive is the impact of the festival at a personal level. The Festival changes the sense of the local people about their current way of life, it broadens their horizons, and it gives them opportunities to establish new friendships. It also stimulates their creativity, awakes their memories, makes them more confident and raises their self esteem.

The truth is that this variety of economic, social and personal impacts is not intentional; at least they are not a result of

preliminary planning and purposeful actions from the New Culture Foundation, the organizer of the festival.

Thus, the current text is not an evaluation of the Bela Rechka Project, aiming to assess to what extent the project managed to fulfil the preliminary set objectives. The aim of the research presented here was different – to identify and to present the impact of the festival on the village and on the local people, as comprehensive and well-grounded as possible.

Could a cultural event lasting a few days change the life of the people in a small village? My explicit answer is: "Yes!" and the clear evidences are presented below.

The research is based on some observations and notes from seven visits to Gorna Bela Rechka from the summer of 2005 to April 2007, as well as 21 interviews taken in Gorna Bela Rechka, Vurshets and Sofia (September 2006 - March 2007), and a lot of text and visual documents examined.

When I first visited the village in August 2005, I was impressed by the organizers' wish to develop the festival, while at the same time they preserve the "intimacy of the place". During my last visit, the former mayor Boris gave me may be the most clear and concentrated definition what is the festival for the local people: *"Communication, communication, communication… communication!"* It is important to mention that my work is naturally coloured by all meetings with the people, by my participation in the third festival in 2006, by my numerous conversations with Diana Ivanova - the main initiator of the project. I do not believe in the absolute objectivity of the humanitarian studies, but I am convinced that a researcher could achieve precise and reliable results when he/she is responsible and honest.

Information about the village and the festival

The GOATMILK Festival of Memories takes place since 2004 in the village of Gorna Bela Rechka. The village is situated in the North-East of Bulgaria, municipality of Varshets. About 90 people live there, most of them pensioners aged over 70. According to data from United Nations Development Program (2003) the municipality of Vurshets is among the 20 municipalities in Bulgaria in worst demographic situation and among the 50 municipalities in worst financial situation (from 264 municipalities all together).

GOATMILK is an international festival. In its first edition, the participants were from Austria, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Poland, Romania, France, Holland and Czech Republic. In the following years, people from Albania, Turkey, Serbia, Switzerland and Japan also came. Through the years, the number of the festival guests varies between 100 and 300, most of them from Sofia and abroad.

Specific of the festival is the combination of the interest in tradition, past and memories, at the same time using new multimedia technologies, work in an Internet environment and an accent on the contemporary artistic forms.

The unusual format of the festival and the unique atmosphere in Gorna Bela Rechka attract an extreme media interest, as early as the first festival in 2004. Through the following years the festival is the subject of many publications and broadcasts in national media, including "Capital

weekly", "Dnevnik", "24 Chasa", "Svyat i Diplomaciya", "Bulgaria Air", Bulgarian National Radio, Radio France International and "Svobodna Evropa", Bulgarian National Television and the national channel bTV.

In addition, the festival gains publicity, including international, through its broad Internet presentation in the websites www.belarechka.com, www.hiddenspirits.net, www.goatmilk-fest.com (now at www.goatmilk-fest.org) and www.novakultura.org.

The festival receives strong support by the local people and the local authorities.

Social and economic impact of the Festival on the life in Gorna Bela Rechka

The Bela Rechka project is a complex process with a multitude of results and effects. The present text is only based on the impacts that the project has to the village and its inhabitants. Wherever impacts of the festival are mentioned, they include the influence of the other activities and projects in the village, which happen in the months before or after the festival.

Economic impact

The economic impacts of the festival could be divided in three groups: **First**, attraction of additional investments in the village. **Second**, creation of local employment (temporary or permanent). And **third**, development of tourism.

The festival leads to the **raising of the interest in buying properties in the village.** In 2006 and 2007, two houses in the village have been bought by people directly linked to Bela Rechka project. Buying a house includes **additional investments**, which infuse into the local economy, as well as **additional employment of local people** – selling goods and services, cleaning,

construction and reconstruction work, etc.

The festival brings additional attention on behalf of Vasrshets municipality shown through yearly investments in construction and improvement of public utilities. This includes reconstruction of the old school, and its gradual turning into a functioning festival center, reconstruction of the public toilet and covering with asphalt the path leading to it, renewal of the curb stones along the road, construction of a drinking water fountain, etc.

The festival brings also **investments for the local small business**. Most visible is the **annual renewal and expanding of the local pub.**

The festival stimulates **creation of temporary and permanent employment**, in both private and public sectors: additional cook for the local pub during festival days, two long-term unemployed people hired to reconstruct the building of the old school where festival events take place, a part-time cleaning lady for the renewed building, etc.

The festival has a **direct economic impact for the six people in the village who offer rooms for rent.** Depending on the number of rooms/beds, offered for rent, the income from the festival days varies between 80 and 120 leva for each of the six people, which is equal to an additional income of one extra minimum monthly pension.

The festival also has **indirect impacts on the local economy**, which are harder to be measured, but they include the value of all costs for food, materials, fuel and other goods and services, which the tourists attracted by the festival spend in the region.

The festival contributes to the development of a new type of tourism in the municipality of Varshets, which adds up to the traditional for the town and the municipality spa tourism, and it creates new development opportunities.

Local image and identity

The festival **creates an image of the village** as a place with its own uniqueness, where interesting things happen.

Through Internet and the media, **the festival makes the village** visible for the people all over Bulgaria and even abroad.

In the framework of the municipality, **the festival distinguishes the village**, and it turns into its trademark, which also shows into the words of the museum director in Varshets, who said: *"Now I have something to tell about the village. Like the other villages in the municipality – they have spa, they have something else..."*

The Bela Rechka project **creates a new feeling of belonging to the place, and it provokes virtual or real "coming back to the roots":** an evidence of this is the story of the painter who lives in Sliven but was born in Gorna Bela Rechka, and after he found out about the festival from the TV, he wishes to make an exhibition on his home village; as well as the initiative of the owner of a printing company also born in the village, who offered several times to support the publishing of a kin history book.

The presentation of the village in the media and Internet, as well as the interest of young people and foreigners to the village, create a strong feeling of local pride among the people of Gorna Bela Rechka.

Revitalization and Personal development

The festival **revitalizes** the village. The local people describe the festival by expressions like: *"More lively!", "The village is animating", "The village became merrier".* Or, like one of the people interviewed in Varshets said: *"For themselves [local people] it is some kind of awakening. One can feel life."* An especially important part of the general revitalization of the village is the **presence of a lot of young people**, because, like one of the old village women said: *"Having young people here is the most precious thing... When you see someone young, your heart opens".*

The festival brings **diversity** in the village. The screenings, the performances and concerts during the festival days are very interesting for the local people and create an atmosphere which they describe as: *"We had fun, we all had fun... It is good, we hope it will happen again", "We go there excited".*

The festival gives the inhabitants of Gorna Bela Rechka the opportunity to **meet new and unknown people**, often from foreign countries and with defferent professions and interests. These meetings enrich both the outside visitors and the local people, they give them **new knowledge and new understanding of the others.** Or, according to the words of one local elder: *"It is interesting, because... I learned something more".*

The festival **creates friendships** which last long afterwards.

The festival **strengthens the self-respect** of the village people, and **helps them feel complete** – because they learn new things, because they re-discover their place of birth through the eyes of the others, because they see the interest about themselves, their memories, their dreams, because they receive, but they also give, because they participate in an equal dialogue.

The festival does not only awake the memories of the people of Gorna Bela Rechka, but it also provokes them to express themselves and their feelings.

The strongest examples of that are Boris[1], who brings out his old accordion years later, provoked by the music of an Austrian musician, and the old lady Nikolina, who twines a wreath of spring flowers to decorate the door of the old school, because she remembers it was so when she was a schoolgirl.

Environmental issues

In 2006 the festival team organized a **large-scale cleaning of the river** in the village of Gorna Bela Rechka. More important than the cleaning itself is, that the action attracted local people's attention from the as well as those of the municipality .

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[1] Everywhere in the text the people of the village are presented with their first names. I ask all of them to take this not as a lack of respect, on the contrary – as courtesy to the specific intimate atmosphere of Gorna Bela Rechka.

The festival causes the posing of many questions connected to the cleanness of the village. Like the main organizer of the festival said: *"When many people come, one sees a lot of things – that there are no toilets, that there are no litter bins."* In fact, during the festival the municipality provides litter bins and transportation of the garbage, but this raises new questions: *"You cannot bring in litter bins for 3 days, and then take them out – because people ask where the bins are."*

As a whole, the festival creates space for debate on environmental problems, but it also provokes a lot of new ideas – for the introduction of separate litter gathering and composting of the waste, natural materials construction works signing of an ecological chart of the village, etc.

Other impacts

The festival **provokes the local people to ask (themselves) questions** which have no easy answers. From the question *"Why are they here (foreigners and people from Sofia), if it is poor and miserable place?"* which means re-thinking of local values, to the question of the old ladies from Dolna Bela Rechka, who asked in the municipality building: *"And what is going to happen in our village?"*
The festival is the reason for the signing of the "Memorandum of cooperation" between the Municipality of Varshets and the Foundation for New Culture (organizer of the festival) - a precedent for the municipality, which has never signed a similar document with an NGO before.

The festival attracts people with different ideas, contacts and professional experience, and thus it opens **new opportunities for partnerships and joint projects.** According to the words of the interviewed office workers at the Tourist Information Centre in Varshets: *"Around the festival, many other things happened. An event of the British Council. The website "Our memories". A children competition ["My street" project]", and more: "At the moment, we develop a project for cross-border cooperation. We keep the festival in mind."*

And last, but not least – the festival provides an **example of decentralization of cultural life** through the organization of an international cultural event in an extremely small settlement. It is also a proof that an international festival which stake on new media and contemporary arts, can take place with local support and volunteer labor, not necessarily counting on big international donors. In addition, for the people of the region the festival provides access to cultural patterns which are different from the standard cultural production reaching them through media and traditional cultural channels.

Negative impacts

The research does not show any negative impacts caused by the festival on the village or the region.

At the same time, several potentially problematic points were shown, among them – the great expectations of the village people, which could easily turn into disappointment, eventual tension between Gorna Bela Rechka and the surrounding villages, as well as the chance that the raising of the real estate prices in the village could be seen more like a problem than like a positive impact.
The development of the project, though, shows that the probability of real problems on these subjects is extremely low.

Reasons for successes

Bela Rechka project owes its success and its great influence on the local people to a complex of factors, some of which listed below.

Clear vision and flexible implementation

Bela Rechka is not a classic project. It is more like a research project, which often achieves results different from the preliminary expected. One could also say that Bela Rechka is an artistic project, to a great extent based on improvisation. But it has one of the main characteristics of the successful project – a clear vision of the direction it is going to, and of the type of change it wishes to achieve.

Sensibility, smoothness, gradualness

The sensibility is a very important element of the idea of Bela Rechka project, which through the years tries (and succeeds) to establish a strong connection to the local people and the village. The sincere aspiration to develop in unison with the processes in the village, not hurting its atmosphere, is characteristic of the project. It brings new things in the village, but it is trying to do so in smooth and gradual manner.

Tradition and modernity

The combination of the interest to the memories, past and tradition with modern technologies and ways of expression has turned into a watermark of the festival as well as its main distinctive characteristic.

This unique feature of the festival continues to provoke interest – in Bulgaria as well as abroad.

Effective work with media

The extremely broad media coverage of the festival is directly connected to many of the effects, described in this report – the local image building, a part of the economic effects, the raising of the self-confidence of the local people, etc.

In addition, the active presentation of the project through Internet is of key importance for the dissemination of information to certain target groups, the first among them - youth.

Mobilizing local support

The festival receives strong support from the village people and the local authorities in the form of volunteer work,logistic support in kind and cash donations.

The strong local support is a sign that the local people accept the festival, and they support it. This is a very important guarantee of its future sustainability.

Strong leadership

The Bela Rechka project owes a great part of its success to the strong team as well as the leadership person with clear vision, able to involve people.

Continuity

The GOATMILK festival is not a one-time event. The village people see that festival organizers come constantly in the village, and this probably makes them feel assured that the events will keep happening in Gorna Bela Rechka. Diana, Mariana, Kalin and the other members of the festival care to there team so often, that they are not in fact "outsiders" for the village anymore.

The trust building is a long process which takes patience and persistency, and in this respect the Bela Rechka project team has obviously done a lot.

Art in Industrial Environment – the Experience of Art in Action Association

Dobrin Atanasov

Dobrin Atanasov is born in 1978 in Gabrovo, Bulgaria. He graduated Sofia University St. Climent of Ohrid with MA in Art Pedagogy. At present he lectures contemporary art (Sofia University). His artistic work is in the field of the modern art - installations, performances, videoart and photography. Dobrin works in Bulgaria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Estonia. He is developing and implementing educational projects with European participation. He is member of Art In Action Assosiation.as well as cofounder and vicepresident of ALOS – Center for Informal Education and Cultural Activities and is also its.

Art in Action Association is an independent organization, with a special interest in the field of contemporary art and specific experience of working in areas situated away from the cultural centers. Since its establishment in the 1990s, the Association has specialized in regional and intercultural projects implemented in towns and villages all over the country. Local communities often do not have any information about the contemporary art forms and methods of expression. But at the same time they play an important role in artistic projects developed by Art in Action Association - they witness artistic work personally, sometimes they are engaged in, and often are the only audience of these art actions.

In this viewpoint, only some stages of one of the current Association's projects are presented, since its experience is really vast to be fully described in this text. The project's title is Areas-Authors-Conceptions. It began with *Factory for Princesses* which took place at the textile factory in Kazanluk in 2005.

Although different authors are included in the project there is a common concept which includes active artistic interaction with the place – and it could be natural landmark, cultural site or industrial space in certain region. Until now, the following art actions were realized as part of the project: Lost Dialogue Action held at the *Retro ujut* furnicher factory in Yambol; Meanings and Signs Action - at the *Devetaki cave* in Devetaki village area, Krushuna Waterfalls and some factories in Lovetch; Soft Materials Action - at the *Velbajd textile* factory in Kyustendil.

The project has adopted the following principles of work: the authors engaged in the action use materials from the surroundings, and they modify their personal concepts according to the circumstances, becoming a part of the industrial or natural area. Thus, the artistic interventions enter

directly the social and work space without preparation and without giving any detailed information for the essence of the actions to the people working or simply present on the spot.

The participants of the project work in the factories during daytime, without interrupting the production cycle. The permission to work in these areas is taken directly from the factories' owners. The workers don't know anything about the nature of the happening; they are told that somebody will make some videos there. Apart from building installations on the work places and getting real objects out of their context, the art activities include direct intervention in the work zones using the methods of art action and performance. An active performance group is crucial in order to provoke and involve people into artistic action.

The results in social and communication aspects are really interesting. The workers, who are not quite connected to the local cultural processes, show a real interest in what is happening around

them. They do not hide their curiosity about the artists and their work, and they ask numerous questions about the activities, preparation or even private life of the artists. Almost everybody is eager to cooperate in the art work, and even more – people are ready to ignore their own work and help. The things happening may seemes strange to them, far from their everyday life or their idea of art. They don't really understand the purpose and the meaning of the actions, but nonetheless they are ready to participate, and they show interest. Of course sometimes they could be somehow indiferent, but it is more because they are shy and a bit afraid of the unknown and the alien, which is the exact definition of contemporary art for these people.

In conversations, the owners of the factories where the actions take place say that the happening has made quite strong impressions on the workers, and they discussed it for weeks.

Such actions could also be considered as a kind of mutual therapy:

For the workers - because something different and unexpected suddenly gets into their everyday lives, and they get in touch with a world too remote and even mythological for them. In their minds, the terms art and artist have a classic and traditional meaning ever since their early childhood, and this notion is even deepened by the media. Although it is difficult for them to understand, the people from these communities are starting to feel that something important is happening around them that goes beyond the boundaries of their everyday life. And furthermore, they feel a part of this.

And for the artists, it is very important to get in touch with the industrial space, and to have the possibility to communicate and work directly with people far too different from themselves. Reflection on their concepts as wells as on the expression methods they use sometimes causes a radical change in the direction of their art thinking.

In conclusion, we could use the words of the organisator of the Factory for Princesses action. She says that probably the women who have worked in the textile factory for years, doing the same things every day – they all wanted to be princesses when they were young, to be the center of attention. However, reallity made them do monotone work in the textile factory day after day. That's why the peculiar appearance in their life of people who pay some attention to their work, and who have a completely different point of view to the surrounding environment, turns out to be an extremelly important event.

Community Development and Art: Welcoming the Other Within

Teodor Mladenov

The texts recounts the differences between community development (CD) and art along the lines of traditional Western binaries like ethics/aesthetics, public/private, rational/irrational. Consequently, it describes the fusion between CD and art as a transgression of the boundary separating these opposing terms. Defined as welcoming the other within, such transgression is regarded as a rejuvenating possibility for both CD and art.

Teodor Mladenov has been thinking, talking, reading and/or writing on social exclusion, citizen participation, social construction of disabilities and community development for years. He has been performing as development consultant and researcher on the scene of different Bulgarian and international non-governmental organisations since 2000. Presently he continues his work with NGOs, while considering to expand (and further institutionalise) the social and political insights, gained during his postgraduate study at the University of Sussex (2005/6), by engaging in related doctoral research.

Let us start with outlining a traditional boundary. Community Development (CD) is about improving people's lives. Its activities pertain to the domain of *ethics* and are concerned with the questions of the good and the just. It is essentially interested in the micro-politics of everyday social living – therefore, it is inherently public. From the practitioner's point of view CD brings about tangible results of practical significance, based on logical reasoning, careful planning of interventions, assessing the results and suggesting reasonable improvements. The 'cultural wing' would not completely agree, but one could risk the oversimplification of stating that the iron law of rationality dominates the field.

In contrast, traditional thinking associates art with delight and enjoyment. Its acts and products pertain to the domain of *aesthetics* and are concerned with the question of the beautiful. It has nothing to do with effectiveness or efficiency and generally does not serve practical purposes. In its essence art is irrational, emotional, and private – originating from and coming back to the individual. It is not interested in power or politics and it cannot be useful for improving community's wellbeing. On the contrary, a reasonable level of wellbeing is required for any interest in art to emerge at all.

We could summarise all this drawing a list of binary oppositions:

CD	Art
improving lives	bringing about delight
ethics	aesthetics
good, just	beautiful
public	private
practical	impractical
rational	irrational, emotional

Outlining the boundary which separates the terms in the list enables us to pose the main questions of our inquiry: What does the marriage of CD with art, advocated recently by an increasing number of culturally inclined CD practitioners and/or socially inclined artists, ultimately amount to with respect to our list of dichotomies? Does it reveal a corruption of the development reason, a contamination of (A) the pragmatic, down-to-earth concerns of the development practitioner for the wellbeing of the public, with (NON-A) the irrational, impractical, self-centred, inherently private creative activity of the artist? Or – the other way round – isn't it a mere perversion of art to utilise its high, uncanny 'agents', 'processes' and 'products' for mundane, vulgar, practical purposes?

Yet, it seems that something is wrong with our last two questions. They are posed within the framework of the binary oppositions already outlined and therefore presuppose these oppositions, take them for granted and reinforce them. Consequently, we should reformulate our inquiry, delving a bit deeper or a bit bolder, trying to see how the coupling of CD and art could challenge the very boundary splitting the table. We could then point out the way such a transgression highlights important aspects of both development work and art, which have hitherto remained hidden by traditional dichotomies – and thus probably even change the way we think about, experience and do community development and art.

Let us prepare ourselves by inquiring about the meaning of 'community'. From the very moment the individual starts to exist as a human being, s/he is necessarily *already within* a community. Individual existence is always already marked by communality, submerged in constant enacting of shared behavioural patterns, in never-ending mastering and synchronising of role repertoires, in ceaseless (re)orienting oneself in what is commonly held as proper and normal. Swimming in this socio-cultural milieu like fish in water, people usually disregard it – it is too close to one, too pervasive to be noticed. Consequently, to 'develop a community' could mean to strengthen the sense of this communal background – to show the water to the fish, to emphasise that one is always already a node in a social network, that social occurrences partake in the very basis of individual existence.

Thus, community development *highlights the social in the individual.* This essential characteristic allows it, by incorporating art in its practices, to elicit the relational and processual aspects of the work of art and with this to de-reify its thing-like countenance. CD is able to show us that there is much more to art than the art 'product'. For example, when a development practitioner encourages community members to draw their vision of the future, the resulting picture is not meant to be the focal point of the activity. It is not the picture that is important here, but its becoming. Indeed, we are tempted to say 'its *drawing*', but this actually clouds the issue because 'drawing' is but a small part of the *becoming* of any picture. A good CD practitioner would make us see this clearly.

Importantly, the becoming we are talking about involves both the activities of production and reception of the work. Thus, what really counts is the interaction before, after, or more generally – *with regard* to the physical 'appearance' of the artefact or the event. It is within this interactional frame of reference that art *takes place* – and it is this interactional frame that is the focal point of CD practice.

But isn't it ridiculous to designate the outcomes of CD workshops as 'works of art'? Aren't we misusing the concept of 'art' here just to enhance the image of what development practitioners are doing?

We already encountered these questions of 'misuse', 'contamination' or 'perversion' of the one term of the binary couple with the other. And as we did earlier in the paper, here again we will abstain from answering them, for any attempt to answer would impose on us the very framework of dichotomies we want to challenge. Yet, it is worth pointing out that such questioning is symptomatic of the way the boundary gets safeguarded against transgressions – i.e., against attempts at redefining one of the terms of the binary by implying that it contains the trace of its other *within* itself, or even as *constitutive* of itself.

To summarise, the incorporation of art in CD helps us see (and experience) the creative artefact and/or event within the framework of the relationships and processes surrounding it and making it a 'work of art'. It helps us recognise the water, thus expanding our understanding of what kind of fish the art is. Interestingly, such a turn could also challenge the reduction of art to a commodity to be sold and bought, but the critique of marketization goes well beyond the scope of this paper. What is important here is the awareness brought about by CD that art is essentially a relational (social, worldly) phenomenon, which necessarily partakes in the micro-politics of everyday living. The 'beautiful' is inherently concerned with the 'good' and the 'just' – no matter how private, every brushstroke is also a public, political, power-invested gesture. Such a conclusion bears far-reaching consequences, meticulously explored in recent decades by feminist, queer, cultural and disability studies. Again, the space does not allow us to elaborate further on these here.

Yet, does the reverse also hold true? Does the incorporation of art in CD reveal something about community development itself? And could this merging change the way we feel about and/or understand CD?

It is time to focus on the 'development' part of the 'community development' ensemble now. As was already noted, art is concerned with the 'irrational' – at least in our (Western) culture. Could its fusion with CD then challenge the *law of rationality*, implied in any effort to purposefully *develop* a community? For purposeful development always calls for calculability, predictability and comparability of actions and their results. It tends to render human behaviour in linear terms, incorporating it within a chain of causes and effects – we invest resources to produce actions, actions are measured by their outputs, outputs lead to outcomes, outcomes have effects, etc. Otherwise, no planning and/or budgeting and/or managing and/or monitoring and/or evaluating would be possible. Designing and implementing development necessitates rational thought and action. But while we might sometimes feel uncomfortable with excesses of rationalisation (as is the case with bureaucratisation), it is still hard to see why the domination of rationality in the field of CD could be problematic.

It was three years ago that the author got the chance to articulate these issues in a number of insightful conversations with a colleague of his, Vera Dakova. As a development consultant, Vera was concerned about the lack of creativity in project development, reporting and evaluation. It was often the case that the creative deficit was inherently related to a widespread appropriation and replication of a certain model of 'passionless' but 'sellable' projects in the field of CD. The issue then withdrew to the background and resided there for long. Yet, at the beginning of this year the author was happy to see it revived in a position paper, written by the Executive Director of the Trust for the Civil Society in Central and Eastern Europe. In her Executive Letter dated February 2007 Rayna Gavrilova reflects on the quality of the project proposals submitted to the Trust in 2006. Garvailova points out that somehow 'the passion is gone [from the new projects]' – '[o]ut of the close to 1000 project proposals we received, the vast majority consisted of well-written, polite and correct professional texts'[1] . And she comments that the majority of established non-governmental organizations have evolved into professional intermediaries, i.e. experts and permanent staff with long experience, social security, attractive salaries, self-confidence, little innovation but good delivery of routine operations'[2].

It is precisely the invasion of this '*little innovation* but good delivery of *routine operations*' in the field of development that is at stake here. We were probably anticipating it in 2004, when Vera started talking about rejuvenating development by injecting creativity in it. Now, in 2007, it is already the donors who highlight the issue. The point is that this lack of innovation and this routinisation would stand out even more clearly as a problem if we look at it against the background of art's inherent features. For in its essence art is *always innovative and never routine*. In addition, it is always and necessarily circular and polysemic. Thus, what art teaches us about human existence is that it could never be reduced to a calculable set of linear, fully predictable cause and effect relationships. Consequently, when incorporated in CD practice, art bears the potential of highlighting the 'passion' aspect of it – it suggests that the creative, the unpredictable, the unmanageable is at least as needed for boosting the community 'spirit' as is the carefully planned and measurable. Art emphasises the *incalculable* in CD practice, the impossibility of reducing community work to a totally rational and therefore *programmable* activity.

To summarise, we have described two major transgressions of the boundary between traditional dichotomies, enlisted at the beginning – both of them elicited in the interplay between CD and art. The two transgressions go in opposite directions (indicated by the arrows):

good/just   beautiful

rational (calculable)   irrational (incalculable)
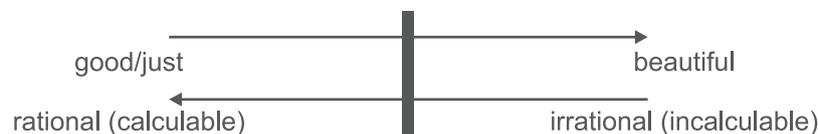
Each of the arrows bears a promise – and we might have already noticed that these are promises of 'border-crossers' (or 'migrants', as one could say in accord with the big issues of today). The promise of the first 'border-crosser' is the de-reification of the artefacts and the politicisation of the private sphere. The promise of the second 'border-crosser' is the limiting of the instrumental rationality and the bringing of the incalculable, 'private' values of human existence back into the

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[1] Gavrilova, R. (2007) 'Executive Letter – February 2007', available online at http://ceetrust.org/index.php?ar=15 (accessed 22 October 2007); n. pag.
[2] *Ibid.*

'public' game of social development. The former teaches us not to reduce the works of art to self-contained objects or events, confined to the area of private 'passions' – for no human passion is completely private. The latter teaches us not to reduce development to a set of calculable occurrences – for no occurrence concerning human existence is completely calculable. The former makes us more communal, the later – more tolerant towards the undecidable.

There is one more issue to be pointed out before closing the present exercise in critical development thinking. Arguably, besides promises, the two arrows of transgression breed *risks and dangers* too (as dose every 'migration').

Firstly, the aestheticisation of development work could alienate CD practice from its down-to-earth basis. This is the danger of diverting development from its grand mission to bring about tangible improvements in people's lives. Secondly, the rationalisation of art could easily suppress its irrationality, incalculability and undecidability under the weight of institutionalisation, rutinisation and bureaucratisation.

No art could survive bureaucratic calculation. Indeed, we already implied these dangers by raising the questions about the corruption of development reason by the 'impracticality' of art and the perversion of art by the 'vulgarity' of development work. And we have so far twice refused to directly address these issues, fearing not to solidify the boundary we originally intended to challenge. The problem is that such questioning brings about the fallacy of the either-or alternative between exclusion and assimilation – to be practical, CD should *either exclude* the impracticality of art or *assimilate* it and make it comply with its ultimately practical purposes. Art, on its behalf, should *either exclude* the practical concerns of CD, or *assimilate* them, while retaining its essential irrationality, incalculability and undecidability. Both options count on the *annihilations of the otherness of the other and sustaining the boundary around the same.*

Yet, there is probably another option too. Probably it would be possible to escape the false alternative between exclusion and assimilation by eliciting *the irreducible trace of otherness at the very heart of the same.* Could development work provide hospitality to art as the trace of the other *within* itself, thus expanding and challenging the alleged rationalistic purity of its pragmatic, down-to-earth base? Could art accommodate developmental rationality, recognising it as a trace of the other *within* itself, and thus become more sensitive towards its inherent relationality and publicness? Probably. What seems sure is that as far as one keeps trying, there is still hope for community.

Communication – Photographic Workshops with Young in Multiethnic Regions

Ana Adamovic

Communication project is conceived as creative educational program for young in unstable regions with unsolved ethnic problems that could help in establishing the dialogue and communication between the citizens of different national groups. Project starts from the belief that art is an efficient tool in solving the social and political problems. It challenges and examines the possibilities for a consistent dialogue among the members of different ethnic groups while applying the communication methods based upon photography workshops.

Ana Adamovic (Belgrade, 1974) graduated at the World Literature department in Belgrade and studied photography at the Art Institute of Boston. She was publishes photographs in numerous magazines and cooperates with many humanitarian and advertising agencies. She is founder of Belgrade based organization KIOSK. Lives and works in Belgrade.

Communication project is conceived as a creative educational program for young that could help in establishing the dialogue and communication between the citizens of different national groups in unstable regions with unsolved ethnic problems. Project starts from the belief that art is an efficient tool in solving the social and political problems.

After the wars in the Former Yugoslavia, that were based on the ethnic conflicts, the whole region is still facing unsolved problems related to establishing a genuine dialogue among various ethnic groups living together on the same territory. This project challenges and examines the possibilities for a consistent dialogue among the members of different ethnic groups while applying the communication methods based upon photography workshops.

The generation this project is primarily targeting is the one born and raised during the times of wars and conflicts. Also, this generation, generation of young people born at the beginning of the 90's are the future decision makers in the region. That is the main reason we are working with them – we believe that they are old enough to have certain prejudice against the others,

but that these prejudice are still not that strong and that some of their attitudes could be changed through joint work and creative projects. If they decide to spend some time together, if they decide to communicate with each other, listen to each other, there is a possibility that the future of the region we inhabit could be better.

Communication project started in 2005 in South Serbia region. Nineteen young Serbs, Albanians and Roma from cities of Bujanovac and Presevo, were gathered on photographic workshops where, during several months, they worked together on documenting their lives and learning more about each other. In 2006 workshops were organized in three more cities, so the project involved eighty young people from Subotica, Novi Pazar, Pristina and Bujanovac. Two more Belgrade based artists and one art historian were invited to conduct the workshops – Tatjana Strugar, Dorijan Kolundzija and Vladimir Tupanjac. Art historian, curator and one of KIOSK's co-founders, Milica Pekic Conev, was the main coordinator of the project. The first year of the project was supported by Olof Palme International Center, while British Embassy in Belgrade supported the second.

Photographing together on numerous subjects, week through week, young people of different nationalities were getting to know each other better and starting a dialogue. Establishing of that, more then necessary dialogue is the very goal of this project.

Multiethnic, art-based workshops are held for years around the world in the regions prone to the conflict. Needless to say, that practice is used in Serbia as well. However, majority of these workshops are based on theater methods, so KIOSK is one of the first organizations working in the field of contemporary art conducting photography-based workshops. The choice of photography for these kinds of workshops seemed more than logical since photography is still considered as one of the most open and objective art mediums.

In the first year of the workshops we defined ten subjects that were proposed for young participants to photograph on. (More or less, they've stayed the same in the following year as well.) Some of the subjects on which young people were photographing were Self-Portrait, Home/

Family, The Others, Friend/ Enemy, Tradition, Fear, Happiness… These subjects were chosen since they have the same importance and interest for all people, no matter of their nationality. Photographing from week to week they are presenting their lives, friends, views, believes. Work they are producing is a ground for the discussions happening during our weekly meetings.

From the very beginning of the workshop process our idea was not to teach them photographic techniques, but we rather tried to use the photographic medium as a tool of communication. Workshop participants are using simple point and shoot cameras and color negative films. Thus their concentration is really focused on the very act of photographic perception. On the other hand, during the course of the workshops, we are trying to introduce them to some of the most important photographic projects, in particular the documentary ones. Consequently, our young workshop participants are starting to understand the power that photography today still has as a medium by which a message can be sent, but also a power art in general can have in stressing out the important issues of the today's world. Exposed to these important photographic bodies of work, they start to see works they are producing from a slightly different perspective as well.

At the weekly meetings, first they edit the work they want to show to the rest of the group, choosing the photographs they feel would explain their attitudes about the certain subject the best. Thus, they are creating a certain narrative, they are trying to express their views or feelings through the images. Once the images are on the wall of the room where we work, they become a public thing, since the whole group is invited to comment on them. Consequently, important thing they are learning is the necessity of articulating opinions or the art work, and explain it and defended it if needed. Photographs they are making are becoming a basis for their discussions on various subjects.

Naturally, their views are often different, on many subjects quite opposite, and sometimes leading to conflict. Conflict situations like that are happening more often during the workshops held in regions like Kosovo or South Serbia, where young people are coming from nationalities living in the state of prejudice and animosities against each others for years. But, even during the most eager discussions, they are listening to each other with the respect and trying to be as sincere as possible. Actually, the tolerance and understanding they are showing during these debates is admiring especially since these young people spent better parts of their lives in crisis or potential crisis situations.

In the course of the workshops, we organize one day long field trip, when we visit a place or places that are close to the homes of our young participants but where they never go. For example, in South Serbia or on Kosovo we usually visit churches and mosques since religion played an important part in the conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia, but young people don't know anything about religions different then theirs while learned to have prejudice. Also, we are taking them to visit people living in different conditions then theirs, like Roma settlement near Novi Pazar 2006's workshops. During the day, participants make a lot of photographs, so this work is discussed on the following week.

At the end of the workshop process, the group is editing the photographic work together, creating a joint body of work that will be presented on the exhibitions and in the publication about the project. By working on this task together, the idea is to present a work of the group, to create a statement about their lives and experiences through photographs, rather than present a separate images. These final materials create an exceptional document about one generation growing up in the state of crises, isolation and constant animosities. Also, they are working on their final ver-

bal statements that are published in the publication and filmed for the video documentation about the project.

The final exhibitions in the cities where workshops were conducted are very important events and one of the crucial moments of the project. For the first time, young people we are working with are presenting their photographic art works to the public, most often in the local galleries, cultural centers or museums. The media interest is always very big for the project, so they become stars for that one night, giving interviews, talking about their work. This way of presentation of the project stresses out the importance and possibility of multiethnic dialogue publicly once again. Since 2005, Communication project was presented at nine exhibitions in the region and abroad, in two publications, on several conferences and in numerous TV and radio reportages.

Projects of this kind are immensely important.

And not only for obvious reasons like enabling a multiethnic dialogue in the regions where that dialogue is hardly existent.

They are important since young people realize that their opinions, feelings have value, that they have a right to be listened to.

They learn to express themselves artistically, learn new things, create new friendships, experience new things.

But, projects like this are also important for the artists working with these young people.

We all live and operate in more or less closed circles, we spend most of our time communicating with the fellow artists or people working in the domain of culture, working on our projects, exhibiting in the professional galleries and for the public of connoisseurs. In that sense, working on the project like this is a kind of a reality check. You are faced with young people whose opinions are on one way filled with the prejudice since they grew up in an environment that was a perfect ground for them, but at the other hand who are more open to the new ideas than anyone we know anymore. Also, photographically speaking, since they don't have a formal training and facing the medium more seriously for the first time in their lives, they are not strained by the rules or tradition, so the way they are seeing the world around them is amazing. Their perception is fresh, sincere and spontaneous, so the results are photographs that many professional photographs and artists can only dream about. Spending time with them leave precious traces in us both as humans and artists.

"The World Survived Because it Laughed": Humorscapes/Artscapes of Development in Bulgaria and Cuba

Nadezhda Savova

This article explores how the similar community cultural centers networks in Bulgaria *(chitalishte)* and Cuba *(casas de cultura)* employ vernacular arts, across what the author calls "*artscapes* without borders," in the complex construction of community. It also examines how humor and collective laughing, within *humorscapes* engaging art and politics, performs a peculiar agency for negotiating social issues.

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HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THAT…

Gabrovo is the only city where you can exchange humor for trash. Nestled in the bosom of the Bulgarian Balkan Mountain, lying across the center of the country, Gabrovo is a middle-size, picturesque city famous for its witty inhabitants. Infact, Gabrovians like boasting, a Russian astronomer in the 70s had heard about the "world capital of humor" and thus, in the same facetious mood, called it Planet Gabrovo, which thus physically exists not only as the humorous nucleus of local cosmology.

Santiago, on its part, is where humor sells food. Perched on sea-side hills, Santiago is the capital of Afro-Cuban music and streets famous for their sonoric peculiarity of ambulant food vendors' songs (*pregones*) and ambulant percussion groups (*congas*) that pick up crowds of revelers amidst kinetic urban architecture. In a longer, trans-border displacement, the *conga* from Santiago made it all the way to Gabrovo in the 80s when socialist Bulgaria trained workers from the biggest textile factory in Cuba, *La Textilera* in Santiago, and when the exchange was more cultural than professional with Cubans joining with their

conga the Gabrovo Carnaval.

While humor and the *conga* forge the "intangible" connection between Gabrovo and Santiago, the two cities and countries are linked in "tangible" terms through similar networks of community cultural centers funded by their Ministries of Culture. In Bulgaria they are called *chitalishte*[1] , to which *dom na kulturata* (house of culture) was added under Socialism as bigger performance halls, and Cuba imported the "house of culture" (*casa de cultura*[2]) **concept from its socialist allies in the 80s and engaged in cultural exchange with Bulgarian *chitalishte* and *houses of culture*, embodied in the Cuban dance instructors who still remember Balkan folk dances.** The "house of culture" notion, however, is far from "communist" yet deeply community-rooted: born in the 1850s as a locally-organized library, "the *chitalishte* is the first classless non-governmental organization in Europe – not charity but membership-based - open to all people to spread education, enlightenment [*prosveta*] and art!,"[3] says Totka Polyakova, the secretary of *Chitalishte* Gabrovo.

Artscapes without borders

Chitalishte Gabrovo is illustrative of the transformations that the *chitalishte* underwent during the "transition period" of decreased state funding, when, while some shut down and their number fell from 4200 in 1995[4] to about 3500 at present, many other found creative solutions within their legal status as a non-governmental organization, striving to reconfigure along the market economy principles that translate into the non-profit sector as fierce grant competitions. *Chitalishte* Gabrovo was established in 2002, being one of the most recently registered in the country, and its initial purpose was to "unite in one family" the amateur choirs and dance groups from disintegrated institutions, such as houses for art-based child-care (*dom za rabota s detza*), houses of culture, tourist associations, and factories. I argue that the artistic base and pre-socialist history helped the *chitalishte* persist with ever newer activities, unlike other institutions, either destroyed in anti-Communism impetus such as the collective farms, or fallen apart as the "houses of culture," which lacked community ties[5].

In only the five years of its existence, *Chitalishte* Gabrovo has worked on many projects, organized a yearly International Orthodox Church Singing Festival, and has twenty amateur groups members, from folk singing and dancing to ballet and modern dance. Organizing concerts for private companies is fund-raising for the groups to travel to festivals, and journalism students volunteer for publicity. "We have tried to connect the *chitalishte* as a cultural and artistic center to other spheres in society such as church, schools, business, and ecology," says Polyakova, and this has been a trend for other *chitalishte* around Bulgaria, trained in grant-writing by the UNDP-supported *Chitalishte* Development Foundation (CDF), **which wants to see the *chitalishte***

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[1] The name relates to the verb "to read" (*cheta*), standing for "reading place."
[2] Unlike other socialist countries where the term "house of culture" replaced, if there already were, similar local institutions, in Bulgaria the *chitalishte* always remained *the* community cultural center, while the "houses of culture" were mainly concert spaces. Thus, it is the *chitalishte* that corresponds to the Cuban small, community-based *casas de cultura*, although the latter translates into "house of culture" (*dom na kulturata*).
[3] Interview with Totka Polyakova conducted by Nadezhda Savova on August 10, 2007. *Chitalishte Gabrovo*, Gabrovo, Bulgaria.
[4] Kondarev, N. and Sirakov, S., and Cholov, P., eds. 1979. *The People's Chitalishte in Bulgaria* [Народните читалища в България], Vol. 2., quoted in *The Chitalishte in Bulgaria*: Past, present, and future [Читалищата в България: Минало, Настояще и Бъдеще]. 2000. United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Sofia.
[5] A similar process of the revival of the "community" for local development through the arts takes place at "houses of culture" across former-socialist countries, where those "houses" were not concert hall like the Bulgarian ones, but operated like the *chitalishte* in neighborhood contexts. Knowledge of these dynamics was derived when presenting a paper at the *Conference on Houses of Culture in Post-Socialism*, at the Max-Plank Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany, September 2007.

grow into computer-equipped information centers. The focus of the *chitalishte*, as well as of the *casas de cultura*, however remains the arts for its multiple intellectual and spiritual ramifications. These landscapes of vernacular arts [*samodeino iskustvo*] at community cultural centers across countries is what I would refer to as artscapes, borrowing the notion of "scape" as a non-fixed, kinetic space from Appadurai's (1996) "ethnoscape,[6]" where "for the project of the nation-state, neighborhoods represent a perennial source of entropy and slippage" (191[7]). **"*Artscapes* without borders"[8] are like landscapes in their function of infusing daily life with art that used to be understood within secluded "high" circles.**

"Our projects try to bring back the culture of having a community:" this is how *Chitalishte* Gabrovo faces the post-communist individualism that despises the politically-burdened notions of "community," "collective," and "public." But what, then, does the concept of "community" and "development through the arts" mean in a "still-Communist" context, and what can we learn from it? The State position is that the *casas de cultura*[9] aim to "form truly integral and harmonious personalities" by fostering "the spending of increasingly educated and productive recreational time of the population (Gómez in Canclini 1988: 367[10])." The *casas* have indeed fostered a remarkable rise in amateur creativity, with 18,000 groups as of 1975 compared to only 1000 in 1964 (Craven 1990: 105[11]); however, ethnographic studies on how these local institutions play into social well-being have not been conducted, and this paper is a short introduction to the topic, drawing on six months research in Bulgaria (2006-2007), mainly in the Gabrovo region, and in Santiago de Cuba during June-July 2007.

The Cuban *casas de cultura* do not yet face the lack of funding as their Bulgarian counterpart and thus offer many more free classes. State funding, however, also comes with strings attached of top-down methodology control on instruction content and form, as well as censorship imposed on hip-hop concerts, plays, and poetry readings.

And yet, art instructors share that even these rules can be creatively molded: "it is art, after all," they would smile.

As Cubans have few options for entertainment in an economy tied to yet fighting the dollar, the casas provide crucial space for leisure, fun, meetings, music practices, concerts, collective art-making, joking, or just sipping coffee in the cool patios. At the *chitalishte*, alongside paid modern classes (from Latin dance to martial arts), one sees a new trend in informal folk dance conceptu-

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6 In Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. The concept of "ethnoscape" expresses how "the landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapes – around the world are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (48). Thus, Appadurai argues for the development of a "macroethnography" (52) to be able to embrace the multiple-level dynamics of "modernity."

8 The *vernacular "artscapes* without borders" concept builds on the *professional* international artists' network Art Without Borders, created by Bulgarian sculptor Valentin Vassilev and U.S. sculptor/painter Rafael Arrieta-Eskarzaga "to present contemporary art from the viewpoint of the artist as well as to offer artists a forum to communicate their perceptions of art and their outlook on life" (< http://www.pipeline.com/~artistarresk/index.html>). It was also inspired by organizations like Clowns, Engineers, and Doctors Without Borders, with the difference that the *artscapes* I discuss are, at least partially, state-funded, which adds a new dimension.

9 The fundamental political units in Cuba are 169 municipalities, and there are more than 200 *casas de cultura*, administered by the municipalities under the directives of the Ministry of Culture.

10 Gómez, Georgina Grande. 1988. "La casa de cultura cubana: instituto para la participacion masiva del pueblo." *In Cultura transnacional y culturas populares*, ed. Nestor García Canclini and Rafael Roncagliolo. Lima: Instituto Para América Latina, pp. 335-367.

11 Craven, David. 1990. "The State of Cultural Democracy in Cuba and Nicaragua during the 1980s." *Latin American Perspectives*. Craven states that, when the early 80s witnessed a process of power transfers to the local levels (*poder local*), "foremost in this development has been the establishment of a national network of *Casas de Cultura* (Houses of Culture)," as the structure whose aim is "to bring people into direct contact with art, to disseminate culture, to raise educational level of the population, and to provide it with opportunities for leisure and recreation (Craven 1990: 105).

alized by adolescents and adults over a spectrum from "fitness exercises," "fun," and "stress-re-lease," to "learning to be able to dance at weddings [where folk dancing is a key ritual moment]," and "feeling connected to our ancestors, to our 'Bulgarianness'". In both Cuba and Bulgaria, the amateur performance groups[12] of ages **mostly 15-30 share that being able to travel to festivals internationally and domestically is critical in their understanding of the world and their own countries, sharing their home *artscapes* abroad and thus infusing them with greater value in the eyes of the locals.**

In their reach to the broader community, art instructors from the casas work with other institutions, such as elderly hospices (*casas de abuelos*) and elderly community associations (*círculos de abuelos*), penitentiaries, and work places. The *chitalishte*, however, now rarely have instructors on staff and cannot reach *out* but rather bring *in* the community for local and national celebrations, which in smaller towns and villages are highlights that people expect and discuss throughout the year. The *casas* also attract people through their implementation of UNESCO's Living Human Treasures Program promoting local *curanderos* (natural healers) and traditional dance groups.

The *casas de cultura* thus challenge Habermas' (1989a[13];1989b;[14] and see Habermas in Fernandez 2006[15]) "communicative theory" that lively public spaces can exist only outside of authoritarian regimes, perhaps because Habermas did not explore vernacular arts. "There is something else to which we are witness, and which we might describe as the *insurrection of subjugated knowledges*" (Foucault 1994 [1976]: 202[16]) at the community cultural centers, even if state-funded, that accumulate their own mixture of social and cultural capitals, which I called in a previous article *community creative capital* (Savova 2007[17]).

Humorscapes: laughing as building community

"Civil society building," tailored after the US non-governmenal ideals, is circulating in the various projects of *Chitalishte* Gabrovo. Their *Humor for Trash* Project engaged a working-class community to clean up the neglected public spaces and "exchange" the trash for comic prizes and skits. *Chitalishte* Gabrovo's effort, as well as those of many other *chitalishte*, is to dissociate from socialism and connect to democracy the values of social cooperation and collective ownership of public space: their way was to infuse the streetscape with the humorscape. In another project of intra-ethnic cultural exchange among Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities, the Chitalishte tried to bridge "ethnoscapes" through humorscapes, which I call the spaces where creating

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[12] Cuban heritage transmission does not occur directly within the spaces of the *casas* as in Bulgaria, and folk dance was never subjected to a Soviet-style homogenization. It rather underwent a technical institutionalization where the *casas*' Traditional Popular Culture officer offers "spiritual attention" by listing under their auspices all local traditional dance, song, music, and religious *grupos portadores* (carriers of tradition), divided mainly into Spanish, Afro-Cuban, or Haitian-Cuban heritage. While traditional popular culture dances taught in workshops are quite similar across board, the listed heritage groups have preserved their unique practices, even though they do "represent" the casa de cultura and not their actual community.

[13] Habermas, Jurgen. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,* trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press.

[14] Habermas, Jurgen. 1989. "Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Practice in a Scientific Civilization," in *Jurgen Habermas On Society and Politics: A Reader,* ed. by Steven Seidman. Beacon Press. pp. 29-54.

[15] Fernandez, Sujatha. 2006. *Cuba Represent: Cuban Arts, State Power, and the Making of New Revolutionary Cultures.* Durkham: Duke University Press.

[16] Foucault, Michel. 1976. "Two Lectures," pp. 200 – 222, in *Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory,* ed. by Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry Ortner. 1994. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[17] Savova, Nadezhda. 2007. "Community Creative Capital: UNESCO's Intangible Heritage Politics Revisited at the Bulgarian Chitalishte." *The International Journal of the Arts in Society.* CG Publisher. August 2007. Also available at < http://ija.cgpublisher.com/product/pub.85/prod.171>.

laughter together becomes an artistic process that both negotiates differences and generates certain shared sensibilities. Whereas in Western Europe, a recent turn in fighting social exclusion[18] focused on the public libraries as providers of information services previously inaccessible (Black and Muddman 1997[19]; Matarasso 1998[20]), the *chitalishe* employ a multilayered approach integrating public, non-governmental, and voluntary organizations converging at the local *humorscape* in *community creative capital* - that much "richer" if it makes people laugh together.

While in Gabrovo humor is exchanged for trash, in Santiago humor sells food, in the humorous *pregon* songs of the ambulant food vendors. Chavela, Director of the Department of *Cultura Popular Tradicional* at the *Casas de Cultura* Provincial Office describes how they have been **promoting the *pregon* by recognizing old *pregoneros* with the National Community Culture Award (*Premio Nacional de Cultura Comunitaria*) for "preserving the values of community ties," and organizing *Festival del Pregon* with dozens of *pregoneros* and *casas* volunteers. The *casas*' scrumptious traditional cooking initiatives have also "helped communities get together in exciting new ways."**[21] The *casas*-led recognition of the *pregon* as national heritage is ethnographically sensed in the pleasure with which anyone in the streets can improvise a funny *pregon*, just like a Gabrovian would a self-mocking joke.

At the *18th International Biennial of Humor and Satire in the Arts*, on May 19, 2007, the House of Humor and Satire (HOHS) in Gabrovo, a state-funded cultural institution, presented the city as having two parliaments: the Municipality and the House of Humor and Satire, in charge of perpetuating the pleasant laws of humor with winking defiance of economic stagnation. Indeed, the politics of fun was circulating throughout the *blagolaj* event (an old term for "noble, white lie") with individuals competing from clubs of joke-tellers at *chitalishte* around the country.

The economy of laughter exchange between politics and civil society is the power engine of the *humorscape*. Gabrovo's *humorscape*, just like Appadurai's "ethnoscapes," transcended the geographic boundary of Bulgaria and invited jokes from the Bulgarian communities abroad,

with winner the Club of Bulgarian Women and Families in Hamburg where a Gabrovian organizes Festival of Humor as a facetious export of ethnic sensitivities. Beyond Gabrovo, *humorscapes* are spread in many *chitalishte*, hosting clubs of *zevzetzi, veselitazi, gavradjii, shegobiitzi, shegadjii,* or *cheshiti*, all nuanced terms for joke-tellers. The winner of the *Blagolaj*, the Secretary of the *chitalishte* in the village of Damianovo (Sevlievo) was convinced that the *chitalishte* "have kept the Bulgarian spirit alive for all these centuries precisely through the arts and culture," and that the *chitalishte* is crucial for society since "it provides a 'stage' for local talents." Her words echoed around the room, in the voices of witty *zevzetzi* from ages 12 through 87.

The President of the *Zevzek* Club at the *chitalishte* in Smolyan argued – quite cogently, I admit – that the National Health Fund must urgently open a *Healing with Humor* Division. *Humorscapes*

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[18] The concept of "social exclusion" has recently come into fashion in the European Union's social policy vocabulary. "Social exclusion is a broader concept than poverty, encompassing not only low material means but the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life and in some characterizations alienation and distance from mainstream society (Duffy, K. 1995. *Social exclusion and human dignity in Europe*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe)."

[19] Black, A. and Muddiman, D. 1997. *Understanding community librarianship: the public library in post-modern Britain*. Aldershot: Avebury.

[20] Matarasso, F. 1998. *Learning development: an introduction to the social impact of libraries*. Bournes Green, Stroud: Comedia.

[21] Interview conducted on July 15, 2007. Provincial Office of *Casas de Cultura*. Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

beyond Gabrovo and the *chitalishte* clubs then spill into people's daily agency of play, which holds on to psychological sanity when the absurd capitalist shock-therapy saw plunging mental illness rates.

Baba Ginka received a special award given by Dr. Stanoy Stanoev for "keeping the essence but changing the form of joke-telling" where this process, traced in Stanoev's other studies on the transformations of Bulgarian jokes[22], is indicative also of the transformations of the Bulgarian *chitalishte*, where the form of cultural activities included more modern options and the main form of funding switched to grants, but kept the essence born more than 150 years ago of striving to be – achieving it in varying degrees in various places - spaces of independent social creativity and anchors of community.

Funny conclusions?

Divided by the Atlantic, Cuba and Bulgaria share fascinating sites of alternative sociability across *artscapes* and *humorscapes*, defined by the kinetic interplay between art and politics. I focused on the collective laughing and art-making within and across state-funded institutions and not non-profit associations per se to take a glimpse at how the arts provide people with agency in the restrictions of a Socialist regime and those of an ambiguous, post-Socialist neo-liberalism.

The funding discrepancy between the two networks is not the key issue, since their intrinsic strength is the *community creative capital,* produced when vernacular arts, from visual to performance, help people find unsuspected talents and niches of self-fulfillment, travel and explore, as well as forge a sense of community across generational, socio-economic, and residential frontiers, among the "artists" and through public events in the neighborhood.

Whether humor tickles trash-collection, dancing, or the *pregon*-style food sales, it is an art form that found its "home" at the Bulgarian and Cuban community cultural centers and from where in clubs and events laughter negotiates the ambiguities of politics and daily life.

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"School Memory": the Experience of White School Foundation in the Village of Stokite

Momchil Tsonev

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There is a common opinion that the local people in the village of Stokite are too old or not qualified to be interested in arts. The ones who want to visit exhibitions or theatre are people concerned professionally in art, education or culture (teachers, a wood carver, the local chitalishte secretary, etc.). "Maybe I would like to visit concerts" is the most wide-spread answer among those whose profession is not related to art, culture or education when someone asks them for their cultural interests.

It is quite a challenge to create an art center focused on contemporary arts in a very small village in Central Bulgaria. It is not the lack of interest that creates the challenge but the misunderstanding of the contemporary art itself. The region lacks major cultural centers, professional audiences, well-qualified art journalists and critics. In fact, local people expect another – may be more "traditional" – kind of art.

In that context, the works of art presented here – in the so-called White School – are sometimes considered provocative and avant-garde in local media and people's opinion. And, on the other hand, the local people are very impressed by the foreign success of the founder and director of the White School – Nikolay Panayotov. He is a French-Bulgarian painter and as local people said: "We don't understand that art but it must be good as the French like it".

How did it all start?

Since 2005, the White School Foundation developed art projects in a former school building at the village of Stokite (Central Bulgaria). The building is as big as 1 500 m2 plus 11 000 m2 open-air yard. The following year Nikolay Panayotov began to organize free visual art classes. Children and young people

were invited to visit the art centre and draw their own pictures.

Furthermore, during the past two years White School Foundation managed several events for promotion of the contemporary art centre, including a feature movie "Dimitrii" (La Femis, 2005), a visual arts workshop (Secile Folveque, Anne Lacouture, Laurent Beshtell, 2006), "Multimedia novel" (Momchil Tsonev, 2007) and the 2007 installations "A museum with cooker for contemporary art" and "Propartcity-1".

But the cultural participation and the access to culture are not the only important points in the White School case. The questions about the local memories and intangible heritage are also very significant.

The collecting and researching the heritage of the local community has somehow become a very important part of the Foundation activities. A variety of artifacts from the village school, a portrait of the social and political development in the last five decades, are preserved in the White School Art Centre. Usually White School projects and works of art involve such artifacts, stimulating a vital reflection of the communist past and local community history.

As a natural development of all these activities, the Foundation has a plan to establish in the village a yearly art festival called White Festival.

A search for local feed-back

In the period between 2005 and 2007, White School Foundation became more and more interested in its relationship with the local people: if they know enough about the foundation activities, what they think about them and –most importantly – what are their wishes, fears and expectations. In search of answers to these and other questions, a special research took place in September 2007.

All of the local people research respondents have a positive attitude towards the art centre. Following the common practice in Bulgaria, the local community had an village meeting before the selling of the former school building, and they adopted a resolution to transfer the property to White School Foundation. The people think that it was inevitable, after the decrease of the population caused the closing of the school in 2000. Nevertheless, some of the older people still feel sad that there is no more a village school in Stokite, and that the few pupils left have to travel and study in the town nearby. But that opinion doesn't reflect negatively on their attitude towards the art centre. As granny Sava said, "I am happy that the school is still called a school (White School). This keeps our school inside us".

Most of the local people have great expectations of the art centre development.

The first group of expectations is connected with some possible benefits to the *local economy* – people hope that the popularity of White School will develop the local business, commercial activities and real estate market. The village has not yet become a preferred destination for rural tourism, although it is situated in a very beautiful and peaceful mountain region. People think that the art centre activities will help the tourist business, because the art project participants will need accommodation. The 82-year old granny Pena who lives next to the school even said, "I heard

good things about it (White School). I hope something good will happen. I hope people here could have jobs."

The second group of expectations is the **hope to lead active life.** "We are waiting for guests. An active life.", "We don't have enough people. We want to revive our village, we want it to be like before – full of people, full of life", said the people.

These great economy and social expectations might be a future challenge for the White School Foundation, as arts and culture haven't yet become a well-developed industry in Bulgaria, especially in the North Central region. Effective future actions would be: all-year White Festival activities, getting involved in tourist agencies' destinations and NGO networks, realizing international and EU projects. But one of the most important steps is to make the local people active. "Something good" could happen only if there are joint actions. Otherwise, the Foundation activities could not change the situation in the region, and a negative shift in the attitudes is possible.

As a result of the local people's nostalgia for their former school one of the strongest expectations of White School Art Centre is to be **a "school" place**. A former teacher expects White School to educate children from the region in the field of arts. As an old man said, "Children have to be directed to arts while they are young, so that some of them could become artists in future". In fact, the free art classes at the art centre still preserve the school atmosphere. The research shows that some of the local people overcome their nostalgia, while expecting a special "museum" to be arranged at the art centre. This **"school memory" expectation** encourages the White School team to develop the "Local History Cube" Program.

Only a few of the local people have concrete **expectations about future White School art activities**. As it was mentioned before, the local people are a little bit skeptical but also curious about the contemporary arts. In this context, the White School is planning to bring contemporary art closer to local people - mostly through free workshops and seminars about art, but also through participation of local volunteers in the process of making art, as well as through using the local school history as a basis for new art.

White School Foundation has always cooperated with the local authorities in Stokite and Sevlievo Municipality, as well as local media, in order to provide the local community with regular information about its work. But the results of the research show that media are not enough to make the foundation's activities well-known by the local community. Most of the older people are not interested in the regional media. Some of them did not know anything about White School projects in the summer of 2007, although there were publications and radio and TV broadcasts about them. In search of the best way to inform local people, the foundation team asked them how they inform themselves. One of the old women answered: "Our village includes a lot of small hamlets, situated quite far away from each other. So we visit people in their homes, or we send everybody invitations for a certain event. There is at least one shop or pub in every hamlet, so we put printed announcements on the walls".

The results of the research motivated the foundation team to upgrade its information strategy. In order to consider local peoples information habits, it would be better to post announcements and provide a lot of information and free participation of local people in the projects' preliminary period.

Instead of conclusion

The work of White School Foundation in the village of Stokite is an interesting example how an artistic project could attract local attention, even if this is not a preliminarily set objective. It is also obvious how dynamic the relationships between the artists and the local community could be. And one of the reasons why is that the artists never come in an empty space – the place has its "memory" which influences both the artists and the local people.

My Street Project
To Say "I Live Here" as the First Step to Social Awareness and Sensitivity

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www.divanova.org

The Bulgarian project **www.moyataulitsa.net** was carried on in the framework of the British Council international project – EU&me in 2006. Hundreds of young people from 9 countries (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, the United Kingdom, Romania, Serbia and Turkey) have been invited to share their hopes and fears about their country's membership in the European Union. Each country decided its own approach within the larger EU&me theme.

Our approach was to use cameras and storytelling - to shoot and write about the streets we live on. What are they like? What are the buildings there? What are our neighbours like? What are our relationships with them? How are our streets likely to change with our country's accession to the European Union?

We had a vision why this was important

First, because we wanted to talk about the EU in an everyday language.

Second, we wanted to encourage a personal and very concrete way of observation of our own immediate environment.

Third, we wanted people to be creative and feel free to express own ideas and notions on a topic that was extremely „polluted" with opinions by media, politicians and experts.

Forth, we wanted to give equal right to people from different social groups to talk about Europe and since everybody has a street, the street was the perfect „gate" for the new dialogue.

The street, we realised also, was the perfect place that was still very small to be „mine", to be-long to my personal identity, and big enough, at the same time, to represent othernes, society, rules, culture and norms that influence us on an invisible level. We wanted to see the street as a „micromodel" of EU – a place where we clash with others, learn to understand and keep borders, realise our free will and choices.

If we understand how we influence the streets we live on and how the streets influence us – we could than probably start to observe differently also our place in bigger social and collective con-structs, like the EU.

What happened?

The project provoked tremendous creativity and curiosity among the participants. It was the first time for almost all people involved to talk about their streets and city in a group with the others and to take pictures of their streets. It was the first time for many of the Roma participants to use camera.

Around 200 people in 8 cities, small towns and villages took part in the workshops. After the project a travelling exhibition followed. A publishing house proposed to publish a book and a book followed by the end of 2006 (with 39 selected stories and pictures).

The workshops consisted of 10 to 15 people and were made in 2 parts – first one in the begin-ning of the day – describing the project, giving cameras and instructions how to shoot and how to write and second one – after the work was done, reading the stories and showing pictures to each other, talking about similarities and differences.

We made the workshops with cheap traditional cameras, using films – we gave people films and cameras, developed them after the work in local studios, digitalized them and presented them with a laptop. At the end of each workshop we collected the cameras and used them again in the next one. After the project we donated the cameras (given to us by a photo studio as a gift) to people from a local Roma community who took part in the workshops.

We gave very simple instructions about writing and making photos:

First to write to somebody who has never been on your street and to describe it to this person, to write about the buildings, colours, neighbours, thing that are always around, to describe details, as many as one could remember or see at the moment, to write no more than 1 page.

Second to make up to 10 photos of the street, to show a photo that impress its author at the mo-ment or that have always impressed him/her, to make photos of details also.

What did not happen but could

One of the most interesting and valuable outcome was the group energy and discovering that talking in group was an energizing experience. What could have happened was to use this energy and give impulse to local leaders to continue the project in the local community with their peers and neighbours. There have been several people ready for that (Kozloduy, Haskovo). We

could not continue because the project had its own frame and did not allow for such free outcomes.

An idea about developing and branding the idea and use it as a beginning for all kind of difficult community work is still existing. Actually, this was and is the big plus of that project – that it created energy that could be used in different directions.

What did not happen was the conversation about Europe and European Union. It happened but it was difficult to make a link between the street and EU, to see them symbolically linked. The European dialogue was still dominated by cliches, media ideas and could not be seen as a personal project. There was a clear gap between me and EU.

In that sense, the street also was a good metaphor, as a road that was always changing, dynamic and uncertain and could fill the gap.

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