

## **SUMMARY**

**Tuesday 7 December 2010**

### **Critical Practice (London): A Case Study in “Culture in Common”**

The issues discussed were the subtle differences between “practice” and “practise”, the espoused theory and theory in use, shared knowledge and the creation of knowledge within the community.

Selected projects of the Critical Practice group, including “Parade”, embracing both historical and urban public space in London (part of the premises of Chelsea College of Art and Design) and “Ranchito”, carried out with a group of artists, designers, architects and researchers from Madrid, raised a number of important questions.

How can we prevent collectively-created knowledge from being used by unauthorized companies and corporations to gain profit?

What risks, if any, are involved in the idea of transparency of action?

Does the openness of the team translate into the genuine commitment of people from outside the group?

Is any new value created in community action?

What is the status of such actions and how should they be remunerated, since they are mostly carried out in free time and for the benefit of the community?

### **Tomasz Szkudlarek (Gdańsk): Knowledge Society and its Workers**

The Marxist theory describing the birth of capitalism and the working class becomes a metaphor for the current situation in higher education.

Its employees are “deprived” of their field of activity – the vast majority are confined to university employment or short-term contract work. PhD students are often denied access to knowledge at the top academic level (e.g. due to the economic situation), they move around the system improving their skills (which may be useful in their further academic “career”), though few of them will reach the top.

Professors and researchers who become “knowledge workers” are active in the academic field through participation in the production of academic skills, or skills useful for the job market in narrow specializations.

There are new challenges for academic lecturers and students – how to gain the skills necessary for effective “knowledge management”?

Is modern education heading in that direction?

What kind of knowledge is produced in the art field?

What kind of “professional” abilities will graduates in the humanities be able to offer on the job market?

**Kaja Pawełek (Warsaw):**

**When a Vocation Becomes a Profession**

The professionalization of the curator, while desirable and necessary, may also involve the risk of having to adapt to commercial and market demands.

Is it still possible to avoid clichés and follow one’s own path? The biographies of the precursors of the profession (Harald Szeemann, Hans Ulrich Obrist) serve as the starting point for a debate on the role of the curator today, the professionalization of his relationship with the artist, the narrative of action, the selection of material and interplay with the authorities.

Do curators who want to pursue their individual concepts (not necessarily matching current market trends) have to be excluded from the market?

What is the role of the third sector in organizing cultural and artistic events?

Is the relation between the artist and the curator similar to the relation between the Marxist proletarian (who delivers “content”) and the bourgeois manager of the means of production?

**Wednesday, 8 December 2010**

**Microsilons (Geneva):**

**The Culture of "Fly-in fly-out" Workshops**

Since 2005, the group has engaged specialists in different fields in various projects for limited numbers of participants (mainly schoolchildren and students), based on the “fly-in fly-out” principle. The projects arising from such collective action have been presented in the form of exhibitions in public institutions, publications and Internet websites.

The projects, including “The revolution will not be televised. Video amateurs de 8mm a 2.0”, “Utopia and the Everyday. Between Art and Education”, have provoked analysis of issues such as: the relationship between the artist, the financing institution and the exhibiting gallery, where a gallery wants to maintain its control over a project, despite its minimal contribution; the lack of knowledge of the project’s location; and the creative urge.

Don’t international projects realised by artistic collectives of a nomadic structure reduce the role of the artist and the curator to that of a door-to-door salesman?

What is the role of artistic educators? How do they participate in the activities of public institutions? How is this cooperation supposed to operate?

How, if at all, can the model of “collective struggle” work within international projects?

What is the impact of new media and social networks on such collective action?

How can artists and curators avoid the neo-liberal compulsion for individual productivity?

Should community-based projects be held only locally?

**Magdalena Rek-Woźniak (Łódź):  
A Picnic for Winos?**

Culture, understood in terms of economic activity, is connected with commercialization, competitiveness and innovation, etc. It acquires the traits of a mechanism of social exclusion – although every individual is legally entitled to culture, not everyone has access to it. Łódź, the third largest city in Poland, traditionally industrial and working-class, is facing serious economic and financial problems. Paradoxically, a high percentage of those with the lowest living conditions are concentrated in enclaves in the city centre, near the theatres and university, rather than in the suburbs. The city's public policy (aimed at winning the title of European Capital of Culture 2016) focuses on organizing mass festivals and multicultural activities. It ignores the socio-economic context of the city and social exclusion issues, and therefore overlooks the locals' expectations of the cultural sphere.

Can culture be used a tool in combating social exclusion? Is that its aim and can it be "effective" in this regard?

Isn't combating social exclusion through art an invasive form of assistance, leading to stigmatisation?

How can socially-excluded communities become creators of culture instead of passive recipients?

How can we strike a balance between integration and participation?

**Piotr Kowzan (Gdańsk):  
Pedagogy of Debt**

The presentation centred on the construction of economic capital as debt, which came to a head during the global crisis, particularly in Iceland (where Piotr Kowzan carried out his PhD research) - when debt became a social, rather than an individual problem.

How do migrations shape the processes of ongoing public debt?

How does indebtedness lead to social exclusion and isolation?

How does indebtedness impact educational choices?

What strategies of resistance are there against individual and public debt?

How does public debt change and shape a country's economic, social and political relations?

What are the alternatives to student loans?

How does an indebted artist entering the art market influence the market itself?

How does debt impact the creation of the art market?

**Heath Bunting (Bristol):  
A £1,000,000 Fortune Begins with a Single Transaction**

Heath Bunting carries out network projects in collaboration with numerous artists ([www.irrational.org](http://www.irrational.org)). They focus on DIY and net-art as a reaction to the mechanisms ruling profit-based mainstream art. Bunting aims to create a new market for artists who have rejected the mainstream.

During the presentation, the participants took part in an experiment where they had to complete a transaction on the basis of best exchange value.

What is capitalism today in relation to the processes of cognitive capitalism, non-material work and the mechanisms of profiting individually from the results of collaborative work (with authorship rights)?

What can members of a group offer each other, what kind of common currency can they find? The exchange experiment illustrated how money and goods are created on the art market, and how they acquire value through collective decision-making.

Is the need to find a common currency related to any specific social class?

How does capital flow in the mechanisms of network action and non-material work in the fields of culture and education? What values are created by the flow of symbolic and economic capital in contemporary cultural industries and educational “factories”?

For whom is culture and education productive? Who is being exploited and who is making the highest profit?

How do the values created in the field of art influence public institutions and vice versa?

**Thursday, 9 December 2010**

**The Carrotworkers' Collective (London):  
When a Carrot Becomes a Stick**

The collective (comprising activists, interns, teachers and researchers) reflects on the conditions of unpaid work in contemporary society and its impact on material conditions, self-identity, life expectations and individual desires.

The presentation touched on the problem of budget cuts in the British education sector, which provoked its employees and students to demonstrate on the streets.

What about interns and apprentices? How do they profit and how do they use such profit, if any?

How do we reproduce the knowledge that we challenge?

How can we prevent social prejudice against the working class and the unemployed?

What is the role of unpaid work in the everyday work of activists?

**Krystian Szadkowski (Brussels/Poznań):  
Regaining Education**

The presentation concerned the phenomenon of international student and workers' movements protesting against neo-liberal reforms in the field of higher education in recent years (USA, South America, Spain, Italy, France, Austria). None of the protests attained their objectives, despite the high degree of social engagement.

The speaker referred to the example of Zagreb, where the protests embraced not only education issues, but also social equality, justice and human rights. They were intended as an experiment in direct democracy. The protests constituted one of the first attempts to seize control over the university and were internationally acclaimed as a great social success. The initiative was the first such success for the organizers, who had declared themselves to be part of the International Student Movement from the very outset.

What useful conclusions can be drawn from the experience of global student and workers' demonstrations against the privatization of public education?

What protest and occupation strategies can be employed to resist neo-liberal reforms of higher education in Poland?

What similar protest methods are used in the individual fields of art and education?

How can we reconcile the contradiction between challenging the neo-liberal mechanisms governing the operation of higher education institutions and benefiting from the grants they offer?

What transformations of political and economic structures are necessary for educational reform?

What prevents us from taking the risk of direct resistance, establishing a programme of reforms and launching individual initiatives on a broader scale? Is it the lack of immediate results or the lack of a direct relationship between the aforesaid?

**Radical Educational Collective (Ljubljana):  
Beyond Knowledge Factories**

The presentation focused on how students' demands and new models for their political organization can translate into the broader social struggle for a world without capitalist exploitation.

The structuring of universities on medieval hierarchical principles and strong divisions among faculties hampers dialogue between university students and employees. In such situation, creating links between groups is as important as creating links within groups. Students have emphasized their solidarity with other struggles in the social, political and economic spheres.

Should the collective struggle for a common interest be conducted horizontally among individual universities or vertically, expanding the network of university-workplace-market relations. Would such connections ensure the mutual support of groups fighting for similar rights but working on different levels? How can such network cooperation be developed? How can a retreat into isolated local niches be avoided?

What are the foundations of solidarity actions? How, if at all, can we avoid inequitable contribution in an action or a project?

**Kuba Mikurda (Kraków):  
Analysis of the “National Programme for the Development of the Humanities”**

What is the role and position of the humanities in state programs and institutions (National Program for Scientific Research and Development, National Program for the Development of Humanities, National Centre for Research and Development)? According to the Minister of Science and Higher Education, Barbara Kudrycka, research in humanities should not be financed from EU funds. The National Program for Scientific Research and Development of 2008 prioritizes health, industry, economics, agriculture and the environment, while the humanities and the cultural sector are ignored.

How can we reconcile the fact that cultural and artistic activities are recognized as part of the cultural industry and yet are deemed not to require any state support?

What is the scope of competences of “academics – managers” mentioned in the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities?