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European Cultural Networks and Networking in Central and Eastern Europe

*Part 1
Report*

Contents

Introduction

This research project is intended to complement Bettina Stadler's study entitled " 'Eastward Expansion' in the Cultural Sector. Reports from Central and Eastern European Members of Cultural Networks." [1] This 1998 study, which examines the expectations, experiences and problems of Central and Eastern European members of European networks on the basis of a series of interviews, was discussed in a working group at a meeting of the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) held in Vienna in December 1998.

This project attempts to complement the research performed for Bettina Stadler's study and implement proposals (in particular documentation of the "material basis") made during the working group session.

The research has two focuses:

> Analyzing the participation of Central and Eastern European members in European/global networks

> Examining, documenting and performing individual analyses of regional and national networks in Central and Eastern Europe

In the course of this research, an effort was made to combine a more strongly quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative approaches (interviews, individual analyses). The preparatory work began in June 1999, and most of the research (mailing of the questionnaires[2] and the interviews) was performed from October 1999 to March 2000.

In this report, a brief introduction on networks will be followed by a description of how and to what extent the Central and Eastern European members of European/global networks participate (Chapter 1). As a complement to Bettina Stadler's study, an examination of the networks as organizations was the focus rather than the members' points of view. Interviews were conducted, primarily with coordinators and network board members, and questionnaires were mailed to the coordination offices. In this chapter, an attempt is made to combine an examination of concrete activities with a quantitative description of the current situation (number of members, regional distribution, etc.).

Chapter 2, which is a bit more comprehensive, deals with networks in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) and contains a brief overview of the results of our research. Concrete examinations of each area and the establishment, development and activities of the networks are provided in two portraits of individual countries (Bulgaria and Poland) and descriptions of

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[1] Bettina Stadler, "'Eastward Expansion' in the Cultural Sector. Reports from Central and Eastern European Members of Cultural Networks", Vienna: Kulturkontakt/IG Kultur Österreich 1998

[2] Questionnaires were sent to approximately 250 European/global, regional and national networks in Central and Eastern Europe. Of those, 85 elicited answers (35%), and ten organizations informed us that the network no longer exists or can not be regarded as a network. Most of the networks which did not answer the questionnaire were contacted once, a smaller number twice. The accompanying cover letter and the questionnaires can be found in Appendix a.

three individual networks.

The second part of this report comprises a list of cultural networks (European/global, regional and national in CEE) compiled in the course of our research; this list documents the knowledge acquired in the course of the research project (relating to CEE in particular). With regard to its practical evaluation, this list was conceived primarily for publication on the Internet, where it can be supplemented and updated in the long term.[3]

This research project would not have been possible without the generous support of our interviewees, those individuals who took the time to fill out the questionnaire in detail, and others who in private conversations at meetings and conferences, telephone conversations, etc. called important issues to our attention, provided background information, and put us in touch with useful contacts. We would like to express our sincere thanks.

Networks[4]

The first international networks in the cultural sector were founded at the turn of the last century. After that, primarily international organizations on the level of national governments (League of Nations, and UNESCO and the Council of Europe after WWII) provided the basis for establishment of additional structures for networking.

The UNESCO in particular pursued a policy according to which international networking on the government level should be paralleled by international networks in the non-government sector. As a result, international NGOs were founded primarily in the early 50s, often initiated by UNESCO, which has supported these organizations in the form of financial and other resources[5] since then.

Although reducing the variety of international and European networks founded into the 70s and 80s to a simple organizational model is certainly not appropriate, a few of the principles

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[3] At http://www.eipcp.net.

[4] A few studies and indexes and a number of essays on the topic of cultural networks are available: e.g. Judith Staines, "Working Groups. Network Solutions for Cultural Cooperation in Europe," Brussels: EFAH 1996; Gudrun Pehn, "La mise en réseau des cultures. Le rôle des réseaux culturels européens," Strasbourg: Editions du Conseil de l'Europe 1999; Simon Mundy, "The Context and Structure of European Cultural Networks. List of International Cultural Networks," Den Haag: Raad voor Cultuur 1999; IETM/Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, "IETM. Study on the Effects of Networking" [this study will be published by the Arts Council of Finland before the end of 2000]; Rod Fisher (ed.), "Arts Networking in Europe," London: The Arts Council of England 1997; Martin Roeder-Zerndt, "The Politics of Networking," in: *impulse* [ITI newsletter], congress special, Marseille, May 2000; Biserka Cvjetičanin (ed.), "Dynamics of Communication and Cultural Change: The Role of Networks, Proceedings of the First World Culturelink Conference, Zagreb, June 8-11, 1995," Zagreb: Institute for International Relations 1996 (Culturelink special issue 1996), Gerhild Illmaier, "Cultural Networks in Europe Today," Graz 1997.

[5] A list of international NGOs which maintain official relations with UNESCO can be found at http://www.unesco.org/general/eng/partners/ong/index.html. In the 90s, UNESCO began to evaluate its relations with NGOs and reorganize them. Resolutions and reports are also available at the UNESCO website (http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/); cf. "Records of the General Conference," Twenty-eighth Session, Paris, October 25 to November 16, 1995, Volume 1: Resolutions, Item 13.4.

dominating the areas of international organization and cooperation to that time can be named. One essential element is that the basic model for cooperation was literally international, as it was often based on national units. This could mean either national committees established after suggestions were made from abroad or national associations or groups which already existed.

In this regard, one could speak of a form of cooperation based on representation with reference to both the inner structure (the members represent national or regional units on the international level) and their view of themselves as representatives of a certain sector or professional group as a whole.

The first European networks were founded in the early 80s. New structures and work methods were developed explicitly as new forms of cooperation which differ from the older forms of networking or which had their roots in the independent cultural scene in the 60s, though without referring to them directly. Projecting a network concept onto this process in hindsight should be avoided. The approaches were not derived from an organizational model;[6] they were presumably intended in particular to enable direct cooperation or exchange between producers of culture, operate in a practical fashion and provide organization in a way unlikely to lead to hierarchies or institutional rigidity.

This network model then spread quite swiftly, and in the late 80s and early 90s, a true explosion of new networks took place. Not only new links between actors were created as a result; some older organizations or those with fundamentally different structures adopted the new forms of cooperation and work methods which were developed by the networks.[7]

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[6] Discussing the presence of an organizational model in connection with the network approach is possible to a limited extent only, at least with regard to the period of time in question. This term was first used in the field of sociology and represents a general approach for analysis of social structures, regardless of whether they have developed formalized organizations or organizational forms. This approach was later adopted in various other scientific disciplines, including political science, economics and organizational research. The relevant literature has grown to a massive extent. An overview of the individual subject areas and references to more in-depth literature can be found in the following works: Dorothea Jansen, *Einführung in die Netzwerkanalyse. Grundlagen, Methoden, Anwendungen*, Opladen: Leske + Budrich 1999; Dorothea Jansen, Klaus Schubert (ed.), *Netzwerke und Politikproduktion: Konzepte, Methoden, Perspektiven*, Marburg: Schüren 1985; Roland Böttcher, *Global Network Management: Context - Decision-making - Coordination*, Wiesbaden: Gabler 1996; Timo Renz, *Management in internationalen Unternehmensnetzwerken*, Wiesbaden: Gabler 1998. In particular, an important work in this context which deals with NGOs, primarily those in the field of environmental protection, contains a few essays on the relationship between network structures and political intervention: Elmar Altvater, et. al (ed.), *Vernetzt und Verstrickt: Nicht-Regierungs-Organisationen als gesellschaftliche Produktivkraft*, Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot 1997.

[7] Martin Roeder-Zerndt described the changes in the work performed by foreign cultural institutes which can be seen as a reaction to the forms of transnational cooperation developed by networks: "The great Western European cultural institutes reacted to this development by adapting themselves. Project work became as important, if not more important, than the traditional mission contained within their charter. It was an attempt to create additional legitimization by simulating alien methods. It was no longer a matter of mediating language skills, or disseminating relevant information, or exporting cultural assets and cultural norms, but investing in bilateral artistic work encounters and production processes. [...] Some of the institutes of the Goethe Institute abroad have now started to initiate international festivals, for which the respective bilateral international relationship is no longer key. In other words: the national mediators are themselves becoming protagonists in transnational

At present, the network concept is used on two levels. In a narrow sense, it refers to this newer form of networking and therefore structures and work methods characterized primarily by non-hierarchical, horizontal cooperation, a transnational orientation, establishment by the grass roots, a non-representational character, diversity and the absence of powerful "central forces." In a wider sense, this term is also used to describe the totality of networking forms, including the older models described above and networks which link central organizations and their "branches."[8]

The difference between these two definitions is important and useful for systemic and political analyses and also allows definite categorization of many networks. At the same time, there are many examples of networks with elements of a number of different models. One could assume that the number of organizations belonging to this "intermediate classification" will continue to grow due to the success of the new work methods mentioned above.

While we have concentrated our research mainly on networks in a narrow sense, the field as a whole has also been included. For example, questionnaires were also sent to international NGOs and associations with a variety of organizational forms.

In the course of our research, these differences in the definition of various network forms on a pragmatic level gave rise to the question of how the quite informal structure of networks in a narrow sense can be differentiated from other, looser forms of cooperation. In principle, the "minimum requirements" for cultural networks are that they are designed for long-term cooperation rather than realization of a specific project or a series of projects, that there is a common goal, that physical meetings are held, and that the network has members[9] (though not necessarily in the form of a legal entity with formal membership). Our research concentrated mainly on the presence of these characteristics without applying them as rigid criteria which must be fulfilled before one can term an organization a network.

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procedures" (Roeder-Zerndt, op. cit.).

[8] Cf. the differentiation described in Staines, op. cit., p 4-9, etc.

[9] Of course, there are exceptions to the last two points. The irreplaceable nature of meetings is pointed out in the literature frequently, and the majority of our correspondents were also of this opinion. At the same time, it was noted in one interview that regular meetings are not absolutely necessary in certain cases (if achieving the network's goal does not absolutely require that the members meet in person, the members were first acquainted in a personal encounter and there are other opportunities for individual members to meet, such as festivals). The question of membership is even less equivocal. Even if Simon Mundy supplied a quite equivocal formulation earlier, the restriction is hardly less obvious: "By definition a formal network has to have membership of some kind, otherwise it is an agency or independent enterprise. However some centres and foundations work as quasi-networks, using their mailing lists, meetings and consultative arrangements in a fashion which mimics the activities of those formal networks which operate with membership rules and criteria" (Simon Mundy, op. cit., p 14).

1. Participation of Central and Eastern European Members in European and Global Networks

Context

In the second edition of the index entitled "Arts Networking in Europe,"[10] which appeared in 1997, Rod Fisher noted that the curiosity dominating the years following 1989 has since been replaced by a serious interest in long-term cooperation. Furthermore, North-South relationships and various regional contexts (e.g. the Baltic region, or the Mediterranean area, which is a much-discussed topic) have now become more visible next to the relationships between East and West.

In this sense, this research project was performed in a context in which the question of continuity has arisen after the initial euphoria, primarily in light of the ongoing economic and political inequality and the accompanying differences in prerequisites for participation.

The increased recognition of other regional and supra-regional contexts for Central and Eastern Europe is important in two ways: On the pan-European level, CEE is no longer considered to be the only synonym for the "problem of the periphery" in Europe, as this issue is shifting to the context of relations between North and South. At the same time, this means that, in contrast to the first years after 1989, "Eastern Europe" is no longer regarded primarily or exclusively as a single unit, by neither western nor Eastern Europe. Furthermore, the differences between the various CEE countries with regard to history, politics, culture, etc. have become more visible though they are experiencing similar problems related to the transition from socialist to capitalist systems.[11]

Noting at the same time that conditions have undergone changes on several levels, one could term this briefly outlined situation a "second phase" in the development of East-West cooperation since 1989. This also illustrates the context in which the various networks operate on the basis of a wide range of individual histories and stages of development.

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[10] Rod Fisher, Introduction, in: Rod Fisher (ed.), op. cit., p 5-7.

[11] In addition to this simplified conclusion, it should be mentioned that this differentiation in Central and Eastern European countries comprises a number of dynamic elements, including the concrete economic and political interests which have manifested themselves in various speeds of adaptation to the EU and NATO, the tightening of the future outer borders of the EU, etc. At the same time, this is a process of differentiation and ideological interpretation supported by lines of reasoning concerning the various cultures within a Central Europe that differs from the eastern periphery (cf. the development of the "myth of Central Europe" since the early 80s and the connections between the lines of reasoning concerning "cultural borders" and concrete political interests: Maria Todorova, *Imaging the Balkans*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1997, p 140 - 160). (The results of our research on cultural networks show that this is manifested in the strengthened presence of representatives from this region in European structures, but apparently not in the formation of their own "Central European" networks.) On the other hand, it has been observed that the common histories stretching over the past 50 years which the post-socialist countries share is being replaced by older regional contexts such as the Baltic region or the Balkans (which leads to the reformulation of other contexts such as the relationship between the Balkans and the Mediterranean region).

Participation

Among the European or global networks (and those aiming at this level of activity), those which were founded and/or are based in CEE[12] and/or whose memberships are dominated by CEE citizens represent isolated exceptions. An inquiry concerning the participation of Central and Eastern Europeans in these networks is virtually identical to the question of their participation in western-oriented structures or how these structures facilitate or encourage such participation.

The actual extent of participation and the "developmental phase" with regard to the inclusion of Central and Eastern Europe vary widely among the individual networks.[13] They can be categorized in three general groups:

Some of the networks have already passed the "critical point." Due to a comparatively large number of members and completed concrete reflexion on and cooperation concerning, East-West cooperation has already become commonplace, and networks have become so visible in Central and Eastern Europe (at the same time Central and Eastern Europe has become so visible in networks) thanks to the members that many independent processes have begun (potential members hear about the network, opportunities for meetings arise, specific topics are dealt with in the network, etc.). During this phase, the coordination offices and decision-making bodies presumably consider their most important tasks to be returning attention, if necessary, to issues relating to CEE; securing or expanding the availability of material resources such as travel grants; monitoring continuity (e.g. of meetings in CEE) and adequate representation of CEE members in the decision-making bodies, etc.

Many of the networks could be said to occupy the middle ground with regard to the level of participation by Central and Eastern European members. For example, though the share of CEE members has exceeded a minimum, it is still relatively low and/or limited to a few countries of origin. The reasons for this vary widely. Some of these networks have realized special activities and/or projects, though this has produced solely a small degree of continuity and membership growth; to an extent, this is merely the current level of an ongoing process. In other networks, the extent of participation seems to mirror what has been achieved through earlier activities (during the phase of euphoria). A last group has developed slowly without the aid of special activities.

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[12] In the course of our research, the only European/international networks we identified which have been founded in or are based in CEE were Culturelink (Zagreb), Pontes (Krk/Zagreb), nice (Riga, which was originally formed in a regional context also), the European Network for CyberArt (Budapest) and the International Amateur Theatre Association, which has moved its main office to Tallinn.

[13] The older international organizations which had members in Central and Eastern Europe long before 1989 are facing a quite different situation. Dealing with this issue in greater detail in this report is impossible because the answers elicited by the questionnaire did not provide detailed information. In light of the logic of the changes and the individual statements made during interviews (conducted with persons who are not themselves active within the organizations), it would seem that other types of problems have arisen, such as the fact that the national commissions from the socialist era and associations have come under a great deal of pressure to justify their existence, divisions are taking place, competing organizations are being founded, etc.

Networks which have few or no members in Central and Eastern Europe also represent an extremely heterogeneous group. This group comprises relatively new networks founded in western Europe which still have limited memberships in only a few countries.[14] Some of them work hard to establish themselves, though in the West first. Networks which specialize in the EU in a variety of ways[15] should be included in this group. In the case of a few other networks, CEE-oriented activities have not yet been realized as a result of refused applications for grants, while others seem to have little interest in CEE.

A network's commitment to inclusion of Central and Eastern Europeans is of great importance. Since 1989, some networks have established a basis for the entire region and have increased the familiarity of Central and Eastern Europeans with both the European networks and the concept of networking. At the same time, the question of the extent to which (or speed at which) this commitment can be translated into concrete activities and increased participation (or the extent to which this is possible without extraordinary commitment) depends on various external factors. The following factors seem to be significant in addition to the aspects already mentioned:

> The sector (such as specialization in certain types of organizations, etc.) in which the network operates. For networks with greater specialization in areas which are at present underdeveloped in CEE (or which have fundamentally different organizational structures), identifying potential cooperation partners is of course difficult. For some, this also means first identifying individuals interested in building up such a sector. The situation will become even more difficult for networks which are active in such sectors and which build on structures more complex than individual organizations (such as national associations/federations).

> The degree to which the network is established and the amount of latitude in the use of finances and other resources. The latter is relevant to both the possibility of financing projects and travel, granting reductions of membership fees, etc. and the extent to which resources are available for identifying and meeting potential cooperation partners. This is reflected to a certain degree by the ratio of the network's age to the percentage of its members from CEE. Even if there are some networks which begin with a relatively large percentage of CEE members, the data

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[14] The aspect is quite significant in connection with CEE, though it affects more than just this region's inclusion: "Often the geographic spread of membership has been used to indicate levels of importance. However it is unreliable. A narrow band of membership may just reflect the youth of the network or the compatibility of its aims and objectives with the interests of potential members in other countries. There is often a degree of herding involved in joining networks. If a few from one country, region or professional discipline join, others tend to follow. However it is often difficult for network initiators to build trust in unfamiliar places. Consequently the networks spend a period being under-represented in certain areas and labelled as dominated by one region (usually northern Europe or francophone countries). This is more often a sign that development is still to come and that a more inclusive sense of purpose has to be articulated than that a network is under-performing." (Simon Mundy, op. cit., p 5/6)

[15] At the same time, the scenarios described here can also differ, for example in that the network accepts solely organisations from EU member states as (full) members or because interest is or will be awakened in the CEE countries only by the concrete determination of dates for membership due to its concentration on the EU.

provided by the membership lists we evaluated shows that the percentage is higher on the average in relatively old networks.

> The question of how soon one can expect practical benefits from networking probably comprises an additional factor. Even though there are indications that members prize immaterial benefits from networking more highly[16] and at times the secondary aspects are considered more important than the main aspects, it would seem that many cultural organizations in CEE expend more time and resources on practical matters and in the "daily struggle for survival" than their colleagues in the West; as a result, they have in total less latitude for networking when no immediate practical benefits can be expected.

It is obvious that solely a simplified view of a complex situation can be produced with so-called hard facts such as membership shares. At the same time, such facts can provide information concerning the extent to which concrete participation has been achieved as a result.

On the average, for the 85 European/global networks evaluated in this project,[17] the share of members from Central and Eastern Europe[18] compared to total (European) members amounts to just under 21%. This figure is inflated by networks with very few members per member country (In most cases, this means that they are based on national committees or associations.). This is primarily a result of the fact that the number of western members seems relatively small due to the formula "one member per country."[19] When one excludes these networks from consideration, the average percentage of Central and Eastern European members is between 16% and 17%.

In networks with the lowest total number of members, the share is the lowest by far.[20] The share is the highest in the medium-size networks and is somewhat lower in the largest networks.

Determination of a comparative value which makes this share of 16/17% or 21% meaningful

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[16] Cf. IETM/Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, op. cit., Chap. 3.

[17] See Appendix b for more details.

[18] In defining Central and Eastern Europe as the formerly socialist countries in Europe or their successors, various possibilities arise for categorizing the former states of the Soviet Union located south of Russia. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were included.

[19] The data on the share of CEE countries represented in the networks by at least one member would seem to indicate that this situation is a result of the lower number of western European members and not a stronger presence in CEE. The percentage in these networks (27%) is lower than in those with a larger number of members per country (33%).

[20] In the face of the relatively low number and heterogeneity of the sets of data which were evaluated, using more complex statistical methods to find answers to such questions did not seem reasonable. Instead, simple approximations were calculated by comparing the totals to the shares of CEE members for the quarter of data sets with the lowest, second lowest, etc. numbers of members. For the 21 networks with the lowest number of members, the share is only 8% to 9% (12 of those networks have no members in CEE), the share for the 42 medium-sized networks is 27% to 28%, and approximately 19% for the quarter with the largest number of members.

is difficult. The percentage of the total populations of Central and Eastern European countries compared to the total population of Europe (including the total population of Russia), which is approximately 44%, could be used.[21] At the same time, the extent to which the difference results from a lower density of cultural facilities now in operation and the extent to which it results from a lower intensity of participation in cultural networks is still not certain.

Additional information on the share of members is provided by the number of CEE countries represented in the networks by at least one member compared to all European countries which are represented. The average is slightly over 30%.[22] (The percentage of CEE countries covered compared to all European countries covered is 46%.[23])

In one discussion, the opinion was expressed that while there are no vertical hierarchies in networks, there are inner and outer "circles." The question concerning the share of CEE members in network decision-making bodies was used as an indicator of the extent to which members from CEE countries are represented in the "inner circles" of European and international networks. This figure was then compared to the total number of members.[24]

On the average, the percentage of CEE members in decision-making bodies is slightly less than proportional. This is a result of the fact that a good third of all networks with CEE members have no CEE members in their decision-making bodies.[25] In a second group (slightly less than one-third), they are underrepresented, and overrepresented in a third group (also slightly less than one-third). The latter two groups balance each other out; in other words, the average number of CEE members in decision-making bodies corresponds to their percentage of total members in these two thirds.

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[21] The figure which would have been obtained if Russia were excluded has been provided here as a guideline for the extent to which Russian influences this ratio: 34%. (The population statistics were taken from the information provided at this Internet address: http://www.photius.com/rankings/population.html.)

[22] Not surprisingly, this percentage increases considerably with the total number of members: from 10% for the 21 smallest networks to 40% for the 21 largest networks.

[23] The question regarding counting of partially sovereign political units and "micro-countries" as countries was not decided systematically. To a great extent, the basis used was the listing of units in the membership lists as countries. In the calculation described above, the following were dealt with as separate units: Andorra, the Faeroe Islands, Liechtenstein, Monaco and San Marino.

[24] Evaluation of solely 34 sets of data was possible. This number is relatively low because only those networks which have members in CEE and are established to the point that they have decision-making bodies could be included. In addition, a list of members was necessary for calculation of the comparative value.

[25] In one-third of these networks, the CEE members are not underrepresented in terms of numbers: In one example, with 8% of total members, they are far below the percentage (25%) which represents one of only four board members.

Regional distribution

The question of the extent to which various countries or regions have been included in networks is complex. Examination of both the development over time[26] and the figures for both the breadth and density of participation in the respective regional units would be desirable. In the framework of our research, it was possible to present solely a limited picture of a certain aspect.

In the evaluation of 85 membership lists, the countries in which at least one member of the respective network is located were identified. This data can be used to determine the number of networks in the 85 in which individual countries are represented by at least one member. Primarily the breadth is reflected in this evaluation, as the figures are based on an overall picture of the various sectors, both the independent, institutional and national-government sectors, and of networks with various structures which perform a variety of tasks.[27] The populations of the individual countries were less important here than they would be in evaluations based on the number of members. This represents a problem in that the significance of the size differences is difficult to judge and can lead to different interpretations.[28]

The result would seem to suggest that, with regard to presence in networks, the ratios of center to periphery or the extent of integration into the center reflect economic and political factors, while no more than the beginnings of counter-trends relating to the breadth as a whole are visible. The large EU members (France, Germany, Great Britain, Spain and Italy) and the Netherlands are represented in over 90% of the networks. The representation of smaller members located in the center of western or northern Europe (Belgium, Finland,

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[26] In accordance with a suggestion made in a different context, it was planned as part of the project to analyze the regional development of the memberships of several comparatively older and larger "networks in a narrow sense." From the very beginning of this project phase, this proved to be impossible because of the extent of the work necessary and the difficulty of obtaining material. (This was due in part to the fact that we intended primarily to deal with the geographical development of networks. This involved the problem that most of the networks were new and had no office, formal membership, etc.—for this reason, complete data was not available. This however should not imply that answering these questions is impossible, though this would require more work than possible within the project's framework, both for collecting data and developing approaches for dealing with their incomplete nature.) The relevant statements made during the interviews varied; on the one hand, the constant increase in the share of CEE members was pointed out, and on the other, it was estimated that this share has stagnated in the past few years.

[27] A check was made of the statistical deviations when only those networks which we believe can be termed with certainty "networks in a narrow sense" are included. However, there were no significant deviations with regard to CEE countries. The deviations among the percentages for CEE countries were normally between two and four percentage points, while the deviations for Belarus (-5%), Poland (+5%), Estonia and Latvia (both -6%) were somewhat higher. A notable aspect is that the figure for Turkey, which is lower than average at 32%, drops to just 15% with networks in a narrow sense. The fact that Luxembourg is the only country with a small population for which the figure does not drop considerably compared to the totals is also surprising. In contrast to the totals, Finland rather than The Netherlands would take on the role of the smaller EU country with the same high percentages as the larger members of the EU.

[28] The individual figures can be found in Appendix b (Table 9 and 10).

Sweden, Austria and Denmark) is slightly lower, with figures between 85% and 88%.

The CEE countries which are closest to the EU economically and politically (Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic; presumably because of its small population, Slovenia had a somewhat lower figure) had figures ranging from 60% to 75%, as did the non-EU members Switzerland and Norway and member states located on the southern or western periphery (Ireland, Portugal and Greece). The only countries with figures under 60% are former members of the East Bloc, Turkey (with 32%) and those which are not suitable for comparison to other states due to their extremely small populations.[29]

The limited inclusion of Russia is made obvious by the fact that it, the largest European country, has approximately the same figure as Slovenia and Slovakia (55%). The southeastern European countries Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia (all around 50%; for the sake of comparison, Yugoslavia has 39%) have somewhat higher percentages than the three Baltic countries (approximately 45%). The differences in these countries' sizes can be used to qualify these figures to a certain extent; for example, Estonia's 47% (approximate population of 1.5 million) seems quite high when compared with Romania's 51% (population of 22 million).

Macedonia's 33% must be interpreted differently than the 31% found for Ukraine, the second largest country in Central and Eastern Europe after Russia. Relatively low percentages ranging from 22% to 7% were determined for Albania, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Azerbaijan.

Cooperation

The network structures and the work methods employed in networking are quite suitable for enabling equal cooperation (at least to an extent[30]) and flexible reactions to dynamic development, even under the difficult conditions characterizing the East-West relationship.

One opportunity for dealing with a certain topic is offered by working groups or series of special meetings. The fact that such activities have contributed a great deal to the establishment of East-West and, in a somewhat different way, East-East contacts[31] is well known. The basis for long-term working groups is presumably the fact that work is performed on concrete problems or tasks which are especially relevant to CEE. One example is the digitalization of information in areas in which this process has generally been completed in western Europe.

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[29] Luxembourg, Iceland, Cyprus, Malta, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Andorra, San Marino and the Faeroe Islands

[30] This was added to point out that the questions posed cannot relate to expectations that the networks will simply remove or defuse the effects of factors such as the gap in prosperity between East and West; they were directed at the extent to which a "corrective potential" can be developed.

[31] At least in a few areas, such activities have also contributed to East-East contacts, especially in a phase in which CEE artists and culture workers were strongly oriented toward the West, some exclusively, and such contacts probably helped the artists and culture workers to overcome this phase.

Some of the networks answered our question as to whether any special working groups or committees concentrate on CEE in the affirmative. Approximately the same number replied in the negative, adding the comment that no one wants to create ghettos. The extent to which this involves attitudes which are not specific to CEE, or whether this must be considered in the context of the "second phase" mentioned above, cannot be answered on the basis of the questionnaires.

In order to obtain quantifiable indicators for the amount of continuity achieved through cooperation or the extent to which a financial basis has been secured for this cooperation, we asked the networks with CEE members whether regular meetings are held in CEE and whether CEE members are offered financial aid, e.g. in the form of reductions in membership fees and/or fees for meetings, grants for traveling expenses, etc.

The question concerning regular meetings in CEE was answered in the affirmative by 40% of the networks, and 20% answered "yes, but not regularly."[32] In answer to the question concerning financial aid, 70% of the networks replied that they offer such reductions in general (37%) or in certain cases (33%). Eight percent replied that this is not done for specific reasons, e.g. because membership is generally free. The percentage is much higher for the networks that are active in Europe exclusively (general or case-by-case reductions: 81%) than with the global networks (50%). This difference can be explained partially in that global networks which offer reductions according to other criteria (e.g. to members from countries with "currency problems") answered this question in the negative, though it is also possible that these networks do not offer any kind of reduction or they are offered to members from "developing countries" exclusively.[33]

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[32] The 20% share of "yes, but not regularly" must be interpreted with caution. This was an open question concerning whether meetings are held regularly, in other words meetings being held at irregular intervals could elicit either an answer of "no" or "yes, but ..."

[33] As differences between European and global networks are being pointed out here, it should also be noted that the compromise made for our research, namely to examine global networks while maintaining the focus on European networks, proved to be problematic. On the one hand, it seemed unjustified to limit the subject of networking in Europe by excluding all global networks from consideration. This led to a problem, however, that too little information on global networks was available to adequately describe the differences in comparison to European networks. This would also require identifying differences among the global networks themselves (Is the network equally active on all continents or does it have an area of focus, especially Europe and North America? Does the network contain regional or continental groups, and if so, what percentage of all activities does this comprise?). Without a doubt, this would produce a wide range of perspectives. While in the European context CEE is associated with the end of the Cold War, the fact that this event has led to a wide range of situations in various regions around the world would be of primary importance in a global context, and CEE could be considered a European issue. In a different sense, varying perspectives can be produced in certain areas which at present do not exist or are rudimentary in Central and Eastern Europe. While CEE would be considered a "problem area" in a European context, it could be seen in a global context as an area with a great deal of potential in which western aid and the expected economic improvements in the region itself can enable development, while this should not be expected for many developing countries.

Challenges

Both the questionnaires and in the interviews dealt with special challenges or problems relating to East-West cooperation. The answers occupy the following categories:

> Financial problems. In this context, it must also be considered that, in the answers to our question regarding how cultural policy has influenced the network's East-West cooperation, a certain problem was addressed repeatedly, the fact that costs accruing in CEE countries are not reimbursed by EU cultural programs.[34] In principle, the answers referred to a generally unsatisfactory situation regarding grants and subsidies; at the same time, improvements were also noted in some questionnaires in which the present situation was compared to the period immediately after 1989.

> Problems with the technical communication infrastructure in CEE

> Language barrier

> Visa problems. The answers in this area presumably depended greatly on the concrete experiences of the individual networks in the recent past. This problem was addressed less often than we expected. However, in cases in which we obtained more detailed information, the problem was not just red tape slowing preparatory work but, as in the past, participation in meetings was made impossible in spite of what was in fact timely preparation. Both the external borders of the Schengen countries and the entry conditions in CEE which apply to other CEE countries lead to massive problems.

> Differences in work methods or contexts. This is an area which illustrates the multiple associations, both positive and negative, with the word "challenge." Most of the comments in the questionnaires seemed to refer to the various contexts of experience in the specific area, while others related to the differing work methods or approaches to networking. The latter was dealt with in greater detail in a few interviews. One could simplify by saying that networking is a work method which must be learned to a certain extent and the forms of cooperation and communication resulting from non-hierarchical approaches are different from those which predominate in both eastern and western societies. It is obvious in this context that rigidly hierarchical decision-making structures implemented in socialist countries survived for longer periods than in western Europe. As a probable result, these non-hierarchical work methods were farther removed from the experiences of CEE members, especially in the first few years after 1989.

> In solely a few isolated cases, a problem which is difficult to judge with regard to its extent was mentioned or hinted at: the fact that while some network members are interested in East-West cooperation and activities were realized for this purpose, other western-European members show little or no interest. In a similar context,

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[34] As work on this report was drawing to a close, it was known that efforts were being made to achieve equal participation of countries earmarked for EU membership in the Culture 2000 calls for proposals in the year 2001; however, no conclusive decisions had been made.

mention was made that some of the CEE members were rather reserved in their participation or saw themselves being forced into a passive role, and as a result, they do not fully express the enrichment they represent to the network.

> In one conversation, the perception was expressed that in certain CEE countries, the network activities are being "hijacked," meaning that while a few individuals or organizations were intensively active in European cooperation and represented in several different networks, their number hardly increased.

2. Networks in Central and Eastern Europe

2.1. Overview

The research performed in CEE as part of this project examined both transnational and national networks. Two approaches were employed:

One level was the research performed in Central and Eastern Europe as a whole. The goal here was to obtain an overall impression of the present situation with regard to networks. This report was able solely to provide a rough sketch; the practical result—the CEE part of the index of networks included in this report—is intended to provide a basis for a work in progress. We hope that publication on the Internet will elicit information about other networks.

At the same time, the concrete situations in the cultural sector and the activities and development of individual networks are examined in greater detail in two country-specific reports and short descriptions of individual networks. The fact that these descriptions comprise the greater part of the following chapter is a result of the fact that, as a whole, the individual descriptions—in which a few problem areas appear repeatedly in varying forms while wide differences in various countries and regions are also illustrated—seem to point out the parallels and differences to be found in CEE more clearly than abstractions.

Here too, the point of departure was the information provided by Bettina Stadler's 1998 series of interviews. On the one hand, this study made it quite clear that, after a phase in which producers of culture from CEE concentrated especially on cooperation with the West, a greater interest has developed regarding cooperation within CEE. However, solely a few networks were known (the 1998 interviews concentrated implicitly on the transnational level), and the general impression was dominated by informal networking, planning and/or preparation phases.

At the time our research was performed, development work was condensing into concrete networks. Though this impression was strengthened by explicit inclusion of the national level, it also reflects the actual development (at least[35] ten of the CEE networks covered were founded in 1999 or early in the 2000).

Transnational networks

This group comprises both European/global networks (formed in CEE and/or based there) and regional networks. Only five of the former were identified, and their background, structures and goals differ so widely that no general characterizations can be made.

The regional networks are based almost exclusively on "historical" regions, especially the Balkans or southeastern Europe[36] (as a whole, or in certain cases on the former Yugoslavia)

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[35] Information on the date of establishment is not available for all networks.

[36] Depending on the specific context, both designations, "Balkans" and "southeastern Europe," are

and the Baltic region, though not normally CEE as a single unit.[37] In connection with our topic, a difference between these two regions must be mentioned: Due to the geopolitical situation in the region surrounding the Baltic Sea, speaking of "East-West cooperation" is justified, while in southeastern Europe, primarily formerly socialist countries are involved.[38]

Statements concerning the number of regional cultural networks can only be approximations. For example, we identified approximately[39] 20, though in the Baltic region, the context in which the research was performed makes the fact relatively clear that we were not able to examine all existing networks; while we learned about a few southeastern European networks which were formed recently, finding new networks is often the most difficult. In other words, there are presumably other new networks which were not included in our research. In the Caucasus region, two regional networks were identified, though obtaining more information was not possible.

With regard to their establishment, it could be said in general about the transnational networks that those which were founded by a single individual or group as completely independent organizations came into existence fairly recently, normally not before 1996/97. Most of the older networks in this category have some form of connection to governmental or international organizations.

When one examines the contexts or structures promoted by networking and the creation of networks in CEE, they are primarily European or global networks. These types enable not only the establishment of East-East contacts and cooperation within CEE in their own contexts; they also provide in many ways a basis for establishment of regional networks (including in CEE).

In the course of our research, we found a wide variety of examples: members of European networks who present their networks and their concepts at festivals; appeals for participation at foundation meetings which are distributed via the informational infrastructures of European networks; the fact that individuals with extensive experience with transnational networking due to their membership or work with European networks are often involved in founding regional networks; a number of reports on foundation or preparatory meetings for the establishment of networks contain references to the fact that (generally) coordinators of European networks are present, hold workshops, etc.

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used below. For information on the development of the various ideological and geographic meanings, see Maria Todorova, op. cit.

[37] Which does not mean that the contexts of cooperation as a whole are no longer based on this unit; in the cultural sector, they are organized in the form of independent networks in individual cases only.

[38] Regarding the issue of the regions, it should be mentioned that networks based in the Mediterranean region (which therefore are regional networks which include formerly socialist countries) were not included with regional networks in CEE.

[39] In isolated cases, the categorization remains open, as this involves networks created in the national context which intend to or are in the process of expanding beyond this context.

The expansive "network" of the Soros Foundations[40] is significant in a completely different way, firstly, because the Foundations are an important source of funds for transnational projects and without their financial support, many projects would never be realized, and secondly, because of their meetings, workshops and training and education projects.

It might be possible to describe the form of support in that it is aimed primarily at networking (and therefore to an extent indirectly at networks). Subsidies are granted for specific projects and, though they can be of long-term importance to networks, they are not provided for the express purpose of ensuring a network's continuity, as "structural subsidies" are not available. Long-term prospects in this area are virtually non-existent due to the withdrawal of the Soros Foundation from its work in CEE, which has already begun and is difficult to judge as an outsider.

To the extent that we obtained more detailed information (relating primarily to the performing arts) concerning the Soros Foundations' meetings, seminars and workshops, the aim of funding usually involved producers of culture working with a certain subject at events lasting several days. They had the opportunity to establish contacts and obtain a list of participants, which would lead to the formation of informal networks. There were also reports about results, for example that events devoted to the same subject were held in various other regions, individuals who participated in the events followed up on the contacts they made, etc. With regard to more stable networks, this must be termed creation or improvement of conditions rather than concrete and direct promotion.[41]

Even more important for the creation of material and practical conditions are certainly initiatives on an international or regional political level. In the Baltic region, political initiatives have contributed a great deal to the renaissance of the region after the fall of the Iron Curtain.

In southeastern Europe, the issue of the effects of the Stability Pact[42] arises on this level, though in a way which is quite different than with the initiatives originating in the region mentioned above. A substantial evaluation of such extensive activities beginning at the time of our research is certainly not possible. The fact that culture was not established in the Stability Pact as an independent work sector seems problematic, and this is not compensated by the fact that cultural issues are mentioned in other chapters (those dealing with media, education and youth, women, etc.) and outside these areas in "Working Table I."

At the same time, the facts that cultural policies have lead to substantial activity in the sector,

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[40] http://www.osi.hu

[41] This corresponds on the one hand to the character of networks as forms of independent organization, as the foundation's intention is not to establish "independent" networks, and at many such meetings in the various sectors, the conditions required for the creation of stable transnational networks are often not present in the various countries. On the other hand, the Soros Foundation seems to have little interest in independent networks in certain areas (not including the performing arts), in part because they are considered to an extent to be competitors.

[42] Cf. http://www.stabilitypact.org.

that initiatives have been launched, and that the region has been included in calls for proposals for promotional projects as a focus cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, many of the answers we received from European/global networks mention southeastern Europe as an active region.

Increased commitment in the cultural sector by international political bodies which leads to an improvement in the financial situation and the availability of an increased range of subsidies—especially in the form of the long-term structural subsidies which are important for networks—would be desirable for additional creation and development of cultural networks in the region. In the region itself, the great interest in and potential for transnational cooperation present in the cultural sector has so far been satisfied to a limited extent on the political level. As in the past, especially in southeastern Europe, it was reported that obtaining national subsidies and grants for East-East cooperation is extremely difficult, and massive problems are repeatedly caused by visa laws.

National networks

A summary description of networks which are active on the national level is made difficult by the fact that conditions in the various countries vary greatly and a wide range of organizational forms are present, including unions which have survived since the socialist period, new special-interest groups, networks in a narrow sense and local organizations which perform various networking tasks. At the same time, only a few organizations exist on these levels in many countries.

In an attempt to identify common characteristics in the various contexts in which networks are active, a few fundamental parallels relating to the transformation process can be described. The previous socialist governments left behind a dense infrastructure of institutions involved in the art and culture sector. After 1989, the expenditures on culture were reduced dramatically, which in many cases reduced their ability to function to a great extent, although a large portion of this infrastructure still exists. This applies to institutions which are still able to perform their main tasks but, for example, have no budget for periodicals; cultural centers which were forced to release large numbers of employees and rent substantial portions of their buildings for commercial purposes; and for example houses of culture in rural areas which, though they still exist formally, are able to do little, assuming that their spaces have not already been rented as commercial establishments or for profit-oriented events.

Normally, efforts are made in the course of general political decentralization and the accompanying administrative reforms to transfer a more or less large share of the responsibilities relating to cultural policy from the national government to municipalities and/or regions. Smaller and/or poorer communities are then often unable to maintain these facilities. The combination of decentralization and massive economic change then makes it difficult if not impossible to obtain an overview of the situation (especially in rural areas). As a result, while it would seem that the total number of houses of culture which still exist has remained approximately stable, the question of how many of these facilities still function as originally intended remains unclear.

With regard to representation of interests, the transformation has often been accompanied by a high degree of discontinuity. Whether caused by frequent changes in the government or conflicts within the new parties or coalitions, producers of culture are frequently confronted by the problem that their contacts within the government are replaced so often as to prevent development of substantial dialog. The discontinuity on a general political level also involves the problem that the development of long-term prospects in cultural policy is rarely possible.

While one could cautiously speak of similar problems, it should also be mentioned that the situations in the individual countries vary greatly. In some, the decentralization process is almost complete, while solely the first steps have been taken in others. Of course, the financial problems parallel the country's budget as a whole and the significance attributed to the cultural sector on the political level.

The situations in the independent art and culture sectors also vary greatly, being a function of its background on the one hand (and therefore the conditions for independent organization). In certain countries, this sector (or its predecessors) was born in the 70s, while others came into being in the years before and after 1989. On the other hand, the situation is equally relevant to the context of cultural policy. Although solely a few governments more or less explicitly regard the NGOs as enemies and as a whole the basic dedication to a civil society has been commonly expressed, the actual amount of recognition and support varies greatly. In certain countries, this difficult situation in the state cultural sector seems to represent such a drain on the government's finances and ability to solve problems that support of the independent cultural sector seems to have been left to a great extent to the Soros Foundations[43] and western organizations. In other countries, the availability of a minimum of funding for the independents would seem to represent an essential element of cultural policy.

With regard to networking on a national level, the possibility of transformations of organizations which existed before 1989 in particular has involved a number of other questions which it was not possible to answer within the framework of this research project.

The unions/associations of artists and labor unions in particular represent an extremely extensive and heterogeneous area. The development of these organizations after 1989 is quite varied,[44] including strict adherence to previous modes of operation, which occasionally involves replacement of socialist ideology with nationalist ideas in harmony with the government; opening membership to everyone; divisions; reorganizations;[45] and the

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[43] In the small and medium-sized countries in particular, such conditions could result in a monopoly of the NGO sector by the Soros Foundations accompanied by developments which would be counterproductive for the independent cultural sector.

[44] Cf. the University of Bremen's Forschungsstelle Osteuropa [Research Department for Eastern Europe] (ed.), *Kultur im Umbruch. Polen - Tschechoslowakei - Rußland*, Bremen: Edition Temmen 1992.

[45] Gernot Grabher, David Stark (ed.), *Restructuring Networks in Post-Socialism: Legacies, Linkages, and Localities*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 1997 provides additional information on divisions and the establishment of new organizations (primarily with regard to economic issues). Grabher and Stark advanced the proposition that sluggishness in the flow of information and isolation from the rest of the world increase with the networks' density. Especially dense social networks are characteristic for strong collective identities. Holes in the network guarantee the structures' openness, permitting the

establishment of new independent associations in the context of such changes. The changes in this area are still in progress; in cases in which the unions rigidly cling to the old modes of operation, the question of whether they are capable of substantial change or whether they will be replaced by new organizations will arise sooner or later.

Most of the hierarchical relationships and structures remaining from the socialist era—such as in the area of cultural centers—fell apart in the years after 1989, often leaving behind a vacuum and, in certain countries, a very basic skepticism regarding formalized associations. At the same time, a number of networks—some of them organized in accordance with the levels of the former hierarchy—were created in this context.

With regard to new independent networks, it was found that associations (especially in the area of contemporary dance) were created shortly after 1989 in certain countries. Some of them seem to concentrate primarily on representation of interests and member services, while others are involved in a wider range of activities. The boundary between "alternative professional associations" and networks in a narrow sense is fluid in this case.[46]

While at least the older associations were definitely created in the national or local context and connections to European networks have arisen or can arise in a second step, there are a few examples of recently formed networks which were originally established (similarly to the regional sector described above) in connection with European networks. Presumably, the presence of this context at the establishment of new networks is becoming more widespread in both western and Eastern Europe on the national level also, and new networks will increasingly employ this structural model. If this is the case, it would represent a general trend, the effects of which would be more relevant to Central and Eastern Europe due to the present low density of formal networks, especially in the independent sectors, and the expected new organizations.

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network to adapt itself to the various needs of its members and act effectively in local affairs without requiring the involvement of the entire collective in all activities. With regard to social networks in the post-socialist economies, this means that, rather than the actors who revive the "old" relationships and develop in their environment, those who reorganize their networks of contacts, including the "old" relationships, are the ones who benefit, and thereby enabling diversity.

[46] Examining individual organizations in isolation from their context would also be problematic. For example, the Contemporary Dance Theatre Association in Budapest concentrates strongly on representation of interests and member services, though its close cooperation with the Workshop Foundation shows a different picture. The latter (as a foundation without formal membership) also organizes regular meetings of dancers on various topics and is quite active in transnational networking.

2.2. Portraits of Individual Countries

2.2.1. Bulgaria
[Raimund Minichbauer]

General Political Situation

The "transformation process" in Bulgaria seems to be strongly influenced by a stalemate between the former Bulgarian Communist Party and the opposition—at least this was the case until the spring of 1997. Presumably, the fact that the opposition was not able to produce a significant shift in power immediately after introduction of democratic elections is primarily a result of the fact that hardly any the structures essential to a civil society had taken shape; there was no real unity among dissidents and the crystallization of "counter-elites" began quite late.[47] Therefore, the opposition was unable to build on either existing structures or a large number of actors who had publicly assumed a firm stance.

The first free elections held in June 1990 were followed by frequent reshufflings of the government, resignations, "cabinets of experts" and interim governments.[48] In a number of phases, the result was almost total paralysis, and this also led to overly hasty reforms.[49]

In the winter of 1996/97, a serious financial crisis developed (collapse of the banking system and hyperinflation which reached a monthly rate of almost 250% in February 1997), resulting in renewed mass demonstrations and widespread strikes. A coalition led by the Union of Democratic Forces won the subsequent elections with 57% of the vote. The period which followed was to all appearances more stable, and the coalition is still in power (as of July 2000).[50]

The government, which is strongly oriented toward West Europe and the USA, is currently working to stabilize the currency and continue the implementation of a market economy. While most of the current economic data seems to show an upward trend,[51] large portions of

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[47] Cf. Wolfgang Höpken, "Die 'unvollendete Revolution'? Bilanz der Transformation nach fünf Jahren," in: Höpken (ed.), *Revolution auf Raten. Bulgariens Weg zur Demokratie*, Munich: Oldenbourg 1996

[48] Although the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the new name adopted by the Communist party a few months earlier, came out ahead in the first free elections, the government resigned just a few months later (November 1990) after mass demonstrations. A cabinet of experts was then installed. The opposition won the elections held in October 1991 by a slim margin, and the government was removed by a no-confidence vote one year later; apparently the result of a miscalculation, it was called by its own members. Another cabinet of experts was named, and a left-wing coalition led by the BSP won the next elections in December 1994, staying in power until early in 1997. (Cf. Höpken, op. cit., and Nadja Rademacher's chronology of the years from 1989 to 1999 in *After the Wall*, exhibition catalogue, Stockholm: Moderna Museet 1999; http://www.v2.nl/~arns/Texts/Chrono/BG.html.

[49] E.g. the privatization of agricultural cooperatives in 1991 (cf. Höpken, op. cit., p XI; Ilija Trojanov, *Hundezeiten. Heimkehr in ein fremdes Land*. Munich, Vienna: Hanser 1999, p 200 ff.)

[50] However, the government was extensively reshuffled in December 1999.

[51] At the same time, privatization has resulted in an increase in the unemployment rate, from 11.1% in 1995 to 14.7% in 1999, according to the government's definition

the population are going through an extremely difficult situation in both a social and economic sense as a result of the transformation process.

Cultural Policy

It is obvious that, in the context of such problems, the cultural field is currently experiencing an extremely difficult phase. The shares of total government expenditures and the gross domestic product which go to culture have shrunk continuously.[52] In a context of political conditions complicated by numerous problems, making the needs of the cultural field heard is difficult if not impossible, and the frequent changes in government have hindered formation of a basis for a coherent strategy in cultural policy. The latter aspect has also been accompanied by the fact that there were in effect no members of government available for dialog with cultural producers. Before meaningful dialog with a minister could take place, the next government was already in office.

However, the years since 1997 have brought greater continuity in the members of government, and the same Minister of Culture has occupied that position for the entire period (as of July 2000). At the same time, a number of correspondents have pointed out the fact that a substantial strategy for cultural policy has still not begun to take shape. Furthermore, the cabinet reshuffle in December 1999 resulted in a weakened cultural policy on the national-government level. The office of a vice-prime minister whose responsibilities included the creation of links between the various sections of the cultural field (e.g. culture and new communication technologies)[53] was eliminated.

The long-term strategy on the structural level is aimed at achieving a comprehensive decentralization in the field of cultural policy, including at the Ministry of Culture itself: The specialized departments were removed and, according to the arms-length principle, transformed into "national centers" for the individual sectors. The creation of true partial autonomy for these centers has to an extent progressed in quite contradictory directions

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(http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/document/eesuppc/2000_1/bul.htm and the annual report published by Transitions Online at http://www.tol.cz/countries/bular99.html).

[52] The National Report prepared by the Institute of Culturology as part of the Council of Europe's program for evaluation of national cultural policies, which covered the years from 1990 to 1995, described this development as follows: "There is a stable trend towards the reduction of public expenditure on culture. It is not influenced by the nature of the parties in power. Regardless of the growing concern for culture constantly declared in party programs, the proportion of expenditure on culture in the general expenditure of the state and the gross domestic product is decreasing." The "percentage of total expenditure in the consolidated budget" was reduced from 2.15 in 1988 to 1.37 in 1995; the "percentage of the gross domestic product" fell from 1.28 to 0.58 in the same period (Council of Europe / Culture Committee (ed.), "Bulgarian Cultural Policy in a State of Transition," National Report, Strasbourg 1997, p 52)

[53] Three vice-prime ministers were named when the new government came to power in mid 1997. Their responsibilities covered "co-ordination and control" and not implementation, which was the responsibility of the specific ministries. One vice-prime minister was responsible for the so-called "non-material field" (most importantly education, culture, social affairs and health). In the course of the government reshuffle in December 1999, two of the three vice-prime ministers were eliminated (conversation with Rada Balareva, Sofia, 1/26/00).

(which was the cause of harsh criticism from the Council of Europe's experts, e.g. in 1997).

The second approach to decentralization is transferring responsibilities from the national government to the municipal level.[54] In one concrete example, this move was implemented as part of a theater reform apparently dominated by the goals of "structural cleansing" and cost reductions. The intention was to eliminate some of the numerous state theaters (through closures, conversions into "open stages," combinations with various genres such as puppet theater, etc.), and responsibility for funding was gradually transferred to the municipal governments. Although this reform has wide support as being a necessity, individual cases of implementation have often posed considerable difficulties (concerning the distribution of costs compared to the apportionment of influence between the national and local governments, the problems poor municipal governments have in raising their share of funding, etc.).

Some generalizations can be made concerning the relationship between the national government's cultural policy and administration and the independent cultural field. Concerning the NGOs, some correspondents pointed out a trend over the past one or two years: The national government's institutions have begun to take note of the NGOs' ability to solve problems, and the latter are gradually becoming accepted as partners in a concrete way. The cultural field (but apparently not that of education) does however have a great deal of catching up to do. This was mentioned during the interviews as a general observation, and problems in individual sectors would seem to justify this characterization. For example, the fact that the Ministry of Culture still regards networks as competitors was mentioned as being one of the most serious difficulties hindering the formation of such structures.

As cooperation with NGOs apparently has no firm place in cultural policy, the willingness to work together with and support independent cultural organizations on the level of the national centers depends to a large extent on the overall situation in the individual field and the responsible persons at the particular center. For example, funds were made available for projects open to participation by independent groups as a result of the theater reform mentioned above. While independent producers of culture consider certain centers to be quite cooperative, others have largely failed to notice the existence of the contemporary-art and cultural sectors and NGOs at all.

In the towns and cities, there have been the first positive examples of NGOs being recognized and benefiting from inclusion in a few funding programs, and of small budgets being set aside for these organizations. In the cultural sector, this is presumably still limited to isolated cases. The city of Sofia has failed to assume a pioneering role, as its commitment to the cultural sector in general has been quite reserved.

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[54] Municipal governments represent the sole political level beneath that of the national government; although there are 28 different regions, they are solely administrative units. However, the question of whether cultural facilities and institutions of regional importance could also be funded at this level is apparently being discussed (conversation with Raina Cherneva / Institute of Culturology, Sofia, 1/25/00).

The Independent Cultural Scene: Three Fragments

Due to its heterogeneous character, a unified description of the independent cultural scene is not possible, especially under conditions of dynamic change in which few forms of independent organization have resulted in lasting structures. In such a situation it is clear that, in the course of a few days, one can only attempt to outline a few fragments of the overall situation. The fragmentary portraits below refer primarily to the areas of theater and the visual arts.

Reflection

The cultural policy pursued in the 70s and 80s was apparently successful in maintaining the established organizational forms in the art world to the exclusion of virtually all competition. "Creating" dissidents through strict prohibitions was avoided, and efforts were made to dissuade artists from leaving the "closed systems" of the Unions, both in general (through recognition, relatively broad freedom within the institutions, numerous opportunities to exhibit, foreign travel, relatively high income, etc.) and in individual cases (through incentives).

This was apparently successful to the extent that no coherent movements or groups were able to form outside these closed systems, and emigration was the only alternative available to individual artists. It seems that this success also prevented development of a long-lived professional independent cultural scene under the official status of "amateur art," such as at cultural and youth centers, and other facilities for students.

The independent cultural scene presumably came into being around 1989, and there were no solid traces of development before that time. In the area of spoken theater, most of the first independent theaters were "small-scale copies" of the state theater; a fundamentally different context developed from the field of contemporary dance, which had no predecessors in the state art system.

Despite the extremely difficult conditions, quite dynamic development eventually got under way. At present, the independent art and cultural sector is anything but marginal. Although no precise statistics are available, up to 150 independent theater groups are now active in Bulgaria according to rough estimates.[55] In other areas, such as new media, the attention shown outside Bulgaria and the existence of relatively "old" NGOs such as the Student Computer Art Society (SCAS),[56] which was founded in 1990, suggest the existence of a

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[55] According to a rough estimate made at my urging (by Elena Saraivanova, National Theatre Centre), over 100 independent theater groups are active in Sofia alone; at the Soros Center for the Arts, approximately 150 applications were submitted by various theater groups and organizations in 1999.

[56] The SCAS has put on an international computer art festival (Computer Space) in Sofia each year since 1990. In 1994, it began operation of a computer art center which awards a limited number of grants for computer-art and new-media projects (approximately 15 each year) and provides a technical infrastructure and consultation services. In addition, the SCAS is active in the youth information and exchange sector; projects entitled "Art against the Violence" and "Resistance Culture" were presented in the year 2000 (conversation conducted with Rosen Petkov, SCAS, Sofia, 1/23/00;

relatively wide range of activity though their effectivity seems to have been limited in the first years.

Substitutions, One Example: the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)

On the national level, the independent art and culture scene is not organized in formal networks, special-interest groups or associations of alternative artists. At the same time, this does not mean that the field has no structure at all. A relatively large number of independent organizations perform networking tasks. Such tasks are large in number, as there are few established institutions for this purpose, and those that do exist are limited in their activity due to insufficient funding. For example, there is no museum for contemporary art, the art academy was forced to cancel its subscriptions to international art periodicals due to a lack of funds, relevant institutions neglect the tasks of archiving and maintaining an informational center concerned with contemporary art, etc.

The Institute of Contemporary Art[57] has the longest history of all independent organisations in the area of contemporary visual art. This initiative was founded in the early 90s by curators, theoreticians and a few artists with a quite straightforward goal: to create framework conditions in which people with the "positive idea to connect the connections" could meet and build an informal network which enables the implementation of ideas.

One especially important focus of this group's activities, which received a great deal of attention in the beginning, is the international promotion of Bulgarian avant-garde art (or arousing initial interest in it). In Bulgaria, there are separate shows put on in this area, and a number of projects aim at documenting and stimulating the growth of the scene: lectures (for the purpose of informing young artists about the practical function of the art sector and to stimulate discourse about aesthetics; as part of the Locally Interested project, internationally prominent artists were invited to lectures held in Sofia; these lectures, up to three hours in length and followed by discussions, often attracted up to 300 participants), an archive which has been digitalized (and an art project and virtual museum, the "Virtual Museum of Contemporary Art / VMCA"), meetings of international curators and Bulgarian artists, archiving art periodicals, etc.

> "Our main thesis about our institution and all the similar type of institutions[58] now in the country: we are not institutions, we are substitutions. We are substituting everything, we are substituting all the normal life of contemporary culture here. Our institute is trying to substitute a museum. Because we know who of the artists is saving his piece from '95 or '89 in his studio. And we know it exactly. And sometimes I am calling: 'What is going on? Please don't destroy it.' Yes, it takes place. It's impossible to live with it. Our artists, they have no studios, they are living and working and saving their stuff in their own apartments. [...] And we

additional information is available at the SCAS website: http://www.scas.acad.bg).

[57] This information is based primarily on a conversation conducted with Iara Boubnova of the ICA, Sofia, on 1/24/00.

[58] At present, there are five or six similar independent organizations in the field of the contemporary visual arts.

have a big archive here, archive of last fifteen years. So we are substituting the archive of contemporary art, we are substituting this informational center and expertising in the field of contemporary art for many people."

Sections

The Union of Artists offers a two-year pre-membership for young visual artists who have just completed their training at the art academy. During this phase, pre-members can apply to participate in shows, which will be decided by a jury[59]. Participation in two national shows is required before an application can be made for full membership (in one of the sections painting, graphic arts, etc.).

In the course of the 80s, this rigid system and its old-fashioned structures became less and less acceptable to young artists; at the same time, the entire arts scene was organized by the Union of Artists, and there was a strong desire for membership. As a result, the Club of Young Artists, later renamed Club of Eternally Young Artists in an ironic reference to the elitist attitudes present at the Union, was formed in the late 80s.

The Club was founded by young artists as an alternative to pre-membership in the Union. There was a great deal of interest in new art forms, and its members were extremely active. A few years later, the Club led to a separate multimedia section[60] within the Union. There was now hope of changing the organization, opening its membership to all and concentrating its activities on the representation of artists' interests. However, the Union clung to its old role in the previous organizational form, considering its primary responsibility to be maintaining an authority which defines art and its role in society and is able to implement these definitions in praxis. The importance of the multimedia section was reduced greatly, and pre-membership may be reintroduced in the future.

While the Club continued to exist independently of these changes, it gradually became obvious in 1994/95 that the interests of the individual artists had undergone such a sweeping change that the organization was no longer of interest to them. Subsequent attempts to revive the Club were unsuccessful, and 300 invitations sent out for a meeting typically drew a crowd of no more than a few.

Networks

On the one hand, it is obvious that any statement about the presence of positive attitudes toward networking and international cooperation in a certain country's cultural scene runs a risk of being tautological when made by those who do not speak the local language and whose contacts were made directly or indirectly within the context of European networks and meetings.

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[59] The juries made all decisions concerning participation (this was the case into the 80s and has been reintroduced).

[60] "Multimedia," rather than applying to digital multimedia works, refers to experimental methods which do not conform to the classic categories

On the other hand, my colleague was also confronted with deeply skeptical attitudes during her visit to Poland, which was made under similar conditions. At the same time, it was conspicuous that the fundamental importance of networks and networking were never questioned in any of the interviews conducted in Bulgaria, and there was no mention made that successful establishment of formal networks is improbable due to their association with centralized structures or because they are otherwise ideologically suspect.

A number of problem areas were addressed during several conversations in an attempt to explain the fact that few strong networks exist at present. Excepting the fact that, in many cases, specific points were mentioned (explicitly or implicitly) in addition to difficulties with funding, only the problems of enduring inequalities, the formation of "closed circles," the withholding of information, etc. could be considered widespread. However, this is only partially true for the cultural scene itself, as this tendency was found—not exclusively but to a great extent—in connection with the excessive power of the Soros organizations and their attempts to monopolize the situation.

The other problem areas are listed here in arbitrary order: as a result of the financial crisis of 1996/97, an extremely difficult economic situation has arisen in the past few years, making the establishment of strong networks impossible; the concept of networking is still widely unknown; a change in the attitudes of producers of culture is necessary; as a result of the frequent changes in government, there have been no political contacts to address; the "communist heritage" of expecting solutions to be supplied by the government; the establishment of networks linking various groups and organizations is still not possible as most of the latter were formed merely a short time ago; obtaining funding from the Ministry of Culture is difficult because such institutions are still regarded as competitors.

The networks located in Bulgaria which were identified in the course of this investigation and briefly described below are active (as networks) on the regional level in the Balkans or southeastern Europe.[61] For all these activities, the regional context seemed to be decisive from the very beginning, or at least in the early stages of development. At the same time, some of the networks have retreated to the national level, intending to apply solutions found in regional contexts.

Efforts to solve the problems of the Balkans without outside help are in frequent evidence in the various networks. The goals of the Balkan Young Theatre Network include the powerful slogan "To create a Balkan Network that works,"[62] and the "subtitle" of the access association's name is Association for Contacts and Cooperation - East-European Self-Support. In the same vein, this goal was expressed quite clearly in the invitation to the meeting at which the Balkan Theatre Schools Network was founded: "Among the many forums taking place all over the world, directly addressing regional or European issues, we

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[61] I would like to point out that the newly established networks of cultural managers described below operate on the national level and, in addition to the Unions (cf. Council of Europe / Culture Committee (ed.), op. cit.), there is an association of theater directors and an Association and a Union of *chitalishta* (reading clubs / houses of culture).

[62] Taken from the 1999 program of the Balkan Young Theater Festival.

would like to initiate a meeting of theatre schools **of** the Balkans, initiated **by** the Balkans themselves and taking place **on** the Balkans" (emphasis in the original).[63]

As clearly expressed at the beginning of this last quote, this attitude is not accompanied by attempts to insulate the region from the rest of the world; on the contrary, the networks cooperate closely with their European counterparts and other organizations. The networks themselves and/or their members also belong to European networks;[64] representatives of European networks are invited to meetings; the access association cooperates closely with the International Peace Information Service based in Antwerp; etc.

Five networks are briefly described below. One, the Balkan Neighbours Network (access association), might seem to represent a "borderline case" in a list of cultural networks, as human rights are the main focus of its activities. On the other hand, excluding a network which deals with the construction of images of the "other" is not justified in my opinion.

Balkan Young Theatre Network[65]

The Balkan Young Theatre Network is a network of theater producers and directors who are strongly committed to the presentation of young artists. The focus of this network's activities is organization of the "Neighbouring Voices" Balkan Young Theatre Festival, the first of which was held in the town of Sliven, Bulgaria in 1997; since 1998, this festival has been held each year in Sofia.

This event comprises three parts: a festival featuring productions of young artists from the Balkan countries; training sessions (the Balkan Summer Theatre University) intended primarily for students and young professionals which comprise workshops in acting, directing, dance, puppet theater, stage design, etc. and cultural management and policy; and a project presentation program. This provides a forum to which producers are invited and represents an opportunity for young artists to realize their ideas and concepts for projects.[66]

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[63] Quoted from an answer provided on our questionnaire.

[64] In the Balkan Theatre Schools Network's questionnaire, the following organizations were mentioned: ELIA, IETM, CONCEPTS, the International Theatre Schools Festival in Amsterdam.

[65] This information was taken primarily from a conversation with Zlatko Gulekov, Sofia, 1/26/00.

[66] As this section is intended to provide, in addition to a brief outline of the program, a more in-depth understanding and establish a connection between the network and the overall situation regarding national cultural policy, more information on the network's background has been provided in this footnote. Its origins extend back to 1993. Just a few years after the political change in 1989, the idea of breathing new life into the state cultural facilities and institutions such as by encouraging the placement of young artists in leading positions was formed. In 1993, a young man under 30 years of age was made the director of the state theater (Stefan Kirov Theater) in Sliven (with a population of about 120,000 the eighth largest city in Bulgaria). The Summer Theatre University project initiated that summer later became the Balkan Young Theatre Festival on a national level and also included all three elements of the present program. The festival was intended to present the most interesting Bulgarian theatrical productions of the past season at Stefan Kirov Theater in Sliven. The project presentation program aimed at shaking up the rigid structures typical of repertoire theaters with a fixed ensemble (hierarchies, routine decision-making processes, etc.) and to open the theater to young artists. Everyone, including actors, dramatists, etc., had the opportunity to present their ideas and

Due to its concentration on this one annual event, the Balkan Young Theatre Network seems at first glance to be closer in nature to a "networked festival" (programming decisions are not centralized; the members in the respective countries adopt a selection or at least an interim selection of potential projects;[67] concretely, the artistic director, at least at the first festival, was located in Sliven, though this position was filled by a member from Macedonia).

Regarding the difference between the network and the festival, Zlatko Gulekov claimed that, to present, it has not been possible to "keep the network networking all the time" due to insufficient resources. Although the primary concentration so far has been the festival, the network's goals comprise a great deal more. Furthermore, establishing a network with the solitary goal of putting on a single one-week festival each year would be absurd.

When one examines more than just the concrete results which have been achieved so far, a trend toward a larger context can be observed starting at the very beginning. At the first meeting, possible tasks and fundamental goals were formulated for the network, and this was separate from discussion of issues concerning the festivals. At the second festival, a meeting was dedicated to "The Framework of the Balkan Young Theatre Network in the Context of the Current European Development in Networks and Networking."

In 1999, a medium-term concept was worked out for the 2000 - 2002 period. This concept, in addition to continuation and expansion of the festival, includes the launch of a website with an electronic catalog (listing groups, theaters and artists) and forums for news and discussions, and supporting "Balkan theatre co-productions" through calls to suggest and select projects, fundraising, etc.

This network is still informal, and there is no formal membership. Creating a legal foundation requires additional discussion of the structures, which can be made possible by improving opportunities for communication through the website.

This network's goals could be regarded as occupying three levels:

> Practical level: encouragement of young professionals through education and by providing opportunities to realize and present projects

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concepts for new productions. This also gave birth to an open dialog concerning the theater's program, casting, etc. in the following season. This event was held in the subsequent years as a project of Stefan Kirov Theater. In 1996 an NGO (The Summer Theatre University Association) was established as a project organizer, which was also part of a more comprehensive approach of combining state infrastructure and an independent management. In 1997 the festival was expanded to include the regional context and the Balkan Young Theatre Network Project was developed. The Stefan Kirov Theater became—mainly because of the success enjoyed by the Summer Theatre University —-an argument for the theater reform. Unfortunately, the theater reform led shortly thereafter to a catastrophic financial situation, as a result of which the director declined to extend his contract. This failure is presumably related to the unclear aspects of the relationship between municipality and Ministry, though it presumably serves as an example that the theatre reform triggered dynamic processes which overtaxed the ability of the state art system and its administration to reintegrate.

[67] Although reducing "networked festivals" to this single aspect is obviously not justified, this example shows how networking under difficult conditions (with regard to finances, problems with visas) represents virtually the sole method of enabling cross-border cooperation.

> Discursive/reflexive level: refers to both the area of aesthetics and the issue of practical enabling conditions and those created through cultural policy. Both complexes of issues were analyzed at the first meeting, also as a prerequisite for dealing with the issues involving networks. One of the goals spelled out in the 2000 - 2002 concept is to "contribute to the promotion of reform of cultural policies on the national levels."

> Broadened political and social context: contributing to the European integration process, the "opening of national cultures towards the diversity of cultural developments in Europe,"[68] and creation of a positive model for cooperation on the Balkans: " 'To balkanize a problem' in the political slang is a synonym of complicated misunderstanding and inevitable conflict. We would like to deny such connotations and establish a Balkan network of colleagues in the performing arts able to contribute to the process of Balkan co-operation as part of the European co-operation and integration process."[69]

Balkan Theatre Schools Network[70]

In 1997, the theater and film academy Krustyo Sarafov initiated and hosted the 1st Balkan Theatre Schools Meeting in Sofia. This event comprised primarily a festival at which each participating institution was to put on a production featuring its characteristic or most important acting style. A total of 100 participants attended this meeting, approximately half of whom were from educational institutions in Albania, Macedonia, Romania and Yugoslavia, the remainder being from Bulgarian institutions. Some of the participants were from outside the region, such as Carla Delfos from the European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA), which also sponsored the meeting.

At a roundtable discussion held at the conclusion of the meeting, the desire to establish a network was expressed. Since then, a meeting has been held each year (in Tirana in 1998, in Thessaloniki in 1999, and the fourth meeting will be held in Bucharest in the fall of 2000) for discussion of a certain aspect of education or the educational process.[71] Each meeting includes special roundtables or discussions dedicated to the direction which future development of the network will take. In 1998, additional possibilities were worked out, and a draft for the statutes was presented in 1999.

At present, the network is still informal, meaning that there are no official members. Thirteen institutions from eight countries have participated so far. The activities planned for the future include creating the necessary conditions for and realizing various projects; research and

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[68] Festival program, 1999

[69] Ibid.

[70] This information was taken primarily from a questionnaire filled out by Lyubov Shtilianova. Additional information concerning the network is also available on the Internet: http://www.art.acad.bg/natfiz/doc/eng/BTSNet.html.

[71] In 1998, the topic was "2nd year working process," and in 1999, "full performance, demonstrating the contemporary methods of artistic production and interpretation of text."

events relating to art education; exchanges of students, teachers and artists; development and implementation of training and qualification programs; creation and servicing of funds for scholarships and prizes; and establishment of an online database. In addition to the meetings, students from seven different educational institutions in five different countries cooperated on a co-production in Sofia in 1999.

Association of Managers and Administrators in Culture

This network of cultural managers was established late in 1999 after a course held earlier that year. Although courses offered at several Bulgarian universities cover the field of cultural management, there are no opportunities, apart from a few workshops, to receive training in this field outside a conventional degree program.

In 1999, funding was made available to the cultural sector for the first time within the framework of the EU's phare program. A portion of this money was used to finance a training project held in two parts (April and September 1999), which had a total of 80 participants. A gathering held in November 1999 at completion of this course was the new network's first meeting, and a seven-member board was named and statutes were drafted.

Balkanmedia Association[72]

The Balkanmedia Association, which was founded in 1990, is the most firmly established of the networks described in this section. The Association cooperates with UNESCO, the Council of Europe and other organizations; serves as the Bulgarian National Committee of the European Cultural Foundation; and began in 1999 to prepare the establishment of the Balkan Media Academy,[73] which will enter the realization phase in the year 2000, as part of the stability pact for southeastern Europe.

In general terms, the Association's goal is to promote cooperation in the areas of culture and mass communication, both among Balkan countries and between those countries and the rest of Europe and the world. The group has members in all 12 countries of southeastern Europe,[74] in particular individuals in the media and cultural sectors (although it is also open to organizations). In principle, the Association's structure differs from that of a network with the primary purpose of creating links between members and solely "existing," in which only its members are active. In contrast, the Association is an international organization which concentrates on publishing, including the quarterly entitled *Balkanmedia* and the comprehensive series entitled *Bulgarian Media Studies*.

On the one hand, while the activities of Balkanmedia seem to concentrate more or less on

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[72] This information was taken primarily from a conversation with Rossen Milev and Svetlana Lazarova (Sofia, 1/24/00), Balkanmedia's statutes and its own description of its activities.

[73] Balkanmedia held intensive courses in media management (in cooperation with KulturKontakt) in 1995.

[74] In the interview with Rossen Milev (conducted in German) regarding these developments, he explicitly referred to the broader term "southeastern Europe" rather than "the Balkans."

mass media and mass-communication research, several of its projects deal with a broader understanding of culture and media which includes art. The 1994 conference "The Balkans, the Mediterranean and European Cultural Cooperation" was the first reference to the fact that the Balkan countries belong to a Mediterranean cultural region.[75] In 1998, the Balkan Film Festival[76] was revived in cooperation with the Goethe Institute. One of the important projects of the year 2000 is the identification of (and collection of fundamental data concerning) Balkan organizations in the media and cultural sectors.

access association / Balkan Neighbours Network[77]

The access association is active primarily in the areas of intercultural dialog and cooperation on the Balkans, minority rights, development of a civil society and democracy. This organization considers one of its most important tasks to be work on the "development of a network facilitating free exchange of expertise and information, and establishment of contacts among Bulgarian and foreign NGOs, especially from the Balkan countries."[78]

A long-term project which continues to make an important contribution to networking on the Balkans is the Balkan Neighbours project, which was launched in 1994.[79] In this project, the participants in each country observe and analyze their mainstream media's portrayal of the neighboring countries and their ethnic and religious minorities. The results are published in a semiannual newsletter, and monthly reports were published on the website over a period of two years (1996-1998).

This project began with five countries (Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey) which have been joined by Albania and Romania since 1996. Approximately three organizations in each country are also involved in the project in addition to individuals representing a number of different sectors (media specialists, philosophers, human-rights experts, etc.).

The access association's activities in the area of intercultural dialog are not limited to monitoring, as they include scientific research and analysis on issues of cultural diversity[80]

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[75] This was followed by other events: In December 1999, the fourth "Euro-Mediterranean Cultural Co-operation Campus" was held in Spain; the EUROMED CULT network was founded at this event.

[76] The original Balkan Film Festival was held annually from 1965 to 1982. A number of attempts have been made in the past few years to revive it (cf. the introduction to the Festival's program by Rossen Milev, Sofia, 1998).

[77] This information was taken primarily from a conversation with Valery Roussanov (Sofia, 1/26/00); additional information on the access association's projects can be found on their homepage at http://www.access.online.bg.

[78] The access association's description of itself and its activities can be found at http://www.access.online.bg/accessinbrief.htm.

[79] The access association was founded in 1992, and the Balkan Neighbours Project has used its present name since 1996. During its initial years (1994 to 1996), the latter operated under the name "Cross-Border Information Exchange on Balkan Ethnic and National Prejudices."

[80] See Goedele de Keersmaeker, Plamen Makariev (eds.), *Bulgaria - Facing Cultural Diversity*, 1999. This publication was prepared as part of a more comprehensive networking project entitled "Civic

and work relating to intercultural education. For example, it published a brochure listing terms frequently used in everyday political language such as "minority" and "Balkanization"; these terms were explained in a way secondary school students can understand (with illustrations by students at the Art Academy in Sofia).[81] Lastly, videos are produced for the same target groups.

Network for Cultural Pluralism and Intercultural Integration in Southeastern Europe"; the texts are also available at the access association's website.

[81] This publication appeared in Sofia in 1995 (in Bulgarian; 2nd edition in 1997), and an English translation of the Bulgarian title is included in a list of publications in "Us-Them. A Concise Ethnopolitical Dictionary. Mostly for citizens of the Republic of Bulgaria under identity-card age."

2.2.2. Poland
[Elke Mitterdorfer]

In the same way as in the other socialist countries, the cultural sector in Poland was provided with a broad range of government support on all levels until 1989. Cultural events were virtually free, and the entrance fees for museums and concerts were extremely low. With the implementation of a market economy and the accompanying reduction of state subsidies for the cultural sector, the majority of state funding received by these institutions—including those of national importance such as large museums, state opera houses and national theaters—was lost. At the end of the 80s, the percentage of the budget allocated for culture was approximately 2.5%; at present, it is approximately 0.6%.[82] The period after the reduction in subsidies and the struggle to survive is generally referred to by culture managers as "shock therapy," and a surprisingly large number of organizations managed to survive it.

The hypothesis that joining or establishing networks eased or could ease the difficult situation facing many cultural organizations has proven to be incorrect in spite of the first attempts in this direction. On the one hand, networks are occasionally seen a priori as bureaucracies and rejected as such; on the other hand, it would seem that sufficient resources (both human and financial) are not available for the creation of networks. Furthermore, international cooperation is not made easier by the generally limited command of English of most 30 - 50-year-olds.

In spite of these problems, 68% of the pan-European networks we examined have Polish members. Due to the lack of statistics on membership growth in networks, we can only assume that Polish cultural institutions first started to become involved in networks around 1990. In light of the radical economic, political and cultural changes in post-socialist Poland, we must also assume that many sectors of Polish society are still in a period of change.

> It is a very difficult country, because, well, we changed the name of the system, but it is impossible during few years to change the mentality of people, the way they used to live and work. [...] But it is still changing and it will take another ten, fifteen years, I guess, one generation, basically.[83]

This applies to the cultural sector in particular, which has been quite extensively affected by the great administrative reforms of the 90s. The first issue is decentralization: New and (still) relatively opaque administrative units are being implemented on all levels. The situation of Polish cultural organizations was greatly affected by the administrative reform of 1998, which so far represents the culmination of the decentralization policy in place since the early 90s. For instance, the Staromiejski Dom Kultury (a cultural centre) in Warsaw's old city center was a municipal facility in the 50s, a state institution from 1962 to 1988, and it was placed in the powiat administrative unit (a new administrative unit) in 1998.

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[82] Interview with Dorota Ilczuk, Instytut Kultury, Warsaw, 1/15/00.

[83] Interview with Magda Chabros, Warszawski Ośrodek Kultury (Warsaw Culture Center), Warsaw, 1/14/00.

Confronted by the "bureaucratic jungle" of new administrative units made more confusing by a lack of coordination, organizations are attempting to establish their own, comparatively independent structures. For example, this has been done through informal cooperation between municipal and regional houses of culture within a "union." This cooperation, which is based on regular meetings and exchange of programs (exhibitions, theater productions, concerts), embraces informality. In other words, neither a network nor an association nor a foundation is formally established. This is a result on the one hand of negative experiences with institutionalized cooperation which left the impression that "nothing was accomplished but talking." On the other hand, the implementation of networks involves legal obstacles because there are at present virtually no suitable legal forms for NGOs. In contrast to associations of individuals, there are no legal provisions for the foundation of institutional associations. For this reason, the following applies to the informal network of municipal and regional houses of culture in Warsaw and the surrounding area established by the director of the Staromiejski Dom Kultury:

> It's not an official union because it's not possible to found such a union, because it's a union of institutions. For example it's possible to make a union of managers. [...] But it is more important for a cultural center to have such a union of institutions. [...] It is impossible because of the law. It is informal, completely, but they have meetings, and they are in permanent contact by telephone and a very important point of this union is co-operation in this way: for example we are giving our performances, concerts, and the like, completely free, they are giving to us their attractions, and because of that our programs are bigger and much, much, much cheaper.[84]

The advantages for individual institutions offered by informal networking with similar organizations relate primarily to the synergetic effects generated by the network. For this reason, though not exclusively, further networking within the sector is improbable, as the structures of houses of culture and cultural centers in Poland are quite heterogeneous, and cooperation on several different levels is made rather unlikely due to the range of variation in the available spaces and funding available to the potential partners.

While the purpose of restructuring the large Warsaw cultural center Warszawski Ośrodek Kultury also involves the exploitation of synergetic effects, the main goal is to ensure the institution's survival through establishment of some type of network or a conglomerate of various cultural organizations. They would provide productions to one large and several smaller venues, filling them with an audience which is increasingly harder to please. The large cultural center in Warsaw will become an institution which in the future will provide a program for both the municipal center—where the market for concerts, exhibitions, etc. is already saturated—and smaller houses of culture in the region of Mazovia (Mazowsze, the area surrounding Warsaw). This goal is in part a result of the fact that Warszawski Ośrodek Kultury is now financed by the Sejmik Mazowiecki (approximate translation: Parliament of the Region of Mazovia, which was also recently defined).

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[84] Interview with Sebastian Lenart and his colleagues, Staromiejski Dom Kultury, Warsaw, 1/17/00.

A number of organizations will participate in this network, specifically an agency for concerts of classical music (Krajowe Biuro Koncertowe), five galleries for contemporary art which have already begun working together (Biuro Wystaw Artystycznych) and the Warszawski Ośrodek Kultury cultural center in Warsaw. The new center will be called Mazowieckie Centrum Kultury i Sztuki (Mazovia Center for Art and Culture), and its goal will be to provide a program for the capital and the region of Mazovia. The provincial houses of culture will occasionally make their programs available to the larger cultural center for presentation in Warsaw. Cooperation between the galleries is focused on the promotion of young artists who will benefit from many additional opportunities to exhibit through the network.

Although the question of whether the re-establishment of Warszawski Ośrodek Kultury in the planned form coincides with the logic of rationalization rather than that of networking seems debatable, this project will ideally lead to networking on a number of different levels and provide an alternative to the possible closure of some cultural centers. For the Polish houses of culture, international networking does not yet play a role, though the beginnings are already noticeable.

A network of supra-regional and transnational importance within a cultural sector which is not widely recognized in Poland, namely contemporary dance, has existed for a few years now. This network involves the Polish Association of Contemporary Dance and the Network of Artists and Arts Organizations. The former is a national network with 30 to 40 members throughout Poland (both individuals, such as dancers and choreographers, and institutions involved with contemporary dance) which founded the Network of Artists and Arts Organizations (which has members from both dance companies and the event sector) for cooperation on an international level. On the national level, the network's members are at present less interested in cooperating on projects or generating synergetic effects than establishing an art form which receives little public recognition and therefore financial support in Poland. In a situation in which a relatively small number of dancers, choreographers and project organizers attempt to present their programs to the Polish public, a network can serve to provide coherence among the actors so as to strengthen their public presence:

> In terms of the funding game: There is no way that Poland has the resources at this point to allocate to something like contemporary dance, which they don't even recognize as a profession.[85]

An especially important topic in this context is cooperation between the various national associations committed to promoting dance, who often ignore the possibility of joint action. In addition to the Association of Contemporary Dance, which also networks on the international level, there are at least three national dance associations with their own interests. Choreographer Joe Alter, member of the Association of Contemporary Dance, addressed a common problem experienced by networks, namely the members' disinclination to act independently within the network:

> There are a lot of people that think that it would be a good idea if the association did this, but what they do not realize is they are the association and they keep

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[85] Interview with Joe Alter, Polish Association of Contemporary Dance, Warsaw, 1/17/00.

waiting for other people to do it. And so there is a lack of activities because people don't understand what is in it for them. They think it benefits a very few number of people, and they don't recognize that as a democratic institution, that they have a voice in how it runs, if they apply their energy. If they don't apply their energy, they have no reason to complain that what they want to get done is not getting done. [...] But the fact is, if you get these people to apply their energy, there is a great deal that could be done here, in the network, in the association, on a local, regional, national, international level. There is great deal of good things happening here that nobody knows about and that's a shame.[86]

This statement addresses two crucial issues regarding networking which are also certainly relevant beyond Poland's borders, namely the importance of the networks' activities for increasing the level of variety within the cultural sector and the internal (members) *and* external (public) effects of networking.

A great deal of the transnational cooperation involving Polish organizations can be found in the Baltic region in particular. Gdansk and Szczecin are centers for the networks established in the Baltic region. The founding of the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1992 led to a renaissance in a region divided by the Iron Curtain for decades. But cultural networking began years before. In 1988, before the fall of socialism, ARS BALTICA, a forum for joint cultural policy in the Baltic region, was formed at the initiative of Björn Engholm, then Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein. ARS BALTICA is a network of high-level public officers in the various ministries of culture who discuss proposals for multilateral cultural projects, the majority from transnational partnerships.

Another official network is the Union of Baltic Cities (UBC), which was founded in 1991. This network recalls the tradition of the Hanseatic League, one of the oldest commercial networks. The UBC's membership comprises 97 cities in Russia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Poland; at present, its main office is located in Gdansk. Cultural cooperation represents only one of this network's activities: "The main goal of the Union is to contribute to the democratic, economic, social, cultural and environmentally friendly development (sustainable development) of the Baltic Sea Region—for the benefit of people living in Baltic cities."[87] The UBC's cultural commission is based in the Polish coastal city of Szczecin.

Szczecin is also home to the main office of MARE ARTICUM, a network of curators and art critics who publish the international art periodical of the same name and organizes annual shows of contemporary Baltic art (N.E.W.S.) in Szczecin. MARE ARTICUM receives support from the UBC and has been declared an official project of Baltic cultural cooperation by ARS BALTICA. This fact illustrates the closeness of cooperation among the region's cultural institutions, which does not take place exclusively within a single network but also involves a number of different networks. The question regarding the challenges facing East-West cooperation was answered by the UBC's cultural commission as follows:

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[86] Ibid.

[87] UBC, from the questionnaire.

The biggest challenge could be described as the new possibility to experience the Other which resulted in the dialogue with the former stereotypes and prejudice. The open debate which is always easier to obtain on the base of culture and art than on the political level.[88]

Furthermore, UBC member Szczecin is involved in the ArtGenda network. This group's 18 member cities (including Copenhagen, Oslo, Göteborg, Helsinki, Tallinn, St. Petersburg, Riga, Vilnius and Gdansk) organize a biannual show of contemporary art, which was last held in Helsinki from May 5 to 28, 2000.

In addition to the networks named above, there are numerous other platforms for cooperation in the region, including the Baltic Writers Council based in Visby, Sweden; space does not permit detailed descriptions of them all. An Internet platform in particular deserves mention: The intention of Ballad - The Independent Forum for Networking in the Baltic Sea Region (http://www.ballad.org) is to help institutions which are interested in transnational networking find partners. This platform was founded in 1997 at the initiative of the Baltic Institute in Karlskrona, Sweden. In addition to news from the various Baltic countries, a calendar of events and other services, a database (descriptions of projects can be entered for the purpose of attracting partners) can be accessed by all visitors to the organization's website.

Though we did not find evidence of networked cooperation with Poland's neighbors to the east and south (Lithunia, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia and the Czech Republic), this does not mean that contact, exchange and joint projects do not exist. In the case of Belarus and Ukraine in particular, Poland represents the gateway to the West. Due primarily to its historical relations with the member states of the European Union, Poles have always considered their country to be part of the West, especially in contrast to Belarus and Ukraine. Culture workers interested in exchange in this direction have come to consider cooperation with their eastern colleagues to be a kind of development aid or at least tutoring on the subject of democracy:

We started in 1990, and in 1992 we started to contact and we organized the first seminars and conferences. And we got help from UNESCO, some money and so on, and we still have such contacts. We collaborate especially with Ukrainians and Belarusians. It's interesting, because they need help, and examples from Poland, because, for them, journalists, teachers from the United States, for example, are like people from another planet. We are closer, and we have the common experience. [...] In Belarus the situation now is very a hard one, because [...] they have no free press, and they need help, the different situation is Ukraine, [...] but, however, we have now the big problem, Polish-Ukrainian and so on, Polish-American agreement, simply said, the Americans give money for these organizations to Poles [so that they can] teach Ukrainians [about] democracy, self-government and so on.[89]

In this context, the American billionaire George Soros has built up his network of Open Society Institutes and Soros Foundations in Central and Eastern Europe (from Slovenia to

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[88] Ibid.

[89] Interview with Jan Kłossowicz, Polish Center of the International Theatre Institute, Warsaw, 1/17/00.

Kirgizstan[90]). One of their purposes is financing cultural projects, making them one of the most important financing partners for independent institutions in many countries. In Poland, the Warsaw branch office, called the Stefan Batory Foundation, plays a key role in the spectrum of cultural subsidies:

> Poland: The possibilities for funding of cultural networks are rather limited. We can present it in 4 main categories:
>
> > State: The Polish Ministry of Culture policy has been changed recently and could be described as the progressive decentralization. As a result of this policy the Ministry reduces the resources for the independent projects or activities.
>
> > Municipalities: Cities are currently becoming the biggest and most active sponsors of the cultural activities on their areas.
>
> > Foundations: The biggest sponsor for network activity is Soros Foundation. There are several other foundations from among the most active are: Polish-German collaboration foundation and Culture Foundation.
>
> > Private sponsors: Because of the unfavorable tax law regulations this sector of funding is still underdeveloped.
>
> Baltic Region: Scandinavian countries have a well developed system of sponsoring of the networks: The Swedish Institute and Partnership for Culture Program coordinated by the Swedish Institute, Danish Cultural Institute and Danish Art Foundation, Finland's Art Council and others, whereas in the Eastern countries Soros Foundation seems to be the only reliable base for support of the cultural networking.[91]

The Soros Foundations' cultural projects have been amalgamated under the newly established Arts and Culture Network Program, which developed from the Open Society Cultural Link Program founded in 1995. The Cultural Link Program is coordinated from Poland and pursues the following goals throughout Eastern Europe: encouraging social discourse; bringing up new issues; introducing new, experimental and innovative art forms; contributing to social change; and addressing topics in the field of cultural policy. The motto of the Cultural Link Program is "Cooperation, Program Exchange, and Network Building," and this program concentrates on the financing of transnational culture projects in harmony with these goals. In 1999, 370 projects were given a total of USD 2.3 million.[92] Financial support over and above funding for individual projects, such as basic financing for emerging network structures, is not planned despite the clearly expressed support of networking.

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[90] Soros organizations are located in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldavia, Mongolia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Yugoslavia.

[91] UBC, from the questionnaire.

[92] "Open Society Cultural Link - information about 1999 activities," an unpublished report by Elsbieta Grygiel, Stefan Batory Foundation, Warsaw. Further information about the Arts and Culture Network Program and the focuses of its program, the Cultural Link Program, the Cultural Policy Program and the New Initiatives Program can be found at the Stefan Batory Foundation's website: http://www.batory.org.pl/art/.

Conclusion

There are several reasons for a Polish cultural institution to found or join a network, such as intensifying transnational and international contacts, generating synergetic effects (within national networks) and lobbying for art forms which enjoy little recognition among the general public (e.g. contemporary dance).

Motivations such as exchanging information and representation of interests (in a way similar to unions) by the network's members are rarely mentioned. In principle, short-term goals such as securing the organization's existence through joint programs and projects are considered more important. The focus is certainly joint realization of all projects, a situation which is reflected in the criteria used by the state and "private" sources of financing in providing funding.

The development of networks in Poland is still in its early stages, due in part to the unstable public administration, the far-reaching reforms in a number of sensitive areas, and the lack of a firm legal foundation. Making definitive statements concerning the importance of the networking concept in the Polish cultural sector will probably not be possible until a few years have passed.

2.3. Brief Descriptions of Individual Networks

2.3.1. Association of Contemporary Arts, Minsk, Belarus

The Association of Contemporary Arts network based in Minsk, Belarus, was founded in 1999. This network's members include artists, writers, musicians, actors, curators, critics and journalists, galleries and a literary association. The intention of the association is the establishment of a forum for independent producers of art and culture in this country which, with its grave economic, ecological and political problems, offers little if any latitude for such initiatives. One of the benefits of formation of a network would be the gathering of independent and democratic forces in Belarus, thereby putting a stop to the brain drain in the long term.

The country's international isolation presents artists with extreme difficulties. While the country has virtually no art market except for works belonging to the school of socialist realism and commissions from the totalitarian government (as a result of the problems mentioned above), artists lack opportunities to show their work abroad. This is due not only to the absence of financial means and contacts, the primary cause being the pressure exerted on independent institutions by the Lukashenko government, which includes the closure of private radio stations, independent newspapers, periodicals and printing companies; censorship; the closure of Soros Foundation bank accounts in Minsk in 1997 ordered by the authorities (to that point, the Foundation was the most important private source of funds for cultural purposes); and the restrictive and arbitrary tariff laws which make the presentation of Belarusian art abroad difficult if not impossible:

> Visual artists are practically deprived of their intellectual property rights being forced to pay 100 per cent customs duties when bringing their artworks abroad. The value of artworks under taxation, again, is determined arbitrary by customhouse itself! Actual regulations make it virtually impossible for artists and independent cultural institutions to organize Belarusian contemporary art exhibitions abroad and foreign art exhibitions in Belarus.[93]

In spite of these adverse conditions, the Association of Contemporary Arts works to improve the situation for its members with the goal of enabling formation of an independent art scene in Belarus through support provided by international partners and joint action. While the government continues to focus on the East and Lukashenko's talk of reuniting with Russia has led to the reintroduction of Russian as an official language next to Belorussian in 1996 (decided in a highly controversial referendum),[94] the Association of Contemporary Arts has

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[93] Arthur Klinov, "Conditions of Contemporary Arts' Existence in Belarus Today." Unpublished text written by the chairman of the Association of Contemporary Arts, Minsk, January 2000.

[94] Aleg Dziarnovic, director of the Naša Niva Foundation, one of the most important independent cultural institutions in the county, said the following about the political and social significance of the Belorussian language: "In a paradoxical way, and paradoxical not only for foreigners but for Belarusans as well, Belarusan language and culture oppose totalitarianism, and currently oppose efforts of a return to authoritarianism. All people and non-governmental organizations in Belarus which take an active role in broadening the use of the Belarusan language, avow democratic values in the political sphere and, therefore, find themselves in opposition to the authoritarian regime. Belarusan culture has become a training ground, symbol and metaphor for democracy, pluralism and the

turned to the country's western neighbors, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia.

By making use of Belarus' historical relationship with Poland and reviving the historical Minsk-Riga-Stockholm axis, attempts are being made to end the isolation of Belarus' art scene. The Association of Contemporary Arts' cooperation partners are involved in these efforts. Regular cooperation is taking place with the Zamek Ujazdowski center for contemporary art in Warsaw, which is considered Poland's Centre Pompidou;[95] the Soros Centre of Contemporary Arts in Vilnius, Lithuania; E-Lab in Riga, Latvia; and CRAC (Creative Room for Art and Computing - Artist run medialab) in Stockholm, Sweden.

The network is based on close and constant cooperation. In contrast to the practice of holding one meeting per year, which is common in many other networks, the Association of Contemporary Arts' "Council"[96] sits no less than once each month.

As a "counter-event" to the government's propaganda festivals such as The Slavonic Market and The Slavonic Movie Festival, the Association of Contemporary Arts has organized the annual Navinki performance-art festival (named after a large psychiatric clinic near Minsk) since 1999. Other current projects include:

> Foundation of a network of galleries (which now comprises four to five venues for shows) which should lead to a more extensive network of venues, art workshops, cultural centers, libraries, publishers, conference centers, etc. in the long term

> Presentation of Belarusian art abroad through participation in international projects, creation of a database of independent Belarusian art and culture producers, and a regular exchange of information with festival organizers abroad

> Presentation of international art in Belarus, inviting artists to Belarus, expansion of international contacts

> Support of contemporary-art festivals in Belarus

> Residence programs in European cities in cooperation with various funds (opportunities for Belarusian artists to travel)

> Founding independent periodicals and supporting plans for publication projects, creation of websites

> Internships for Belarusian culture workers abroad, holding seminars and lectures on themes relating to contemporary art in Belarus (including in rural areas)

> Social support in all areas (financial, housing, employment, legal counseling, etc.)

The positive effects which the Association of Contemporary Arts is expecting from

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modernisation of Belarus." (Aleg Dziarnovic, "Belarusan Non-Governmental Organizations in the Sphere of Culture: The Civilized Choice." In: *Supolnaść. Bulletin for Belarusan Non-Governmental Organizations.* Special Issue: Belarus. The Third Sector [1999?])

[95] In cooperation with the Association of Contemporary Arts, a show of contemporary Belarusian art was held in Zamek Ujazdowski from June 6 to July 7, 2000.

[96] "Council" refers to the ten most active members: "the most active advanced and enterprising members, members, who currently carry on ACA projects" (from the questionnaire).

implementation of these projects involve primarily a re-positioning of Belarusian art in an international context, improvement of the living conditions of its artists and producers of culture and a rebuilding of the art scene, which is being threatened by the emigration of many artists and intellectuals. The present situation is still negative, as can be imagined, and Denis Romanovski, a member of the ACA, wrote the following as an answer on our questionnaire:

> Activity of the great majority of the non-governmental artistic sites formed at the beginning of the 1990-ies has been suspended under conditions of Belarus' economic stagnation and dramatic lack of the state support customary given to such institutions in economically developed countries. Unfortunately, a fact could be established that the modern Belarusian artistic process is placed into informational vacuum. The reason is quite obvious: there is not any particular artistic institution able of accumulating and selecting of valuable information in Belarus and from abroad and maintaining effective dialogue with appropriate organizations in the world. As a result, starting with 1994, *no one* Belarusian artist has been invited to participate in any significant European artistic project.

The network's activities are aimed at creating an environment more friendly to a third sector in Belarus, the existence of which has repeatedly and systematically been threatened by the government.

In addition to the recently founded Association of Contemporary Arts, there are a few other NGOs in the cultural sector, though they cannot be termed networks. At the same time, they represent alternatives to the institutions associated with the government. The most important include the Belarusan Humanitarian Foundation Naša Niva, the Centre of European Co-operation Eúroforum and the Belarusan Institute of Central and Eastern Europe. The work performed by these institutions includes historical documentation of the Belarusian opposition, providing support to cultural projects (Naša Niva), series of publications and specialized periodicals (Eúroforum) and finally research projects (Belarusan Institute of Central and Eastern Europe).

The third sector—which comprises NGOs, networks, associations and foundations—plays an important role in Belarus, as stated by Aleg Dziarnovic, director of Naša Niva:

> The Belarusan situation at the cross-roads of the spheres of politics and culture is a unique situation. The role of cultural factors in the political life of Central and East European countries has traditionally been a large one. Belarus, however, has its own specific character which is manifested in the activities of Belarusan non-governmental organizations. [...] It can be said, however, that non-governmental organizations, which conduct activity in the field of culture will, in various ways, have an influence on Belarusan society. The activity of these organizations promotes not so much a political choice as they do a civilised choice on behalf of an open and pluralistic society.[97]

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[97] Aleg Dziarnovic, op. cit.

2.3.2. Mobile Theatre Network, Ljubljana, Slovenia[98]

The jump taken in this report from Belarus to Slovenia explicitly illustrates the vastly different situations in the various post-socialist countries and what must be accomplished through networking. Of these countries, Slovenia has made a relatively great deal of progress toward western Europe, both politically and economically; it has a well-developed independent art scene, and Ljubljana, the capital, has assumed a prominent place in the European cultural scene as a venue for a number of international festivals and conferences.

While the close similarity to the practical problems presently being experienced in Austria, for example, became obvious during conversations with independent dramatists, actors, etc. in Ljubljana, the creation of a touring system, the goal of the Mobile Theatre Network, is being hindered by difficulties characteristic of the post-socialist "transitional period." The problem mentioned in the introduction, that although a great deal of the dense cultural infrastructure created under Socialism (repertoire theaters, cultural centers / houses of culture, youth centers, etc., and especially elements located outside the capitals) still exists, the effectiveness of the work performed varies greatly.

The events leading up to foundation of the Mobile Theatre Network extend back to 1997. An employee of the Open Society Institute in Ljubljana who is also involved in the independent theater scene was familiar with the practical problems from personal experience: the lack of venues for independent projects and the familiar consequence that even widely popular productions are able to give solely a limited number of performances (due in particular to the fact that, although a number of projects have to be performed at repertoire theaters, only a few evenings are set aside for performances). At the same time, performances at venues other than those in the three most important cities in the cultural sector (Ljubljana, Maribor and Celje) are confronted with precarious conditions. Many of the venues are rundown and lack technical equipment, and the extent of the local management's activity is difficult to judge.

The Open Society Institute solicited tenders for construction of a touring system, and the contract was awarded to *museum, Institute for Art Production, Distribution and Publishing* based in Ljubljana. In the fall of 1999, a pilot project involving three venues and eight productions was launched. At the same time, the available venues were entered into a database and an index with short descriptions of the various independent groups, producers and organizations was published in the form of a calendar.

In addition to an increase in sheer numbers, which includes festival organizers and partners in the border regions of neighboring countries, the strategies aim at audience development, increasing the amount of interdisciplinary activity (concerts, especially for a young audience; exhibitions; etc.) and greater involvement of the organizers in the sense that they have the opportunity for performance of their own productions and productions developed on location with the touring system.

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[98] This information was gathered primarily during a conversation with Nina Dešman Vižintin and Igor Berginc and while I attended a seminar organized by the Mobile Theatre Network in November 1999. Additional information concerning the network is also available on the Internet: http://www.museum.si.

Parallel to the pilot project, a program of international exchange of information was launched. At the initiative of the Open Society Institute's Performing Arts Networking Program in Budapest, a seminar on touring systems was held in Ljubljana in November 1999. Participants came from around Central and eastern Europe exchange relevant information (about the structure of the independent theater scene, venues and opportunities for performances, subsidies and grants, etc.) and potential approaches. Participants from western Europe gave reports on touring in Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Portugal. The results of this seminar were published in brochure form, and an Internet mailing list was set up for further exchange of information.

2.3.3. Pontes/Aquarius (Zagreb/Krk, Croatia)[99]

Both networks reflect several fundamental issues which have been dealt with in this research project. Pontes is a European network originally founded in Central and Eastern Europe, making it one of only a few of its kind. Aquarius, on the other hand, is (still) a national network born of the need to create local structures in Central and Eastern European countries as a prerequisite for networking on a European level.

Pontes is a network of young writers, critics, theorists and publishers created on the fringes of the workshop/festival of the same name which has been held on the Croatian island of Krk each year since 1996. Originally, this was primarily a workshop, and its "extracurricular events" have developed into a festival of readings, exhibitions, concerts, etc.

Early each year, an outline of the current topic is published in the form of a short essay. Young persons from around Europe who are involved with the field of literature can then apply for a place at the workshop (selection by a jury). The growing participation of western Europeans is shown by the statistics dating back to 1996 which are published on the homepage. While the first event was attended by Central and Eastern Europeans exclusively, the list of participants who will be present in 2000 includes Germans, Italians, Dutch and Austrians.

While this annual event remains the network's central activity, its most important goals are enabling ongoing cooperation among the participants after the event itself in the form of exchange of information, concrete projects, translations, publications in other countries, etc. The participants involved in the network more intensively make up the so-called Pontes "Ambassadors," who function as interfaces between the network itself and interested groups and individuals in their home countries.

The network's members and participants are under 35 years of age, which should be understood as comprising the "newcomers" and writers who are not yet established, the need for this resulting from the situation in Central and Eastern Europe: The network serves as an independent organization and support group for the generation confronted at the

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[99] This information was taken primarily from a conversation with Katarina Mažuran and Valerij Jurešić (Zagreb, 12/21/99), the answers provided on the questionnaire and the Pontes hompepage (http://www.pontes.hr).

beginning of their cultural work by the vacuum created by an infrastructure which no longer functions and new structures which do not yet exist or are underdeveloped. At the same time, these are representatives of the first generation to come of age after the "fall of the Iron Curtain" who are developing approaches to cooperation throughout Europe.

The opportunities for closer international cooperation through the Pontes network highlighted the problem that building on a network inside Croatia was not possible. While there were opportunities to invite writers from abroad, put on international film festivals, etc., such plans could not always be realized, or realized to a limited extent only, due to the difficulties involved with staging events outside Zagreb:

> "The basic problem is: It's very hard to do cultural networking on an international level, if you do not have good partners inside Croatia. And that is a problem for most of Eastern Europe. You don't have good working institutions—autonomous or state-owned, it doesn't matter which one—in your own country, and you should be able to do international networking. [...] There are many people with a lot of energy and willing to do things. But these institutions haven't grown enough and in most cases they are not yet institutions, but one, two, three people not able to organise things because they are not experienced enough. [...] So, here, in such conditions, you need first to move young people eager to organise things, and to train them, how to do that, so you can use international networking to do something."[100]

In 1999, the Aquarius network was founded. It is not limited to the field of literature, and its members are from a number of different disciplines. At Pontes 99, the first workshop on cultural management was held (15 participants). The network's goal is to identify potential partners and expand the range of training available in the field of cultural management. At the same time, an exchange for projects and cooperation was set up on the homepage[101] in 1999. The next steps in preparation are the inclusion of partners in Bosnia-Herzegovina (which seems justified because of the geographic proximity and the lack of a language barrier) and activities conducted in English which are aimed at further internationalization.

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[100] Conversation with Valerij Jurešić.

[101] This exchange can be accessed at the Pontes homepage: http://www.pontes.hr.