

The Exception and State of Exception

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Calling the exhibition of young Albanian artists from Prishtinë (the capital of Kosovo) “Exception” and showing it in the two biggest cities in Serbia, Belgrade and Novi Sad, may seem at first glance quite appropriate. In a highly polarized situation – that of bringing the decades’ long conflict to a resolution by unilaterally declaring Kosovo as independent state or by the Serbian government’s firm contention that Kosovo remains an integral part of the internationally recognized state of Serbia – organising the kind of exhibition that brings together people from Kosovo and Serbia can undoubtedly be rendered as an exception. Nevertheless, the sequence of events that drove the (non)realization of the exhibition proved that the most of things that have happened are not exceptions, but almost rules of the game which could be called the peripheral politics of culture.

Exception: What’s in a Name?

Starting with the very title of the exhibition we immediately notice the incongruities of the organisers’¹ conception of the show that, eventually, enabled the events to drive it in a direction that is far from being exceptional. Given that it is reasonable to presuppose that the title was initially made in English during the course of conceiving and discussing these art events with people from Prishtinë, the “translation” to Serbian language is, at the very least, strange. The show’s title “Exception” was translated to Serbian as “*odstupanje*.” Well, the exact translation of the English word “exception” into Serbian is “*izuzetak*,” meaning precisely an exemption from the rule or from the usual state of affairs. In contrast, the meaning of the word “*odstupanje*” is twofold. Firstly, it stands, in military terminology, for a tactical retreat of troops or, in everyday speech, simply, for stepping back, therefore actually meaning withdrawal. The organizers certainly did not have this in mind when they were planning the exhibition. Nevertheless, it is precisely this meaning that remained to haunt the event, since it was deferred a couple of times, and, finally, the Belgrade show actually never managed to open.

Secondly, “*odstupanje*” means aberration or, even, deviation. It is this second meaning that I had in mind – since *Prelom kolektiv* was invited to take part in the preparation of discussions that were supposed to happen in Belgrade in relation to the exhibition – when communicating with the curators of *Kontekst* gallery and some of our friends and colleagues from Prishtinë. I understood the title in the sense of diverging from the imposed political choices. Those imposed political choices are always forged, since they represent the binaries upon which a dominant political discourse is grounded. This means, giving the acute polarization of this whole situation, that one supposedly has to choose between the two prearranged political positions. Concretely, in this case, the “choice” was: either you are for the independence of Kosovo (meaning that you are Kosovar Albanian or a traitor of the “Serbian national essence”) or you are against it (meaning that you are loyal citizen of Serbia or a Kosovar traitor)². It is clear that those “alternatives” serve precisely to restrict and enclose the field of political possibilities, since no matter how one chooses, s/he always finds her/himself within the positions delineated and determined by the dominant political discourse.

Now, this non-correspondence of the title of the exhibition and the Serbian translation of it is a symptom of a problematic field of operating as a local NGO funded by mostly European and US

¹ The exhibition was organized by NGOs *Kontekst* (www.kontekstgalerija.org) from Belgrade and the Institute of Flexible Cultures and Technologies *Napon* (www.napon.org) from Novi Sad, and the curators were Vida Knežević, Kristian Lukić, Ivana Marjanović and Gordana Nikolić.

² For some commentators the main culprit for producing the dominant Serbian political binary is the media. “In such critical macro-political conditions, mass media in Serbia reporting about the exhibition mostly failed, as they did many times before. With a precise political plan or just without responsibility for the public discourse, they played a remarkable role in empowering tensions and divisions of the public. They forced the public to decide: PRO (for Europe, for democracy, for tolerance, for internationalism) or CONTRA (which means for Serbia, for nationalism, for preserving history, for the national dignity, and anti Euro-Atlantic integrations, anti tolerance) the exhibition.” (Ana Vujanović, “No Exception!” in: *Kontekst arhiva/archive 06/07/08*, Kontekst, Beograd, 2008, p 168, available on-line on: http://www.kontekstgalerija.org/pdf_08/KontekstArhiva.pdf as well as a previous version of the text published in the newspaper *Reartikulacija 3*, available on-line on: http://www.reartikulacija.org/RE3/ENG/stateofexception3_ENG_excep.html)

foundations³. It reflects the inescapable duality in working on a “project.” In order to get funding one has to formulate an application that follows the guidelines of the foundations, which are predominantly formulated in the spirit of contemporary neo-liberal politics of interculturalism – a term which is used by the official EU cultural policies. In the post-bipolar world the dominant political divisions are not running any more along the lines of the 20th century’s two paramount political ideologies, but are diversified by assigning them to specific and different cultural identities. The policies of interculturality aim to facilitate “meeting the Other,” getting informed on that “Other” in order to understand, appreciate and respect it, as well as to enable the communication of respective “Others” thus supporting the post-conflict reconciliation process of the formerly warring sides.

Therefore, what one really does with a “project” depends on the skill to present it exactly as those guidelines demand in order to obtain the necessary finances for producing it. In the concrete case of the exhibition “Exception,” this almost certainly meant to present the project as one that would enable the war-disrupted communication between the two supposedly singular cultures. The organisers of the project sincerely identified with this apparently noble and certainly perilous task, as it was clearly stated in the catalogue of the exhibition: “[I]t is not surprising that society in Serbia today does not know the Albanian culture and society in Kosovo, as it was the case in the past decades. A total blockade of information about the Albanians and partial about the Serbs from Kosovo in everyday media reporting in Serbia creates an unease feeling and it is not appropriate to speak of people who live there, which presents informational genocide of a kind. The idea of the ‘Exception’ exhibition is to, together with roundtables, presentations and publication in the forthcoming period, analyze certain facts that an average person from Serbia was not allowed or did not want to know. [...] What is in this case the field of art? The field of art is a place where, among other things, people talk about something that has to be talked about publicly, in media and parliament, and this is the issue of the past and the issue of the future of co-existence in this area, the issue of the very subjects.”⁴

Now, if this project was conceived as entirely focused on the (re)installation of communication between the two cultures in the sense of getting informed about one another, then it would just blindly follow the aforementioned guidelines. The interculturalist scheme of bringing each other’s “Others” together is not actually such a progressive move – as it is always officially proclaimed to be – since, at the same time, it is only affirming those cultural identities as separate and incomparable “Others” which should just learn to tolerate and respect – in terms of their “cultural rights” – each other. The organizer’s concept that the exhibition should be accompanied with roundtables and panel discussions clearly shows that the planned events should have gone well beyond this interculturalist “paradigm of communication.” It was precisely within these discussions that a veritable exchange could be established on the grounds of elucidating the common problems, situations and strategies in the field of art and culture activism, as well as in

³ In their text on peripheral cultural industries Janović and Močnik give an outstandingly insightful description of the “independent cultural activists”: “The group of marginal culture-oriented agents is composed of various *alternative* cultural producers and audiences. They struggle in the *intermundia* of contemporary cultural scene, practice ‘small business’ or masquerade as ‘socio-culture’, parasite on ‘cultural diversity’ and ‘minorities’ policies, evade regulations that favour transnational oligopolies or invent spaces not yet regulated by the ‘free trade’ legislation. Common to all these alternative forms is their direct affirmation of the *socialized* character of contemporary means of cultural production, and of the *socially productive* potential of contemporary communicational technologies able to create worldwide audiences without the mediation of private appropriation. In other words, alternative cultural practices suppress the *separation* between the individual and her or his *sociality*, they perform material liquidation of that *Tennung, Scheidung*, so typical of the 19th century and which made industrial capitalism possible. In this way, alternative practices directly confront and combat the endeavours of transnational capital privately to appropriate what has historically and materially already been socialised. [...] Policies of the third group create alternative spaces of socialisation and cultural production, while being simultaneously exposed to the pressures of economic marginalisation and legal criminalisation by the powers-to-be on one side, and to the processes of systemic recuperation and commercial exploitation on the other. [...] [T] to the *alternative* cultural production, nexal flows are the most prominent necessary condition for creation and survival.” (Nikola Janović and Rastko Močnik, “Three *Nexal* Registers: Identity, Peripheral Cultural Industry, Alternative Cultures,” <http://www.pozitiv.si/petrovaradintribe/pages/Rastko-Nikola-PolicyBook%5B1%5D.doc>, pp. 9-10).

⁴ http://www.kontekstgalerija.org/pdf_08/odstupanje.pdf, p 19

general social and political terms⁵. This was much more clearly stated by Vida Knežević, one of the curators of the *Kontekst* gallery, in a discussion with an Italian journalist, than in the catalogue of the exhibition: “[We want] to be an exception to the dominating prejudices, silences and taboos between Serbs and Albanians. This exhibit should have been our exception to what is happening here.”⁶ The point here was not only to discuss, but to discuss in order to elaborate, articulate and expand the collective material practices such as this whole exhibition-event envisaged. Now, this would precisely be a true exception in terms of practicing an active opposition to the dominant politics of culture.

On the Shores of State Politics

In spite of this emancipatory plan, the course of events progressively revealed that the chances for this kind of exception are close to none and that the whole thing produced not exceptional but regrettably expected effects, since the project ran aground on the shores of state politics. This was quite clear from the opening of the exhibition in Novi Sad, where one of the key-note speeches was held by a local politician in the midst of an electoral campaign for the presidency of Serbia. By allowing this to happen, the organisers in Novi Sad opened up the floodgates for a type of politicization of the exhibition that they were surely not aiming at. This opening event immediately fell prey to the media’s unappeasable appetite for scandals and to politician’s urgent need to stir up the worn-out masses and absentee voters in a fifth consecutive attempt to make the elections successful. It also made a perfect target for nationalist outbursts of “righteous anger” for “tearing Kosovo from its primeval Serbian orthodox fabric.” After Novi Sad, it became clear that the Belgrade exhibition that was supposed to be opened on February the 7th in *Kontekst* gallery will be just a demonstrative exercise for rehearsing a response to the “real thing” – the unilateral declaration of Kosovo independence that happened just ten days later.

The curators, faced with the canceling of planned discussions – since the Prishtinë collaborators had had an reasonable change of heart regarding their presence in Belgrade – and with the obviously worsening series of events which confirmed that the *Kontekst* gallery would be the target of the extreme right organizations, resorted for help and support from one part of the circles that were called from the mid-1990s “Other Serbia.”⁷ It was this move that finally sealed the political trajectory of the exhibition, since it precisely suited the dominant Serbian political binary: pro-European democratic forces vs. nationalist-chauvinist ones. Thus the stage was set for the inevitable: the exhibition could not be opened since a crowd of young members of “*Obraz*” [“Honor”] was protesting in front of the gallery while inside some people – members of the Serbian Artist Association and the Association of Refugee and Exiled Serbs from Kosovo – took over the microphone from the organizers and tore down Dren Maliqui’s piece “Face to Face,” which led the Commanding Officer of the police forces present to state that they could not guarantee any more the safety of the event, so the gallery should be closed immediately. In the absence of Albanian guests from Kosovo, this event turned out to be precisely a clash of the

⁵ It turned out that some of the organizers and collaborators had an almost naïve opinion that the artworks themselves can supplement that: “Essentially, reactions of hatred and blind destruction were triggered by the fact that Serbian cultural racism could not bear having its stereotype of ‘uncivilized Albanians’ be strongly contrasted, and therefore nullified, by perfectly articulated artistic positions of Prishtina’s contemporary art scene.” (“Exception Proves to be a Rule: A Report by Eduard Freudmann and Ivana Marjanović” in: *Kontekst arhiva/archive 06/07/08*, *Kontekst*, Beograd, 2008, p 175, available online on: http://www.kontekstgalerija.org/pdf_08/KontekstArhiva.pdf).

⁶ Cf. <http://www.osservatoriobalciani.org/article/articleview/9779/1/407>

⁷ The term “Other Serbia” gained currency especially after the 1996/97 mass protests against the Milošević regime that lasted continually for three months all over Serbia. It was the moment of full-scale manifestation of the existence of this “Other,” pro-Western, civic and democratic Serbia diametrically opposed to the “official” Milošević’s Serbia, the “First Serbia” characterized in whole Western political discourse as “authoritarian,” “totalitarian” and “nationalist-chauvinist.” This “Other Serbia” comprised the parties of the opposition and the NGO sector that boomed during the 1990s, but, in political sense, it was quite diverse. It ranged from traditional liberals to nationalists that were more radical than Milošević himself. The aftermath of those protests and, ultimately, the “October the 5th Revolution” in 2000 marking the down-fall of Milošević, showed that those supposedly diametrically opposed representations of Serbia were, in fact, mirror-images and that the changes were almost exclusively superficial – the same methods of criminal privatizations, gang-like organizing and shameless exploitation were given a plastic surgery that strived to make Serbia’s image more appealing to the EU and the “international community.”

“defenders of Serbian national pride” and the “traitors” to it – the compassionate “defenders” of civic conduct, civil rights and tolerance for the “Other.”

The whole incident quickly became obsolete to the media and public opinion in general, since a Kosovar declaration of independence was coming soon, however some groups and initiatives demanded that the official institutions enable the (re)opening of the exhibition. One of those initiatives came from the group RUK (*Radnici u kulturi* [Workers in Culture]) that comprised all the curators, and who even published a newspaper entitled “The 7th of February.” Putting aside the obvious issue of being self-proclaimed as *workers* in culture⁸ – since some of the members were or still are employed in high-ranking positions within various cultural state apparatuses, e.g. a consultant for the Minister of Culture, the Dean of Belgrade University of Arts or the chief curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art) – the main objection to RUK’s newspaper is that it enclosed the problems of the exhibition within a very limited framework of Belgrade and its art-and-culture scene. This narrowing-down was the outcome of the editors’ decision to treat the exhibition as yet to be opened and to focus exclusively on the violent incident of the (non)opening itself.⁹ It meant that there was no mention of the events in Novi Sad, which were crucial for the actual politicisation of the exhibition¹⁰, and that there could not be any discussion of the curator’s concept or about the artworks with the artists from Kosovo, since the exhibition could not be seen.

For the RUK group and its newspaper – as in the most of the critical reactions – the main actor culpable for the closing down, i.e. not opening, of the exhibition was the Serbian state: its governmental, administrative and policing bodies. In taking the reaction or, more precisely, the lack of reaction on the side of Serbian state apparatuses as the target of criticism, the main point was an appeal to the rights of art(ists) to be defended by the authorities if verbally or physically threatened¹¹. Now, this is an objection directed at the state’s incapacity to uphold and defend the basic civil rights of its citizens.¹² The ultimate consequence of it is that all we can do is to appeal and wait for the action of state apparatuses in order to restore the “normal” and, also, normative circumstances in which the autonomy of art is respected and officially enforced. Moreover, the emphasis on the enforcement of civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the critique of the state for not doing that have effectively situated RUK at one side of the dominant political dualism. One of the contributions in the newspaper even conflates the “progressive” citizens with the “reactionary” ones.¹³ Now, this opposition of “progressive” and “reactionary” citizens is precisely mirroring the abovementioned dominant Serbian political

⁸ In the very “The 7th of February” newspaper, within a section where different professionals answered to a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the event, their presence or absence and their motives for it, was published a “class-based” critique by Nebojša Milikić – a program coordinator for Belgrade’s cultural center *Rex* (a part of B92, which had been privatized and nowadays is one of the largest Serbian media enterprises). Milikić states: “It is very odd that a group of managers in culture calls themselves workers in culture. This is a case of a theatrical redressing of the bourgeoisie in working-class costumes [...]” (Nebojša Milikić in: “Everyone speaks...” *The 7th of February*, p 6 [translation mine]). What Milikić – undersigned as *a worker* in culture – oversees is that his ouvriermism is precisely a bourgeois device for repenting the sins of actually occupying the structural place reserved for the members of the ruling class.

⁹ “The first issue of this newspaper aims to reconstruct and analyse the incident of the interrupted opening of the exhibition as well as the politics behind it. At the empty place of the exhibition remained the incident!” (“Why the Newspaper of Workers in Culture?” the editorial in: *The 7th of February*, p 1 [translation mine])

¹⁰ Actually, if the events in Novi Sad hadn’t happen, the Belgrade exhibition in *Kontekst* would most probably have unfolded without any disruption – as it did in 2006 when *Kontekst* organized the first presentations of young artists from Kosovo – since those kinds of events are considered marginal, raise no significant public interest and pass by almost completely unnoticed.

¹¹ “Perhaps we can see the incident in the KONTEKST gallery as an alarm bell warning us that the *white cube* walls are not anymore a guaranteed shelter but an imagined one where we dream of freedom of the artistic expression...” (Dejan Sretenović, “Alarmni signal” [“Alarm Bell”] in: *The 7th of February*, p 5 [translation mine]).

¹² The editors of the RUK newspaper state: “The political space within the art is abolished, and the freedom of thought and expression guaranteed by the Constitution banned.” (“Why the Newspaper of Workers in Culture?” the editorial in: *The 7th of February*, p 1 [translation mine]). “From now on the indicator of the presence of *human and political rights* of the citizens of Serbia consists in the existence of an object that is the exhibition *Exception*. If the exhibition remains closed, the matrix of apartheid and civil war stays in power, and the citizens deprived of their *human and political rights*.” (Branimir Stojanović, “Tamo gde je bio *Šiptar* biće savremena umetnost” [“There Where *Shiptar* Was, Contemporary Art Shall Be”] in: *The 7th of February*, p 3 [translation mine]).

¹³ Cf. Branimir Stojanović, op. cit.

binary, thus showing the RUK's inability and, finally, incapacity to escape it, let alone to attempt to critically dismantle it.

For all these reasons the RUK effort – same as the most critical reactions – remains on the fringes of dominant politics, never actually managing to radically question it. The dominant politics uses those efforts in the same manner as it uses the extreme nationalist groups – just to create a functional political dichotomy within the constituency, to pitch the opposed positions against each other, and consequently to manage this conflict in favour of their own impunity and survival in power. The authorities allow such “extremist” groups to enter the public political scene in order to stage the “happening of people” and present it as a display of “general will.” In this way, the authorities create a situation in which they can only shrug their shoulders and say, “What can we do? This is evidently the will of a large portion of our constituency, and we, as their elected representatives, have to respect that.” This is certainly not an abdication of state power in the face of the “extremists,” since it actually forms a part of that power's mechanisms. On the other hand, the authorities also feel obliged to justify their actions, or the absence of them, to the “international community” by actually stating: “We are for EU integrations and for the Rule of Law in terms of defending the civil rights of all our citizens, but we are unable to do anything since our constituency is still culturally backward and it will take time for the democratic culture and respect for other cultures and life-styles to take hold among the people.” This is precisely what completes the vicious circle of the dominant politics of culture, since it gives reason for further international funding for “cultivating” the people of peripheral areas and, accordingly, for implementing the official geo-political agenda.

State of Emergency and the Emergence of Identity State

The RUK newspaper ends up with a blank page with only one line at the bottom of it: “The RUK group finds that the state of exception in contemporary art is on!”¹⁴ Taking the state of exception as the main explanatory notion became almost obligatory in the majority of critical writings concerning the (non)opening of the exhibition¹⁵. Now, every modern state recognizes that there are moments and periods in which the situation – of natural disasters, of civil unrests or civil war, of declaration of war, etc. – necessitates some extraordinary measures to protect and, eventually, restore the given social order. A state of emergency is, then, a governmental declaration that may suspend certain normal functions of the government itself, extend the competences of executive power, declare martial law and, therefore, effectively suspend the constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties (especially the *habeas corpus*).

The term “state of exception” (re)gained global currency in relation to the events of 9/11 and the subsequent George W. Bush's declaration of “war on terrorism.” Since it proved to be a permanent tool in both domestic and foreign policy of the US, the critics of it sought parallels with another historical period when the state of exception was also permanent – Adolf Hitler's raise to power in the Weimar Germany and the subsequent Nazi government. Some theorists even proposed to treat the state of exception as a form of governance characterized by suspension of the democratic legal process in a favor of extra-judicial state violence against specified groups. Guantánamo is an obvious example of such governance that results in the prosecution and incarceration of the “threatening elements.” Authorities declare such “elements” to be deprived of their legal status, making them thus – to use a well-known expression from the French revolution – *hors la loi*.

It is precisely this extra-judicial encroachment of the state upon a certain individuals or groups that raise the post-humanist voices against the violation of the “sacred” human rights. Almost immediately, the old Cold-War device of totalitarianism is summoned to do its work once again

¹⁴ One could pursue to analyze the imaginary instance of this enunciation in identification with the authority of a paternal (or, even, maternal) figure of state, following Schmitt's dictum that sovereignty consists in power to declare a state of emergency.

¹⁵ “[T]he exhibition's non-protection is the continuation of the state of exception in Serbian public space after the overthrow of the Milošević regime in 2000.” (“Exception Proves to be a Rule: A Report by Eduard Freudmann and Ivana Marjanović,” loc. cit.)

by offering itself as a theoretic-political ground for critique. Even such an esteemed radical leftist as Giorgio Agamben seems to confirm this perspective: “We can define modern totalitarianism as the institution, by way of a state of emergency, of a legal civil war that permits the elimination not only of political adversaries, but whole categories of the population that resist being integrated into the political system. Since then, the voluntary creation of a permanent state of emergency (though perhaps not declared in the technical sense) has become one of the essential practices of contemporary states, including the so-called democratic ones.”¹⁶ Therefore, the state of exception and its form of legalized violence is seen as threading on the Rule of Law and destroying the autonomy of civil society as the most prominent achievements of the two centuries of constitutional democracy.

The whole conundrum surrounding the usage of this notion in critically analysing the event that prevented the exhibition to be opened leads precisely to a position welcomed by the dominant cultural-political agenda. It perceives local democracies as not yet ripe for the enforcement of tolerance, the culture of rational dialogue and truly democratic procedures of the Rule of Law as those so-called liberal democratic systems in the “civilized world” supposedly adopted a long time ago. Therefore, this position serves to establish and, eventually, perpetuate a supposed cultural and political “lagging behind” of the peripheral states, thus making the Western “liberal democracies” an etalon for all the others, and so allowing the big powers feel better about themselves. However, any constitutional parliamentary democracy comprises more or less hidden traits of this perpetual “state of exception,” since they form a constituent part of the exclusions upon which the contemporary nation-state or the principle of citizenship is based upon (more recent examples are the cases of the *sans-papiers* in France or, geographically closer, that of the “erased” in Slovenia).

The newly-formed nation-states in the region of ex-Yugoslavia emerged precisely from a type of situation that supposedly could only be resolved by the measures of the state of exception – in the case of Kosovo, the NATO bombing campaign entitled “Merciful Angel” could be rendered as such since it suspended one of the basic principles of international law, that of sovereignty. Moreover, it seems that the state of exception in this area really tends to be a permanent one.¹⁷ The point is that all those newly-formed states are based on the ethnic majority principle – constitutionally, Slovenia is the state of Slovenians, Croatia is the state of Croatians, Serbia the state of Serbs etc. making none of them a state for all their citizens regardless of ethnicity. Not only for that reason those nation-states could be termed as identity states.¹⁸ Since none of them is ethnically and religiously homogenous, there are always “others” – various minorities – that should be integrated into the existing political and judicial structures or, conversely, declared *hors la loi*.

Now, the only available way for those “others” to be heard is to appeal to their own specific identity or “culture.” If they manage to present themselves within the dominant discourse as a case of exception then they fall under the multiculturalist “politics of recognition” as a particular minority whose rights should be acknowledged. If not, then they suffer from the state’s extra-judicial violence as in the permanent state of exception. “When the self-submission to a presumed universality succeeds, the particularity of the subordinated discourse becomes *identity*, and is thus *culturalised*. Culturalisation is how an eventual *excess* of sociality is tamed, controlled, reduced. When the operation fails, the excess cannot be mastered – it has to be made illegal, by illegitimate force, if necessary.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2005, p 5

¹⁷ “[T]he exhibition’s non-protection is the continuation of the state of exception in Serbian public space after the overthrow of the Milošević regime in 2000.” (“Exception Proves to be a Rule: A Report by Eduard Freudmann and Ivana Marjanović,” loc. cit.)

¹⁸ The following argument is developed in: Nikola Janović and Rastko Močnik, “Three *Nexal* Registers: Identity, Peripheral Cultural Industry, Alternative Cultures,” op. cit.

¹⁹ Ibid., p 15

It is precisely these processes of culturalisation²⁰ that form the veritable global context of the exhibition. Culturalisation stands not only for the displacement of political struggles from the modern sphere of politics into the dispersed field of competing “cultural options,” but also for culturalisation in the sense of learning, accepting and applying the vehicles of “culture” for conflict solving by using culture’s allegedly non-violent, symbolical mechanisms.²¹ Therefore, culturalization playing an important role in today’s neo-liberal capitalist system – that of pacifying and neutralising contemporary social antagonisms, the ones which the exhibition was supposed to bring into focus.

²⁰ The notion of culturalization gained certain currency mainly through the writings of Boris Buden and Rastko Močnik. “What, at a first glance, seemed a ruthless occupation of the cultural sphere by the economic sphere, what seemed to be the destruction of culture by the logic of commodification – actually establishes an autonomous cultural sphere as a collage, as a Sargasso Sea of free floating bits and pieces of what used to be mechanisms of social cohesion that had to yield under the onslaught of free economy and its organised repression (WTO, IMF, WB etc.). What really vanishes between triumphant economy and emerging cultural diversity is *the political sphere*. Consequently, it is not the suppression of the cultural sphere by the sphere of economy (or the threat that this may happen), as the advocates of ‘cultural exception’ want us to believe, that is the most fascinating socio-structural event of our time. It is *the disappearance of the political sphere* – or, more precisely, its transformation into various branches of ‘management’ of society. Political parties no more represent social groups and their presumed interests, they are all together, as fractions of one and the same political apparatus, involved in the management of the whole of the society and, merging with administrative apparatuses and apparatuses of ‘governmentality’, they reproduce the effect of social totality. [...] ‘[C]ulturalisation’ of political ‘questions’ is not a forced, if inadequate, response of political forces that are denied legal existence – it is *induced* by the very transformation of the legal political apparatus itself. And hence it is ‘productive’ [...]: it is productive up to the point that certain states themselves (or entities that are considered as such) can presently exist as merely ‘cultural’ constructions.” (Nikola Janović and Rastko Močnik, “Three *Nexal* Registers: Identity, Peripheral Cultural Industry, Alternative Cultures,” <http://www.pozitiv.si/petrovaradintribe/pages/Rastko-Nikola-PolicyBook%5B1%5D.doc>, pp. 11-12).

²¹ “[C]ulturalization exceeds the simple translation of political issues to cultural ones. Culturalization is also a “school of culture”: the education, cultivation, and breeding of subjects for the dominant culture. “Culture” is, therefore, only one moment in the ideological education or, better yet, formation (the German word *Bildung* encompasses both of meanings) of the ‘popular masses’ – properly speaking, of the *subjects* (in both senses of this term in English) of the capitalist order. The culture of tolerance, the culture of communication, environmental culture, digital culture, etc. are all neo-liberal forms of a new social literacy – what Althusser called *savoir-faire* (know-how-to-do).” (Dušan Grlja and Jelena Vesić, “The Neo-liberal Institution of Culture and the Critique of Culturalization,” <http://eipco.net/transversal/0208/prelom/en>)