

PATCHWORK ON COLLABORATION¹

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MAKING OF

Temporaries is an artistic project that was originally initiated to question the term and practice of “local dance community” by six artists who have been working in the field of contemporary dance and performance gathered around the activities of Station - Service for Contemporary Dance (www.dancestation.org) in Belgrade (Serbia).

OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

After more than ten years of systematic work on strengthening the local contemporary dance community (although much has been done), due to social and political situation in Serbia, currently there is no consistent artistic scene and structure. Moreover, contemporary dance and contemporary performance are not recognized as relevant artistic and cultural practices by most of the local cultural institutions.

Following this, conditions for generating artistic work are: no cultural policy, no planning for further development, small grants that are not certain even if one gets them, no space for work, totally marginalized independent cultural scene, very few or none budgets for the production of contemporary shows, lack of high institutional education. European funds are supporting only the international collaborations (if one wants to get support, one needs to have an international collaboration – as a condition) and our government never gives us a bigger amount of money that can invest, for example in a six people project. Due to such conditions, as actors of so called 'independent art scene' in Belgrade, all six people involved in this project are dispersed working on projects or studying mainly abroad. And so, basically, if we decide to work together we have to presume that such artistic exchange and collaboration will remain temporary. In that sense, we came up to the word *temporaries* used as a term in economy to describe a temporary employed person, temporary employees, that serves for a limited time.

WORK

Coming back to our project and its (original) aims, we saw and still see ourselves as a temporary working community. Therefore, we came up with the desire that residences and performances we want to do within the Temporaries project should provide us with continuity of our work. By that action we aim at creating ‘our scene’ – that could have many different forms and provide us conditions to work. We are not aiming to create a collective, but rather to work with each other 'con-dividually' (term coming from a philosopher Gerald Rauning, related to the principle of individuals interrelated by their similarities).

This doesn't mean that we want to create a 'con-dividual' work based on similarities only (such are i.e. similar cultural heritage, political history of country, professional and personal histories, same mother language etc). On contrary, we also want to underline the importance of our (individual, artistic, social, political etc) differences in this project and process as well, that will maintain our desire to collaborate, since we have never been working together (all six of us). By relying on our differences in this project, placing them to continuously exist next to each other within the whole specter of processes - from creation and production, to the everyday living together - we are designing a potential dynamics for not slipping into a collective identity. It isn't easy, especially considering the circumstances of nowadays art market, but still we do fight to achieve it. This is why during the project's first phase - which was realized in Berlin, with the support of APAP network, Tanzfabrik and Uferstudios organization, and also in Belgrade with the support of Belgrade City Council and Independent Cultural Scene in Serbia - we structured our work through a working alone together principle. This principle

includes our individual works and approaches on ideas, practices, questions, but together – in situation where we are intensively interrelated with each other – discussions, consultations, production and exchange of knowledge, artistic support etc.

One of the references during our first phase of the work in Berlin that drew our attention, was the notion of 'Temporary Autonomous Zone' by a writer Hakim Bey, introducing ideas of socially-political tactics of creating temporary spaces that elude formal structures of control. Still, we agreed that our desires in this work don't lie in a strongly political-leftist attempts to fight the Western (capitalistic and neo-liberal) social system through artistic activism, but through the attempt to think of new forms of 'communal' in public space. To identify or articulate a temporary community that by its form and content functions differently than usual forms of what 'communal/community' is, considering this especially within performing arts and its historical background. This further also touches questions of production of certain context or public space for our public practices, which isn't so much defined by where it exactly emerges, or exists, but it's rather articulated by communal bodily investments (and this would be a reference to Judith Butler's - Bodies in Alliance).

Consequently, the next important issue during the process was how we shall share this community to others, outside of our process. It became clear that our principles, aims, experiences, issues raised during our 'temporary con-dividual community' in order to be communicated out, have to become a concern of the spectator. This is where we came up to the idea for having people participating actively, within the first presentation of our work. The proposal was to create a situation in which we could confront serious social-art issues we were dealing with, and to possibly intervene over them in public space through the performance. However, I want to be clear on this point: it's not that we placed people in 'active participation' - because I'm always afraid that such articulation leads to misinterpreting our aims as attempts to actively engage audience – which is then problematic, since we don't want to treat anyone as inactive, even if spectator just seats and watches the whole event. This further implies that, articulated by Ana Vujanović, 'artist's concerns in contemporary performance shouldn't come down to considerations of spectator's activity or passivity or models of their involvement, but rather to the forming of communicational community that is not something that already (pre-) exists'. In other words, the audience that comes to theatre is not a pre-formed community, but a group of individuals coming from their own private lives. So, to form a temporary 'communicational community' (Vujanović) with spectators during the performance the procedurality of communication between the artist and spectator needs to be based on certain communicative tasks, ways, forms, and issues that would become the concern of spectators and therefore form their interest in becoming the part of such community. The question was how to propose these communicative relations between us and the audience in order for these relations to become collaborative relations. How does collaboration work?

QUESTION

If we would want to say a word about collaboration between us while working on the project, we could name some of the principles that this collaboration was based on. As we talk in Temporaries also about conditions of work in performing arts nowadays, it's good to mention that these conditions also shaped and influenced principles of collaboration in our work. Here are some principles, nothing new, just we observed them appearing in this project more often than others:

- # Hanging out with each other, as a method of work. Very important.
- # Not having preset principles of work, but reflecting, questioning and articulating the existing ones.
- # Not having preset and/or fixed positions and roles. Everything or anyone can become something or someone else. As this text does.
- # Everyone works on what he/she finds interesting. If there is at least two persons interested in an idea,

the idea is developed. If there is no interest in the group for suggested idea, there is no development of the idea. Also selectivity of our memory sometimes decides for us.

About "killing the babies" we decide together. "Babys"- amazing, fabulous ideas which emerged during the process, but perhaps had to be excluded from the presentation of the work.

Working in smaller groups and then presenting a concept or idea to each other helps.

Focusing on one question at the time and trying to solve it, or marking it well so we can clearly come back to that point. Or this is more a wish for our work.

Providing space for variety of individual approaches, which comes not from formal tolerance or political correctness, but from interest for project development. Or from joy.

We never voted, which does not mean that the option of voting was excluded.

If there is crisis situation going on, minimum three people out of six are enough to gather and work.

Working on the project when we have time. We have time when we're paid for that time. We are paid in euros or dinars. But also in other, very different currencies. Particular good becomes currency when we all agree upon it. Quality of work doesn't depend on a currency we're paid in.

Taking time for what ever is needed. Not more not less then is needed, which often doesn't seem like that in the present moment. That leads us to the next # .

Putting ourselves and the project in potentially vulnerable positions and unsafe situations. Sometimes without knowing it.

Not taking things too seriously.

Our collaboration was initiated out of a pure need for collaboration. And it become a goal, a theme, a process, a product to itself. One would expect that after two years of work we have tutorial on how to collaborate. If we admit here publicly that this is the first time in our process that we're putting down principles of our collaboration on paper, we could conclude that this was not such a successful collaboration. But we could also see success in not looking for definite solutions, but having patience and fearfulness to stay with an open question. Stay with an open question. Stay with an open question. Repeat after me. Stay with an open question...