

When a cooperation turns into patronization

At the presentation we had a chance to see rare research-initiative, that is, the intervention of the Labor Enquire Group and Radical Education Collective into the forbidden and often mystified (by the workers in the culture industry themselves, as well as outside it) field of working conditions in cultural production. Lacking of information about the local conditions (the aforementioned museum, the context of the art scene, official cultural policy, etc.) apart from the parallels with local cultural context as seen in press that could result in rather superficial conclusions, similarities which may make the colleagues' experience valuable are endless: internship (and many other forms of relation with the institution) as a new format of exploitation under the guise of gaining professional experience that is branching out into issues of professionalism, expertise and other disciplinary purification. Furthermore, ignoring and deepening the differences among sectors/departments within the institution itself (or a new class division?). Then finally (or resulting in), the absence of any sense of solidarity among the workers as well as (non)recognition and the lack of awareness about already participating in the production of a certain cultural and political discourse, which ends up in the lack of the sense of responsibility thus lacking basic requirements of political subjectivation of the cultural worker.

Detailed analysis, and (local) urge for deconstruction of many themes opened during conversation, could have been directed toward locating possible positions or strategies of resistance against rigid structures that inhabit the context of modern institutions; also, toward the problems of *shared* interest by the left and right political practice, which could have been "amplified" in the context of the paradox, which post-fordist capitalism continually produces by means of voracious appropriation; as well as towards the possible forms of public cooperation that could shed light on commonality and differences between workers in other industries and those in culture.

On the first day of presentations' series it was insisted on presentation of the survey which, participants of doctoral studies at the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid at a time, carried out among employees of the Museum. This attempt was made towards

understanding conditions which led to the re-use of the survey first conducted by Karl Marx among workers in 1880. Rather confusing dramaturgy – presentation of survey scheduled for the first day, survey results for the second day – which insisted on a detailed analysis of the context, most likely failed to meet anticipated expectations of this strict division made by the initiator/organizer. But it did meet some other.

In fact, what can be considered most valuable is the comparative analysis of working conditions and workers' status at a time, against the position of (cultural) workers and working conditions today. Performed in the terms of contemporary practice, it not only illustrates the dramatic turns in development of capitalism in the last hundred years and more, but it also makes visible enduring similarities (between now and then) empowered with upgraded ways of appropriation as *the* strategy for advancement of capitalism, coupled with the appropriation of the cultural and art techniques which were battling against the expansion of capitalism. One can certainly be informed and well-read in theory about such appropriations. However, the priceless value of such experiences is, in addition to immediacy, a set of unexpected circumstances and specifics of the context and conditions, which can lead to the production of knowledge, and at the same time, exposure of idealized expectations in pursuit of "pure, perfect" position, form or product *allowed* to intervene in public sphere. Isn't capitalism already operating along those lines? Quite the opposite seemed to be the aim of these presentations. It appeared visible through the presentation of results (rather modest though not less important), but only for patient and good willed ones on the second day. The very attempt to interpret results in the context of contemporary work-hood and significantly altered capitalist conditions of the production and labor could have been the beginning of *the* process so frequently longed and avowed for. Until we reach grand solutions for the change in the global level, it seemed that this micro-political discourse could have contributed too. Although looked-down upon, the "what might be done/changed each day" approach exposed a lot on expectations and ambitions among local cultural workers. Contrary to this, the protagonists bravely shared the most political part of their efforts with us - their motives, circumstances, feelings and rather clumsy, as they themselves said, first steps towards an attempt of political subjectivization with an ambition to initiate the very process, offer opportunities and/or explore the achievements, implications, and perhaps, controversy

regarding the problems and stereotypes of representation and reception of cultural work-hood. Those could have been a few more common, neuralgic experiences that could have been shared with guests from Madrid.

The impression that the local (“Belgrade”) scene often lives in theoretical constructs taking a position of a haughty opponent to various contents recognized as theoretically under-empowered, repeatedly witnesses the inability (lack of willingness?) or opportunities missed by local cultural stakeholders to critically reflect their own expectations of successful practices of resistance in the direct communication with the differently envisioned strategies, and putting their practical attempts and efforts in achieving those practice on the table for an open discussion.

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