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Conflicting Visions of Urban Regeneration in a New Political and Economic Order The Example of the Former Bicycle Factory ROG in Ljubljana, Slovenia

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the phenomenon of urban regeneration and development in the context of globalisation and processes of Europeanisation with a focus on culture and creativity. It asks how the process of negotiating EU-rope is being reflected in places situated at the 'edge' of the European Union and which actors are involved in these processes of negotiating EU-rope, its culture, values and urban regeneration. The author presents an empirical example from Ljubljana, Slovenia. The focus lies on negotiating the usage and development of an abandoned industrial site. Here, different ideas of negotiating and developing the city in the context of globalisation and Europeanisation come to the fore: top-down approaches that follow the image of a creative city as well as bottom-up initiatives that develop anti-global and anti-capitalistic criticism with the help of social-spatial and cultural practices.

KEYWORDS

creative and cultural industries, creative city, EU-ropeanisation, neo-liberal urban politics, urban regeneration

The Spreading of Creativity: An Introduction

Several cities in the world lately offer the following picture: young and trendy people sitting in coffee bars with their smart phones, iPads and iMacs, drinking coffee and communicating globally with the help of Skype, Facebook and Twitter. But they do not just communicate; often they also produce content in form of texts, music and pictures to earn their living. If they need more infrastructure, such as a local network or printers, they go to the next co-working

space, which they find via the internet. These places are usually located in abandoned industrial sites that are situated centrally and offer the infrastructure for an urban and creative lifestyle. They are flexible, virtually connected, hip and (often) cheap. Popular examples are the *Betahaus* (Berlin) or *The Hub* (London). A decisive factor for the development of such a city image was the introduction of the concept of 'creative industries' in 1997 by the British Department for Culture, Media and Sport. It was a reaction to the challenges of the post-industrial era. Great Britain had not only experienced steep cuts after its industries collapsed; unemployment rose and new development visions were missing. With the implementation and spreading of the concept of 'creative industries', it seemed that culture and creativity could help to explore new economic fields to solve social, economic and structural problems. The term 'creative industries' reflects a neoliberal concept of art and culture (Primorac 2005: 30). The sectors subsumed under the term 'creative industries' had already existed before. But now they were put together systematically under one common term, acknowledging their economic potential.

Since then, more and more cities and regions have tried to encourage creative entrepreneurs to move to their region to enable them to compete on a global scale. In Germany, for instance, several *Kulturwirtschaftsberichte* – reports on the creative and cultural sectors – have been published at the municipal, state and federal level,¹ analysing the status quo of the cultural and creative industries² and recommending measures to stimulate creative sectors and entrepreneurs. The increasing relevance of the cultural and creative industries is visible also at the supranational level of the European Union. Amongst others, these industries are being considered important for generating growth and solving economic and social problems (European Commission 2009; European Commission 2010).

The described developments illustrate that there is an increased focus on the revitalisation of cities and regions with the help of culture, arts and creativity. From a European point of view, it is mainly the countries, cities and regions that are being considered to form the central part of EU-rope who deal with this phenomenon. However, in the course of the European Union's enlargement one can also perceive this restructuring of the economy and urban space with the help of culture and creativity 'at the edge' (Welz 2005) of the European Union.³

This can be witnessed for example in Slovenia, which entered the European Union in 2004. Since its independency the country has been characterised

by post-socialist transformation, integration into global competition and processes of EU-ropeanisation, meaning the formation of a common European Union space. This has led to several specific developments in Slovenia similar to other post-socialist transformation countries. Slovenia has experienced the restructuring of the state and its administration, the privatisation of public space and infrastructure, the introduction of neoliberal politics, individualisation, the outsourcing of social services, rising unemployment rates and increasing scepticism of the society against the state (Dragičević Šešić and Suteu 2005: 83–4). Also, the capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana, has experienced fundamental changes. With the elections of the new mayor, Zoran Janković, in 2006, the focus of the political-administrative level to develop Ljubljana with the help of culture and creativity intensified. Janković, a former CEO (chief executive officer) of the retail chain *Mercator*, formulated twenty two projects he wants to realise during his mandate, which runs until 2014 (Midasch 2011: 87). Amongst these projects are several which concern the transformation of Ljubljana into a creative city attractive for people and businesses from the cultural and creative industries, as well as for tourists and investors. Amongst these initiatives are the sanitation and reopening of *Kino Šiška*, which today is a popular (commercial) place for urban youth culture in Ljubljana, and the realisation of various aestheticisation projects in the old city core by building new bridges, statues and revitalising the Ljubljana embankment. Janković also revealed his plans to develop *Rog* (Janković 2006), a former bicycle factory that was closed in 1991, bought by the city in 2002 and occupied by anti-globalisation activists and artists in 2006. So far, the development of the former factory has been integrated as a pilot project into the EU project *Second Chance*⁴ concerned with the revitalisation of abandoned industrial sites in European cities with the help of art and culture. The city plans to establish a *Centre of Contemporary Arts* on the area, together with a hotel, apartments and shopping areas.

The formation strategy of the city, meaning the development of Ljubljana into a creative city, has led to conflicts, amongst others, with actors from the creative and artist scene that imagine Ljubljana to be different. Their criticism concerns the economic conceptualisation of culture as well as neoliberal urban politics that are associated with an increasing exclusion of the poor and unemployed as well as an increasing privatisation of urban space. These critics are revealing negotiations of the urban public space and culture in the context of the EU-ropeanisation process.

Conceptual Background: Creativity and EU-ropeanisation

The conceptual background of this article is, on the one hand, framed by theories and models concerning the creative city as well as the cultural and creative industries; here I will focus on the theories of the economist Richard Florida. On the other hand, it is framed by cultural-anthropological and ethnological theories on EU-ropeanisation.

Cultural and Creative Industries and the Creative City

The perception of cultural and creative industries as instruments for the branding and image development of cities and regions is connected to the theories of Richard Florida. Although the concept of the creative city existed before, Florida strongly influenced the debate on the creative city with his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida understands creativity as a central economic source of our time. According to him, it is crucial for cities and regions to attract creative entrepreneurs to become or remain (economically) competitive. Hence, creativity has become an economic resource (Florida 2006: 23). The central part of his theory concerning the increased significance of creativity for the economic development of cities and regions consists of the definition of the main ingredients for a creative city. Florida calls these the 'three Ts'. According to him, technology, talent and tolerance are needed, if a city or region wants to attract and retain creative talents, generate innovation and stimulate economic growth. In order to measure whether a city or region has the potential to become a creative city, Florida developed different indexes (Florida 2006: 23).⁵

Florida's theory on creative cities has been received differently by different audiences. In general, one can distinguish two positions. On the one hand, cities and regions saw new possibilities for future economic growth and developed instruments for promoting cultural and creative industries and for attracting cultural entrepreneurs. On the other hand, various scholars have criticised Florida's approach towards creativity and culture (Gligorićević 2007; Lange 2005; Altenburg and Schmidt 2010: 126–7). The criticisms concern his empirical methodology for the measurement of creativity, tolerance, talent and technology (Glasauer 2008; Peck 2005; Malanga 2004), the conceptualisation of cities as consumption and investment sites (Breznik 2007), and the disregard of differences in geopolitical, cultural and social contexts while recommending similar measures universally (Dragičević Šešić and Suteu 2005).

Moreover, I would be critical of Florida's theory on creative cities because of his top-down approach. Although he mentions that creative cities also need bottom-up initiatives, he focuses on measures to be introduced at the national, regional and/or local level. Yet from my point of view, creative cities cannot be commanded by the political-administrative level acting in isolation. I would also be critical of his neoliberal approach, which perceives culture and creativity merely as economic sources, and regards cultural entrepreneurs as a kind of avant-garde that shall solve society's social and economic problems while mostly working and living in economically precarious circumstances themselves. Finally, I regard conceptualising cities merely as consumption places, and transferring a development model formulated first in a Western/U.S. context simply to other geopolitical regions, as deeply problematic.

EU-ropeanisation and Creativity

With reference to the ethnological and cultural-anthropological literature, I understand EU-ropeanisation as a process of negotiation between the centre of the European Union and its member countries (Poehls and Vonderau 2006; Poehls 2009; Kaschuba 2007; Welz and Lottermann 2009; Römhild 2009). Furthermore, this negotiation becomes visible at the 'bottom' (Römhild 2009) of the European Union, meaning the non-institutionalised level of the average people, as well as at the 'edge' (Welz 2005), meaning those countries that (currently) form the external borders of the EU. This view enables understanding EU-ropeanisation as a negotiation in which different actors with different positions are involved (Römhild 2009: 262). The 'edge' of the European Union, which is also constituted by Slovenia, is marked by very specific experiences with different mobility patterns due to its position between the hegemonic western centre of the European Union and the countries outside the European Union. Different subjects develop specific knowledge, criticism and interpretations concerning European modernities, which leads to a more reflexive approach to the project of modernisation. According to Regina Römhild, it is therefore useful for researchers to also move physically to these places to understand and reflect the processes of constituting EU-rope in a more holistic way (Römhild 2009: 262–5).

This negotiating of EU-rope with the help of culture and creativity is being influenced by the developments and funding strategies of the European Union. In its Green Paper 'Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries' (European Commission 2010), the European Commission describes

the cultural and creative industries as among the most dynamic growth sectors in the European Union, generating 2.6 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) and about five million jobs (European Commission 2010: 2–3).⁶ Focusing on the cultural and creative industries is also a reaction to the European cultural agenda, which demands that the European Union should utilise the potential of culture to stimulate innovation, generate growth and jobs in the frame of the Lisbon Strategy (Council of Europe and ERICarts 2009: 10). In this strategy we find the hidden hope that with the help of culture and creativity most contemporary problems will be solved. The neoliberal approach is obvious here; after all, the European Union wants to become the most attractive place for cultural entrepreneurs and industries worldwide, to secure its dominant position (see European Commission 2010: 2). With the further enlargement of the European Union, the number of potential places where culture and creativity can be spread to secure its competitiveness is increasing.

The negotiation of the urban spaces with a strong reference on culture and creativity can also be observed in Ljubljana. The employment of a creative city strategy by the political-administrative level reflects the above-mentioned attempts of cities and regions to shape their image with the help of culture and creativity in order to stay or become competitive on a global scale. This top-down strategy is confronted with bottom-up negotiations of urban and cultural space by different actors. This corresponds to the anthropological perspective on the process of shaping EU-rope. According to Gisela Welz, this process must not only be perceived as a top-down hegemonic process and a neocolonial practice, where Western models are implemented in other geopolitical contexts (Welz 2005: 19). Other, non-institutionalised actors are also involved in this negotiation process.

Here at the 'edge' of EU-rope, the image strategy of the political-administrative level is confronted with different realities, such as the socialist past, the post-socialist transformation, negotiations with the European Union and globalisation. This strategy is introduced into a field that for a long time did not follow capitalistic, but rather socialistic values and norms. Culture has always played an important role in Slovenia – for the formation of a national identity, for educating socialist citizens and now for generating growth and jobs. This means that the concepts of cultural and creative industries and creative cities that were conceived in a different geopolitical context encounter a reality that is shaped by new experiences and mobilities – and in the course

of this reveal conflicts and negotiations. Hence we can better understand the formation of Ljubljana's urban space under today's conditions if we consider both sides of the process: the top-down approach of the politic-administrative level and the positioning of independent, non-institutionalised actors towards these formation projects with their own specific negotiations concerning urban space, living and working conditions and culture.

Methodological Aspects

In this section, I present central methodological aspects from my empirical research in Ljubljana. I first review the state of research concerning the spread of cultural and creative industries in other geopolitical contexts and my central assumptions, before illustrating the applied research methods and my research questions.

State of Research and Assumptions

So far, no ethnological studies have been conducted with regard to the transformation of Ljubljana into a creative city. Several authors have, however, discussed the possibility of transferring the concepts of 'cultural and creative industries' and 'creative city' into other geopolitical contexts, given that these concepts have their origin in a Western/American context (Tomić-Koludrović and Petrić 2005 for South Eastern Europe; Strykiewicz et al. 2011 for Poznań; Grochowski and Zegar 2011 for Warsaw). These authors chose a different approach to mine by discussing the situation of cultural and creative industries in regional contexts and evaluating whether the local environment is adapting to this trend, or which challenges may still have to be met. The ethnographical approach I applied allows a different perspective on urban formation as it includes different views and negotiations on the process. My ethnographical approach reflects the anthropological understanding of Europeanisation processes, described earlier.

My research is based on two premises. Firstly, I assume that the political-administrative level in Ljubljana is trying to develop Ljubljana into a creative city, and in doing so is adapting to the global urban competition, where a specific image is increasingly essential to attract entrepreneurs, tourists and residents. The increased focus on exploiting culture and creativity economically is a consequence of the challenges of the post-industrial era. My second premise is that the cultural and creative actors in Ljubljana negotiate the

social, cultural and imaginative spaces of Ljubljana with their cultural and social-spatial practices. Therefore they are positioning themselves towards and/or against current top-down formation approaches. They themselves negotiate EU-rope and some of them also develop other possible Europes. 'Other Europes' was the title of a project seminar held by Regina Römhild at the Institute for European Ethnology (2010–2011) at Humboldt University, Berlin. The term refers to negotiating other imaginations of Europe that go beyond the visions developed by the European Union and its institutions. It also refers to the producers of such alternative visions, who are often marginalised in the dominant narratives about Europe like certain social milieus and criticism of Europe.⁷

Applied Methodology and Research Questions

The empirical results that I present here are part of my PhD research. This included three field research trips to Ljubljana between 2009 and 2011, where I conducted qualitative interviews with actors from the political-administrative as well as from the cultural-creative scene. Furthermore, I undertook participating observations in Ljubljana concerning social-spatial and cultural practices of both parties, and I organised so-called go-alongs (Kusenbach 2003) with cultural and creative actors. For the go-alongs, I went for a walk with cultural actors with the aim to learn about their subjective perceptions and interpretations of Ljubljana. I asked them to show me important, beautiful or ugly places in the city that were/are important for them and their (artistic) work. Additionally, I have been analysing various policy documents of the local, regional and national level concerning cultural policy and urban development.

In the next section, I present an aspect of my empirical work. It refers to the development of the former bicycle factory *Rog*, located in the city centre of Ljubljana. It is a good example to demonstrate how the formation of Ljubljana with the help of culture and creativity is being realised and, at the same time, which realities it is confronted with. The two main research questions are:

- What are the strategies of the political-administrative level for the development of *Rog* in the context of the creative city formation of Ljubljana?
- What cultural and social-spatial practices are employed by the cultural and creative actors using *Rog*?

Rog: Between the Centre of Contemporary Arts and Anti-Capitalistic Critics

The basis for this section is the empirical research I conducted between October 2009 and April 2011. This included interviews with people living and working at *Rog*, who are involved in the plans for the further development of the area at the political-administrative level and who are included in the EU projects *Creative Cities* and *Second Chance* in Ljubljana. Furthermore, I undertook participant observations in the area. Together with the project partners from *Second Chance* and *Creative Cities*, I participated in a guided tour of *Rog*, lead by a representative from the Department for Culture of the City of Ljubljana on 14 April 2011:

We enter some run-down shanties on the right side. This is where the Social Centre is located, which was founded when the former factory was squatted in 2006. It functions as a meeting point and safe place for the initiatives which belong to the social centre: *Invisible Workers of the World*, *World for Everyone*, *The Erased* and a group that fights against low wages. The current situation for the Social Centre and other users is quite precarious since the city has cut the water and electricity supply. We move on to the back of the area – here I meet a girl who has been living in the area for about one year. She and the others have set up candles and a generator to get some heat and electricity. She seems quite happy with her living situation and tells me that there is an agreement with the city that they can stay until an investor has been found. But from time to time the police come and register their data (...). An architecture student who is using the area for her projects shows us the main building used by artists, a European-wide known skater park and a concert hall. The third floor is run-down with broken windows and rubbish lying around (...). The fourth floor is in a better condition and is often used for producing videos. The student points out the urgently required sanitation of the building and hopes that the city will acknowledge that the area is a productive place for artists (...). After the visit of *Rog* I meet an activist of the social centre and ask him whether there are any negotiations between the city and the activists. He denies this and adds that only one representative of the city has some contact with them. He also criticises the lack of social workers and police in the area. (Notes from my fieldwork, 14 April 2011, translated by myself)

While visiting *Rog*, discrepancies between the different narratives and perceptions of the area are revealed. Although the activists and users of *Rog* are not

Figure 1 Area of *Rog* in April 2011 (photograph by Kornelia Ehrlich)

a homogenous group, we find activists and artists for whom the situation is precarious because they eventually lose the space for their productions and projects, the facility which enables them to realise alternative modes of living

Figure 2 Third floor of *Rog* (photograph by Kornelia Ehrlich)

Figure 3 Fourth floor of Rog (photograph by Kornelia Ehrlich)

and working, and to address unpopular issues such as the increasing privatisation of urban space or harsh EU visa regimes. They are being confronted with the plans of the city to convert the area into a Centre of Contemporary Arts. These plans foresee the development of a flagship project that will brand Ljubljana as a creative city. These plans might lead to the exclusion and displacement of the current users of Rog. Other users of the area are rather optimistic and hope that they can continue to use the place after its sanitation. The representatives of the city speak of a constant dialogue with the users of the former factory. At the same time they criticise the lack of organisation among the users as hindering the establishment of a dialogue with them.

The extract from my field notes already points out the different practices of negotiating space in Ljubljana for economic, social and cultural purposes. In general, we can distinguish between two positions: While buying the area of Rog in 2002, the political-administrative level expressed its plans to establish its image as a creative city with the development and revitalisation of the area. At the same time, we find artists and activists who use Rog for the development of a critical view on society, neoliberal politics and the formation of urban space for social groups with high economic and social capital. They perceive the area as a refuge for establishing alternative life and work-

ing patterns with direct democratic structures and no economic exploitation, as well as a possibility to make marginal positions and people visible. This is reflected, for example, by the work of the groups belonging to the social centre. Representatives of the social centre were involved, for example, in the conference 'Cross Border Experience' that took place in October 2011.⁸ They participated in a panel discussion with the title 'New (precarious) labour relations in post-Fordist Europe'. The group *Invisible Workers of the World* organised a Precarious Worker's Demonstration in June 2011 to fight for their rights. These two patterns of perceiving and negotiating the development of Rog also reveal processes of EU-ropeanisation, which will be discussed in the following section.

Political-Administrative Level

With the new Rog – Centre of Contemporary Arts Ljubljana will get a new creative and artistic focal point and will start realizing the concept of a creative city as a development model.⁹

When purchasing the area of the former bicycle factory in 2002, the city of Ljubljana gave the starting signal for the revitalisation of the area. In 2007 a project group was installed by the city for developing a concept for the further usage of the area. The project group recognised the importance of Rog for alternative culture and its working modes, and suggested a gentle revitalisation of the area. The concept was rejected by the city council. One reason for the rejection may have been the location of Rog. It is very close to the city core and presents one of the best pieces of the real estate market in Ljubljana. This may have nurtured the hope to sell the area for a high price to a private investor. After the rejection of the suggested development plan it was unclear what would happen with Rog until the city saw a new possibility for the realisation of its revitalisation plans. Rog was integrated into the EU project *Second Chance* that is concerned with the revitalisation of abandoned industrial sites with the help of culture and creativity, to attract creative entrepreneurs and regenerate decayed urban areas. The plans for Rog include building a Centre of Contemporary Arts with premises for exhibitions and cultural production. These premises are to be used temporarily by artists who are chosen by an international consortium. In addition, the plan includes building a hotel, an underground car park, apartments and shopping areas that would partly belong to the city. In doing so, the city hopes to generate additional income for the Centre of Contemporary Arts. The financing of

the project shall be realised through a PPP (Public-Private-Partnership). In developing a PPP, the city wants to accomplish two aims: having an influence on the development of the area, especially the Centre of Contemporary Arts, and generating income when selling the area to an investor. Several authors, though, have pointed out that neoliberal practices like the privatisation of public goods have rather negative consequences for cities. PPPs often do not represent equal partnerships because the public institutions do not have enough power to further their own (social) interests (Engartner 2007; Harvey 1989; Pelizzari and Zeller 2005).

When studying the architectural plans for the *Rog* revitalisation that were developed by the architectural studio MX_SI from Spain, I formed the impression that start-ups of young entrepreneurs were not being addressed, in deference to the established enterprises who can afford the rental of shop areas and production spaces. The plans that include the construction of a hotel, shopping areas and apartments show that the area is conceptualised as a place for consumption, rather than as a place offering cheap production space to young creative enterprises. Also, only certain social groups that have enough social and economic capital at their disposal seem to be addressed by the aesthetics and the programme. Anti-global or anti-capitalist approaches, as well as alternative artistic initiatives that are currently using the area, are not addressed. The focus is on efficiency, economic exploitation and branding the city with a new flagship. This might also be connected to the hope of generating a 'Bilbao effect'. The building of a new Guggenheim museum in Bilbao (Spain) in 1997 by Frank O. Gehry marked the starting point for the global tendency to build iconic buildings to attract new residents and tourists, develop a unique and trendy image and revitalise city quarters (Weissmüller 2011; see also Gligorijević 2007: 22). This tendency is also visible in Ljubljana. The architectural plans show that the old buildings will be replaced by new and modern ones, meaning rising prices and a new image of the area. Also, the residential area in which *Rog* is situated, and which is shaped by apartment buildings mainly from the socialist period, might change its image after the *Rog* sanitation.

At the moment the city is looking for an investor who is willing to invest in the area. This is rather difficult due to the political and financial crisis the country is experiencing at present. That nurtures the hope some of my interview partners expressed: they hope that the economic and political crisis will lead to well thought-out urban planning processes in the future.

The process of revitalising *Rog* reflects processes of EU-ropeanisation. It follows the aim of the European Union to stay competitive on a global scale, meaning that cities and regions have to develop in a very specific direction, to attract entrepreneurs, tourists and residents to these places to consume, establish a business and pay taxes, so that contemporary challenges such as the demographic change or the financial crisis can be met. This foresees a top-down approach, meaning the implementation of a desired image and development model. Also, the aestheticisation of urban areas is a typical development in this context. It shapes the image of a place and thus attracts certain social groups. Others, who position themselves critically vis-à-vis the top-down development of their cities, are marginalised. The usage of terms like 'creative industries' in this context functions as a method of generating money for such projects or, as in the case of *Rog*, being included in European Union projects and in this way being recognised by a Western hegemonic centre.

Cultural and Political Activists

However, here at the 'edge' of EU-rope we also find resistant practices that are developed by non-institutionalised actors against the above-described image strategies that are associated with the economic exploitation of culture and neoliberal urban politics. This is also reflected in the occupation of the former *Rog* factory, in 2006, by artists and anti-globalisation activists. This occupation can be interpreted as a consequence of the increasing commercialisation of *Metelkova mesto*, an autonomous social centre nearby, as well as a general protest against neoliberal urban politics. The activists established alternative lifestyles and organisation forms like direct democratic decision structures and weekly assemblies, and decided to give up personal belongings and locked doors. This idea failed when the users became more and more heterogeneous and started to use the area for accommodation as well. As a consequence, the city cut off the water and electricity supply because the agreement between the occupiers and the city over the non-residential usage of *Rog* was ignored. Since then the conditions have become precarious. The reaction of the city can also be interpreted as a strategy to make the activists leave *Rog*, thereby enforcing its development plans.

An example of an artist group that positions itself against dominant narratives of growth, efficiency and branding of cities is the artistic group *Cirkulacija 2*.

Cirkulacija 2 is located in the former heating house [cirkulacija] of *Rog*. It consists of a huge room with around five-metre-high ceilings. It is in a rather bad condition. During the winter time the artists have to put up tents above their tables and heat the space beneath with an old oven. Also now the climate is rather damp. Additionally, it is quite loud, because the diesel generator next door is needed for producing electricity. The room is stuffed with material the group uses for its installations like electrical instruments and machines, and several seating areas and a small kitchen. The room is basically open to everyone, only during the night it is locked. *Cirkulacija 2* does not only produce, but also exhibits its installations and performances in this room. These exhibitions are often accompanied by public soup kitchen events. The promotion of such events is mainly realised through word-of-mouth, mailing lists and social networks [...]. *Cirkulacija 2* moved to *Rog* at the end of 2006, half a year after the occupation started. By then the situation was already precarious and conflict-laden: it was increasingly marked by internal as well as external conflicts with the city. (Notes from my fieldwork, 18 April 2011, translated by myself)

Cirkulacija 2 understands itself as non-disciplinary and political. Their politics is not necessarily present in their installations but reflects the general attitude of the group. They reject the capitalistic exploitation of art and culture. That is one reason why they seldom apply for money from the European Union. They do not want to employ the bureaucratic language to their creative and artistic ideas and approaches, and by that contribute to a merely economic usage of culture. However, the group faces reality and applies every four years for money from the city; additionally, they are funded by the Slovenian Liberal Party. Its political attitude is also visible in the events they organise. While organising *Volxküchen*, public soup kitchens, they distinguish these from the traditional idea of public soup kitchens that exclude people who do not belong to a certain nation or do not speak the national language.¹⁰ The *Volxküchen* which are organised by *Cirkulacija 2* are open to everyone, independent of race, age and nationality, offering a space for the articulation of critical positions and for different social groups.

The work of *Cirkulacija 2* shows the importance places like *Rog* have for the development of marginalised positions and practices within EU-rope. With their projects and attitudes they negotiate space and the function of culture differently than the city or the European Union do. *Cirkulacija 2*, like the social centre, provides a place for people with alternative approaches to today's urban, cultural and economic developments and offer alternative approaches

to contemporary challenges, such as a lack of production space for artists or people who do not earn much. They provide an independent space where communication and criticism can be freely expressed and they oppose the displacement of unwanted groups. With their practices and spatial strategies that enable the inclusion of marginalised positions and criticism on the negotiations of urban space they also contribute to the production of 'Other Europes'.

The situation of *Cirkulacija 2* also reflects another problem a number of (non-institutionalised) artists are facing in Ljubljana. Currently, *Cirkulacija 2* is looking for new premises for their production. They do not require a very modern or representative place, simply a huge room with enough space for their equipment. However, it is very hard to find suitable premises at a reasonable rate. The problem is not a lack of empty spaces. Ljubljana still has many empty offices, warehouses and industrial buildings. One of my interview partners told me about the 2009 research project *Ustvarjalne skupnosti* at the University of Ljubljana's Faculty for Architecture, revealing that there are still several abandoned buildings and sites in Ljubljana that could be used flexibly. This is often not possible because the concept of temporarily using abandoned buildings is not well known; the advantages of such usage, like the preservation of these sites through temporal usage, are not seen, and the property rights are often unclear. At the same time, the city plans to build new premises at *Rog* for artists. For that purpose they will remove empty infrastructure that could be used by independent artists for a reasonable price. My impression is that the political-administrative level is rather interested to place artists at the newly built *Rog* who contribute to the image of a creative city. Although the city funds various artists, institutions and projects, it might not see the social values of independent and critical cultural groups like *Cirkulacija 2* as well as their creative and cultural potential. Again, the increasing economic conceptualisation of culture and creativity comes to the fore.

The plans for the development of *Rog* do not consider the needs of alternative or independent artists who do not need representative places and cannot afford high rents. *Rog* actually offers the possibility to become another alternative cultural centre, and to tackle the problem of the lack of production space for cultural and creative actors in Ljubljana. During my field trips, I realised that the neighbourhood of *Rog* offers networking potential for the activists and artists. Several social-cultural associations and the autonomous cultural centre *Metelkova mesto* are located nearby, as well as cultural institu-

tions, such as the art house cinemas *Slovenska Kinoteka* and *Kinodvor*, the cultural centre *Stara Elektrarna*, the Ethnographic Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Arts. Nevertheless, the city sticks to the plan to erect a new iconic symbol for Ljubljana on the area of the former bicycle factory *Rog*.

The city wants to develop Ljubljana with the image of a creative city that is competitive with other urban spaces worldwide and attractive for consumption-oriented tourists, highly qualified residents and entrepreneurs. The activists and independent artists want to use the spatial resources to keep or develop alternative modes of living and working, which are not seen by the official side as adding more diversity to EU-rope and its culture, and to include their critical positions towards current social, urban and economic developments.

Potential of Autonomous Sociocultural Centres: Concluding Remarks

In post-socialist countries like Slovenia, the significance of sociocultural centres is high, because they offer an autonomous space for social critics, counter-cultural productions and political activism. Nevertheless, these centres are often considered as problematic by the local authorities, which can also be observed in Ljubljana with the examples of *Rog* and *Metelkova mesto*. The authorities often react with restrictions, demolition or cutting the electricity and water supply (Breznik 2009: 13–14). According to Andrea Zlatar, former director of the Department of Culture of the city of Zagreb, ‘authorities do not recognise their [i.e. the autonomous sociocultural centres; KE] social criticism, subversive cultural practices, political engagement, and theoretical production as “cultural activities”’. (Breznik 2009: 14)

According to Maja Breznik, this negative attitude results from the fact that culture in these sociocultural centres is not perceived as a representation of the national, but as a possibility to offer participation and openness. Cultural objects are not treated as commodities but as communication instruments that also develop critical perspectives on certain developments (Breznik 2009: 14). This situation is also in evidence at *Rog*. The city is confronted with the development of critical positions by several artists and activists that use *Rog*. These critics refer to top-down urban negotiations by the city and to the consequences of the integration into the European and global sphere. With the

help of political activism as it is visible in the work of the social centre and in art, the activists address social and economic conflicts while the authorities react by (implicit) marginalisation, such as cutting the water and electricity supply. With their work the artists and activists are contributing to the development of other possible Europes, meaning they enable and visualise other concepts of, for example, the nation, citizenship, or living and working modes under global conditions that do not marginalise or exploit others. Therefore, they represent a decisive factor for the further development of EU-rope.

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Notes

1. For example, at the federal level: *Kultur in Deutschland* [Culture in Germany] (2008); at state level: *Erster Sächsischer Kulturwirtschaftsbericht* [First Saxonian Report on Cultural and Creative Industries] (2009), *Dritter Hessischer Kulturwirtschaftsbericht* [Third Hessian Report on Cultural and Creative Industries] (2008); and at municipal level: *Erster Kulturwirtschaftsbericht für die Stadt Köln* [First Cologne Report on Cultural and Creative Industries] (2007).
2. The term ‘cultural and creative industries’ was introduced by the European Commission; in Great Britain the term ‘creative industries’ is more popular.

3. The term EU-rope refers to those countries that are currently members of the European Union or negotiating their membership.
4. *Second Chance Project* <http://www.secondchanceproject.eu/wp/?page_id=16> (accessed 11 October 2011).
5. Technology is measured by number of registered patents and the concentration of high-tech industries; talent by the numbers of people working in creative industries; and tolerance, for example, by the relative concentration of homosexuals living in a city or region (Florida 2006: xvii–xx).
6. Under 'cultural industries', the Green Paper includes: performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage (including the public sector), film, DVD/video, television/radio, video games, new media, music, books. Architecture and design, with the sub-sectors graphic design, fashion design and advertising, are referred to as 'creative industries' (European Commission 2010: 5–6) <http://ec.europa.eu/culture/documents/greenpaper_creative_industries_en.pdf> (accessed 11 October 2011).
7. See <<http://othereuropes.hu-berlin.de/>> (accessed 18 November 2011).
8. See <<http://www.crossborderexperience.org/?cat=21>> (accessed 14 May 2012).
9. *Second Chance Project* <http://www.secondchanceproject.eu/wp/?page_id=16> (accessed 11 October 2011).
10. Bandito Rosso Berlin <<http://bandito.blogspot.de/bevoku/>> (accessed 13 October 2011).

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The Fate of 'Backwardness' Portuguese Expectations over Modernisation

CATARINA FROIS

ABSTRACT

In Portugal, terms such as 'modernisation', 'progress' and 'development' are continually invoked by a wide range of social actors, representing the right path and ultimate goal of all political and social change, but on the other hand conceal the actual truth that, to use Latour's expression: 'We have never been modern'. The result is that the demand for modernisation is accompanied by the parallel reification of 'backwardness'. Alluding to Portugal's peripheral condition, to its distance from the rest of Europe and so forth, is part of common everyday discourse, and the country is typically portrayed as a kind of European backwater, forever lagging behind more advanced states. This article aims to present and discuss how backwardness and modernisation are recurrently present in political discourse as a leitmotiv for social, economic and cultural change and the way it is incorporated into a broader and rooted self-representation of the Portuguese modus vivendi and national features.

KEYWORDS

backwardness, European policies, modernisation, Portugal

In Portugal, terms such as 'modernisation', 'progress', and 'development' are continually invoked by a wide range of social actors, representing the right path and ultimate goal of all political and social change, but on the other hand conceal the actual truth that, to use Latour's expression: 'We have never been modern'. The result is that the demand for modernisation is accompanied by the parallel reification of 'backwardness'. Alluding to Portugal's peripheral condition, to its distance from the rest of Europe and so forth, is part of common everyday discourse, and the country is typically portrayed as a kind of European backwater, forever lagging behind more advanced states. This fate, or *fado*, is built as much on the renewal of belief in the potential of the