

ECLN Partner Test Report

Prostor Plus, Croatia

Work Package 4



TRANSportART

I. PEOPLE + PURPOSE

a) **People:** Who will be involved in the activities? What are their roles and relationships?

Follow up of a workshop grasped by ECLN testing phase follows 6 female participants whose initiative for continuing previous workshop modelled relation grow into cooperative project *Decompress Reconnect*. Participants of this project are fellow students attending local Applied Arts Academy in Rijeka, which makes already formed relationships a bit more complex.

This initiative we understood as an attempt for a form of subjectivation but, as we thought at first, out side the given system of identification: neither Academia students, nor follower of alternative art scene, or (professional) art practitioners as it will later turn out latter in the process.

In a plane terms the process of subjectivation that was suppose to advance workshop participants into authors of the project and project participants, may have ended up in positioning of the project authors (despite their ongoing student status) as art practitioners in the local artistic community. But the suspended and prolonged finalization of the project witnesses the reflex of institutional ideology which claims urgency over obligations and assignments – first school then play – robbing informal or any other efforts of their seriousness and value.

b) **Purpose:** What is the purpose of these activities? Why do you want to do them?

Opening project **Decompress** has been initiated as an answer to the lack of non-classical artistic actions and their theoretical analysis within those local art scenes which stand outside so called centres of creation, decision-making and production of art (as a system of value and valuing system), but are related and thus refer to such a centres. Besides the recognition of this gap, *Decompress Reconnected*, as its follow up, is also about acknowledging of a need to



continue cooperation with gifted and ambitious student-participants outside of the given workshop frame. Their participation started with the decision to change their everyday rituals and routes by initiating another, unanticipated activity thus breaking workshop limits and shifting workshop leaders expectations towards more opened collective discussions which led to the possibility of producing art works out of brainstormed ideas.

PLANS + PLACES

a) **Plans:** What plans have you made? How will you carry out these activities?

NATIONAL CORE CURRICULUM	DESCRIPTOR
<p style="text-align: center;">COACHING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing experiences - The process of learning instead one of a teaching, mentoring or coaching - Position of the workshop leaders modified into the role which includes some of what coach, trainer and mentor perform, but without inhabiting any of the positions in particular; - Insisting on dialogue and collective engagement - Providing space for thorough self-reflection and alertness for subtle differences within the process - Guiding participants through the process of production: from an idea to the realization.
SUB GROUP CORE CURRICULUM	DESCRIPTOR
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brainstorming sessions where everybody



<p>COMMUNICATION</p>	<p>could express his/her idea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting to common decisions and solutions via various forms of communication without pre-defined aim or agenda - Creating of a safe and secure working ambient where all kinds of experiments are possible and encouraged - Dialogue that enhanced the feeling of belonging to a collective without hierarchical structures - Extended communication in the social media (facebook, e-mail discussion) following the needs and participants' initiatives
<p>TEAM WORKING</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joined resources (intellectual, practical and creative) - Mediating between different perspectives, needs and bureaucratic demands - Fostering critical thinking with regard to dominant education models - Collective authorship - Open and inclusive decision making process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interweaving theoretical knowledge with practice - Discussions as a tool for creation



<p>CREATIVE PROCESS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horizontal model of cooperation insisting on participation and inclusion in each and every part of the process - Participants as creators and initiators of their own positioning on the local art scene as artists-practitioners (despite their students' status). - “letting down” of formal, traditional expectations connected to the process of production - Encouraging of individual approach to the problem solutions but inside and together with the members of the group
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b) Places: Where will these activities take place? In one place or many places? What are the characteristics of the place(s) or space(s)?

As soon as participants broke the workshop boundary down by engaging all of us in another conceptual setting (*Decompress Reconnected*) there has been no need to meet within the official premises prearranged for *Decompress* workshop realization. Working activities have taken place in an informal ambient (private home, public place/space, coffee shop, Prostor Plus office) without insisting on any particular or common space settings. The choices of meeting places have come as the most practical result of negotiating between obligations of all participants and have usually been in the second half of a day or in the evening.

Participants took their spatial positions at the very beginning, during workshop process (by sitting next to each other, all together, usually with the table between us) and have stuck to them all along, even after our relationships changed. These repetitive spatialized relations we understood as a reflex of an institutional unconsciousness where the hierarchical gap between “apprentices” and “the one that is suppose to know” is embedded in any spatial setting despite of its nature.





II. PROGRESS + POINTS OF VIEW

- a) **Progress:** How did the project progress? What happened during the activities? Were there any tangible outcomes? If so what were these?

For the sake of clarity it will be useful to once more underline the specificity of the *Decompress Reconnected* project. It is unanticipated follow up and one of the outputs of the workshop transPORTart workshop process (realized within the Decompress initiative). The follow up took place immediately after the workshop had ended and in a short period of time transformed into the collaborative project TRANSportART/ Decompress Reconnected. The reason we kept two names is to emphasize the continuity between these two projects and their mutual interrelations as a contribution to understanding the whole. This particular follow up, or rather a part of the process from March to September, has been considered for ECLN testing phase. Regarding this, project is an ongoing with a completion scheduled for October/December 2014.

Establishing of new relationships (from participant/leader to authors and collaborators) made one of the first signs – initiative taken by participants - recognizable and valuable as a breaking point of this educational and pedagogical experiment. It could be viewed as an attempt of establishing *new* model of collective, a group that functions based on *different* principals: the actual needs of its members and not project-based needs and preferences. And, in that way, the group fights and conquers freedom of pursuing themes and problems which are primary interest of their members without flattering the academy curriculum, discursive preferences or funding key/words.

It was this initiative for prolonged relationship but in a different setting (would be highly misunderstood if addressed as “project surplus”) that was for the first time spotted in the written evaluation of the workshop process, acknowledged and immediately proceeded with. This unanticipated workshop output had the first meeting a few days after the workshop ended and continue relationship by e-mailing and FB group posts. On the same meeting former participants took initiative suggesting the group should apply to the public contest for the support of the student art production by Student Cultural Centre in Rijeka, which we did. It would be rather useful to note two different things that happened: participants taking the initiative to re-form the workshop group so to continue meetings and redefine relationships in



accordance to the nature of the new creation; and apply, as a newly gathered group, for a project support. Being it their first project application, the group filled an on-line application form supervised by Andrej Mircev, wrapping up production of 10 workshop ideas and their public presentation as a public intervention, into the project *Decompress Reconnected/TRANSPORTART*. SKC propositions requested supervisors of the process so participants-turned-co-operators named Nikoleta Markovic and Andrej Mircev, but refused the fee. It appeared that this informal TRANSPORTART group has been awarded with around 1000E of the production support grant and was ranked as forth, beating a number of fairly experienced applicants. A special weight barred a fact the *Decompress Reconnected/TRANSPORTART* project has been additionally granted support for the continuation of *Decompress* by the region PGŽ, which made possible for all the participants to receive an equal fee by Prostor Plus. For most of the student participants this was the first time to have officially been granted with a honorarium.

This educative experiment wouldn't be as interested if it would not have encountered problems along the way. For example, probably due to inexperienced applicants, SKC administration decided to make a reuse of the project budget money without previously consulting the applicants. The action would go under the radar if it didn't feel odd to see a use of budget resources different than the one applied with. It is our opinion that the experience gained in a dialog exchange with administration or bureaucracy can be and is of an immense educational potential, so much so that we put all of our efforts into making these administrative demands and formalities understandable and passable by transforming it into the language of art production. The solution to the problem was a student's written suggestion of the budget use so to enable outflow and reimbursement. Since there was no action on the part of students, which kept holding hostage the whole project, another suggestion was made to solve this packed in situation. The proposal suggested intensive mail-exchange which should have translated the workshop and its effects from the speech into written media in a way that would make each item of an art produced process and the strategy of exhibition visible. It would, at the same time, make the costs of production and exhibition of artworks become more transparent and computable, art works well thought through and project realization finally agreed upon. Although I previously had a great experience with the students, this time the responses were minimal, therefore, none of the above intention has



artwork slowdown, losing rhythm, missing or postponing scheduled tasks, delaying the project obligations with a lot of excuses and persistently engaging in production of ephemeral contents (e.g. more new timetables for realization, etc). So it would be also important and useful for this “(e)valuation” of our own efforts to acknowledge and accept it as a realistic positioning of (project) obligations in the fabric of everyday life of the participants thus try to understand it in a broader context - as a reflection of the ruling ideology. Without romanticizing the process and idealization of its “results” we could quite honestly say that the ideology of formal academic education has been, at least just for a moment, defeated by this strong participants’ need for subjectification; but only to come back in a full speed power exactly at the moment when (another important) decisions need to be made: when words needed to become works, and the student – to become authors.

Certainly it is unnecessary to notice that it would mean that all efforts outside of an institution or institutional approval would be (are) considered irresponsible.

The way in which we set this educational strategy and develop educational methods in this special experience along with the experience acquired for an unanticipated meeting with students’ initiatives, unexpectedly and suddenly stopped. But as we realised it later it was just following the pace and the logic it begun with – an academic one. With an approach of the summer break, despite impressions that there has still been enthusiasm, willingness and desire to intervene in a public space with ideas developed at the workshop, our meetings got to be more occasional without a hint for the next one. This is certainly the point where one could and should ask the question of the role of *responsible person/mentor* - position delegated by the project and based on the projects’ division of labor (and again, positions derived from institutional discourse which have often been very uncritically taken over as clearly distinguishable from teacher or lecturer suiting the superficial makeover most of the non-formal educational initiatives tend to). To behave in accordance with expectations implied by position - initiating new arrangements if old ones collapsed, taking over organizational activities, insisting on the reformulation of the budget, intensive meetings that will bring to the finalisation of the plan for production of the works, gathering and technical-technological processing of completed assignments together with the design and making of an exhibition – was not a solution for us. Just the wording and this phraseology clearly implies places and



positions of responsibility, division of labor, hierarchy, and contributes to the withdrawal from experience of the consequences of their own decisions. In this way a rather (already in itself) delicate process of subjectification would be completely compromised and possessed by this mainstream, dominant solutions despite their origin (either formal, informal or marginal practice). So we decided to stick *to* and *explore* this domain of fluctuating roles which we recognized as the process of learning – both for us and participants. We refrained from above mentioned interventions in the process for which we believe belong only to those who built it on the foundations of their own initiative and enthusiasm. But we also did not stand still on the sidelines. We've initiated a few motivational meetings so to kick off the dead spot – we've tried to anticipate forthcoming obstacles (e.g. absence of their mentors after summer break), to make visible the preference of their newly generated position (e.g. the project completion needs to correspond with the timetable suggested by application) and eventually to outline consequences for delayed timetables, etc.

Important to note is that all of our suggestions were directed towards minding the boundaries of the project and timetable of activities as set in the application form. This must not go under the radar, since it is precisely this kind of breaking the boundaries on the first place (an initiative that emerged for continuance of weekly meetings as well as the initiation of a joint project) that led to the shifting of workshop positions towards more egalitarian and transformation of the workshop process into project cooperation. However, to an egalitarian relationship, except for equal rights and equal conditions of production, obligations have equally been immanent. Perhaps this is the place where we should look for the reasons of regression to the previous position – one of a student, and the decisions to delay the project realization till October (when everyone is back in the school again). So, prioritized student obligations left little or no room for new obligations, especially not for procedures that demanding, in the field of public institutions and informal education. With the dominant and pervasive edu-paradigm such as the one we know, the informal education space for manoeuvring is dramatically narrowed down, and is mainly confined either to the fields where Bologna has not yet contaminate or the fields that could be considered as “holes in the Bologna law”. And that is exactly what makes serious informal educational efforts and engagements, made on a decision not to be a part of a mainstream educational system, as a supplemental, (children's) game or (frivolous) hobby activities.

