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## **Punk as a Strategy for Body Politicization in the Ljubljana Alternative Scene of the 1980s**

**Abstract:** The paper focuses on the notion of punk understood as a political position and as a strategy by the actors of the Ljubljana alternative scene in the 1980s. With exposing the minor, invisible and hidden subjectivities the actors and agents of the scene created a ground for experimentation with subjectivities, but also for shaking the Yugoslav Grand National narrative of 'brotherhood and unity'.

I am emphasizing mainly the notion of the body with and through the code of sex and sexuality, being still a base and the core investment of the government. No matter that the discourse has been radically changed, the procedures and protocols of power investments in their core have not. This is an additional reason and a need to recall the past and tackle the bodies that have appeared as unwanted, as 'not right and not quiet' identities in the past in order to evaluate and compare the position of the marginalized and suppressed today. Additionally, I am claiming that only with creating different genealogies can we fight against growing 'intellectual redundancy' and the continuous process of erasure of the subjectivities, which we are confronting today.

**Keywords:** Slovenia, Punk (and its metamorphoses), Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980's, body politic, non-normative bodies, the code of sex and sexuality

### **Introduction**

The focus of this paper is a set of artistic practices that appeared in the Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s that was the most widespread cultural movement until that time in Slovenia, cultivating cultural and social activities that were met with an enthusiastic response.<sup>1</sup> I will refer to them as *Punk and its metamorphoses*, since the phenomenon of punk was not only important for the development of the music scene; its main significance lies in wider cultural, social and political changes that unfolded in Slovenia during the decade. The term 'punk' is used here to determine a political

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<sup>1</sup> A number of exhibitions, performances, multimedia projects, concerts, symposia and round tables were organized, reflecting the events and production.

position of the Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s, while 'metamorphoses' highlights the effective way of punk stances to be modified in various artistic, cultural and social practices.

*Punk and its metamorphoses* as a political position stimulate the possibility from which conditions of life, work and its possibilities of resistance can be rethought. It reconfigured and resemiotised the relation between public, the visible and the socially legitimate in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia. Also, in Slovenia, the point of departure for punk was music – the first concert was held in 1977 by the Slovenian group Pankrti (Bastards). After that it soon transformed into a largely unique and diverse counter-culture.

Punks established a mass presence in the very centre of Ljubljana. They renamed one of the main squares, Plečnik square, into Johnny Rotten square. Punk introduced anti-fashion and non-normative behaviour, such as alcohol consumption, bagging, swearing, fighting with authorities, depicting non-normative sexuality and sexual practices, etc. In order to gain attention from the wider public, its agents transformed clubs and galleries, private apartments and streets into multifunctional cultural and social spaces. In order to emphasize individualization and pluralisation of the self, the sensitization of the body<sup>2</sup> (expanding body registers) was one of the main aims of this movement, taking place through the shift of various cultural and social dispositifs.

While the main investment of the state is still the body, aiming toward its suppression and using it as a 'site', in contrary the Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s employed the body as a subject, as a political weapon through which the actors, as Marina Gržinić claims, were "pointing out the critique of the socialist world and its stance against everything and everyone who was a possible threat to it."<sup>3</sup> They unfolded the process of coding based on various body factors, such as sex, sexuality, race, etc. This past can serve as a tool for rethinking the potential tools for resistance today, or at least to hinder the evacuation of the past.

## Counter-Hegemony

The Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s consciously explored the possibility of reconstituting the existing order by critically examining social norms. Its position was developed on the bases of left-wing poststructuralists (Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, etc.), Marxists (Antonio Gramsci, Luis Althusser, etc.), psychoanalysis

<sup>2</sup> For increasing the body sensibilisation, contemporary dance was inevitable. Its main protagonist was Slovenian choreographer Ksenija Hribar, who returned from London at that time and stepped directly into the scene. She engaged in range of diverse activities, including choreography for the Slovenian avant-jazz band SRP (en. Sickie), theatre performances, as well as her own dance choreography in which she questioned the existing order and ironically pinpointed the hegemonic order and the rural mentality of the society. In addition, together with her collaborators she was co-creating new arts and social dispositifs. It could be said that contemporary dance was also significant for rethinking and transforming the existing body notions.

<sup>3</sup> Marina Gržinić, "Performans, feminizem in queer," in *Trenutki odločitve – performativno, politično in tehnološko: umetniški video, filmska in interaktivna večmedijska dela Marine Gržinić in Aine Smid 1982–2005*, ed. Marina Gržinić and Tanja Velagič (Ljubljana: Društvo ZAK, Društvo za proučevanje zgodovine, antropologije in književnosti, 2006), 91.

(Jacques Lacan), cultural theories (Dick Hebdige) and the punk ideology. Their actors were engaged in the 'political', characterized by Slovenian Literary historian, critic and philosopher Taras Kermauner as changeable, deviate, contestable, anti-despotic, but deeply social and in a superior social meaning against natural, non-normal, from the government point of view as problematic as possible.<sup>4</sup> In that respect, we can also read Gramsci's theory of hegemony and its counterpart, which was together with punk ideology, one of the primal vehicles for the constitution of Ljubljana alternative scene.

Gramsci's analyses of hegemony focus on the complexity of human subjectivity and centre on 'cultural and ideological means', which as in the domain of a dominant class, those who are in charge and so manage a range of institutions, who produce, reproduce but also transform hegemony. In order to retain its dominance over subordinate and oppressed classes, the dominant class has to build 'spontaneous' mass 'consent' thereby making the subgroup accept its values and leadership. However, the exploited group is not necessary completely indoctrinated and therefore constantly fights back; these clashes are mainly enabled by non-coercive coercion, "whereby political questions become disguised as cultural ones and as such become insoluble."<sup>5</sup> For this reason, he advocated the creation of a new culture as "the diffusion in a critical form of truths, [...], making the basis of vital action, an element of co-ordination and intellectual and moral order."<sup>6</sup>

In order for the 'new culture' as 'counter-hegemonic' culture to be created, according to Gramsci, the *war of position*<sup>7</sup> should be established and executed with "heat and passion, even if it takes the form of sarcasm."<sup>8</sup> The actors have to imply multiple strategies, backing up several currents simultaneously and sink "into the humus of popular culture."<sup>9</sup> While for Gramsci, "these cultures might be located in traditional peasant beliefs or the shop-floor culture of industrial workers; for Hall, who further developed Gramsci's theory, they might be found in youth subcultures like Rastafarians and punks, and even in commercial entertainment. The activist's job, according to Hall, is to identify and exploit these cultural pockets, build a radical counter-culture within the shell of the old society, and wage the struggle for a new cultural hegemony."<sup>10</sup> However, what Hall dismissed in his analyses in opposition to

<sup>4</sup> Taras Kermauner, "X + (-) 11 = ?. Premišljevanje ob mlajši slovenski poeziji," in *Do roba in naprej. Slovenska umetnost 1975-85*, ed. Igor Španjol and Igor Zabel (Ljubljana: Moderna galerija, 2003), 102.

<sup>5</sup> Stanley Corngold, "The Melancholy Object of Consumption," in *Violence and Mediation in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Ronald Bogue and Marcel Cornis-Pope (Albany, NY: State of New York Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>6</sup> David Forgacs ed., *The Gramsci Reader. Selected Writing. 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 397.

<sup>7</sup> According to Gramsci, the war of position "does not entail a renunciation of revolution – as understood in the past and embraces in the war of manoeuvre – but a change in its strategy and form." David Forgacs ed., *The Gramsci Reader. Selected Writing. 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 394.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Gramsci's interest in popular culture was bound up with his conception of revolutionary change as a process in which popular mentalities and behavior are transformed. Ibid, 363.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Duncombe, "Theory: Cultural Hegemony," <http://beautifultrouble.org/theory/cultural-hegemony/>, accessed May 24, 2017.

Gramsci, is that cultural power cannot be enough, but can work only in alliance with other pillars as an overall strategy that also incorporate struggles for political and economic power. In that regard also punk should be transmitted into the wider struggle and encapsulated with other stances. Still, the punk political position was potent due to its radicalism.

The punk universe was based on the radicalization of aesthetics and attitude, which implied a capacity to intervene and shock, underlying destructive, ugly and angry nature on various levels of living and being. According to Dick Hebdige, punk began as a “violence of ‘cut-ups’”.<sup>11</sup> In order to go beyond what capitalism and bourgeois society could swallow,<sup>12</sup> punk attacked a wide range of means of expression, such as graffiti, devastating the city’s purity and disrupting accepted codes of a normal way of behaviour – as for example the punk toying with sexual and Nazi imagery. It introduced an ethos of independence and autonomy, with a base in DIY culture. All these pillars were appropriated, while transformed in a unique and local version of *Punk and its metamorphoses*.

### **Methamorphoses of Punk in Ljubljana**

One of many coherent elements of the predominant hegemonic discourse refers to the use of space as transformative. Drago Braco Rotar emphasizes the consequences of rationalism and its hermetic nature, which makes ideology, with its ordering of society/behaviour, to disappear by non-coercive coercion.

According to Rotar, the consequence of a shift that brought rationalism in urbanism is “that the image of the city is not perceived as a dialogue of instances any longer, but appears as a monologue of a total speech of the *ratio*.”<sup>13</sup> Rationalism gains the status of “the only possible and objective findings, which is always positive (unproblematic), since it is produced with abstraction of empirical social conditions, no matter what kind of speculations on basis of this abstraction.”<sup>14</sup> The rationalistic operations are substantiating with the concept of normalization. As Rotar claims, normalised society is “at the same time repressive and rational, but is, due to its rationalisation, even more normalised and repressive. In that respect, rationalisation, repression and normalisation are inseparable.”<sup>15</sup> In the relation to spatial arrangement in socialist Yugoslavia, the space was controlled by the authorities and rigid, Unitarian behaviour enforced. In order to shake the normative order, the actors had

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<sup>11</sup> Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1988), 106.

<sup>12</sup> Dylan Clark, “The Death and Life of Punk, The Last Subculture,” in *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, ed. David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 224.

<sup>13</sup> Braco Drago Rotar, *Pomeni prostora. Ideologije v urbanizmu in arhitekturi* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1981), 250.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 252.

to go beneath its surface, question social essentialism and its 'nature', radicalising social antagonisms with a direct encounter of what Gramsci defined as a *war of position*.

In that respect, Rotar's studies of urbanism are useful since they can be applied to other social problematics. Since punk questioned the existing order, its nature and boundaries, it was recognised as a threat to the hegemony of that time. Punk in Slovenia, as in the UK, shook everything the country stood for: patriotism, (neglected) class hierarchy, common decency, and *good taste*. But in opposition to the UK, in Slovenia, punk, was not commodified and to a certain degree nullified, but contrary – its appearance enlarged the disturbance to authority, transforming it from unsystematic aggressive actions against punk to a concerted campaign, peaking in 1981 with the 'Nazi punk affair'.<sup>16</sup> The Nazi punk affair was a large-scale police operation substituted with other means of policy, going far beyond the legal political jurisdiction.<sup>17</sup>

Punk procedures were applied to the art *milieu* before spreading to the wider social realm and argued vividly by the main actors of the Ljubljana alternative scene on various occasions. With an awareness of art history being conditioned, as Dušan Mandič explained, in 'pre-existing vision' and concrete social relation [...] in visual art [they] are precisely expressed through perverted ideological ways."<sup>18</sup> In order to tear apart the functionalist, rationalistic matrix, based on the hollow nothingness, the struggle for the social transformation should apply non-normative stance(s) and so bring "qualitative (heterogeneity) in the field of quantitative (homogeneity)."<sup>19</sup> In the domain of art, this was transformation of artistic venues, often morphing artistic venues with other cultural forms – discursive, entertaining, activist, social, etc. In addition, actors on the scene introduce a wide range of new artistic expressions, such as graffiti art, postcards, posters, the second-wave video, hybrid and multimedia performances, etc. as well as turned themselves into political activists, who advocated for

<sup>16</sup> In the autumn of 1981 a large-scale police operation against punks took place, systematically picking up punks, bringing them to the police station, where they were intimidated and often forced to sign statements accusing their acquaintances of Nazi activities under the non-existing Slovene National Socialist Party. At the same time, in November 1981, an article titled "Who Has Been Drawing Swastikas?" appeared on the front page of the Slovenian weekly *Nedeljski Dnevnik*. The article created a link between a group of high school students torturing their classmate and swastikas in the form of graffiti appearing on the walls of Ljubljana, supplemented with a photo of a person dressed as a Nazi party member with 'punk' graffiti in the background, stating: "English punk rocker in parade uniform". Three youngsters, all members of the 4R punk group, were arrested and were, due to a lack of evidence, acquitted of all charges only in 1984. Although, the aim of the operation was to tarnish and wash away punks and punk, it turned later in its opposition – into even greater support of punk and a wider rebellion of youth, alternative and intellectuals. Ali Žerdin, "Kratki kurz zgodovine panka," in *Punk je bil prej: 25 let punka pod Slovenci*, ed. Peter Lovšin, Peter Mlakar and Igor Vidmar (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2002), 38–39.

<sup>17</sup> As summarized by Slovenian theorist Tomaž Mastnak, the application of disciplinary mechanisms extended from formal indirect to direct control over hate speech and discrimination against punks appearing in mass media as well as shutting Punks out, etc. Tomaž Mastnak, "Totalitarizem od spodaj," *Družboslovne razprave* 4, 5 (1987): 93.

<sup>18</sup> Dušan Mandič, "Umetnost ni zgolj mesto užitka, temveč je tudi mesto resnice," in *Vojak D.M. Die Welt ist Schön*, ed. Mateja Podlesnik (Ljubljana, Mestna galerija Ljubljana, 2013), 147.

<sup>19</sup> Braco Drago Rotar, *Pomeni prostora. Ideologije v urbanizmu in arhitekturi* (Ljubljana: Delavska enotnost, 1981), 253.

suppressed and marginalized groups and individuals and were the major vehicle for the LGBT community coming out.

Last but not least, the violence toward specific types of (re)presentation was addressed by the Ljubljana alternative scene from the very beginning, posed also by the fanzine *Viks*,<sup>20</sup> opening the consciousness of borders, which were tolerated by the state. Additionally, the violence in artistic as well as wider cultural representations appearing in the works of *Borders of Control* Nb. 4, FV 112/15, Laibach, Borghesia, NSK, etc. as well as the unconventional dressing, non-normative sexual behaviours, could never compete with the violent protocols of a repressive state apparatus, as in the previously mentioned police harassment of punk youth. Violence should therefore be radically questioned and redefined by turning into a powerful tool for cultural, social and political transformation of the 'civic society'.

### The Code of Sexuality

In socialist Yugoslavia, various unitarisms proclaimed social egalitarianism – brotherhood and unity, a project of language and cultural unitarisms, gender blindness, etc. There were attempts of individualism and experimentation with contestable subjectivities. In socialist countries, which based their ideological stances on Marxism and its derivative communism, there was a highly emphasized gender blindness to advocate for working as a community. However deeply rooted patriarchy, by denying the members of the oppressed classes the attributes of being subjects, as materialist feminist Monique Wittig argues, did not disappear. The 'masses' could only fight for the *party* or its organization and not for themselves, being unable to revolutionize themselves.<sup>21</sup> Hence, in order to adjust the unitarism, the state had to prevent and silence all the Others, who could unfold the differences between formal equality and emancipation.<sup>22</sup>

The Ljubljana alternative scene, which was the primal force of *Punk and its metamorphoses* consisted mainly of students from Croatia, representing inner migrants, were also those who directly experienced the non-equality and violence of the 'pure' and 'right'

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<sup>20</sup> *Viks* was a DIY magazine of the 'alternative scene', published by ŠKUC-Forum in 1983/1984. There were also other publications appearing in the form of fanzines that were published by the same organization, while the actors of the scene contributed their articles in various marginalized press outlets: radio Student, Mladina, weekly magazine, Ekran, a monthly journal for audio-visual culture, Problemi Journal, Teleks, etc.

<sup>21</sup> Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 17.

<sup>22</sup> A telling example is the case of The Anti-Fascist Front of Women of Yugoslavia (AFFWY), formed in the beginnings of the Second World War and abolished in 1953. The argument for their abolishment was that women's new role was won in the war. In order to prevent violent rejection by the women, the state replaced the AFFWY with the *League of Women's Societies* (1953–1961), an umbrella organization dedicated to the improvement of the domestic sphere, enlightenment of women and mothers, care for the upbringing and health of children, etc. Hence, as claimed by Sabina P. Ramet, this enveloped the potentiality for transformative sexual differentiation into the traditional gender codes. Sabina P. Ramet, "Tito's time," in *Gender politics in the Western Balkans. Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, ed. Sabina P. Ramet (PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 174.

Slovenians. This was also an additional reason for taking the non-normative subjectivities as a point of departure, a central operation of provocation and subversion, assuring to make it visible. For this reason, the actors took over two spatial modalities and shifted them into a clear artistic and socio-political manifestation. A city was turned into a canvas and a catwalk for disturbing (re)presentation. Graffiti inundated walls, while radical styles as anti-fashion contaminated the purist city. In that regard also individuals were advocated to radicalize their body stances, taking it in their own hand and not leaving it to the state's manipulative mechanisms. They were encouraged to play with it and use it as a canvas or a sculpture and modified it according to their own will. The usage of sex and sexual codes turned out to be potent, causing a high degree of disturbance and threat to the clean and shallow socialist ideology of unitarism. With reference to Michel Foucault, the way sex and sexuality are put into discourse – regulated, condensed and institutionalized – is one of the core subject(s) of the 'law of truth', through which the regulation of knowledge and a series of rules based upon mass morality is practiced.<sup>23</sup> The inclusion of sex and sexuality in the political jurisdiction resulted in a move towards the creation of social standards, which went along with the emphasis upon deviant and dangerous sexual behaviours and practices that posed a threat to the hegemonic order, which extended the division between various groups in society.

While punks proved a disturbance to state hegemony, the same procedures were applied to art created and produced by the Ljubljana alternative movement of the 1980s and later transmitted to the wider social milieu. As stated, this was the way punk was metamorphosed in Slovenia at the time. Everything was wracked with disturbing, unwanted elements, which were signified by the oppressed body politic, emphasizing 'not right and not quiet'<sup>24</sup> identities, and the existing but unarticulated inequalities (ethnic, religious, sexual, etc.),<sup>25</sup> for example: usage of leather, ragged clothes, whips, exposing homosexual images, declaring to be 'political lesbians', etc. As Gržinić emphasized: "We understood, that sexuality is the most important code in the society and the only way to destroy socialism is to make politics. This could be done only through the body, which could not be a heteronormative body. The only way to make this happen was by reference to aberrant sexual practices and their politics. This is what we knew from the theory; we knew that the state is presented and represented in its full totalitarian swing exactly through its renounced gay scene."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

<sup>24</sup> Marina Gržinić, "Elaborating on Transmigrant and Transfeminist Dissident Positions," in Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics. Racialization and Global Capitalism. Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art and Life* (Lanham [etc.]: Lexington Books, 2014), 120.

<sup>25</sup> It created a shift in relation to the strategies placed in the 1960s and 1970s, which positioned themselves toward the existing and visible contradictions of the socialist society, meaning within the patriarchal, heterosexual matrix. The actors of the 1980s, identified with punk ideology, had to go way ahead in order to break with the existing void and neglecting existing identities. In that regard, a genealogy of oppressed identities is differentiated from the West, and started with homosexuals instead of feminism.

<sup>26</sup> Marina Gržinić in Tatjana Greif, "The Discourse of Christianity is Monstrous" – Interview with Marina Gržinić, *Časopis za kritiko in znanost* 37, 237 (2009): 146.

The 'punk rebels' fused sexual and political images, a caustic zone in Yugoslav culture. In addition, they escalated it by masking it with pornography and obscure sexual practices, which were at the time wrapped in darkness (exhibitionism, voyeurism, transvestism, S&M). In comparison to the West, installing pornography into picture, video-works and performances was also a way to integrate art into Western currents of the New Image, surpassing it and at the same time turning it into a constitutive field of ideology.<sup>27</sup> In addition, the usage of pornography and 'obscenity' was since the beginning understood as a political action, which had to transmit to everyday life in order to give visibility to the 'not right and not quiet' identities in society.<sup>28</sup> It is therefore impossible to overlook the initiation, huge support and the active participation of the actors of FV 112/15, the members of Borghesia and The Borders of Control Nb. 4 together with some other individuals in the gay scene coming out in 1984, which is marked by the festival *Magnus: Homosexuality and Culture*<sup>29</sup> (April, 1984), a first edition of what is today known as the oldest European LGBT film festival. Magnus became an independent body soon after, a sub-organization of ŠKUC that is representing gays and is run under ŠKUC, and was joined a year later by the women's group Lilit (1985) with its subsection LL Lilit, which represented lesbians (formed in 1987).

Hence, we can speak of a specific 'coming out' of the LGBT community already two years before, appearing in disturbing aesthetics intertwined with the code of sex and sexuality at the end of 1982 in the Disco FV<sup>30</sup> in the first video art work of The Borders of Control Nb. 4<sup>31</sup> *The Icons of Glamour – Echoes of Death* and was followed by a graffiti artwork with four homosexuals engaged in a sexual act, based on the photo published in Art Press

<sup>27</sup> More in: Dušan Mandič, in Marina Gržinič, "Galerija ŠKUC Ljubljana 1978–1987," *Sinteza: Revija za likovno kulturo* 24, 79/82 (1988): 70.

<sup>28</sup> A similar procedure could be found also in Italy and its usage of pornography. Progressive film directors were using pornography in Italy in the 1970's and 1980's to address the constructional nature of sexual identities and examined past cultural influence upon present cultural anxieties through the very nature of repression. The later example emphasizes a twisted nature of pornography, its potentiality in the struggle against Catholicism, while at the same time provides and proves the relevance of the selected *code* of sexuality as addressed by the Ljubljana alternative scene from the 1980's.

<sup>29</sup> The festival was followed by the Viks edition under the same title, which gave the festival a theoretical frame. The event was organized by ŠKUC-Forum by Bogdan Lešnik, Aldo Ivančič, Marina Gržinič, Barbara Borčič, Neven Korda, Zemira Alajbegović and some others.

<sup>30</sup> Disco FV was a new model of organization and cultural production, where the notion of entertaining is racked with artistic production. It first appeared in the alternative venue next to the Student Cultural Association Forum, placed in the basement of Building IV in the Student campus in Rožna dolina, when taken over by the group FV 112/15 in 1981 and renamed Disco FV. After almost two successful seasons, the organizers were forced to move to a new venue, The Šiška Youth Centre and finally in 1984 to Kersnikova 4 (K4), where Disco FV also ended. Evenings were designed and curated. Parties were thematic with clear performative notions with everyone (organizers, curators and audience) performing.

<sup>31</sup> *The Borders of Control Nb. 4* consisted of Marina Gržinič, Aina Šmid, Dušan Mandič and Barbara Borčič (1982–1983). They aimed to develop the politics of subjectivity by directly asking "who the fuck is the political subject?" They were playing with a range of possible sexualities and sexes, switching and morphing the one-dimensional, limited direction of a subject inscribed and marked by its given sex and gender. Their performative roles become a possible ground for resistance against/toward the controlling mechanism by slowly replacing the previous version of disciplinary mechanisms. Marina Gržinič, "A Time That Lives On, But In A Different Way: 1977–1984," in *Vojak D. M. (Private D. M.) Die Welt ist Schön*, ed. Mateja Podlestnik (Ljubljana: Muzej in galerije mesta Ljubljana, 2013), 39–55.



magazine by Dušan Mandić,<sup>32</sup> but could be found also in Mandić's art works in the form of postcards<sup>33</sup> from the same year. A few months later, in 1983, The Borders of Control Nb. 4, presented their second video work *The Threat of The Future*. Marina Gržinić and Aina Šmid performed in both videos, taking on the role of 'political lesbians'. They continued working with video with the same political direction after the group fell apart.

In June 1983 in the new venue in the centre of Ljubljana on Gregorčičeva 3, Theatre Glej adapted the play *Bent*<sup>34</sup> by Martin Sherman. The play revolves around the persecution of gays in Nazi Germany and takes place during and after the *Night of the Long Knives*. The performance, directed by theatre director Vinko Möderndorfer achieved a huge success and visibility; it was awarded as the best performance of 1983 at the national theatre festival Borštnikovo srečanje. It could be said that the staging of *Bent* was an adequate tactical gesture in defining the problem of sexual minorities, since otherwise reviewers could not opt for it as affirmatively and solitarily. In the theatre leaflet, under the title *Nazism and homosexuality*, the history of jurisdiction sanctions against homosexuals in Germany after 1971 is presented, as indirectly questioning the state policy toward this burning question.

Also later, in 1984, the exhibition of the group Rose Irwin Selavy (Borut Vogel-nik, Roman Uranjek, Dušan Mandič, Andrej Savski, Marko Kovačič, Bojan Štokelj), known today as Irwin, was dedicated to erotic graffiti with pornographic stances, which was a continuation of the aesthetics and the topic of the work of Dušan Mandič – postcards made during his national military service in 1982, a recognizable and specific form of expression and production of the Ljubljana alternative scene.

Additionally, as already emphasized, the code of sex and sexuality did not appear only as an aesthetic convention, but rather as a stance for practicing free speech and giving visibility to the 'invisible' and highly marginalized. Its political nature became apparent also in the work of Borghesia, especially their proactive and provocative performance *Lustmorder* (1984) co-produced and presented in the main cultural and congress centre, Cankarjev dom. Actors used S&M style as the starting point and intertwined it with militaristic gestures and behaviours presented on the TV screen settings. By doing so, they did not only address the relationship between master and slave, but subverted it. Many, including Croatian journalist Slavenka Drakulić Ilić, who labeled the performance as Fascism, therefore misread this radical act.<sup>35</sup>

By subverting the meaning and tactics used by the state, using their empty political speeches and often declaring themselves as political lesbians and gays, the scene successfully unveiled state violence.

<sup>32</sup> The work was made of 55 black-and-white photocopied prints in A3 format, appearing in a graphic format, 210x330 cm. This format enabled its multiple presentations, including Disco FV, Roma, Ex Mattatoio (1983).

<sup>33</sup> Presented in 1982 in ŠKUC Gallery under the title *Die Welt ist schön* and was recreated in 2013 in the City Gallery.

<sup>34</sup> The 1979 play *Bent* with its title refers to the slang word *bent* used in some European countries to refer to homosexuals. The choreography of the performance was by Ksenija Hribar.

<sup>35</sup> Slavenka Drakulić-Ilić, "Performans 'Borghesie,'" *Start* 405 (1984).

## Conclusion

Instead of evaluating the aesthetics and new forms of art works created by the alternative scene in Ljubljana of the 1980s, its real potential is found in their political stances, bringing forward what was not only hidden, but even suppressed by the State. The actors ploughed significant ground on which new forms of subjectivities in socialist Slovenia as well as the wider Yugoslavia appeared, reflecting its uniformed, patriarchal technologies of the self that governed the society. They thereby created possible alternatives to traditional ways of enacting politics. Paul B. Preciado claims<sup>36</sup> that these alternatives are still relevant today. The success of *Punk with its metamorphoses* was also grounded in the inclusive behaviour of the actors, the way they were opening spaces to other initiatives in order to inscribe their forces for social reconstruction. They were aware that such an enactment could function only as a *perpetuum mobile*: more of the opening was enabling new initiatives to emerge and *vice versa*.

The Ljubljana alternative scene of the 1980s managed to redraw from the margin and expose itself as a different choice, as non-institutional formation, and created a base for the formation of NGOs, the support of which were promised in the new alliance of the state. It soon became clear that what the new state was thereby creating was only restoring its central organizational role of rigid structural institutions – the non-problematic art and behaviours that Punk with its metamorphoses continuously questioned. Hence, creating ground for new forms of subjectivities to emerge, the main achievement of the scene of the 1980s and the acts for further emancipation were, after gaining independence in 1991, continuously prevented. Slovenia erased more than 20.000 people (mainly people from the other ex-Yugoslav republics) from the Permanent Residence Registry in 1992, while treating all non-normativity the same, spreading from the erased to the LGBT community to manual and other precarious workers, migrants etc. This clearly shows how Slovenia incorporates the procedure of erasure of subjectivities into its governmentality.

The call for radicalization of stances and direct confrontation of inhuman procedures toward people by the state are therefore urgent acts.<sup>37</sup> Recalling the past can be a helpful tool and a way to prevent against prevailing ‘intellectual redundancy’<sup>38</sup> and the evacuation of history with narrowing practices to an aesthetic dimension instead of its politicality, read in line with the current situation.

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<sup>36</sup> Paul B. Preciado, “Gender and Performance Art: Three Episodes from feminist Queer, Punk Cybermanga...,” *Zahar: revista de Artleku-ko aldizkaria* 54 (2004): 100–5.

<sup>37</sup> I wrote an in-depth analysis of the variable procedures of hegemony in the article: “To take an Position ‘on the Other Side’”. Jasmina Založnik. “Umestitev na drugo stran,” in *Politika, estetika in demokracija*, ed Marina Gržinič (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2015), 73–89.

<sup>38</sup> Nataša Velikonja, “Intelektualna retardacija,” *Lezbnik* 3, 1 (2015): 1. Available: <http://ninadragicevic.com/lezbnik-8-6-2015/>, accessed March 31, 2017.

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