art of change

DOCUMENTATION
Forum on the Conclusion of the Swiss Cultural Programme in South Eastern Europe (SCP)
Friday, 6 December 2013
Kornhausforum Berne

Street activism!
Culture and the arts are building blocks of human existence. They make an essential contribution to the development of societies and can fulfil important roles in conflict situations and in democratic reconstruction. Acting on this conviction, Switzerland launched a long-term programme to promote the arts and culture in South Eastern Europe and Ukraine in 1999. From 2008 to 2013 the programme focused on the countries of the Western Balkans and trans-border projects. The Swiss Cultural Programme in South Eastern Europe (SCP) was brought to a close in the summer of 2013. To what extent did the projects funded positively contribute to social change? How do funding programmes influence the production of culture in their target countries and cultural exchange between them and Switzerland? What lessons from the experiences in the Balkans can be used to improve cultural cooperation with other regions of the world?

Experts, artists and people involved in arts outreach from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Switzerland, together with representations of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Pro Helvetia who were responsible for the programme, presented their intentions, experiences, successes and limits for public discussion. The talks and discussion groups have been supplemented by a selection of music, dance and art videos, short films and an exhibition.

In the morning, the conference focused on a discussion with the people responsible for the SCP and experts in a programme block titled Arts and Social Change. The focus in the afternoon shifted to Cultural Encounters, with artists and organizers talking about their own projects and being joined by artists of various disciplines from Switzerland in a discussion of the opportunities and difficulties associated with funding programmes and intercultural exchange.

The forum was organized by artlink, cultural cooperation, in cooperation with CULTURESCAPES and with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

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   CAPES) Basel; Bujar Luma (LOJA) Tetovo; Adela Jušić, Sarajevo; Valerian Maly (Bone)
   Berne; Damir Imamović, Sarajevo; Goran Potkonjak (Balkankaravan) Zurich; Boris Previšić
   (Pre-Art) Zurich

Photos on the right
Top: Round Table. Centre: Exhibition (detail). Bottom: Presentation of artists an cultural projects

Die DichterInnen haben nur eine Kalkulation: Mit ihren Schreiben die geistigen Leitschienen anzulegen, die einzige Kalkulation, die die Dichtung immer hat: Die Dichotomie zwischen Logos und Mythos, zwischen Denken und Fühlen aufzuheben.

Seit ich meine erste Gedichte in der Schweiz veröffentlichte (1985), dreht sich alles, was mit mir und meinem Schreiben zu tun hat, um suchen nach dem Weg zur Auflösung der Dichotomie.

Am Ende von ersten Gedichtbands „Halbgedichte einer Gastfrau“ steht: noch ist mein Name getrennt auf ich und er, einige Wahrheiten aber wehren sich verkauft zu werden.


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Ich wollte die Literatur ins eigene Leben zurück übersetzen, nicht nur selbstgeschriebene, sondern die (und vor allem die) gelesene, ich verlangte von mir, dass ich mich an die eigene Worte halte, das ich die Worte nur schreibe, welche mir unter der Haut wie Fegefeuer brennen.

Drei Minuten, drei Minuten für Nachrichten (aus Lebendigkeit Ihre zurück)
Ein Dorf, es war ein Dorf ...
Ich könnte mir die Zunge abhacken.

Erst durch den Krieg habe ich gelernt anderes zu lesen – verstand, was heisst bis ins ausserste von Wirklichkeit vertrieben zu sein. An Aufgaben dachte ich ständig.

Schreib kein Gedicht
Schreib kein Gedicht
Gehe
Schreib Telegramm
Kein Fuss gefasst
zu viele Stop
falsche Schritte gelernt
Stop
Schreib nicht
Zurück
Stop
(aus Buch von Glück)

1958 sagte Paul Celan in seiner Bremer Rede: Erreichbar, nah und unverloren inmitten der Verluste blieb dies Eine: die Sprache. Aber sie musste nun hindurchgehen durch ihre eigenen Antwortlosigkeiten, hindurchgehen durch furchtbare Verstummen, hindurchgehen durch die tausend Finsternisse todbringender Rede. Sie ging hindurch und gab keine Worte her für das, was geschah. Aber sie ging durch dieses Geschehen.

So erscheint das Gedicht ist einzige verbleiben Heimat, auf die hin das Ich unterwegs ist: zur Sprache gehen ...
Ich habe zwei sprachen hinter beiden ohren das ist immer hin besser als eine sprache hinter vier ohren zug ist schon abgefahren so kann ich zwei mal sagen zug ist abgefahren so haltet der zug in mir länger ....
(aus Lebendigkeit Ihre zurück)

Giuseppe Ungaretti schreibt nach den ersten Weltkrieg, dass der Dichter einen geschärften Sinn für die furchtbarsten Wendungen der Geschichte habe, da er die Wahrheit des Todes aus nächster Nähe erfahren hat. Der Dichter habe gelernt, was ein Augenblick bedeutet, in dem nur der Instinkt zählt. Er sei so sehr mit dem Tod vertraut, dass ihm sein Leben endlos als Schiffbruch erscheint.

Freude der Schiffbrüche

Und plötzlich nimmst du die Fahrt wieder auf wie nach dem Schiffbruch ein überlebender Seebär

Ungaretti sieht eine einzige Aufgabe des Dichters: als Mensch Vollkommenheit zu erreichen und so die Form, der Styl der Gedichte der Weg zu dieser Värenderung aufzeichne. Ungaretti in Gegenteil zu Celan will das Ich nicht in der Sprache verlassen, sondern fördert das sein schreiben Ich in Wirklichkeit erschafft.

In Unschuld Zunge gewaschen auf dem Papier Reitet mich das Wort Darüber Hinaus.
(aus Post bellum)

Ingeborg Bachmann wird in Frankfurter Vorlesungen 1959/60, wenn sie über die Probleme der zeitgenössische Dichtung spricht, die Gesellschaft bedauern, welche Gedichte nicht wie Brot braucht; von Gedichten verlangt sie, das sie Bitter von Erkenntnis sind. Die Gedichte von Celan, sagt sie, haben eine schmerzliche und ausserst harte überprüfung der bezüge von Wort und Welt durchgemacht und haben neue Definition der Möglichkeit etwas wieder zu sagen, sehr direkt, unverschlüsselt gefunden: In den Gedicht Engführung aus den Gedichtband Sprachgitter ...

... Ein Stern hat wohl noch Licht. Nichts, nichts ist verloren.

Sie haben es schon lange erraten, das sind die Leitschienen, welche ich hier erwähne, sie sind und bleiben meine Leitplanken und Leidplanken, zwischen welchen sich meine Dichtung bewegt.
Welcome Adress

Martin Dahinden, Director-General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Guests from the Balkans and from Switzerland

It is a great pleasure to be here today among you. "Art of Change": The title of today’s forum suggests, that change should be considered as an art. But its double meaning suggests also that art is the means of change. What is the means of change? Where does change start, if not in our minds and in our hearts? What sets them both together in motion, if not a combination of emotion and meaning, as expressed by art? Indeed, artistic expression has the ability to lead us to see people and things differently and to imagine new possibilities.

For the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, fostering change is not only an art: it is a responsibility. Our world is changing rapidly and we are faced with challenges that ignore national borders. Climate change, the pressure on natural resources, and international migration, to name only a few, cannot be addressed effectively without international cooperation. There is a risk however that we leave people behind due to the rapid pace of globalisation. Switzerland bears its share of responsibility in addressing such challenges and in fostering more equitable, peaceful and resilient societies. But, of course, we can only be successful if we join alike-minded partners.

Counting among the most vibrant, innovative and outspoken players in any civil society, artists and cultural practitioners can play a crucial role in the development and in transition processes. This is particularly true in post-conflict situations. When it comes to building bridges between individuals and communities, to shaping new, joint perspectives, artists and cultural practitioners definitely have an important role to play. Swiss cooperation, therefore, has a long tradition of supporting the artistic and cultural expressions of its partner countries. And we are committed to continue doing so, in the Balkans but also elsewhere.

Supporting the artistic and cultural sector, however, raises several questions for an agency like ours, that is using public funds. The Swiss Cultural Programme in Southeast Europe, implemented by Pro Helvetia, is the longest and broadest programme that Swiss cooperation has ever supported in the field of arts and culture. From its experience, I conclude the following:

- There are sound aims for a cultural programme. To increase the plurality of discourse and the diversity of cultural expressions, to foster dialogue and exchange, and to promote respect and appreciation for diversity are among those aims. These are important societal values as such. Attempting to “direct” artistic creation in order to reach more target in social ends might be tempting, but could risk to instrumentalise culture and thus be in the end far less effective, and even counter-productive to the creation of an open and pluralistic society.
Secondly, the “change” spurred by artistic and cultural activities is hardly measurable. There are effects beyond what can be reflected in mere numbers, they can be found in the personal and collective stories of those involved. We should take time to listen and to watch – we just had with Dragica Rajcic an excellent example; I was intrigued by all her references to many authors that played a part in my life and my thinking.

Finally, foreign support is by definition limited in time and scope. It will never replace the role of any society in enabling an independent artistic sector to thrive as constitutive part of a democracy. The Swiss Cultural Program has supported a whole generation of artists and cultural practitioners across ethnic, religious and political borders in a period marked by large-scale change and severe tension. This support has certainly contributed to the transition process in the Balkans. But the long-term sustainability of the established networks and independent artistic scenes lies beyond its scope.
Arts and Social Change

Cultural programmes in development cooperation: a unique way to foster change?

Interactive round table with Predrag Cvetičanin PC (Centre for Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe) Niš; Bojana Matić-Ostojić BM (artngle) Sarajevo; Andrew Holland AH (Pro Helvetia) Zurich; Brigit Hagmann BH (SDC) Bern. Chair: André Marty AM (SDC)

Slide show on the SCP (see www.artlink.ch/scp)

AM The SCP has supported 3,000 projects, that’s impressive. Brigit Hagmann, I would like to gain a slightly better understanding of the SDC’s commitment to supporting cultural development. What is the basic idea behind it?

BH The idea was “change” – the art of change. In the beginning it was all about building bridges: bridges between different people, different ethnic groups, different countries, between men and women, young and old. The SDC’s priorities in the Western Balkans are promoting democracy, decentralisation and, of course, economic development, and we mainly work with governments and the private sector to achieve this. But what about civil society? The most important changes are brought about by people who build bridges, who build the future, in civil society, in the communities, young people, old people. So we wanted a programme especially for these people. The important point was to ensure that this programme maintained a steady focus on the future. Of course, after all the terrible times they’ve experienced, people have to live with the past, but they also have to look to the future. That was the aim of the programme – to give people a chance to build a new future.

AM All kinds of highly qualified development experts work at the SDC, but there are very few cultural managers, if any. How exactly did the idea come about? Did it come from a person, from the institution that said let’s adopt a parallel approach alongside classical, traditional development instruments – of economic development and support for local governments – and also support cultural ideas?

BH When we first started out 20 years ago, we were just experimenting. We didn’t know where the programme would lead or how it should be implemented. The SDC didn’t have the relevant experience, but we very quickly joined forces with Pro Helvetia, the foremost specialist in developing cultural activities. And we naturally also worked closely together with our cooperation offices in these countries. The programme started out with small actions: the cooperation offices began supporting activities by people in Bosnia, Albania, Serbia, etc. People with ideas but not the means of realising them. As our experience grew, we were able to develop a larger-scale project. The biggest change took place around five years ago when we opened the SCP office in Sarajevo. We wanted to manage the programme from the region itself rather than from Switzerland. We wanted to create connections between the people in the region. The reason why this programme was so successful and long-lived is that the SCP team was highly committed, and because it lived in the region and had an excellent grasp on what was happening in South Eastern Europe.

AM Bojana, you were the local SCP manager. What criteria were used for approving grants?

BM A variety of instruments were available, which changed over time. Support for small projects ranged in average from 200 to 2,000 francs; in 2004, national projects were added, then regional cooperation projects and, finally,
cultural networks. There were different criteria for these different types of projects, but they were all clearly directed towards the scene also known as the alternative cultural sector. However, this does not mean that other stakeholders were excluded – SCP also collaborated with a small number of public institutions, to whom it provided support.

I don’t want to go into the technicalities of the award criteria. The important point to make is that these were developed over time, with the involvement of people from the region who work in the cultural sector. The SCP merely stipulated the framework. The people on the ground also developed the criteria for the national and regional projects. As varied as these projects were, one key criterion applied to all: they were to be innovative in their given area and contribute to social change.

Video on Liceulice (see www.artlink.ch/scp)

AM Andrew Holland, at one point in the film on Liceulice it is said the aim is to create a better society for all. How would you explain to Swiss parliamentarians why Pro Helvetia is committed to such activities?

AH I don’t think I need to explain that; it’s more a case of the SDC having to explain why it assigned this task to Pro Helvetia. I would naturally begin by talking about the SDC mandate before making a kind of elevator pitch on why uniting different worlds is important. Personally, I was highly delighted to be given this unique challenge of bringing two such fundamentally different worlds together. On the one hand, the development of local structures, on the other, our basic remit, which was to exchange and export Swiss culture abroad. Learning from one another is the key factor. And I say learning because it was one of the first things I realised when I came to the region: I arrived looking at things very much from an arts perspective and then had to start by finding out what the real issues were. I didn’t know anything at all about the region and had no idea how local structures could be developed. My job was to ask: where are the structures and how do they work? It was a stroke of great luck that I was able to work with projects in the region and get to know them in context. I learned that you first have to create structures before any exchange can begin – a tough, valuable and important process on how things come together. Democratisation, the development of civil society and all these great concepts are very important but, at the end of the day, it’s all about people dealing with people. That’s what I think the programme was about: letting people share their experiences and learn from one another, people from the region. We all know there were conflicts in the region, but I saw people from nine different countries coming together to work, young people whose hearts were bursting with generosity. They forget about the past, but not where they come from; they work together without drawing any kind of boundaries. For me, coming from a country that is proud of its diversity, multicultural and democratic, it was really interesting to see how this region is developing.

AM Predrag, roughly the same question for you: How did politicians and governments, international and local politicians react to the idea we are discussing here today of making a contribution to social change?

PC There are various levels of interaction. In the 1990s and then the 2000s, there were two main sponsoring organisations. In the 1990s, there was the “Open Society Institute”, which supported the independent scene, and in the 2000s, the Swiss Cultural Programme as the principal sponsor, the central institution. The situation is complex, because the independent cultural scene is part of civil society. In the nineties, there was a huge campaign against the civil sector, we were treated as those people who got money
from abroad and who were not supporters of the state or were even opposed to the government. Stories also circulated in the media about vast sums of money that were completely false. So there were many negative reactions on the part of politicians, particularly in the 1990s. In the 2000s, they also received generous support for their own actions, but that didn’t really do anything to change their behaviour. They expected Switzerland to go on supporting them forever. For me, it’s time for the independent cultural scene and culture in general to become self-supporting, using tax revenues from the respective state.

AM How did all these programmes support change?

PC Change is taking place at many different levels. I’m a sociologist and it’s difficult for me to put this into layman’s terms. Change can take place at the cultural level and the level of the cultural institutions, and the support provided by the SCP played a decisive role in the efforts of the cultural scene in the region. Change can take place at local level, and this is an area in which the programme had a huge impact, particularly outside the major towns and cities;
The video about the "Contemporary Arts Centre" in Skopje gives us some idea of what we mean when we talk about decentralisation, promoting culture at the local level. At the start, Dragica Rajić gave us a rather impressive introduction to what it means for an individual artist to deal with what is supposedly ‘the past’. I would like to ask Bojana how artists reacted when the programmes were first launched and they were invited to express how they themselves were dealing with the past. Were there artists who were reluctant to respond or were they glad to be given the chance to voice their own personal experiences?

BM I wouldn’t look on the SCP as a programme for supporting artists who only deal with subjects related to the past. Certainly, we supported projects and organisations that engaged with these topics, but the programme itself was open to subjects of every kind. That was one of the characteristics of the programme: it wasn’t us telling the artists what themes the small actions had to deal with, we were simply there to give them the opportunity to express themselves. The SCP wasn’t just about cultural freedom, it was about every possible form of freedom. It was also about freedom of movement and even the right to any culture at all. The video shows an important point in the activities of the Contemporary Arts Centre: its work with the rural population, which was left practically without any kind of culture on offer following the changes in the nineties. In more than 100 rural communities, the Contemporary Arts Centre and its partners from other countries presented cultural material, and people were given the chance to plan and realise their own cultural initiatives. So it was not a matter of confronting the past, but of projects that looked to the future while keeping the past in mind.

AH I’m still mulling over the question of how I would defend the programme before the Swiss Parliament. Everything that’s been said so far makes one thing clear: this programme combined artistic quality in terms of content with project management know-how. Other countries bring in their own people to work locally – take the Goethe Institute, the British Council and the Alliance Française, for example. The SCP was different: in this case, it was people from the region and local needs that were empowered to unite the two aspects in the cultural sector. When I was there, I was repeatedly told that Switzerland is the only country to offer this kind of access. I would point out for the politicians that it’s good for Switzerland, for the image of Switzerland, a good investment, we create synergies and a win-win situation for everyone. That’s what’s important. There’s a huge, long list of projects, many of which really do come from the grass roots, people from the region working together and addressing their needs. We were not simply exporting something. Instead, people were given support in meeting their needs, in their own environment, in the way they thought it most relevant for their local and regional situation.

AM Predrag, was that not construed as western influence? Did people just see nice types from Switzerland, without a political agenda?

PC In this case, people didn’t think that the Swiss state was pursuing specific interests. In Serbia (which I know best alongside Macedonia and Montenegro, as I conducted research there from 2009 to 2010), there are some 130 to 150 organisations in the independent cultural scene, and I would say 60% use art as a vehicle for social intervention and 40% are artistically innovative. And both categories received support. So nobody was forced to change their programme. They were given support if they met the criteria. That really was one of the strengths of the programme.
Bojana, we now have an independent scene in the region that more or less receives support exclusively from foreign backers. Is that seen as a positive result?

I have spent my entire life in the Balkans and have campaigned both in my professional and private life to make something happen in the Balkans. At the end of the war, I moved from Serbia to Bosnia and, somehow, there was more positive energy in Bosnia in 1996 than there is today. Back then, I suppose I shared people’s expectations that the worst was over and that progress was simply lacking. We started cooperating with governments too, and had expectations of them. Responsibility didn’t just lie with the Swiss government and Swiss taxpayers’ money or any other governments around the world. Our main aim was to get our own governments to take responsibility. There were signs that things were moving in this direction but, sadly, culture is never a priority for any government or any finance ministry, and our governments still need to be persuaded that culture is important. Add to this the stagnation – or even deterioration – of the economy that we are suffering from. We may not be here to discuss economics, but the fact is that the economy in various countries has failed to grow sufficiently – and the one thing has an impact on the other.

Given their tight budgets, it was probably optimistic to expect our governments to invest more in culture and especially in the independent cultural sector. I had expected it to happen within a certain period of time and now that the SCP has come to an end, I realise that the time horizon I allow my government to do something substantial has been continually extended. Whatever happens, thanks to the lively, vibrant cultural scene, I’m sure that something can be achieved, but it will take time.

There have been strong networking ties in Croatia since 2002, in Slovenia maybe a bit later, and in the region as a whole since 2009. We have created national networks; in Serbia, around 92 organisations, i.e. almost three-quarters of all organisations, are members of Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia. We also set up “Kooperativa”, the regional platform for culture that takes in organisations from Slovenia to Albania. We are also hoping to establish a South East European Fund in which the states should be the main providers of funding. For example, 200,000 euro per year for each of the states is not a lot of money for them, but a million and the half in this Fund would with no problem support the activities of the organisations of the independent cultural scene in the region. And we do not want this money to be...
given directly to us from the budget. We want to establish a regional fund to which we can apply with projects. This is another area in which the SCP and other funding providers can help us by saying clearly to our governments: we have left you a wonderfully well-developed cultural scene. Now it’s your turn to make something of it.

AM There have been positive – although not highly promising – developments. How is Pro Helvetia equipped to observe the changes and impacts?

AH In the region? It isn’t really. To come back to what Predrag said: there is a highly dynamic cultural scene. One of the aims was to develop a local, independent cultural policy in each country. We haven’t achieved as much as we should have, not because of the programme but because of what is happening in society there. The scene may be strong, but there is also a fragility to it that unsettles me. There is a need for follow-up activities. The scene can’t be left to its own devices, otherwise all the work that was done will have been for nothing and, presumably, a lot would disappear.

What can we do? Unlike the SCP, Pro Helvetia is not able to support any local cultural structures. We require some kind of link with the Swiss cultural scene in order for us to provide support. Our task is to build up networks for Swiss artists, support cultural exchange, exchange projects, cooperation ventures, co-productions, tours in the region. There are an enormous number of partners whose networks we can use. However, the great work done by the SCP is not part of our daily remit and we are interested in finding partners to support in the future what has already been achieved.

AM If I have understood you correctly: culture changes society or at least encourages social change, even if that change can’t be measured in facts and figures. Bojana, do you agree?

BM Yes, I find that any form of cultural intervention is significant. In the case of the SCP, it began with small financial contributions towards travel that only cost us a couple of hundred francs but were really valuable in helping people network with Europeans, either in the region itself or in
Switzerland. One part of the programme was specifically devoted to cultural exchange with Switzerland; it was directly supported by Pro Helvetia. SCP support extended to projects with development character where entire villages became actively involved. We always tried to measure the success of a project as best we could. Sometimes we had to rely on estimates, at others we had actual figures. For example, I was impressed when I learned about the partners that were conducting a project in rural areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in which the local inhabitants volunteered 3,000 hours of their time for a cultural event they were planning in the village. That’s all about community participation. The project brought the people in this region together, something that increasingly ceased to happen in recent decades and is now becoming more important again. For me, it is a sign of how people can be mobilised to work together. People from several neighbouring villages who don’t see one another very often come together, have only one reason to meet up – if a cultural project, market or something like that is taking place in one of the villages. One indicator was that 6,000 people attended a film screening by a mobile cinema at which films from the former Yugoslavia were shown. 60% of people living in this region took part. That’s an enormous achievement.

AM Brigit Hagmann, the difficulties facing the independent cultural scene are not yet over. As Martin Dahinden said in his opening address, the SDC remains committed to promoting art and culture in the region. What will be different about future support from the SDC?

BH The SDC is very active in the cultural arena in all the countries of the South and East through its ‘cultural percent’, which is invested in cultural programmes. For the five countries in the Western Balkans that adds up to around half a million francs a year, and we are now discussing how to invest this budget with “artangle”. Naturally, it is no longer the same programme. SCP was a very long programme, 20 years with around 50 million francs, and we can see changes and results. Now, as Predrag said, the artists and people in the Western Balkans need to go it alone. The SDC will continue its involvement by supporting the “artangle” fund, which gives people access to finance. That is very important to us. One further comment on the topic of change. Of course, a lot has changed in the Western Balkans, you can see it and feel it. But we have to be careful not to view this transformation as directly related to the programmes for decentralisation and democratisation or to the cultural programme. One example, about three weeks ago in Albania the people did not agree with the government that chemical weapons from Syria should be destroyed in Albania. So they took to the streets to demonstrate, which would have been unthinkable twenty, or even five, years ago. But they did it. That is change, but it has nothing to do with our programme. The key point is that change is happening, and the SDC continues to support that process.

PC It’s very important to understand the structure of the independent cultural scene. Many of these organisations are really very small. As previously mentioned, the SDC initially supported small actions, then came national projects followed by regional cultural projects. These small cultural actions are important for us. Processes of monopolization are destructive for the civil society. This is not the case with politics, for example: in Serbia there are still 287 political parties, which is completely ridiculous and was supported by the former regime with the aim of turning the political arena into a circus. In the political arena, the monopolisation and creation of few big parties is actually a good thing. But for the civil sector it’s a real disaster. In each of these states and societies, there are some five to ten organisations that will survive no matter what. They are well equipped, able to organise cultural projects, they understand how to write project proposals, and they are slowly becoming new cultural institutions. But everything else of value is likely to disappear. And that was one of the goals of the networks in Serbia and in the region: we wanted to create a kind of umbrella for the smallest, the real grass-roots organisations. And that’s where I see one of the problems of “artangle”: it has around EUR 100,000 at its disposal and it uses that money to support large projects, which means that for every 100
good applications it receives, it can support only three. That’s discouraging. The key point now is not to cut back these regional cooperation projects, but to support further projects with additional funding, which would give those engaged in cultural matters hope.

**AM** Small versus large. Is there an easy answer?

**BM** There is no one-size-fits-all system in the cultural sector. Over the years, we here in the region consistently lobbied the SCP for support for small actions but, sadly, we had to rethink our position and accept the fact that there were a variety of instruments with which we could work. The small actions are the most flexible, valuable and practical instruments. Artangle has a small budget for 2013 as it was only launched in the summer, i.e. money for half a year. We now manage the Balkans Arts and Culture Fund in partnership with the European Cultural Foundation. We hope to be able to grow, not just in line with the budget but also in terms of diversifying the instruments as well as the sources and funds we attract to the Balkans.

The fact that we are still receiving enquiries from people from throughout the entire region, five years after the SCP stopped supporting small projects, shows how important that support was. I joined the SCP at the point when SCP Regional Office had taken over responsibility; prior to that, it had been the Pro Helvetia local offices abroad. Hopefully, those in charge at the SDC will not misunderstand me, but whenever I now discuss the SCP with people in Serbia or Albania they immediately make the connection with Pro Helvetia. Not just because Pro Helvetia was much more visible than the SDC. On the contrary. But the small actions of that era meant that lots more people could submit applications. The large projects excluded individual artists and small organisations, except when they were collaborating with larger organisations that had the capacity to be awarded larger grants. I presume it will be very difficult for artangle, but we will try to strengthen the Balkans Arts and Culture Fund and, whatever happens, we will campaign to make support for small projects possible, as well as those in the field of strategy and research. You see, the SCP wasn’t able to cover everything when it supported culture in the region. The same goes for the OSF (Open Society Foundations) or the COE (Council of Europe). We are there to identify the wide variety of needs in the Balkans and to support the various stakeholders.

**AM** The small actions as one possible approach. Are there other lessons that should be learned, perhaps from a more academic viewpoint?

**PC** I think regional networks are really important. And maybe I can point out one more danger: whenever we try to talk to bureaucrats at the local or national level about culture, the immediate response is that there is no money for culture. In other words: we don’t want to speak to you. Yet we didn’t go there to ask for money. There are many more topics that can be developed through culture. If, for example, you go into an office in Serbia that’s in charge of distributing money and you say ‘good morning’, they will reply ‘no money’. And when you speak with EU apparatchiks they say: ‘Not culture in acquis communautaire’. Not because culture isn’t important, but because it is fragile, it can’t be regulated systematically. By networking,
our basic intention is to persuade governments to establish a regional fund that other backers could join, but whose main source of funding should be the states themselves. And we would like to manage this fund ourselves. We want to be an umbrella and not part of someone else’s programme. SCP was unique because those in charge didn’t say “we have a programme and you can take part.” Instead they said “if we find your programme worthwhile, we would like to support it and become involved.” We want the fund to be self-managing, possibly giving the donors the right to have a say – that will be the real future. And we are also trying to boost funding at the national level, but the main problem is not so much the amount of money available for culture, rather how that money is spent. In Serbia, a lousy 0.62% was dedicated to culture last year, which nevertheless represents around 70 million euro. But 80% of that went to national institutions, for their wages and operating costs. That doesn’t leave much for programmes. If they were to operate by the same principles as we do, then they would hardly spend any money on salaries and infrastructure. It would all go towards activities. So we need a more flexible system for institutions. The current system has barely changed since 1945: cultural institutions are given support to ensure they exist and not to ensure that culture is created.

AM Small actions, regional networking, more state funding and a change in the cultural system: is that a dream or fairly realistic? Bajana, in your position I would be slightly nervous as the big boys are not really interested in culture and only a small part of those who are interested are able to provide support. You say that it’s now up to you to deal with these matters and that you need another Swiss link, like before with Pro Helvetia, to support you. So have you been left alone with your problems?

BM I wouldn’t describe myself as nervous as far as the immediate future goes. I’m thinking instead of some of the threats that Predrag mentioned. These also affect artangle as an organisation. We are here, we exist, and our knowledge and experience should give us sufficient confidence. We need to be skilful enough to use this expertise and experience. Our many partners, including those here in the room today, give us a certain assurance that we have not been abandoned – thankfully.

AM Let us widen the picture somewhat: all eyes are now turned towards other regions, the Arab world. Given your experiences, do you believe that cultural forms of expression have a concrete impact in transitional societies?

AH Just to reiterate: we are not stopping our work in the region altogether, it’s only the SCP mandate that has ended. Our work continues. Among other things, we advocate exchanges between art critics, journalists, writers and those working in the cultural arena. Exchange is important, and we learn a lot about interrelationships from programmes like the SCP. I am convinced that culture is important. But art should not have too big a burden placed upon it. Art is art, I’m against any kind of instrumentalisation. But art can contribute to social development.

PC I believe it’s very dangerous to think that only troubled regions in which there is unrest need art and culture. We live in an era of extreme...
inequality. We live in an era where more people are going hungry and where the ten richest people in the world became even richer in 2012. We live in an era where racism and colonialism are on the rise. I think all the respect for human beings learned from the horrors of the Second World War has been lost. People are not aware how important each and every one of us and our own dignity is. Our world desperately needs the best art and culture, and I believe that the instrumentalisation of art and culture, such as through the cultural industry, is coming to an end. You can earn money by doing so, but you sacrifice greater potential, namely to probe, analyse and criticise. That's why I find art and culture are important and needed more than ever.

BM I would like to give you an example from my own personal perspective. When we received the Liceulice – Platform of Activism video last year, my 12-year-old daughter watched it in fascination before saying: “Mum, I'm really proud of the work you do, that you support this kind of thing.” Even a young girl understands the value of cultural work.
Artists and Cultural Projects from Southeast Europe and Switzerland

Portraits, videos, short presentations

The short presentations. Moderators: Petra Bischof, artangle Belgrade & Mauro Abbühl, artlink Berne
Liceulice – platform of activism
Belgrade ______________ www.liceulice.wordpress.com

We strongly believe that activism can significantly contribute to facing the past, developing positive strategies and dealing with challenges. We therefore committed through the project named “Liceulice – Platform of Activism” to the creation of regional coalition of organisations, groups, business and public institutions, researchers, dedicated to the values of societal changes. This Project still establishes, empowers and promotes art activism practices as a self-sustainable, participative and influential mechanism for social change in the Western Balkans.

Two-year’s process of building Regional Platform of Activism involved a vast number of people, enabling them to participate in cultural activism, understanding its values, methods, its power and achievements. All the activities of this Project in their core connected, empowered, networked, educated, recruited, sensitised, encouraged and strengthened pre-existing and/or potential (future) forms of cultural and every other form of activism in Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia. This has been achieved through various methodological approaches (interactive web presence, unexpected guerilla events, regionalisation of the socially aware magazine “Liceulice”, approaching directly marginalised individuals and groups, extensive mapping and research work, workshops, motivational events, etc.).

CULTURESCAPES
Basel, Berne, Chur, Lucerne, Zurich and other cities in Switzerland ______________ www.culturescapes.ch

With the Balkan, in 2013 CULTURESCAPES for the first time put not just a country but a whole cultural region at once in the focus of the festival. The countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia were the focus of the programme. More than 50 institutions formed the Switzerland-wide network of partners for CULTURESCAPES.

The exchange programme SWISS CULTURESCAPES was supported by Pro Helvetia and showed current Swiss artistic work in the eight countries of the Western Balkans. This included the theatre co-production “Love. State. Kosovo” by and with Beatrice Fleischlin and Antje Schupp, the Knabenkantorei Basel [Basel Boys’ Choir], the musician Nik Bärtsch with his project “Ronin” as well as “Imitation of Life” by Boris Nikitin. Christoh Marthaler’s “King Size” was received with great enthusiasm at the International Theatre Festival, Sarajevo (MESS) and the World Theatre Festival in Zagreb.

Bound by a cultural heritage as well as a complex history often beset by conflict, today the Balkans is a melting pot of a wide variety of nations, ethnicities, religions and groupings. Run-ins with memories and the present have been a recurring issue. This broadly based programme opened up a dialogue about the Balkans and called for existing images of the Balkans to be examined and questioned.
Nomad Dance Academy
Made in the Balkans  _  www.nomaddanceacademy.org

Nomad Dance Academy is a platform for collaboration in contemporary dance, a self-refreshing organizational model, a tool for promotion of contemporary dance, an intensive program for education and creation. It started as a grass-root initiative of artists from the Balkans who joined their knowledge, experiences and networks to build the shared space for contemporary dance development. The network has solidarity as a value and has experienced it as an essential mechanism for the empowerment of all actors. Nomad’s main efforts go towards securing conditions for education of young artists from the Balkans and professional development in their original social and cultural contexts (in opposition to the growing brain/body-drain processes). It also works on securing conditions for production of new work, research, presentation and promotion of that work through various formats (festivals, conferences, residencies, publishing and so on) and in collaboration with international referential institutions.
We believe that dance is a socially relevant and inclusive art field and we develop various modes for reaching new audience.

Adela Jušić
Sarajevo  ______________  www.adelajusic.wordpress.com

I recorded myself dyeing the hair of my grandmother. After she died, I wrote all the stories she used to tell me and made a narrative part for the video. I narrate the short events from her life about our family. Although it is merely someone’s personal and intimate life story, one can easily imagine the contemporary atmosphere of a socio-political reality that was surrounding her life. She grew up in a poor family during the second world war, went to school only for 3 years and worked in a tabacco factory already when was 16 years old. She lived in a very patriarchal society, with four children and she lived to witness the death of many of her family members in recent war in Bosia. This is a story common for many women in the Balkans. It witnesses their struggle and their capacity to bare the hard life and still remain strong. The history and stories are written by men and about „important“ men, and with this work I want to contribute to the history and to the importance of life stories of „ordinary“ women. I also wanted to point out the ways women, mothers and grandmother pass to their successors the memories and stories through oral historiy as important aspect of creating the identity we have today.

When I die you can do what you want
Single channel video
Year: 2011
Born in 1981 as the daughter of a writer and a director in the Albanian capital of Tirana, Elina Duni was on stage for the first time when she was five years old. She learned violin, performed at children's festivals and sang on radio and TV. After the end of the communist system in 1991, she moved to Switzerland and studied classical piano in Geneva, where she also discovered jazz for herself.

After film, theatre and jazz projects in Albania and Switzerland, she studied Vocal Jazz and Composition in Berne, founded her quartet with Colin Vallon on piano, Patrice Moret on bass and Norbert Pfammatter on drums and began to deal with folk songs of her homeland and other Balkan countries. Today she sings these in her own arrangements, but in the original languages, bringing very unaccustomed colours to jazz. After two CDs (“Baresha” in 2008 & “Lume, Lume” in 2010) on the German label Meta Records, in September 2012 the quartet’s third album “Matanë Malit” (Behind the Mountain), a musical tribute to Albania, was released on ECM/Universal.

In 2014 she published her first solo project as a singer-songwriter “Muza e zezë” (The Black Muse).

Elina Duni
Berne __________________________ www.elinaduni.ch

Only different things, people, cultures, phenomena and concepts can be similar, and the similarity lies in the exclusive sphere and in the competence of one’s imagination, writes Sreten Ugričić, from whom comes the ambiguous title “Das Leben ist Ausland” (“Life is that Abroad”). We are all searching, worried, anxious, full of energy – all of us more or less sweat, and none of us are really at home. We do not believe in the Swiss or the Yugo, but in open ears. We do not believe in information, but in listening and storytelling. And heads; they can think for themselves. And hearts; they can empathise.

Three times a year we invite an artist – one from the Balkans from the fields of literature, film, fine arts or music. The focus is on literature. Guests encounter an artist there who has been commissioned to deal with the work of the invitee. Since there are still considerable fears of contact and educational gaps between the East and the West, we cultivate an exchange and build bridges between individual people – instead of waiting for a miracle. Reading, performing, storytelling, listening and discussing. That’s all.

Melinda Nadj Abonji, Goran Potkonjak and Jurczok 1001 and guests are responsible for this series.
Public space in Albanian cities over the past 20 years, has been transformed into parking lots, cafeterias & bars, or piles of uncollected waste. More often than not, they are also transformed into additions to existing buildings, or multistory buildings. The public space left unclaimed/ or impossible to claim is viewed as nobody’s land. This mindset has resulted in: untended, destroyed remaining public spaces, almost inexistent community gatherings, activities or socializing. In this particular moment of crisis when the youngest generations in particular feel a sense of frustration derived from the impossibility to directly influence the city, Co-PLAN and POLIS University used provocations and urban activisms as a mean, not only for conveying messages but most importantly, for showing that art can be used for change.

Some of the art based projects accomplished over the past three years in a number of differing urban contexts are: The lightway – bridging two parts of the Tirana Artificial lake; Urban Activism - How can Street Art become a form of Public (Urban) Art?; A colourful playground – using recyclable materials and art to put together a recreational space; The gamescape – turning an abandoned space, inside a housing block, into a “gamescape”, a place for socializing; I am a chewing gum - used an artistic performance as the mean to transmit messages concerning the pollution created by the chewing gum.

Each year during the first week of December performance lovers gather in the Old Town of Berne for the BONE, a festival of action art. Since 1998, the festival has been dedicated to current work, inviting high-calibre artists to the Schlachthaus theater. The festival was founded by Ralf Samens and shaped by Norbert Klassen. Since 2011 the festival has been directed by Valerian Maly along with guest curators. Appropriately for the nature of performance art, the venues have since then been extended to public spaces and art spaces, such as the Stadtgalerie at the PROGR.

In 2013, the emphasis was on performance and action art from the ex-Yugoslav countries. More than in other regions of Europe, daily life there, the social, economic and political conditions all provide material for artistic activities that unfold in real time and are based on working with one’s body. This was portrayed and examined on the basis of the fault line, which, in the specific case of Yugoslavia with its recent history, can be described as an intrusion of reality that changes the nature and mode of performances.

With archival materials from the legendary “Studentski Centar Belgrade”, with five installations, seven live blocks, an all-day symposium and a daily exchange event, nearly forty artists were involved from the Balkans and Switzerland.
A non-profit organisation, pre-art was founded in 2001 by Boris Previšić and Matthias Arter to promote contemporary and top-quality music creation in marginalised regions in Eastern Europe, particularly in the Balkans and the Southern Caucasus. These include tours and master classes with musicians locally and in Switzerland, such as: Histoire du soldat throughout ex-Yugoslavia in 2001/2002, Digressions in 2004, Spatial Intersections in 2005, Terrains vagues in 2007, JeunEst in 2008 and Convergence in 2010. Equally important is the ensemble structure – with Sonemus in Sarajevo since 2001 and Convergence in Tbilisi since 2009 – as well as the pre-art competition, an annual composition competition for young people composing (up to 30 years of age) from across the region. This is not only meant to straightforwardly bridge politically created cultural trenches in the post-socialist countries, but also to deliberately reduce the still ongoing brain drain. Thus, for instance, musicians from the region who thanks to support by pre-art have been able to specialise their skills in Switzerland, oblige themselves to work again in their country of origin in the future. Thanks to donations, as part of pre-art aid the organisation is able to provide help with sheet music and instruments for music academies and talented instrumentalists in the Balkans and in the Caucasus. Currently, the organisation is setting up the label pre-art music to permanently document promising compositions from these marginalised regions.

Founded in 2008 in Zurich by Goran Potkonjak, BALKANKARAVAN is a cultural platform with concerts, readings and parties. The main objective of the platform is to bring the cultural diversity of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe closer to a wide audience. It focusses on music. The first events and concerts took place as early as 2002, since which they have been increasingly expanded and presented to an ever larger audience. It focusses on music. The first events and concerts took place as early as 2002, since which they have been increasingly expanded and presented to an ever larger audience. With its monthly events at various cultural centres in Switzerland, BALKANKARAVAN has reached 40,000 visitors since 2008 at around 100 events. Part of the visitors are people from the Balkan and other Eastern European countries, and about 60 to 70 per cent are Swiss. Zurich is an important location for BALKANKARAVAN, as most of the events are held there. 31% of Zurich’s population are of foreign origin from 169 different nations. With a constantly changing programme, BALKANKARAVAN has, in cooperation with the jazz club Moods, become one of the most important organisers in the field of Balkan music in Europe and worldwide. Nowhere else in any city in the world is there such a dense programme as in Zurich. To achieve such a thing takes lots of time and social commitment. This is the merit of the many staff members, the contributing artists and the audiences with varied interests. A high-quality programme is of essential importance for the further development and preservation of BALKANKARAVAN.
Damir Imamović
Sarajevo  www.damirimamovic.com

Damir Imamović graduated at the University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Philosophy. He is working as a freelance musician and self-producing artist since 2007 and produced three CDs for his musical projects Damir Imamović Trio and Damir Imamović Solo. He also co-produced the research for a documentary Sevdah by Marina Andree-Škop (a documentary that won the first prize from the audience in Sarajevo Film Festival 2009).

Damir Imamović is one of the most important Bosnian musicians of his generation. His reestablishing of the artistic status of the Bosnian traditional music known as “Sevdah” brought him both domestic and international attention, unusual for a traditional musician. Damir Imamović is a grandson of the legendary Sevdah singer and author Zaim Imamović. He participated in musical projects with musicians such as Vlatko Stefanovski, Bojan Zulfikarpašić, Eric Vloeimans, Bachar Khalife, Tamara Obrovač, Jadranka Stojaković.

His research in Sevdah music, its traditions and performance distinguishes Imamović as a prominent figure among experts in the ancient Bosnian craft. Building on that heritage Imamović created a highly personal style of both singing and guitar playing. He regularly shares his insights in workshops and lectures within his own travelling laboratory of Sevdah music: the “SevdahLab” program.

LOJA
Tetovo  www...

LOJA, a non-governmental organisation, was founded in 2000. Intercultural learning has been at the focus of its programme ever since. The primary objective is for the various ethnic groups to draw nearer: The aim is to show that it is possible to learn from each other – despite or because of the different cultures. Another goal is to decentralise cultural life in Macedonia through activities in Tetovo itself. The early days of the institution were characterised by video, photo and art workshops for children and young people relating to social issues.

In recent years LOJA has developed from a purely grass-roots organisation into an organisation that, not only remains connected to those structures, but which also attempts to directly influence and develop government policy and civil society. Also a major aspect in the process is discovering and inventing new communication channels in order to integrate the various members of society, introduce them to social commitment and promote inter-ethnic dialogue with cultural projects.

(Source: Robert Bosch Foundation)
Culture of Remembrance

Exhibition of 46 cardboard panels suspended from the ceiling with photographs and texts.

The exhibition “Culture of Remembrance” was created as a final project of the Participative Network of the Culture of Memory supported by SCP – Swiss Culture Program in the Western Balkans. The project’s goal was to contribute to the development process through art and culture in order to promote tolerance and democratization of the Western Balkan’s society.

The participants who come from six countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Germany, Kosovo, and Serbia, were invited to send a photo and write a short story related to the given photo, and, if they want, invite their friends to participate in the exhibition.

The photos presented on the exhibition are diverse. Some belong to the personal albums, and some are recently shot, amateur and professional photos, of different formats. On one photo we can see smiling children’s faces on a birthday celebration or playing, and on the other personal objects of children tragically killed in war. Some photos represent reminders of some happy times and the other ones are shot during the war or show the consequences of war and conflicts in ex Yugoslavia.

Each photo or more of them correspond to a memory of a moment or a period from the past told in short personal stories. The stories don’t have to retell a photograph that we see, but can often be a intimate visual reminder of the described event.

Pink Cadillac

April 15th 1994. My birthday. I opened my eyes. It’s murky morning. There is a giant white box with a huge red box on the floor of my little room. I jumped out of the bed in disbelief, hysterically peeling the white paper. In a giant box titled Barbie, there were a pink cabriolet, a pink horse trailer and a horse. This box brought me endless hours of fun for me and my friends from the street. My mom brought me the box by a military airplane, when she exited Sarajevo. She was hiding the box in her WHO office until my birthday. My mother got discus hernia from dragging the giant white box, and I got the most beautiful and my dearest gift in the whole world, and a pathological desire to have a pink Cadillac.

This photo is an auto portrait taken on April 15th 2008.

Gasha Miladinović was born in Sarajevo, studied fashion styling in London at Istituto Marangoni. In London, she assisted different stylists and designers, and worked for various magazines. Since moving back to Sarajevo in 2007, Gasha has brought her London spirit across several mediums: fashion and culture journalist for Radio Sarajevo portal; her own segment (The Fashion Alphabet) on national television; conducted a style hunt across the country; and has styled countless editorials, music videos, commercials and TV shows. Since 2011 Gasha has partnered up with her childhood friend to open up an interior design studio and showroom. Gasha is an active member of MODIKO association as stylist and project coordinator and consultant, and is also the official costume designer for Magacin Kabare - alternative cabaret theater in Sarajevo.
It was the second or the third day after the war started. We (I) were still not sure what does it mean exactly. I just came back from Florence - my very first travel abroad - and there were some news on TV. I really didn’t want to know or to listen to immediately. Anyway, it all seemed like it was happening somewhere else - farther away, though in the same country. I was seventeen and the day was sunny and beautiful. Split was looking very calm and serene in this light. I was biking. Back then, in my rebel adolescence, my yellow bike was giving me the feeling of freedom which I needed so much.

I remember I was biking along the coast and gazing at the sea. But in one moment something seemed really strange. On the usually busy road, connecting small harbor with the old town, there were no cars, no people. „How nice and beautiful,” I thought. My eyes wondered and I looked up to the building on the opposite side of the road. It was a huge modernist, white and enclosed administrative building with a few monumental pillars in front; at that time, however, with blinds all closed. And there it was; a small roundish black thing pointing at me, under the closed blinds, as if following my movements. I was at gunpoint. When I bike, I listen to the beautiful music, and I bike pretty fast while my braids curl on the wind.

I took the U turn, passed the building, left it behind, and still nobody on the road. A green park opened in front me, still with no people, nor children in it. „How beautiful and special - perfect,” I thought and laid down in the grass, with my bike next to me. When I woke up the sun was already gone.

Nine years later, when I laid down in the grass somewhere in France, I suddenly remembered it. My knees buckled and huge fear overwhelmed me.

Born 25.04.1974 in Split, Renata Poljak grew up and graduated from the School of Fine Arts in Split and later spent a year in post-graduation (international post diplome) at the Ecole Régionale des Beaux-Arts in Nantes, France. Renata lived in Nice, Vienna, Berlin and Paris, now in between Split, Bol and Zagreb.
Topics and Votes from the Working Groups

In the afternoon the participants in the forum discussed in five working groups the topics of art and social change, the role of the funding agencies, mobility and market access as well as the role of the artist-in-residence projects. Several topics emerged across the groups, which are summarised in the following.

Art and Social Change

“We live in an uncreative space.” Valerian Maly from the Bone Performance Festival in Berne, sees many opportunities to work as an artist in public space – and yet it is in fact almost impossible to do. Everything is regulated and countless costly permits are required—in Berne, he says, there are about 500 cultural events each week. Many of them are neither really good nor really bad. At the three projects in which he was involved in the Balkans, he experienced its necessity and importance as far more pronounced than what he found here in Switzerland. So, is there a greater need for art in South Eastern Europe – and in poor countries generally?

Public space, says Bujar Luma from the Loja Cultural Centre in Tetovo, has a different significance in Macedonia than in Switzerland. There is less public discussion, and a lot happens informally from person to person. When the same stories have been told for forty years, it is difficult to call them into question. Yet sensitive issues can be addressed using artistic means: with video, photography, theatre, documentary films and stories. Via art, it is possible to bring people together for common goals. Two of the Loja projects, one supported by Pro Helvetia and the other by the SCP, have contributed to a debate throughout the country. The relevance of artistic work for social change often only becomes apparent in hindsight. With Loja, says Bujar Luma, they were involved not only in art that directly promotes social change, but also in benefitting young artists eager to experiment.

In Macedonia there is a whole generation that is not familiar with consuming culture. The cinemas were closed in the early 1990s, and there is no theatre in Tetovo, the second largest city. Grass-roots projects such as film programmes are now being initiated via multipliers at small venues in neighbourhoods, he says. In Tetovo, there are about five or six events per week. He would like to see it go as far as Berne – but then go back to a small programme of substance.

Creative Artists and Funding Agencies

The relationship of creative artists and cultural organisers to the mainly foreign donors supplies plenty of topics for discussion. There is general consensus that freedom of art is essential. Artists must not be instrumentalised. Art and artistic expression should not be burdened with a requirement of having to promote social change.

All too rigid geographical criteria are also called into question: Projects with Croatia and Slovenia are ruled out for assistance from Swiss development funds – in the regional context it is proximity that determines relations and not EU membership. Conversely, when supported by Pro Helvetia, Swiss musicians abroad are required to play Swiss music and not, for instance, music of the region – which would not exactly benefit either the [cultural] exchange or the dialogue. Long-term support is important – even with an uncertain outcome. When it comes to cultural matters, it is difficult to know in advance exactly what will be needed and what results one will achieve. You must have confidence and allow artists to deal with changing contexts, because this process is part of the project. It is a big challenge after an event to describe why it was worth bringing about, but concluding reports are indispensable for donors.

In addition to long-term support, it is also important to assist small projects, which, for example, allow young artists to get started.

Brain Drain – the Exodus

Observable in various countries of South Eastern Europe, a growing brain drain has resulted from the lack of national and local cultural funding. Approximately sixty per cent of the active Serbian stage artists have gone away, according
to Marina Cvetković (Nomad). Those left behind could scarcely maintain contact with them. One platform is now to attempt to keep the people who are still there, and to persuade the others to communicate with the scene in their country of origin. They should continue to be present with their work, for example by visiting lectureships at universities.

Pre-art, which embraces assisting talent in music, has drafted a charter for its competition: Those who are able to study in Switzerland or Germany owing to the award, obligate themselves to return and pass on their knowledge in their country of origin. Musicians well-trained in the West could have better options locally than if they had to face the stiff competition in the West. Thanks to studying abroad, one also brings back a broadened horizon, which is by all means needed today at art academies that frequently have encrusted structures.

Politics and the Freedom of Art
Tribute is paid by many to the work of the SCP in the Western Balkans: Switzerland, says Bujar Luma, did not pursue any political agenda in South Eastern Europe, but did very much political work by bringing artists across national borders into contact, when Serbian and Kosovar Albanian people communicate with each other about art, for example. Changing from national to regional projects was also a very political matter as far as communication in the region is concerned.

The SCP was so successful, says Marina Cvetković, because of its structure. There were teams in each country with locals who were able to enter into dialogue with artists locally. The programme was in the hands of people who understood the context and were able to convey it to the donors.

Artistic freedom and freedom of expression were ensured in the SCP. The work produced within the programme was authentic in that sense; the programme had a supporting function.
Music from South Eastern Europe in the West
Both the jazz singer Elina Duni, who is originally from Albania, and the Bosnian Sevdah musician Damir Imamović are confronted time after time with certain expectations by western audiences with respect to music from the Balkans. “Balkan music” is Romani music, brass band music. Jazz and “new music” find it difficult to get heard. Elina Duni clarifies: The music of the Romani people constitutes an important but small part of the music from the Balkans. And the music of the Romani that is known in this country comes mostly from Serbia or Macedonia. The Romani people from Albania, for instance, play a different music and use different instruments. “People like to buy what they know,” Damir Imamović adds soberly. Instead of using the term “Balkan music”, it is more sensible to speak of “music of the Balkans”, which refers to the different musics of the region and not one style.

Labelling – or pigeonholing – is discussed as a major problem in terms of market access: In streaming and download services, the so-called labels are fixed. The first two pigeonholes are filled with music driven by the Anglophone world and certain European genres—all the rest is put in the “world music” pigeonhole. And: “Once you’re in a box, it’s hard to get out”. But the Internet also has advantages: It has replaced the intermediaries, which in the past had the power to decide who would make it big and who would not. Today it is sufficiently possible to get informed and do research. At the same time, however, it is ever more challenging to find one’s way around within the data jungle.

Guests tell of the difficulty of obtaining funds for non-commercial music in the Balkans. In the diaspora, too, the interest of the majority goes to events with popular (turbo-folk) stars. A newcomer to the market requires a large network and has to be innovative to attract the attention of donors. Musicians that break out of traditional boundaries and those with majority appeal have to create their audiences themselves (docking with subcultures, [music] scenes and interested minorities).

Minorities would have a good chance of being supported at international institutions. Elina Duni says it would not have been possible to realise her artistic path from Albania. In Switzerland she had received the necessary financial aid and is now celebrated in Albania when, as an Albanian singer from abroad, she also presents old Albanian songs that have been rearranged together with Swiss musicians, she says.

Paying Creative Artists in Time
Donors, hosts and artists all agree: Discovering other places and countries and experiencing new things at lodgings is important. Artists need accommodation and a minimum income sufficient to be able to grapple with new experiences in no rush and, as Adela Jušić says, to gather creative energy. Thus, donors pay creative artists above all in time.

One does not exactly go into lodgings to produce – or, contrary to expectations, only produces little during one’s stay. Many primarily hope to do networking, and that is also where most of the disappointments are. One quickly feels alone and has difficulty establishing contacts. Artists wish for access to museums and exhibitions, contacts with curators, institutions and other artists. Organisers should be more active on this point, perhaps providing a coach – the way Pro Helvetia does as of late – and clarify exactly what needs an artist has. Artist talk, i.e. public discussions are a good instrument, the artist Adela Jušić thinks. There, one can show one’s work, meet people, preferably embedded in another event or together with other artists, so that enough people come.

Lodgings with content requirements and expectations are discussed controversially. There are warnings against telling artists what they should do and obliging them to produce. Artists are generally not geared to location-based working or to reacting quickly to people and places. Sometimes it is only much later that works emerge from what is experienced during a stay. If too much is specified, there is a great danger that works will be created that are not convincing in terms of quality. Also lodgings in remote locations are assessed with scepticism. Thus, after evaluating many years of experience, today Pro Helvetia primarily offers lodgings in urban areas.
Overcoming Isolation

Leila Hodžić points to the isolation of artists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. After the war the situation was better than now. Back then many people came from the West, and artists were the focus of attention. That contact was one-sided, however. Many came but only few from there could get out. Especially for young artists, it is extremely important to get away from the ultra-conservative, isolated environment. Artists from Southeast Europe mainly seek contacts. Sometimes wonderful works arise from a collaboration.

Melinda Nadj Abonji welcomes the commitment of the Swiss authors association ADS, which supports writers at lodgings and offers networking. She points out in particular the “Writers in Exile” programme: PEN Deutschschweiz is committed to ensuring that also in Switzerland pursued authors are offered longer-term stay options and that they are allowed to build a new life.

Workshop 3 with Alice Thomann (SDC), Marijana Cvetković and Boris Previšić
Guests and speakers:

Adela Jušić ______________ Visual artist, Sarajevo. adelajusic.wordpress.com
Andrew Holland ___________ Director Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, Zurich. www.prohelvetia.ch
Boris Previšić _____________ Musician, Association Pre-Art, Zurich. www.pre-art.ch
Brigit Hagmann _____________ Head of Western Balkans Division, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Berne. www.deza.admin.ch
Bujar Luma _________________ Executive Director LOJA Center for Balkan Cooperation Macedonia, Tetovo
Damir Imamović _____________ Musician, Sarajevo. www.damirimamovic.com
Dragica Rajčić ______________ Writer, Zurich. www.dragicarajcic.ch
Dritan Shutina _______________ Executive Director Co-Plan Institute for Habitat Development, Tirana. www.co-plan.org
Elina Duni _________________ Singer, Berne. www.elinaduni.com
Goran Potkonjak _____________ Concert promoter and DJ, Zurich. www.balkankaravan.ch
Jurriaan Cooiman _____________ Artistic Director CULTURESCAPES, Basel. www.culturescapes.ch
Lejla Hodžić ________________ Freelance curator, Sarajevo. Curator of the photo exhibition „Culture of Rememberance“
Martin Dahinden ______________ Director-General Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, Berne. www.deza.admin.ch
Melinda Nadj Abonji ___________ Writer, musician, performer, Zurich. www.daslebenistausland.net
Nikoletta Kosovac _____________ Program coordinator Liceulice, Belgrade. liceulice.wordpress.com
Predrag Cvetičanin ___________ Sociologist and cultural activist, Centre for Empirical Cultural Studies of South-East Europe, Nis. www.eenc.info/expert/predrag-cveticanin
Valerian Maly ________________ Artistic Director Bone Festival, Berne. www.bone-performance.com

Moderators:

André Marty _________________ Teamleader Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, until 2012 Editor and moderator at SRF Tagesschau.
Mauro Abbühl ________________ Co-Director artlink, cultural cooperation, Berne. www.artlink.ch
Chudi Bürgi _________________ Co-Director artlink, cultural cooperation, Berne. www.artlink.ch