

# ART COOPERATION TRANSMISSION DEMOC(K)RACY

## Project

### A

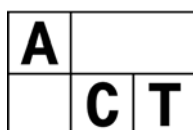
Abroad  
Access  
Accentuate  
Accord  
Accumulate  
Achieve  
Acquire  
Across  
Activate  
Acuteness  
Adventure  
Aesthetic  
Affect  
Affinity  
Afraid  
Aggregate  
Agenda  
Agitate  
Aim  
Audacity  
Alert  
Alive  
Attention  
Avid  
Alliance  
Allow  
Alteration  
Alternate  
Astounding  
Ambiguous  
Amongst  
Amorous  
Analyse  
Anchor  
Another  
Antagonism  
Anthropology  
Anticipate  
Antiracist  
Anywhere  
Appetite  
Ardent  
Arise  
Artist  
Artschool  
Artwork

### C

Cooperation  
Captivate  
Culture  
Carnal  
Choose  
City  
Civilization  
Coalition  
Collaborate  
Combination  
Community  
Confront  
Connect  
Context  
Contradiction  
Converse  
Convivial  
Critically  
Creative  
Contestation  
Capable  
Care for  
Curator  
Celebrate  
Circulation  
Citizenship  
Coexistence  
Collective  
Come out  
Common  
Commutable  
Confluence  
Composite  
Congregate  
Contemporary  
Contrast  
Convention  
Convey  
Complexity  
Caress  
Catalyst  
Change  
Children  
Cultivate  
Coloured  
Construct  
Concept

### T

Transmission  
Transculture  
Territory  
Tender  
Think  
There  
Threshold  
Throughout  
Tomorrow  
Tough  
Translation  
Tribune  
Tune up  
Twinkling  
Talented  
Tension  
Tell  
Text  
Texture  
Thrive  
Topic  
Town  
Transcontinental  
Transform  
Transversal  
Tribute  
Trusting  
Turmoil  
Twinning  
Taboo  
Tactile  
Teach  
Tempt  
Testify  
Thanks  
Thoughtful  
Together  
Touching  
Transcript  
Transgress  
Travel  
Tremendous  
Try  
Talk  
Team  
Tackle  
Tactile



BELGRADE  
CLUJ  
EINDHOVEN  
RENNES



Culture

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Because the withdrawal into separatist identities that occurs in many European countries is an alarming symptom of a crisis of democracy within Europe,

Because Europe is now reaching the limits of an economic model which is resulting in brutal social fragmentation and deepening inequalities between individuals and countries,

Because the conditions required for the exercise of democracy are now being suffocated by obsolescent administrative, legislative and communication structures,

Because the critical, educational and creative dimensions of art are fundamental conditions to the exercise of democracy,

Because in an era of globalization, we believe that interrelation between the commonplace and the singular should cultivate difference, discontinuity and contradiction as the basis of our representations of reality,

We, the partners in the A.C.T Democ(k)racy project:

- **La Criée Contemporary Arts Centre, Rennes – France** (coordinator)
- **Altart Foundation, Cluj-Napoca – Romania** (coorganisator)
- **Kulturni Centar Beograda, Belgrade – Serbie** (coorganisator)
- **Onomatopée research centre, Eindhoven – Netherlands** (coorganisator)
- **European Superior School of Arts of Brittany – France** (coorganisator)
- **University of arts and design, Cluj – Romania** (coorganisator)
- **Fabrica de Pensule, Cluj-Napoca – Romania** (associated partner)

Uphold the following convictions:

- In the face of withdrawal into separatist identities, we believe that the ongoing progress of European democracies in the era of globalization depends on our ability to cultivate a continuous, inter-penetrable, porous dynamic with respect to otherness.

- In the face of critical, educational and creative challenges, we believe that art has the capacity to bring historic, cultural and social elements into relationship with each other in order to generate unpredictable representations, unexpected encounters and innovative creations.

- Amid an over-administrated and decreasingly inventive Culture, we believe that the vitality of contemporary creativity involves the constant cultivation of a dynamic that encompasses tension, transformation and the invention of cultural and artistic projects.

We have thus designed the A.C.T Democ(k)racy project to encourage theoretical research and artistic creativity as tools of critical analysis and inventiveness with regard to new ways of engaging in democracy.

The A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project calls for a permanent commitment in favour of powerful experiments which can contribute to the practice of democracy in both art and thought, notably by devising constructive attitudes with regard to new cultural challenges, as well as encouraging diversity in aesthetics, thought and culture.

The A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project is passionately in favour of movement, interchange and openness as the first conditions for the free circulation of ideas and works.

## REINVENTION

### A shared commitment Art and Democracy

In his book *La mésentente* (The misunderstanding)<sup>1</sup>, the philosopher Jacques Rancière observes that the practice of democracy today appears to have been superseded by its own legislative, administrative and communications apparatus. Evoking liberal democracies in Europe, the philosopher introduces the concept of « post-democracy » to define a society built on a foundation of « judicialisation of social space as a whole, its expert State, and the rule of market research allied to the “science” of opinion. Such a society is characterised by the end of disputes and the systematic recourse to consensus-based logic, in which the maximum benefit for all is achieved by means of negotiation rather than confrontation. Consensus-based logic assumes an absence of conflict and of exclusion, and no discrepancy between real life and police order. Any disputes which may arise are seen not as political occurrences, but simply as problems or delays. Resolving them is merely a matter of time. The post-democratic society thus casts itself as the end of politics: it no longer leaves any room for myth, symbol, semblance or pretence. Every individual identifies with the community. In fact, politics is impossible within a post-democracy, because there is no world outside its own. However, there is a paradox inherent in this “end of politics”. The paradox of post-democracy is a sharp increase in racism.”<sup>2</sup>

In the light of this weakening of democratic practice, the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project partners have chosen to promote art as a fundamental critical space for debating the future of democracy. They argue that art is above all a locus for disensus rather than consensus, on the basis of which democracy can be forged: creating space for discussion, stimulating thought, and imagining symbols, allegories and all the other intrinsic metaphors of cultural creativity and social dynamism. The partners hold that it is important to cultivate the critical dimension of art rather than reducing it to a social event, an exhibition of images or an illustration of key messages. This critical dimension of art does not intend to disassociate contemporary artistic creation from societal and political issues. On the contrary. The challenge is to recognise the importance of allowing artistic creation to be autonomous and enjoy critical freedom, at the same time as interrogating the way artists are trained and the way their works are included in social space. Indeed, recognition of contemporary art as a critical space is one of the foundations of cultural action capable of promoting the exercise of democracy. Art does not make any direct claim to having a social or political dimension, but it has the ability to establish critical distance and represent the full potential of democracy. Regarding these changes, the ACT project recognizes the urgent need to invent new social, economic and cultural organizations that will restore meaning and reality to democratic practices.

This approach of democratic imaginary in art is all the more exciting when we observe how the modalities of thought and creation of democratic issues differ across historical and cultural contexts. Thus, we observe that the visual arts from Romania and Serbia are effective and innovative in the art of performance and conceptual art, because these practices were effective means to oppose authoritarian regimes. In fact, the desire for democratic reinvention is all the more important that those countries emerge from a checkered recent history. Conversely, in countries like France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, artists are more focused on allegorical aesthetics in that they often show a distrust, even a disillusionment, faced with earlier democratic societies. The idea of political art is questioned by generating aestheticizing works or, conversely, an activist art. It seems then interesting to see how partnership cooperation may trigger new creations engaged with the democratic changes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente*, Paris, Galilée, 1995, 188p.

<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Lantier, <http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/040089ar>

## LABORATORY / FACTORY

### A joint laboratory Art and Democracy

The A.C.T. project aims to promote **contemporary art** in its ability to **think, invent and represent the democratic changes of Europe in an era of globalization**. It intends to be a **joint laboratory** and a factory for inventive and collaborative democratic building. 3 complementary workspaces will deploy and intersect: i) Research and critical space; ii) Creation of democratic imaginary; iii) Creative and pedagogical projects.

### Seminars / Research and critical space

The A.C.T project encourages discussion and debate in order to analyse how European democracies have come to establish social organisation based on exclusion and control, instead of forms of organisation that encourage diversity and singularity – including its relationship to art.

Globalisation must no longer be understood solely through the lens of a single economic model, but it will be a sustainable engagement with social, economic and cultural organisations that are willing to learn, cultivate and produce **transformation and multiplicity**. Withdrawal into separatist identities is symptomatic of a struggle to come to terms with globalisation and the complex changes and differences it involves. European nations take refuge in a technocratic approach to cities and citizens: controlling people's movements, monitoring public space, and reducing citizens to the role of operators or economic indicators. The obsession of security and hygiene has become predominant, giving rise to relationships between individuals based on suspicion, differentiation and self-restraint. Local authorities call on artists and designers to devise furniture in public spaces that prevents anybody using it to lie down, or indeed relax. As a result, intimate refuges are no longer possible, giving way to a spectacle of exposure and extreme poverty amid the sordid indifference of the masses<sup>3</sup>. Lastly, social space itself is also highly codified and controlled, leaving little room for the freedom of movement, ideas and individuals.

We want **to question** why and how European democracies, in the era of globalization, lock themselves in **the withdrawal into separatist identities** instead of thinking politically, aesthetically and philosophically about difference and otherness. We want to see how artists, architects and designers get involved in these urban and social divisions, but also how other designers can devise projects based on openness and porosity spaces, and on the need to build places that encourage as much autonomy as sharing the view of thought. Explore what are **the conditions of intellectual and artistic emancipation** in democratic contexts because when artistic practices provide the conditions for intellectual emancipation, they are the place and time where democratic practice is exercised<sup>4</sup>.

With this space, our goal is to test a research and criticism on art and democracy by bringing skills beyond the only artistic professionals. It will consist of a **multidisciplinary laboratory** uniting, in addition to all project participants, 30 multidisciplinary researchers concerned with issues related to democratic and artistic issues: anthropologists, architects, designers, teachers, philosophers, sociologists and urban planners.

This laboratory will work 4 issues that affect arts and cultural emancipation in democracy:

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.rue89.com/photo-rue/2009/11/26/empecher-les-sdf-de-sasseoir-la-ville-ne-manque-pas-didees?page=0%2C0#>

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, Paris : La Fabrique, p.25.

- . Education: training in art in its contribution to democratic creativity
- . Freedom: limits and potential of creative freedom in Europe
- . Urbanism: daily practices of democracy in European cities
- . Poetics: the role of art and poetry in the reinvention of the imaginary of democracy.

Besides the preparatory work, each issue will be worked over the 3 one-day seminars to be held in Rennes (February 2013), Eindhoven (July 2013), Cluj (December 2013), and the symposium "Art & Democracy" to be held in Belgrade (April 2014) over 2 days by bringing together 15 speakers, 8 external moderators as well as the partners.

## **Exhibitions / Creation of democratic imaginary**

The A.C.T project intends to demonstrate that real and sustainable innovation of a culture in motion is the opposite of stun devices proposed to us today.

In the context of serious social and economic crisis, governments and local authorities throughout Europe think they are innovating by establishing **management agencies** – in fact, these are increasingly stifling artists and production/distribution structures.

Over and above the issue of budget cuts, the most noticeably worrying aspect of this is the extent to which the content, innovative potential, critical edge and creativity of projects are overlooked. At present, the prevailing trend when it comes to assessing Culture is to look at whether a given cultural facility meets the requirements of a specific legal status – devoid of substance, and with rigid parameters in terms of management, mediation and communication. Audiences are seen in terms of numbers only, instead of in terms of quality of partnership and co-operation between residents, social stakeholders, cultural structures and artists. Cultural mediation initiatives address people's socio-economic deficits instead of seeing them as individuals in their own right, capable of autonomous action and critical thought. Cultural democratisation has become a mantra justifying the creation of cultural 'products', which flatten and streamline Culture instead of cultivating artistic diversity and critical rigour. In other words, any risk-taking in terms of artistic action and creation has been annihilated by a new cultural bureaucracy whose policies and strategies are becoming increasingly hard to discern.

The partners have chosen instead to cultivate, invent and circulate artistic projects in which the creative dimension of art is valued and in which it is important to apprehend the process of learning about difference. In this way, they plan to support contemporary creation by producing works and exhibitions generating the energy required to fuel **poetic and political inventiveness and thus nurture the democratic imagination.**

Through this second axis, we aim to experiment with a space to cultivate creativity, representations and democratic imaginary. It will consist of a **laboratory of creation about democratic imaginary** which supports the production of works and exhibitions voluntarily offering diverse perspectives, even contradictory, on issues of democracy that occur in different European contexts. These works and exhibits will cultivate otherness and solicit critical and crossed eyes on the political, aesthetic and societal issues.

4 exhibitions will be produced on the theme of "Art and Democracy", by bringing more than 40 European artists who circulate and disseminate their works in the partner cities of Rennes (January-March 2013), Eindhoven (June-August 2013), Cluj (November-December 2013), Belgrade (March-May 2014). Exhibitions will be designed

by four curators asked to think European challenges as part of this issue "Art and Democracy".

Rather than offering replicas of the travelling exhibitions, the 4 exhibitions will be crossed between the partner cities, one partner inviting a European curator from another partner city. These interchanged curatorships are vital in order to offer a sufficiently rich and diverse panorama of European creativity. They also offer an opportunity to establish long-term cooperation between different artistic scenes.

## **Residencies / Creative and pedagogical projects**

The A.C.T project intends to promote higher arts education as a necessary condition to have a democratic practice.

Any attempt to foster democracy on the scale of a city, region, nation or continent is highly dependent on the resources devoted to access to **education for young people**. The European Union has always paid close attention to projects promoting education, and has a considerable remit when it comes to the circulation and sharing of knowledge. Many European cities attach crucial importance to the conditions in which future artists are trained, and look closely at the issue of career prospects for graduates of art schools on both local and international art scenes.

Within the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project, exchanges of teaching projects between partner structures form one of the foundational components of cooperation. However, we intend to establish both networking of higher arts education and the professionalisation of artists on the basis of our ability to continually call into question our journey – whether in terms of theory, geography, culture, or education – through this great question of democracy. To achieve this, we are keen to envisage learning processes for artists that make it possible to go beyond the traditional exchange schemes that exist between schools. We are keen to promote the training of future artists by involving them in **prospecting and circulation work** outside schools, in different urban and rural environments, as well as in contexts combining aesthetics and scientific research. Similarly, we are keen to emphasise cooperation in the field of artistic training between areas located at the extremities of the European Union, that is to say: cities at the western edge of Europe and their counterparts in the Balkans. These territories represent learning environments in which new projects within an expanded and constantly-evolving European Union can best be envisaged.

Through this axis, we aim to invent and share new learning process for art students, and to establish creative partnerships between schools of art and structures of production / distribution. It will consist of a **laboratory of creative and educational projects "Art and democracy"**.

4 exchange residencies of 10 students and 10 teachers will be organized between the cities of Rennes (November 2012), Eindhoven (May 2013), Cluj (October 2013), and Belgrade (January-February 2014).

These residencies will not be mere traditional exchanges within schools. They will rather invent learning projects.

These residencies will offer an opportunity to discover, design and share teaching and artistic projects.

## **Movement / crossing**

Actions will take place from September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 to August 30<sup>th</sup>, 2014, i.e 24 months. As a joint laboratory, the A.C.T project is based upon **full involvement of partners** in all project activities. Partners will all be fully and simultaneously involved. Each action will engage all the partners in the circulation of ideas, individuals and artistic creations.

Thus, the **3 laboratories** will be in **permanent crossing**, concomitance and porosity throughout the project:

- The laboratory of research and critical space, in addition to outside solicited researchers, will involve artists, students and teachers of the other two laboratories in the design, organization and dissemination of the research axis. The reflections of this laboratory also feed the other two laboratories.
- The production laboratory of works and exhibition will involve students and teachers of the creative and educational laboratory. These projects of exhibitions will be designed by 4 independent curators who will be involved in the project of laboratory of research and critical area from the beginning, just as they will participate in the learning process and creative partnerships.
- The laboratory of creative and educational projects will be fed by knowledge exchanges generated by the research and critical space laboratory. Students and teachers will be involved in the organization of seminars and exhibitions. They will also share their projects and experiences of learning process within the research and critical space laboratory.

**In order to make sensitive and disseminate this dynamic of reflection and creation, we will produce an A.C.T. Democ(k)racy publication** that will be a major, multi-focus work on art and democracy. It will comprise: the proceedings of the seminars and symposium, visuals from the exhibitions accompanied by interviews with the curators and artists, documents (texts and visuals) relating to the student and teacher exchange residencies.

For each of the proposed actions, we will pay attention to creating **exchange dynamics** with partner cities, and to make this circulation of ideas, individuals and works dynamic and meaningful. For example, rather than offering replicas of exhibits in circulation, exhibitions will be subject to European crossed eyes.

Lastly, the force of displacement and artistic and intellectual inter-relation carried by the A.C.T project is **a partnership complementarity voluntary based on diversity**: 3 art schools, 3 structures of production and distribution and 2 research structures. Partners have their own capital gain and specificities, but they decide to gather them, in order to practice and reinforce the critical and creative potential raised by the question of art and democracy.