



Projekt IP-2013-11 /6270 ARTNET *Moderne i suvremene umjetničke mreže, umjetničke grupe i udruženja: Organizacijski i komunikacijski modeli suradničkih umjetničkih praksi 20. i 21. stoljeća*
Voditeljica: dr. sc. Ljiljana Kolečnik

ARTNET PROJECT EVALUATION PANEL – MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ARTIST NETWORKS, ART GROUPS AND ART ASSOCIATIONS: ORGANISATION AND COMMUNICATION MODELS OF ARTIST COLLABORATIVE PRACTICES IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

EXTERNAL EVALUATION PANEL

Organisation: ARTNET research group

Dates: 10-11 November, 2018

Panel Venue: Institute of Art History, room 235

Participants: Prof. emerita **Tania Ørum**, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen
 Prof. **Isabel Wünsche**, Social Sciences and Humanities, Jacobs University, Bremen
 Dr. **Johannes Preiser-Kapeller**, Austrian Academy of Science, Institute for Medieval Research (via Adobe Connect)
 Dr. **Vinko Zlatić**, Institute Ruđer Bošković, Division of Theoretical Physics

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The third, and the last report on the activities carried out on the project ARTNET in 2018, is a bit different from the Working materials prepared for the previous External Evaluation Panel meetings. A comprehensive presentation of the work done by ARTNET team during that last project research cycle, which is the object of evaluation, is replaced with an overview of the results obtained during our four-year research, including the explanation of important milestones, and new ideas/solutions that emerged along the way, changing our views, and posing new research questions. It is accompanied by the list of both planned, and accomplished objectives, providing in the conclusion a short description of activities intended to ensure the sustainability of the project's IT infrastructure and enable the continuation of the research, taking into account the possibility of further financial support by the Croatian Science Foundation, and chances for obtaining additional finances through the application to EU funding resources. The individual contributions to this meeting of the Evaluation Panel, are also a bit different from the presentation model established during our previous encounters. Instead of describing a dynamics and the results of this project cycle, they are more concerned with the research team experience and understanding of digital art history, as it was practiced in Zagreb in the course of last four years. The presentations will encompass:

- a comparison between the epistemological value of the results obtained by the application of digital and traditional analytical methods of Art History

- problems and outcomes of interdisciplinary research collaboration
 - the impact of new digital technologies / new software solutions on the very notion of DAH, and on our capacity to imagine the new research possibilities stemming from their application
 - the experiences, prospects and limitations of CAN_IS database public access
- Closely related to the ongoing discussions on digital art history, the chosen topics also serve as an introduction to the ARTNET conference, which follows the Panel, and marks the end of our project.



PRESENTATIONS

Ljiljana Kolešnik, Artur Šilić, *Survey of project activities 2014 – 2018*

2014/2015

In the first project year, ARTNET research group produced both conceptual, and logical model of CAN_IS database that was conceived as a core of its information infrastructure. Database development required at least a basic knowledge of relational database concept, of system analysis, and also of social networks analysis, it was intended to support. It was acquired through the intense knowledge exchange among the research group members, and among them and researchers from other disciplines invited to participate in our Knowledge Exchange Workshops. Research team also engaged in internal discussions on the project's theoretical foundation, and the relation of chosen

analytic methods towards both analogue (traditional) and digital art history. In 2014, at the very beginning of this project, discussions of that sort – also those led in the framework of international academic community – were still rather vague, mostly preoccupied with digitalization of archival and visual sources. Concerning different interests and multiple lines of research configuring the field of digital art history, it could be claimed that even today, four years after ARTNET research group begun its investigations, advancement towards articulation of its theoretical framework is still rather slow. Imbued with the scepticism regarding its methodology, and often perceived as a false attempt in 'empiricism', complicit with an ongoing, global degradation of humanities, and met with some serious criticism regarding the promise of profound epistemological 'intervention' into disciplinary practices, neither the 2014, nor present debates on DAH provide the answers to number of questions we had to face in the course of the project.

2015/2016

In the second research cycle, a database development was brought to the level which allowed initial social network analyses, applied to data on artists' and architects' networks developed at different periods of the 20th century. From present perspective a decision that each team member is free to pursue her own research interest, was completely justified. Resulting with modular database structure, where each module was either adjusted to the specifics of particular period in the 20th century art, and culture, or designed to support their shared characteristics, at this point – as we are nearing the end of the project – it can support wide range of research topics using shared ontologies, and built-in vocabularies, that could be further expanded and reviewed. Network visualization interface (NVI) that was designed already at the beginning

of the second research cycle, and tailored according the requirements of project objectives, allowed editing of nodes and edges, both at the level of their visual display and database description. Network visualizations can be saved, data in their background can be exported in CVS/SVG format, and re-used in different digital environments.

In the course of testing the functionality of NVI, there appeared the question whether our network visualizations and the results of corresponding quantitative analysis could be taken as a convincing foundation for the generalizations assumed by the project initial hypothesis. Or to be more precise – whether the amount of collected and processed data in their background, meet the requirement for comprehensive description of analysed phenomena, which allows such generalizations. The question was strongly motivated by the ongoing ‘big data’ debate, framed by the logic of natural sciences. The attempts in providing an answer to that question, led to the first milestone in our research. That is – to the collective conclusion that in art history, a figure of ‘big data’ could be – perhaps – applied in text analysis (text corpora of avant-garde magazines, for ex.), but in the case of ARTNET, when primary object of research are artists’ networks, criteria required by the notion of ‘big data’ cannot be met, because of the personal extent of these networks is always limited by the range of cultural, historic and political circumstances. Even if we would try to collect and enter information on each and every member of the inter-war Avant-garde, the amount of available data would be far beyond the billions of information collected in natural or technical sciences on daily bases. Along the data limitations imposed by objective circumstances, there could be also those imposed by certain methodological decisions, as it was – for example – our agreement on the expansion of particular artists’ or architects’ network, that will



be followed beyond European culture only in those cases when non-European artists were integral to the phenomena, concepts or problems which motivated its formation, or in case of the networks formed around particular international organization (CIAM), that in their inception were envisioned as transcontinental. Said decision led to yet another project milestone, marked by taking critical stance towards the concept of globalization operative in art history in the last ten years, fostering, rather than deconstructing Eurocentric view on art. At the end of the second project year, research group published its first peerreviewed articles, with the results of its methodological, and historiographic research. As for the most of that period the energy of the team was divided between testing and application of the network visualization tools, and search for the solutions to the problems imposed by the growing database structure, even in these articles some important theoretical questions were – again – left aside. They manifested some serious differences among team members regarding epistemological value of quantitative data analysis. Although both methods – network visualizations and quantitative data analysis – significantly altered group’s approach to the objects of investigation, at the end of the second research cycle there appeared a certain restraint towards such, changed perspective. It could be at least partially contributed to the level of individual



engagement with data collection, and data cleaning, a procedure that was fundamentally important for understanding the nature of the epistemic shift introduced by new project methodology. In comparison to methodological aspect of the project, development of digital tools, and imaginative approach to application of advanced digital technologies, led to new ideas, and opened range of new research directions.

2016/2017

The third research cycle was marked by the significant breakthrough on several levels. The first one concerned the final outline of the CAN_IS, which turned into integrated knowledge database, Network visualization interface, was supplemented by spatial data presentation tool, and by Collaborative Visualization Interface, conceptualized at the end of the second research cycle. It was conceived as an online multilingual platform, enabling data selection according to diverse categories, and a real-time in-browser rendering of network visualizations. Further refined by the introduction of the features that support exchange of information among the researchers during a virtual, joint research sessions that could be recorded, filtered and retrieval again at any time according date or subject of that exchange. Stored in temporal repositories, session can be reviewed, supplemented with the new data or reused by other CAN_IS builtin digital tools. Collaborative Visualization Interface was finished at the end of

the third project year, and the idea to expand it into a virtual research platform connecting all CAN_IS interfaces has to be postponed until we find new funding sources. The beginning of experiments with AR / VR technologies, marked still another, most important milestone in the third research cycle. They followed ideas and suggestions given during group discussions on presentation tools that could advance communication of project results to wider audience. Among its most important characteristics was the ability to combine different media (text, still images, video clips, infographics) supporting descriptions of social network structures, and content of the information – acquired through our research – circulating among network actors. After thorough investigations in representational capacities of visual digital technologies, our SME partner designed the first application based on Augmented / Virtual Reality (AR/VR). In addition to certain methodological and theoretical implications, the application initiated a surge of new ideas on how it might be employed both in our research and in GLAM context. This is especially important because we operate with digitally-born objects, abstract data visualizations and concepts, which also assume new, and different notions of spatiality, new models of interaction and curation. The said application was experimentally included in the 52nd Zagreb Salon of Applied Arts and Design, and applied in rendering of its social network (2,500 persons). Combining prototyped complex pattern recognition (AR), and Google cardboard VR, it was a simple way to test beta version of the immersive data environment. Activities during that research cycle also included intensive communication with the academic community – lectures and presentations on digital art history and digital humanities at several art history departments, public discussions on the relation between classic and

digital humanities, signaling the expansion of our initial research focus towards much broader range of practical problems and theoretical questions on digital art / architecture history, and digital humanities at large. A breakthrough in the segment of text analysis was made at the end of 2017. At practical level, text corpora of avant-garde magazines gained a rather clear outline after magazine Zenit was supplemented by approximately 10,000 articles from the Der Sturm, and by the content of few other, avant-garde periodicals from the 1920s (Action, Art Concrete, Aventure, Cabarte Voltaire, Cercle et Carre, Círculo y Cuadrado, Dada, Dada Jazz, Dada Jok, Dada Tank, Der Dada, De Stijl, Bauhaus, Blok, LEF, MA /Budapest/, MA /Vienna/, MERZ, Novy LEF, Pasmó, Red, Svetokret, Veshch, Zwornica, 391). The experiments with text analysis also assumed investigation of available language sets, translation tools, and tools supporting multilingual topic modelling. It was aiming at tracing the articulation of generally accepted signifiers for particular concepts or poetics through above described text corpora. Text Explorer, application designed for conducting text analysis provides morphologic normalization, automatic extraction and classification of personal names, dates, geo-locations and concepts, mediating between any kind of a digitized textual sources, and CAN_IS database. Digitized textual sources are stored in repository and can be reached through data entry interface. At the end of the project, Text Explorer will be built into the database, while textual repository will be put online and made available for data re-use. However, since targeted text corpora is written on at least ten different languages, and taking care of the linguistic and cultural complexity of initiated research, it will require still another four-year project in order to be completed.



2017/2018

Apart from the work on the contributions to the book – conceived as experiment in e-publishing – intended to provide summary of project results, majority of activities in the last research cycle assumed additional data collecting, presentations at international conferences, participation in roundtable discussions, academic networking, and networking with community of independent research / digital design labs. They were supplemented with minor corrections and interventions in database structure, followed by the development and implementation of Spatio-temporal Trajectories Interface (STI) which provides an insight into the movements of people, objects and concepts through space/time of European modern and contemporary art. At this moment, at the end of the project, STI is fully functional, but with plenty of room for further development. Closing project events are international conference that will be held in mid-November in collaboration with Zagreb University Computing Centre, and public presentation of CAN_IS database planned for the beginning of December.

Željka Tonković, *Experience of interdisciplinary research*

Since the project ARTNET required cooperation between experts from different fields – humanities, social sciences, technological and applied sciences – questions about the possibilities of interdisciplinary cooperation arose during the project. In the presentation, I will give a short review of the main advantages and challenges of the interdisciplinary approach that the research team encountered during various phases of the project. It will be especially directed towards knowledge transmission workshops which were organized as part of the project specifically with the goal of developing an innovative, interdisciplinary approach to research; an approach that overcomes the limitations of each individual discipline and allows for the development of new epistemological and methodology tools, including network analysis and visualisation, as well as quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The presentation will also present several examples of connecting different disciplinary discourses and methodological traditions.

Sanja Horvatinčić, *ARNET's epistemological outcomes*

I believe that what we have at hand with the introduction of DAH in the local context is a radical methodological, but also epistemological intervention on several levels. Firstly, it's the level of defining the legitimate subject of the art historical study – not an artwork, but the subjects and the means of production of art. In that sense, I believe that the negative reaction from the art historian member of the evaluation board after the 1st year of the project was not motivated so much by the fact that we are dealing with digital art history (that is, after all, the new buzz word), but that we are not dealing in this project with images – or “works of art”. The very idea of challenging the priority of the formalist approach was the warning, even alarming sign, and since there was not even an effort to make a compromise, e.g. “to include

some images in the database” (as suggested), then the panic was full on.

Be it the good old discipline's fear of losing the ground and safeguarding its elite position – given its frail foundations and rather short history – or just the uneasiness of admitting its inability and/or unwillingness to adjust to the technological and social changes (which are, of course, at least in part motivated by the cuts in humanities that we, here, have not yet experienced in as drastic way as our colleagues in the west), I think that it is the liaison with social sciences, more than that with the digital medium itself, that makes this project so dangerous. We have witnessed the same fear or resentment with so many other attempts to widen the scope or art-historical research, and/or to redefine the very subject of research or the discipline itself. Maybe this is yet another reason why feminist, social history, visual studies, social memory studies, or any other transdisciplinary, critical approaches are DAH's natural allies, and why in the local context DAH has perhaps stronger subversive effect that in some other academic contexts. Another important layer of intervention in the dominant art-historical discourse in Croatia is the fact that “social network” necessarily go beyond or call into question the concept of national art history, which still pervades the academia. The good side is that we are no longer dependent on the local scholarship or only on the local funding, on the contrary, we are constantly being directed towards the international publishing etc., but here we encounter another problem, that of the material basis of such research.

Nikola Bojić, *Influences of IT on the development and research direction of the ARTNET project*

The presentation will deal with the technological aspects of the ARTNET project, including the development of the project's relational database and visualisation interface, as well as the epistemological and methodological impacts they had on the project's research trajectory. Finally, presentation will tackle already conducted

and future technological experiments emerged within the project (including AR and VR), and map out general attitudes of the project's team towards evolving technological concepts within digital art history.

Irena Kraševac, *Practical application of ARTNET's research results and digital tools developed in collaboration with Croatian Association of Artists*

Work on the research project "Modern and Contemporary Artist Networks, Artist Groups and Associations" (ARTNET) happily coincided with the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Croatian Association of Artists (HDLU), 1868-2018. Parallel to the creation of the project base CAN_IS (Croatian Artists Network Information System), systematic work on the inventory of exhibitions held during the 150 years of HDLU's activity, was also conducted. At the very beginning of that work, art historian Petra Šlošel was hired at first as an expert associate at the HDLU, then as a volunteer at the Institute of Art History and, finally, as an associate in the ARTNET project. From the very beginning, her involvement was extremely significant for the project. Through her applied work and gained experience she contributed to the creation of the CAN_IS base, where she logged over 1500 entries related to exhibitions.

The results of the research and entries into the base were presented to the public at the 4th Congress of Croatian Art Historians (Institute of Art History, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, November 2016), as part of the In/Applicability of Applied Art – 52nd Zagreb Salon exhibition (Ervin Šilić (Novena), Virtual social network of the history of the Zagreb Salon: Augmented Reality Project, Studio Novena, Zagreb Salon network, Mimara Museum, Zagreb, June 2017) and during the panel HDLU Within the ARTNET Project. Base of 1500 exhibitions during the 150 years of HDLU's history (HDLU and IPU, Zagreb, 25th September 2018). The records will also be available in the monograph 150 years of HDLU. Art and Institutions (editor

Irena Kraševac), co-published by HDLU and IPU, 2018.

A meeting between relevant institutions has been agreed, with the purpose of continuing the research work and processing the archival material about the exhibition work of the HDLU throughout its history, and with the goal of supplementing the list of exhibitions held during the target period, and which have not been completely inventoried during the current two-year research. Additional work will be done on systematic entering of data about the current exhibition programme, which was realised on the basis of an application to the Kultura Nova competition held by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

CONCLUSION

The panel was concluded with the evaluation given by the external panellists, summed up in several points:

The panellists unanimously pointed out an innovative contribution of the project to the digital art history in the current international context. Information infrastructure developed within the project, especially the Collaborative Visualization Interface was accented as a tool that, along with the database, can have a significant impact on the field.

On the other hand, panellist agreed that the project opened up, but not answered to a series of theoretical questions. According to the panellists, the theoretical layout of the project should be build up throughout further technological experimentation, interdisciplinary research and problem-oriented case-studies focused on the specific epistemological problem.

The panellists expressed their gratitude to be able to follow up the project from its inception to its final stage within this project cycle. Having in mind all the stages of the project's development, they pointed out methodology, unique set of skills and specificity of knowledge produced within the project as a great value. Recognising the

“know-how” build up by the project team, the panellists suggested to the team to open up and support similar international research initiatives with their knowledge and experience.

Finally, recognizing the developed IT infrastructure of the project as a potential core of larger international research initiatives in the field, the panellists suggested to the team to continue and further intensify networking with international institutions, digital-labs, and research teams. They concluded that project at this stage is sophisticated enough and technologically ready for “scaling-up” to the level of a platform that can serve to a broader international research community. It is suggested that this type of extension and development takes place in the second phase of the project, which is yet to come.