

AGF & Mary C

FEMINIST TRAIN TOUR

APRIL 2023

NOTES by Mary C

Two sound artists and networkers due East and South-East with the intentions to meet people from local cultural scene and discuss the political potential of sound and music technologies, socio-economic context of peripheries and semi-peripheries of Europe, possible connection, collaboration and ways of caring as well as the systems of power(lessness), feminisms and the ghosts of east bloc and future east blocs. With hope we can change the usual frontal formats of music tours to something more communal and connect dots to grow through toxic empires.

Bratislava (SK) with LOM Space

Vienna (AT) with Sounds Queer?

Budapest (HU) with ASS Buda & Easterndaze

Ljubljana (SLO) with Kamizdat & Ustanova Platform

Brno (CZ) with Vašulka Kitchen

Olomouc (CZ) with Hlubina Collective

Prague (CZ) with Synth Library

DEPARTURE

Russian government attacked Ukraine forcing a war on the country.

Ghosts of the former East Block are on the haunt again.

The empires absorbed all the power and traces of life that were left on Earth. Far-right movements are on the rise. Walls are built again and human rights suppressed. Who is speaking up? Who is taking care of those who like our grandparents try to flee a war or authoritarian regime? Back to normal after pandemics never happened moreover the so called normal was always toxic. We don't have time to grieve. Femicide and censorship conducted by those who preach free speech and hail the free market.

Economic growth and innovation won't save us. Only dis-ease trickles down. Care is not valued and harder to take and reach. We are extracting our way to more and more frequent climate collapses, poisoning the water, the air and soil. Not

even Central Europe can be called peaceful and safe. If you turn East the infrastructures are becoming obstacles, fragile and uncertain roads. Many years we wanted to go west. We tried hard to wash the eastern smell from ourselves and cover the accents. Grind locally, die globally.

Governments rarely care about the role of culture and arts nor do they care about the vulnerable members of our society. Small percentage of hoarders own most of what is for sale destroying what should have been the commons. Forests are burning. Instruments are burning coal. Money is printed just for some.

Our work and communication is constantly monetized by data giants and it is getting harder to navigate the webs of propaganda and fake news and to organize. Antifascist feminism is demonized. The bullshit of our jobs plagued our lives. We are living in an interregnum, an intersection of multiple crises. Instability rising up through the classes. Demonstrations and civil disobedience no longer work and are becoming impossible in boiling cities. Cracks are filled with candy.

Can we play or do we still fight?

We have to create movement and space for our voices and sounds.

RE-CONNECTION

Feeling very small facing the problems sitting on a train reading an essay by Polish philosopher Ewa Majewska

“Toward Antifascist Futures”. <https://lithub.com/toward-antifascist-futures-on-small-scale-organizing-as-a-global-movement/>

And we are small. What makes a person or a collective big? Is it its willingness to share, care and learn? Questions and struggles are similar in the independent collectives and initiatives we met. Can we help each other understand our situation better and navigate it with respect in solidarity and creativity, feeling safe and maybe even joyous? “We need to imagine and rehearse alternatives,” writes Majewska.

We are already connected! Not only with our histories and burdens. We welcome chaos and intuition (Synth Library), the Sonic Wilderness (AGF), we call for the multilogue in a circle to wake the connections and resonate. We listen. No silencing, Deep Listening, all shapes and colors can trigger change (Synth

Library). Can we change something together? Do you feel safe? Do you feel heard? Do you feel free?

Some try to speak up but some have to be careful and hide their structures like mycelium to be able to operate under conditions that are far from democratic. We are grateful to all that joined the conversation and we offer the Eastfloc listing document that is open so anyone can add and join the flock.

<https://etherpad.wikimedia.org/p/eastflocsoundalliance>

“When we choose to love, we choose to move against alienation and separation to connect, to find ourselves in the other.”

bell hooks

TOPICS REOCCURRING IN THE DEBATES

How to be in this world?

In the sick system that is imperial, patriarchal, racist capitalism.
Are we really that divided? Society exists. Let's bring back the togetherness.
How to unite with others with different needs?
We need a sense of belonging and hope.
We also need to embrace weakness.

“How to relate to another face?”

We are still grieving and processing the social consequences of the pandemics.

How the world impacts our art and changes any of our practices?

We are told to leave politics out of art but we are all political already
It's too urgent to play just with aesthetics.
Can we follow the urgencies or is it destroying us?
How to deal with the terrible stories around us?
How to pay attention to our feelings and body processes?
Take care of yourself and then others!

Resist!

The uprising is already happening!

How do we communicate?

How accessible is really this debate we are having?

Those who care and do the invisible work might not be able to join debates, workshops or even rest properly.

We have been disappointed by the internet.

The tools we hope to use for good are co-opted by giants or were developed with an intention to control and destroy from the beginning.

“Pondering eastness”

We are trying to find fitting language for the processes around us, within us and between us.

What do we have in common? What to build on? What to grieve about and what to unlearn and demythologize ?

The initiative to connect people from former East Block countries on a Discord channel was first named

Eastbloc Antifascist Sound Alliance, not everyone was comfortable with that.

Presently it became “eastfloc” capturing the diversity of the non-scene still attempting to connect artists and cultural context of the semi-peripheries.

EASTFLOC

“We are a recovering network in the making, decolonizing under attack, neglect, precarity, ignorance and semi-peripheral traumas, our territories are under exploitation and co-option by empires.”

EASTNESS

The quality or state of being east

“The predicament of the East marks a dual exclusion: from the entitled Global North and from the marginalised Global South. But it is not pure Otherness. It is rather a semi-alterity (Tlostanova 2017), a demi-orientalism (Wolff 1994). The East is different but similar, Other but not quite. As much a ‘grey zone’ of indeterminacy (Knudsen and Frederiksen 2015) as it is a grey place. The Global North, often in the guise of ‘Europe’, serves as the teleological horizon against which the East becomes a not-quite-North.

Countries may join the European Union, but the subtle distinctions of habitus of Eurocrats in the corridors of power in Brussels continue to mark the difference between the East and the West (Kuus 2014) as does the racism

that Eastern European immigrants experience in Western Europe (Nowicka 2017). People may partake of European consumption, such as in the ubiquitous evroremont (Sgibnev 2015), but never quite become fully European. This 'Eastness', as some scholars have called it (Kuus 2007; Zarycki 2014), has been a marker of the East for decades, if not centuries, notwithstanding EU accession, decades of economic growth, widespread privatisation and democratisation."

(In Search of the Global East: Thinking between North and South, Martin Muller, Geopolitics, 2018)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14650045.2018.1477757>

More on Eastness

<https://www.routledge.com/Ideologies-of-Eastness-in-Central-and-Eastern-Europe/Zarycki/p/book/9780415787970>

"They don't invite us..."

Looking up to the west and trying to catch up with the western infrastructures, trends and even the life standards didn't bring much.

Do we still feel some kind of shame?

We are still not book and written about.

Music scene is a friends of friends environment.

See the research done by Oramics Collective from Poland on representation of Eastern European artists in Western music media

<https://twitter.com/Oramicspl/status/1578763954041458688>

"How to build infrastructures and sustain on cultural scene?"

How to survive as an artist

It's hard to be autonomous

Infrastructure of youth clubs could help arts flourish.

Commodification of identities

Aesthetics before real politics

Electronic scene is very individualized

Toxicity on the cultural scene

Racism, homophobia and transphobia

Gatekeeping and ageism

How to make music clubs a safer space for everyone?
How scenes disappear if they don't have any funding.
What are the pros and cons of government funding?
How to navigate the language of bureaucracy?
What is considered a successful cultural project by the government?
The funding schemes are suitable for bigger organizations and only for some types of projects.
To what extent the government and bigger institution even know anything about the alternative electronic music scenes?

"Funding as keeping arts and academia quiet."

Is there a potential to start art/cultural unions?
Do we have a capacity to organize like this?

MY BODY OF SOUND

"Fundamental human rights are being suppressed. How can we play?"

In Prague we join a protest gathering My body, my choice co-organized by many Prague based feminist collectives including Synth Library. It celebrated bodily autonomy, right for abortion and LGBTQ+ rights. Night before the event we organized a sound workshop "My Body of Sound". We talked about the political potential of sound and created sounds and recordings for a composition (finalized by AGF). The composition was then played at the gathering.

MY BODY, MY CHOICE

"Under the guise of traditional family values, the pro-life movement Hnutí pro život regularly marches against human rights, reproductive rights, and LGBTQ+ rights. They manipulatively restrict the rights of those pregnant against their will. Amnesty International, among others, reported on the recent developments in the case of Justyna Wydrzyńska, a Polish activist, who was recently convicted for providing a pregnant woman with abortion pills. It has been two years since the Polish government made it illegal for pregnant people to undergo abortions and criminalised the act of providing abortions. The consequences of the new anti-abortion legislature go far beyond the sentencing of activists such as Justyna Wydrzyńska. Polish women have paid with their lives - last year The Guardian reported the case of Agnieszka who died due to being denied a medically necessary abortion. Additionally, the Polish government also has the blood of Izabela on their hands who died due to similar circumstances. We denounce the restriction of reproductive rights abroad and the attempts to move legislation in the Czech Republic in the same direction. Therefore, we want to express our

opposition to the so-called pro-life movement and support all those who need, mediate, defend and protect access to safe abortions.”

ARTS OF THE EASTBLOC

EASTERDAZE

One of the first initiatives to listen closely to current Eastern European music scenes founded by researcher, music journalist, sound artist and more Lucia Udvardyová.

Easterndaze is a project that explores and highlights the best new music from Central and Eastern Europe through a variety of channels, including radio shows (London's Resonance FM, Czech public radio station Radio Wave, Habitat.fm netradio), concerts (check our events), music releases (compilation and further planned releases on Audiotong and our new side-project, the BABA VANGA label) and this blog. Easterndaze aims to explore the current political and social status quo in some of the countries in this region through the eyes of the ones most vulnerable to changes in society – young artists who are still under-the-radar. It's not going to be a patronizing Western view on “hip” Eastern Europe, because we come from the East ourselves. Easterndaze aims not only to raise the awareness about up-and-coming – mainly experimental and electronic – artists in the West, but more importantly, to increase the strikingly low informedness and foster cooperation between the Eastern European artistic scenes.

HUNGARIAN UNDERCURRENTS

<https://www.ctm-festival.de/magazine/to-find-a-world>

<https://easterndaze.net/post/159748140390/budapests-new-underground>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3ct4vkt>

<https://exiles-electronics.bandcamp.com/album/exiles>

SLOVENIAN SAFER SPACES

USTANOVA PLATFORM

Queer DJ collective organizing events at Monokel & Tiffany clubs in Ljubljana

[IG: ustanovaplatform](#)

REJV UTOPIJA

An idea of a night life that is more accessible, safe and inclusive for all.

Provides awareness team and materials for parties.

IG: [rejvutopija](#)

EMANAT

Production, education and publishing institute focused not only on dance art established by Maja Delak

IG: [emanat_institute](#)

SLOVENIAN SCENE

<https://thequietus.com/articles/32807-meant-ljubljana-review-2023>

<https://daily.bandcamp.com/scene-report/ljubljana-slovenia-experimental-electronic-list>

<https://grounded.si/>

<https://sonica.si/>

REDISCOVERING THE PASTS

POOR BUT SEXY

(Agata Pyzik, zero books, 2014)

24 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Europe is as divided as ever. The passengers of the low-budget airlines go east for stag parties, and they go West for work; but the East stays East, and West stays West. Caricatures abound - the Polish plumber in the tabloids, the New Cold War in the broadsheets and the endless search for 'the new Berlin' for hipsters. Against the stereotypes, Agata Pyzik peers behind the curtain to take a look at the secret histories of Eastern Europe (and its tortured relations with the 'West'). Neoliberalism and mass migration, post-punk and the Bowiephile obsession with the Eastern Bloc, Orientalism and 'self-colonization', the emancipatory potentials of Socialist Realism, the possibility of a non-Western idea of modernity and futurism, and the place of Eastern Europe in any current revival of 'the idea of communism' – all are much more complex and surprising than they appear. Poor But Sexy refuses both a dewy-eyed Ostalgia for the 'good old days' and the equally desperate desire to become a 'normal part of Europe', reclaiming instead the idea an Other Europe.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b05s3c5l>

PRESENT STRUGGLES

FEMINIST ANTIFASCISM

(Ewa Majewska, Verso, 2021)

In this exciting, innovative work, Polish feminist philosopher Ewa Majewska maps the creation of feminist counterpublics around the world—spaces of protest and ideas, community and common struggle, that can challenge the emergence of fascist states as well as Western democratic “public spheres” populated by atomized, individual subjects. Drawing from Eastern Europe and the Global South, Majewska describes the mass labor movement of Poland’s Solidarnosc in 1980 and contemporary feminist movements across Poland and South America, arguing that it is outside of the West that we can see the most promising left futures. Majewska argues for the creation of a feminist public—a politics and a world held in common—and outlines the tactics this political goal demands, arguing for a feminist political theory that does not reproduce the same forms of domination it seeks to overcome.

<https://www.versobooks.com/en-gb/products/2660-feminist-antifascism>

BLAST FROM THE PAST

KRTEK A MĚSTO // THE MOLE IN THE CITY

(Zdeněk Miler & Vadim Petrov, Czechoslovakia, 1982)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6u8MZti8FU>

This animated film follows the adventures of the famous Czech mole Krtek and his sidekicks hedgehog and rabbit, as they head to the city after their home – the forest – has been taken over by industrialization. The tale shows so many toxic practices we know from our present day society. Capitalism extracts every possible source, leads to climate crises and displaces many creatures.

The Mole

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mole_\(Krtek\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Mole_(Krtek))

MORE READING FROM THE EASTBLOC

ARTIST AT WORK

(Bojana Kunst, zero books, 2015)

The main affirmation of artistic practice must today happen through thinking about the conditions and the status of the artist's work. Only then can it be revealed that what is a part of the speculations of capital is not art itself, but mostly artistic life. *Artist at Work* examines the recent changes in the labour of an artist and addresses them from the perspective of performance.

The Political Economy of Eastern Europe 30 years into the 'Transition'

(Edited by Agnes Gagyí and Ondřej Slačálek, Springer, 2022)

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-78915-2#toc>

By the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, in most parts of Eastern Europe, high expectations associated with postsocialist transition have been substituted by disillusionment. After 1990, Eastern Europe has been internationally treated with a low-interest acknowledgement of what was understood as a slow and erratic, but unquestionable process of integration in a Western-dominated world order. In the context of today's geopolitical reorganization, East European examples of authoritarian politics once again become discussed as significant reference points for Western and global politics. This book represents a contribution to this debate from a distinctive East European perspective: that of new left scholars and activists from the region, whose lifetime largely corresponds to the transformations of the postsocialist period, and who came to develop an understanding of their environment in terms of its relations to global capitalist processes. A both theoretical and empirical contribution, the book provides essential insights on topics conventionally associated with East European transition from privatization to the politicized slogans of corruption or civil society, and analyzes their connection to the newest reconfigurations of postsocialist capitalist regimes. As a contribution to contemporary debates on the present global socio-political transformation, this collection does not only seek to debate analytical statements, but also to change the field where analytical stakes are set, by adding perspectives that think Eastern Europe's global relations from within the regional context and its political stakes.

Central Europe Culture Wars: Beyond Post-Communism and Populism

(Edited by Barša, Hesová, Slačálek)

<https://nep4dissent.eu/news/central-europe-culture-wars-beyond-post-communism-and-populism/>

The anti-liberal turn in Central Europe aroused a lively scholarly discussion to which this book wishes to contribute by providing a novel perspective. The recent illiberal upsurge is often ascribed to weakly rooted liberalism in the context of an unfinished transition, or, conversely, to the completion of the transition process in which populists turn against their erstwhile mentors from the West. Without separating Central Europe from global trends, the authors of this book look at a change in the political dynamics of post-accession Central Europe through the prism of the culture wars. Conflicts over values, symbols and social norms have marked the 2010s in strikingly similar ways across Central Europe. To some extent they replace the older, socioeconomic right versus left cleavage, and, at the same time, they highlight topics like gender, identity, sovereignty and globalization. Every Central European country has undergone deeply polarizing episodes in the aftermath of the 2015 refugee crisis, and some even before. In certain nations, these are linked to a strong national-conservative project, to religion or to traumas of the past, but there is no simple pattern. The book studies culturalized politics in a broadly conceived Central Europe – Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and Croatia – and shows the various forms that culture wars have taken in the 2010s as well as their underlying logic.

MORE CONNECTIONS FROM THE TRAIN TOUR

LOM SPACE - BRATISLAVA (SK)

<https://space.lom.audio/about>

SOUNDS QUEER - VIENNA (AT)

<https://www.soundsqueer.org/>

ASS - BUDAPEST (HU)

<https://www.facebook.com/funtasstik>

EASTERNDAZE

<https://easterndaze.net/>

USTANOVA PLATFORM - LJUBLJANA (SLO)

<https://www.facebook.com/ustanovaplatform>

KAMIZDAT - LJUBLJANA (SLO)

<https://kamizdat.bandcamp.com/>

VAŠULKA KITCHEN - BRNO (CZ)

<https://www.vasulkakitchen.org/>

FAVU BRNO (CZ) - STUDENTS INITIATIVES

- BUBLINA

<https://bublina.favu.vut.cz/>

- FAVU LABEL

<https://favulabel.bandcamp.com/album/m-na-m>

HLUBINA COLLECTIVE - OLOMOUC (CZ)

<https://www.facebook.com/HLUBINA.kolektiv>

SYNTH LIBRARY - PRAGUE (CZ)

<http://synthlibrary.cz>

FURTHER LISTENING AND READING

<https://rec-on.org/>

<https://radiopunctum.cz/shows/eastbloc-dispatches>

<https://kioskradio.com/label/skupina-x-mappa>

<https://www.new-east-archive.org/>

<https://norient.com/>

<https://en.glissando.pl/issues/>

<https://festivalgrounded.bandcamp.com/album/grounded-peace-va>

<https://kamizdat.bandcamp.com/album/solidarity-fund-hydro>

