

Art Cooperation Transmission Democ(k)racy

Project

Art

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

Cooperation

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

Transmission

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

In many European countries, there are signs of withdrawal into separatist identities –
alarming evidence of a crisis of democracy within Europe

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

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

The critical, educational and creative dimensions of art, meanwhile,
are fundamental to the development and exercise of democracy

In an era of globalisation,
we believe that difference, discontinuity and contradiction
should constantly be cultivated through inter-relating the commonplace and the
singular:
these underpin our representations of reality

In view of all this, we, the partners in the A.C.T Democ(k)racy project:

- . Altart Foundation, Cluj-Napoca – Romania
- . École européenne supérieure d'arts de Bretagne – France
- . Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow – United Kingdom
- . Kultumi Centar Beograda, Belgrade – Serbia
- . La Criée contemporary arts centre, Rennes – France
- . Onomatopee research centre, Eindhoven – Netherlands
- . University of arts and design, Cluj-Napoca – Romania

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 globalisation 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 a Culture which is over-administrated and decreasingly inventive, we believe that the vitality of contemporary creativity involves constantly tending a dynamic encompassing tension, transformation and the invention of cultural and artistic projects.

Together, the partners have 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, particularly 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 prime conditions for the free circulation of ideas and works.

In his book *La mésentente* (The misunderstanding)¹, philosopher Jacques Rancière observes that the practice of democracy today appears to have been superseded by its own legislative, administrative and communications apparatus. Citing 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. In this post-democratic world, everyone sees and hears everyone else. 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. It constitutes the perfect match between real life and the police order. 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.”²

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 political 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, rather the opposite. 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. The A.C.T. DEMOC(K)RACY project seeks to serve as a factory for crafting symbolic representations of the contemporary world in the light of economic and cultural shifts, playing a decisive role in the establishment of inventive, collaborative democracies.

In order to make art an active critical space in which to take up the fresh challenges for democracy in Europe in an era of globalisation, the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project partners have decided to focus on three contexts, which form the springboard for their engagement:

1- The first aspect of weakening European democracy concerns the inability of Europe to think of itself as a creative political force in an era of globalisation.

Withdrawal into separatist identities is symptomatic of a struggle to come to terms with globalisation and the complex changes and differences it involves. Globalisation must no longer be understood solely through the lens of a single economic model. Sustainable engagement with globalisation requires social, economic and cultural organisations that are willing to learn, cultivate and produce transformation, diversity and multiplicity. Amid a dearth of fresh political agendas in favour of democracy, EU nations have taken 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 twin obsessions of security and hygiene have become predominant, giving rise to relationships between individuals based on suspicion, differentiation and self-restraint. When it comes to planning public space and social action, children, adults and old people are seen as mutually exclusive categories: each group is assigned its own space for work, play and rest. Cities hate earth and dust. Trees are pruned square and megacities rise skywards following cookie-cutter

¹ Jacques Rancière, *La mésentente*, Paris, Galilée, 1995, 188p.

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

aesthetic principles. Local authorities call on artists and designers to devise furniture in public spaces which prevents anybody using it to lie down, or indeed relax. As a result, intimate refuges have disappeared entirely, giving way to a spectacle of exposure and extreme poverty: individuals with no choice but to lie on the ground, amid the sordid indifference of the masses³. Social space itself is also highly codified and controlled, leaving little room for the freedom of movement, ideas and individuals.

This is why the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project intends to establish an “Art and Democracy” research unit, bringing together 30 researchers and combining various different fields of knowledge and skill: anthropologists, architects, artists, teachers, philosophers, sociologists and so on. Through seminars and a symposium, we hope to encourage 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 which encourage diversity and singularity. We wish to examine the issue of how and why European democracies in an era of globalisation have taken refuge in securitarian and separatist identity mindsets instead of devising political, aesthetic and philosophical approaches encompassing difference and otherness. We wish to observe the way in which artists, architects and designers collude in this urban and social partitioning, as well as the way in which other creative artists could devise projects founded on openness, porous spaces and the need to construct space fostering both independent perspectives and shared views.

2- The second aspect of weakening European democracy relates to its apparent inability to conceive of Culture in anything other than purely administrative terms, resulting in far from ideal conditions for the emergence of artistic and creative dynamics.

In the context of serious social and economic crisis, governments and local authorities throughout Europe imagine they are innovating by establishing management agencies – in actual 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. Consequently, artists are cast in the role of ‘cultural mediators’ or ‘organisers’, responsible for bringing (new) life to a locality. In European liberal democracies, Culture may now be well-administrated – but it is less and less the fruit of inventiveness. In fact, there is a widening gap between public policy and the artistic projects put forward by art professionals such as artists, critics, arts centres and so on. 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.

In light of this state of affairs, the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project intends to demonstrate that real, sustainable innovation in a dynamic Culture is the exact opposite of such paralysis-inducing schemes. 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.

This approach to the realm of the imagination as it relates to democracy through art is all the more inspiring in that the partners have observed the extent to which thought and creative processes with regard to issues of democracy differ widely depending on historical and cultural backgrounds. For instance, we have observed that contemporary visual arts from

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

countries such as Romania and Serbia are particularly powerful and innovative as regards performance art and conceptual art: these artistic practices were effective and uncontrollable ways of standing up against authoritarian, ideological regimes. The desire to reinvent democracy is all the stronger because these countries have only recently emerged from a troubled and unstable period in their history. On the other hand, in Western European countries such as France, the Netherlands and the UK, artists are more interested in allegorical aesthetics, and often appear distant, disillusioned or indeed anxious when it comes to the historic democratic nations. The idea of political art is called into question, either through the creation of formalistic works focussing solely on aesthetic goals, or at the opposite extreme, through militant art forms. In the light of the above, we believe it is worth examining these contexts and seeing how cooperation between partners can trigger new interrogations and new artistic creations responding to changes in democracy.

3- The third aspect in which the issue of democracy is vital relates to training and career prospects for future artists.

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 and networking of teaching projects between partner structures form one of the foundational components of cooperation. Over and above this, we intend to establish both networking of higher arts education and the professionalisation of artists on the basis of partners' ability to continually call into question their 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 which exist between schools. For instance, we are keen to promote the training of 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 EU: cities at the western edge of Europe and their counterparts in the Balkans. Indeed, these extremities represent learning environments in which new projects within an expanded and constantly-evolving European Union can best be envisaged.

In the light of all these social, economic, cultural and environmental changes, the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project recognises the urgent need to engage with the issues and invent new forms of social, economic and cultural organisation which can once again ascribe meaning, reality and inventiveness to the practice of democracy.

The A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project thus intends to grasp this decisive moment to support European artistic creation focussing on issues of democracy, engaging education and artistic creation in the face of social and political challenges to this democracy. We are persuaded that cooperation between structures from widely differing backgrounds can result in a culturally rich vision of the Europe of the future.

Partnership status within the A.C.T. DEMOC(K)RACY Project

The A.C.T. DEMOC(K)RACY project brings together 5 countries and 8 partners:

- . France
 - La Criée contemporary arts centre, Rennes (lead partner)
 - École européenne supérieure d'arts de Bretagne – Rennes (co-organiser)
- . Netherlands
 - Onomatopee, centre for research on the parameters of culture, Eindhoven (co-organiser)
- . Romania
 - University of Art & Design, Cluj (co-organiser)
 - Altart Foundation, Cluj (co-organiser)
 - Fabrica de Pensule, Cluj (associate partner)
- . United Kingdom
 - Glasgow School of Art (associate partner)
- . Serbia
 - Kultumi Centar Beograda, Belgrade (co-organiser)

The A.C.T. DEMOC(K)RACY project also involves:

- 3 higher arts education establishments:
 - . Cluj University of Art and Design, Romania
 - . École européenne supérieure d'arts de Bretagne - Rennes, France
 - . Glasgow School of Art, United Kingdom
- 3 production and circulation structures:
 - . La Criée contemporary arts centre, Rennes, France
 - . Kultumi Centar Beograda, Belgrade, Serbia
 - . Fabrica de Pensule, Cluj-Napoca - Romania
- 2 research and presentation centres exploring the parameters of Culture:
 - . Onomatopee, Eindhoven, Netherlands
 - . Altart Foundation, Cluj-Napoca - Romania
- 10 students from art schools and universities
- 10 teachers from art schools and universities
- 30 outside contributors:
Architects, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, curators
- 24 European artists from the partner cities and other European towns and cities
 - 40 artistic works and productions circulating in Europe

Principal aim

Defining and promoting the ability of contemporary artistic creation to imagine, invent and represent the new democratic challenges and processes faced by Europe at a time of major change.

Specific aims

- Cultivating the critical dimension of art as a condition for inventiveness and the practice of democracy
- Promoting cross-fertilisation between artistic research and democracy, bringing together skills beyond those of art professionals alone: anthropologists, architects, artists, teachers, philosophers and sociologists
- Promoting higher artistic education within Europe as a democratic condition of contemporary, dynamic and innovative creativity
- Encouraging creative partnerships between art schools and centres involved in producing and circulating art, enabling students to have a better grasp of local and international art scenes
- Encouraging relocation and invention of learning processes outside traditional teaching frameworks
- Developing artistic solidarity throughout the expanded territory of the EU both today and in the future
- Producing, exhibiting and circulating contemporary works on the theme of "Art and Democracy"
- Promoting the project beyond the partners, particularly as it relates to local authorities and organisations that are aware of the current issues facing democracy

Expected outcomes

- Building up artistic networks based on social responsibility and solidarity
- Setting up of a European "Art & Democracy" research unit based on cross-fertilisation of knowledge and skills and the critical dimension of art and thought
- Developing creative, framework projects conducted by students and teachers with European artists and curators
- Developing support for artistic creation through co-production of works and exhibitions
- Developing cross-cutting work between art, performance, architecture and theory
- Increasing the circulation of contemporary artistic stakeholders (artists, curators, academics, etc.)
- Developing a network of contemporary European and international art stakeholders and researchers who are concerned by the issue of "Art and Democracy"
- Better career launches for graduates of art schools within local and international art scenes
- Development of partnerships between universities, art schools and research laboratories
- Development of new ways of relating to audiences with respect to issues of democracy and the dimension of art as a critical space

- Structuring the “Art and Democracy” project in relation with local authorities
- Dissemination of the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project beyond the EU partners, in relation with international structures expressing an interest in the issue of “Art and Democracy”
- Carrying out communication targeting both general-interest and specialist media as well as social networks concerned by the issue of “Art and Democracy”
- Carrying out communication based on the design and creation of computer tools (software, Internet networks) meeting requirements in terms of exchanges, research and public debating space relating to art and democracy

Initiatives and resources

Actions will take place between September 1, 2012 and August 30, 2014.

Partners engaged in research, artistic production and circulation, and education, will all be fully and simultaneously involved in all actions put forward by the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project. These actions will be structured around 3 complementary strategic avenues which will be intertwined throughout the project:

- Research and critical space for “Art and Democracy”
- Production of works and circulation of “Art and Democracy” exhibitions
- Creative and pedagogical “Art and Democracy” projects devised by art schools and production/circulation structures

Each action will engage all the partners in the circulation of ideas, individuals and artistic creations.

For each of the proposed actions, the partners will pay particular attention to creating an exchange dynamic with partner cities.

To make this circulation of ideas, individuals and works dynamic and meaningful, each action will take care to promote networking and the exchange of knowledge.

Specific actions for the project:

- Setting up of an “Art & Democracy” research unit, with the organisation of 3 seminars and 1 symposium, bringing together 30 European contributors: architects, visual artists, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, teachers and curators

The “Art and Democracy” research unit will have offshoots in each partner city, on the basis of the conviction that when artistic practices create the conditions for intellectual emancipation, they thereby create a place and time for the practice of democracy. This emancipation calls for a review of the conditions for artistic experimentation which, in the words of Jacques Rancière, works in favour of a new “sharing of what can be felt”, in other words “the possibility of restating the relationships established between seeing, doing and speaking”⁴.

To implement this intellectual and artistic emancipation in democratic contexts, the work sessions will be designed to cross-fertilise research spaces, bringing together 30 European contributors – architects, visual artists, philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists and curators.

3 seminars and 1 “Art and Democracy” symposium will be organised as part of this research unit.

The three seminars and the “Art & Democracy” symposium will investigate the following issues:

- . Education: artistic training as it contributes to democratic creativity
- . Freedom: the limits and potential of freedom of expression and creativity in Europe
- . Planning: the day-to-day practice of democracy in European cities
- . Poetry: the role of art and poetry in reinventing the imagination of democracy.

The 3 “Art & Democracy” seminars will take place successively in Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven and Rennes.

The 3 seminars will also serve to prepare the final stages of the project: the symposium and the publication.

The “Art & Democracy” symposium will take place over 2 full days, in Belgrade.

⁴ Jacques Rancière, *Le spectateur émancipé*, Paris: La Fabrique, p.25.

The “Art & Democracy” symposium will bring together 15 speakers and 8 outside moderators, plus the partners.

- 4 collective exhibitions on the theme of “Art & Democracy”

The “Art and Democracy” exhibitions will very deliberately aim at highlighting diverse and even contradictory viewpoints on the issues of democracy which are at stake in specific and complementary European contexts. The challenge for these exhibitions is to cultivate otherness and encourage better sharing of information about creative contexts in the light of political, aesthetic and societal issues.

Consequently, rather than duplicating exhibitions already in circulation, the 4 “Art and Democracy” exhibitions will feature interchanged curatorships:

- Belgrade will host a curator from Eindhoven
- Eindhoven will host a curator from Cluj
- Rennes will host a curator from Belgrade
- Cluj will host a curator from Rennes

The partners will also invite independent curators on the basis of the latter's ability to think in terms of the aesthetic and political issues at stake in Europe in the context of the question of Art and Democracy.

These interchanged curatorships are both necessary and vital in order to offer a sufficiently rich and diverse panorama of European creativity. They also offer an opportunity to establish long-term cooperation on the basis of more in-depth knowledge and consolidated collaboration between different artistic scenes.

There are 4 exhibitions, corresponding to 4 organising cities: Belgrade, Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven and Rennes.

24 artists and 40 artistic creations will be in circulation during the course of these exhibitions. Each exhibition will bring together 6 European artists for a total of 24 artists in circulation in all.

Each exhibition will comprise 10 artistic creations, for a total of 40 artistic creations in circulation and being disseminated.

- 4 exchange residencies between the cities of Belgrade, Cluj-Napoca, Eindhoven, Glasgow and Rennes

Student and faculty residencies will not be mere traditional exchanges within schools and universities. On the contrary, they will promote inventiveness and openness to new learning projects: for instance, a residency project focussing on “extremities” could be established with regard to walking in such diverse contexts as immersion in rural and urban environments in partner cities.

Student and faculty residencies will also be designed to ensure students and teachers are closely involved in preparing the other seminar and exhibition activities. In particular, they will be called upon for the design of the seminars and development of the exhibitions.

Lastly, these exchange residencies will offer an opportunity to discover, design and share teaching and artistic projects.

This will activate and implement the development of perspectives and opinions on the issue of art and democracy on a practical level.

2 students and 2 teachers from each of the 4 cities will be invited to take part in exchange residencies, for a total of 10 students and 10 teachers.

These exchange residencies will involve the 10 students and 10 teachers in preparing and participating in the other partner actions: the exhibitions, seminars, symposium and the publication. Residencies will thus run concomitantly with the other actions listed.

- Production of 1 A.C.T. Democ(k)racy publication

The A.C.T. Democ(k)racy publication 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

- Setting up a local and European media plan:

. Creation of an A.C.T. Democ(k)racy website providing information on the project and the progress of activities, as well as setting up an audiovisual and text database covering the production of works, exhibitions, residencies, seminars and the symposium

. Creation of computer software making it possible to create, mobilise and organise public debate on the issue of "Art and Democracy".

. Inclusion and dissemination of the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project on social networks

. Compilation and circulation of monthly newsletters providing details of the overall A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project and each of the specific actions engaged

. Drafting and circulation of A.C.T. Democ(k)racy press kits to the general and specialist media in each of the partner cities and countries in the EU

. Dissemination of the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project to European radio and TV media

. Dissemination of the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project to research units and observatories with an interest in issues relating to democracy

. Dissemination to and regular meetings with information points active within partner local authorities

. A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project press review

- Coordination and administration of the A.C.T. Democ(k)racy project

Meetings between the partners will be organised to handle project coordination and administration:

- 1 preparatory meeting ahead of the project
- 2 meetings to review actions during the project
- 1 evaluation and assessment meeting at the end of the project

This makes for a total of 4 coordination and administrative meetings for the project as a whole.

An electronic work platform will be set up to facilitate continuous information and shared administration of the project and actions engaged.