

CONFERENCE

Time to Reset

Reinventing the Power of Communities through Creative Activism and Engaged Art

September 30 – October 1, 2022, Public Room, Skopje

Many democratic governments in the Western Balkans and beyond record an unfavorable trend and suffer from backsliding by moving in an authoritarian direction. There is widespread consensus that citizen engagement is key to stimulating a balanced power of authority and therefore significant resources are invested in raising citizens' awareness about important issues. Civil society actors (organizations, activists, artists and different platforms for action) generate narratives aimed to trigger interest in engagement among the general public and to mobilize citizens in advocacy campaigns. However, effective civic mobilization and public action are still limited in terms of outreach and impact.

On the other side, there are visible examples where small informal actions and engaged art projects use their potential to cause social changes. More and more, creative activism, alone or in combination with existing forms of civil pressure and representation, has the potential to energize people and organizations and to stimulate culture of creativity. Specific strategy combined with emotions and empathetic approach advance personal causes, make community feel empowered, and reach a greater audience to demand small but meaningful solutions.

Realization and promotion of citizen engagement actions are important but not sufficient. There is no magical formula, which ensures that these actions grow support, bear results and appeal to others. What is special about using creative activism to advocate for change? What motivates, nurtures and advance the role and impact of civic actors and community? How to create more affective and effective interventions that are more likely to bring about change? How to cooperate with others affected parties and enable inclusiveness and solidarity? How to secure sustainability of engagement and efforts?

With these questions in mind, the conference is aimed to re-think approaches of advocates of social change and bring them to the next level. Prominent theoreticians, engaged artists, activists and organizations pursuing similar or complimentary initiatives will reflect on lessons learned and will discuss challenges and opportunities ahead. The event strives to capitalize on these experiences with the hope that it will inspire even more creative and innovative civic actions, create positive synergies and learnings and yield a multiplier effect in the communities in the future.

AGENDA

September 30, 2022 (Friday)

19.00 – 20.00 Opening Session

Welcome speech, Adrijana Lavchiska, Foundation Open Society - Macedonia

Promotion of the Books: *“CREATING CHANGE: Exploring creative approaches to act against corruption in West Africa and the Western Balkans”* and *“Art/creative activism in Macedonia: Reclaiming Public Space through Civic Engagement 2006 - 2020”*

- Promotor: Aleksandra Bubevska, journalist, North Macedonia
- Speakers: Anilla Balla, artist & activist, Albania;
Nikola Pisarev, Contemporary Arts Center, North Macedonia

Documentary movie *“CreaACT: Creative Approaches to Act against Corruption in Western Balkans and West Africa”*

- Promotor: Slavica Indjevska, Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

Moderator: Radmila Maslovaric, Open Society Foundation Serbia

20.00 Artistic Intervention followed by Reception

October 1, 2022 (Saturday)

10.00 – 11.30 Panel Discussion: “The Catch 22” for Looking Forward (part I)

- Iskra Geshoska, President, Kontrapunkt Skopje, North Macedonia
- Andrea Linnenkohl, Coordinator of the Artistic Team of Documenta fifteen, Germany
- Stephen Duncombe, Co-Director, Center for Artistic Activism, USA
- Karen van den Berg, Professor of Art Theory and Curating, Zeppelin University, Germany
- Vladimir Janchevski, Curator and Art Historian, Museum of Contemporary Arts, North Macedonia

Moderator: Artan Sadiku, philosopher and activist, North Macedonia

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee break

12.00 – 13.45 Panel Discussion: “The Catch 22” for Looking Forward (part II)

- Edisa Demic, activist, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Nenad Stojanovic, activist, Proaktiv, Serbia
- Denis Ampev, activist, Shtip Art Activism, N. Macedonia
- Sambou Oumy Regina, Founder and Editor, Africulturelle, Senegal
- Prince Andrew Ardafyio, activist, Ghana

Moderator: Beth Dunlap, Open Society Foundations New York, USA

13.45 - 15.00 Lunch

15.00 - 17.30 Panel Discussion: We Have a Chance! From Raising Awareness to Social Mobilization through Donor Lenses

- Hawa Ba, Division Director, Open Society Foundation Africa
- Bertan Selim, Head of Fundraising & Communications, Prince Claus Fund, Netherlands
- Albert Hani, RYCO Secretary General, Albania

Moderator: Lauren Agosta, consultant, USA

17.30 – 17.45 Closing remarks