

Group Terms, the Skopje “fraction”

A diary of the group Terms – the Skopje “faction”

Forming the group Terms

One of the groups that were “created” during the Ohrid Summer School was the group named Terms. The idea was/is to work out and develop – but also connect – the certain terms and phrases that are being used in contemporary art and society into a web system in order to thoroughly contemplate their meaning and their uses today. The idea was not to create yet another lexicon which will explain the phrases, but to find a creative way in approaching their re-formulation. In other words, as we later on figured out, the goal was to “de-jargonize” the terminology or rather, to affirm certain terms that we use in our day-to-day practices.

We were interested in the origin of certain terms – how they were formed, how they evolved, i.e. how they become part of the everyday contemporary art and society language; how all these terms penetrated the jargon of modernity and what the terms mean today. From the very beginning the group was oriented towards a “product” and had an idea about the goal it was trying to accomplish by the end of the year long working process. The initial idea was to publish a book, but as the time was passing it developed into something more...

The idea to work with phrases and terms was introduced by Bojan Djordjev, who gave us an ‘infinite’ list of “hot words” (approximately 700). The list included terms that are part of the language of contemporary art and society.



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After Ohrid and Bojan’s suggestion, the groups met on Skype. Due to the posed practical limitations of Skype, the groups did not understand each other well enough when it came to figuring out the best approach in defining the way we’ll work with the terms. At that moment we felt we were going to fail. We had a general idea that seemed attractive to all of us, but we did not know how to develop it further. In our communication through e-mail we decided that each of us will select certain terms from the ‘infinite’ list and then separate them by using the following individual criteria as a guide: familiar terms; terms repeating – and I don’t know what they mean; suspicious terms; commonplace stuff; terms I use most frequently; terms without an adequate translation; neologisms; ‘personal’ terms.

We all (at least the members of the group from Skopje) understood this post differently. We had a list of terms we wanted to work with, which was still fairly big and not cleaned up enough. The way we were going to classify the terms remained an enigma to all of us.

The group from Skopje was very diverse. At this particular moment it was composed of members with different professional experiences and interests, therefore we decided to begin by working on reaching a consensus regarding the individual interest in certain terms, before we were to work on defining the best approach to the working process. Agreeing was hard, therefore the next step involved an attempt to classify the terms according to personal usage and to find a way to translate them in different mediums, in other words, to find the different formats by which they will be presented. For example, to use the terms in a text, but also, to translate the text in other mediums so they can communicate with interested groups in other spheres of interest.

Therefore, at the beginning of this process, we were searching for the methods we were going to use and approach our work with the terms. We were also deciding on the processes we were going to use in their development. Therefore, a large portion of our work was spent thinking through the process.

In order to check and ascertain our way of thinking and approach, we decided to call for the help of Suzana Milevska. We spent the session we had with her discussing the rhizome, and the use of the concept

as a methodology. This meeting motivated the group to continue to work, even though we were still undecided on the methodology and our approach.

Finally, an idea started to fall into place: to learn more about certain terms by using our personal perspective in approaching it. We decided to have each of us select one term and to work with it using the following criteria:

- ~ Initial acquaintance with the term
- ~ Visual idea about the term
- ~ First use of the term in colloquial language
- ~ References
- ~ General (flexible) usage of the term

Together with Suzana we developed two terms (the fold and networking). Unfortunately, though the idea was very interesting, it was not developed any further. However, the approach helped us to look at the terms – and look at our relationship with them and towards them – from a different perspective.

However, our work came to a halt again until the workshop by Kalle Hamm. We used Hamm's workshop to continue the work and define our approach in working with the terms, but we still could not come up with a defined and clear method. In the workshop with Hamm we decided to write down the previously chosen terms (those that each of us selected from the 'infinite' list) and post them on the "big glass". The "big glass" referred to the classification of the terms in groups according to several categories:

- ~ The terms I see
- ~ The terms I hear
- ~ The terms I feel
- ~ Groups of terms I completely do not understand
- ~ Über terms – terms that do not fall in any category since they are used widely

We worked together and divided the terms into categories. By working together, we opened the door to a discussion regarding the different individual insights about the terms, i.e. the different sensible experiences which are a result of our individual approaches. (An example



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would be the term Sound art – even though it is widely accepted that this term refers to an audio form, still, some of us classify it into the visual rather than the audio category.)

Afterwards, we split into smaller groups and each of us tried to find a logical connection between the different terms, or find a new meaning of the terms. This work resulted in interesting connection of two or three different terms into one combination of terms, which prompted us to discuss the idea that we could further develop them and translate them into different mediums (e.g. text + picture, text + sound, and so forth). We also felt that we could organize them into programmatic units. The idea was to create categories in order to define how the terms could be researched in the different formats; how a certain term is being used, or how it could be used in the different mediums: text, verbal, visual, audio...

(Throughout our work and our meetings – which were not as intensive, but were quite productive – we came up with several ideas about how to further develop the project. Since we could not apply all of the ideas, we decided to place them into a segment which we called "a graveyard of ideas.")

At the Hamm workshop we were joined by the group Identities. They worked at the same time we did and perceived themselves as an 'addition' to the group Terms. They decided to develop their own approach to the predicament which was completely detached from ours. They combined two separate terms to create one new one. For the purpose they made up a fake history and fake references about the development of the terms.

Later on they attempted to include these newly developed words in Wikipedia. Unfortunately, their fame in the virtual world was short-lived since their approach did not fit the terms and conditions of the online encyclopedia. Therefore, the terms were removed from Wikipedia shortly thereafter.

The Identity group's approach to work gave us a new idea. We thought it might be useful to look at the terms from the new perspective that they suggested. We also thought we might take into consideration their approach in developing new terms.



After the engagement with Hamm's workshop our group became inert once again, and remained so until the workshop with Bojana Cvejić. At her workshop, the entire group (including the members from Belgrade and Skopje) finally worked together. Working together helped us to get to know each other a lot better. This workshop was an important boost of motivation for both of the 'factions' which made up the group Terms.

Bojana motivated us to work on several terms that are included in the EDA's (East Dance Academy's) lexicon. Initially we focused on the phrase contextual approach in the arts which is specific to the artistic practices in our region. Later on we began working on the term festival(s). What was significant about this workshop is that the two groups (from Skopje and Belgrade) began working together to locate the origin, the essence and the context in which these terms are used. This helped us clarify the direction we needed to take in our work. Once we started using our mutual associative ideas and thoughts regarding the terms, and took onto a clearer and systematic approach in working with them, their meaning began to uncover. More so, the terms began to connect with the practicalities that pertain to them.

At the workshop we split the assignment between each other. Each group had a responsibility to develop their terms and to write a text. Our group from Skopje continued to work on the terms festival(s). Since our visit to Belgrade was short, we did not get a chance to talk thoroughly with Bojana, thus we had a lot of remaining work to do in developing our term. But, we followed the approach Bojana suggested and decided to invite an outside member to join our group. This is how Iskra Geshoska joined us and offered her suggestions, ideas and guidance. We needed to fill in the gap which was created when two members of our group quit due to personal reasons. Iskra's presence compensated for their absence and contributed positively to the 'atmosphere' in our group.

It was important that we all continue to work as a group. The motivation and enthusiasm were still solid and our group did not dissolve. We managed to find the motivation to continue to work both as individuals and as a group. At this point our group, which had three members – plus the outside member – continued to work with the term festivals and to analyze the context in which it evolved in our region, as well as its meaning and usage... We talked, we commented, we wrote...



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The work intensified when we met with the Belgrade group at Timeshare. It was during Timeshare that the 'big group' came about. Our friendship became even stronger, and we worked on new terms and on coming up with fresh thoughts and ideas. We also talked about continuing to work together as part of the 'big group: Terms.'

Few more words from the Skopje "fraction"...

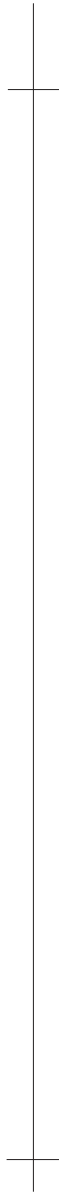
We accepted to take part in this project, based on self-organization and self-education, even though some of us were already acquainted with it in somewhat different contexts and others were not familiar with it but found it interesting. Initially, we found working according to the suggested methods hard to accept, because many of us are used to a hierarchical model of functioning. Despite that, in the year long period we managed to produce both direct and indirect ways through which we recognized the benefits of these self-educational processes. We were changed and transformed daily by having to find our own way, our own approach and motivation to continue to work after each 'failure'. We started to see the time and the 'assignments', as well as the goals we had, in a different light. We had enough space and time to think and rethink again and again. We had the space and time to search and find ways to resolve the dilemmas, and to also lose ourselves in them. We were faced with a process that is completely open to us. Our responsibility lay in deciding what to do with that open space, how to develop the process, what to add, and what to take away.

The biggest accomplishment from working in a group came on the Timeshare campus in Skopje and Belgrade, where the group gained in significance, in other words when we finally became a whole. The chance to replace the virtual space with the real time/space allowed us to get to know each other through work. It also allowed us to learn how each of us thinks and contemplates about things. During this intensive period the two groups became cohesive which brought a joint result: Publication in Process, Open Printing House and commonly shared challenges for future work and cooperation...





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publication



in process

