

Maps 2005 – 2009 / Texts

Contents

Introduction to Maps <i>Minna Henriksson</i>	5
Mapping Cities and Gossips <i>Miran Mohar</i>	9
A Reflection of An Istanbul Art Scene: On Minna Henriksson's 'Istanbul Art Scene Map' <i>Süreyya Evren</i>	15
Art and Structures of Power <i>Otso Kantokorpi</i>	21
Over-determined by Contradictions: On Messy Structure of 'Art – Systems' <i>Sezgin Boynik</i>	25
Biographies	35

This book contains reproductions of drawings made between 2005 and 2009 that are maps of art scenes of Istanbul, Zagreb, Ljubljana, Belgrade and Helsinki. In the beginning I would have not guessed that I would eventually be making such maps in five cities, but now that I have done all of them, it feels that it is time to put an end to the project, and that it is necessary to present all of them at once. Earlier I have usually only exhibited one of the maps at a time, in the location of the city of the art scene which the map describes, and exhibited them in a gallery spaces, most often as huge wall drawings. Beside the maps, this book also offers a collection of reflections, analytical and theoretical views, in the form of four commissioned essays by Sezgin Boynik, Süreyya Evren, Otsu Kantokorpi and Miran Mohar, to further thinking of the work and its potentials and impacts.

The project started in Istanbul in 2005, when I was on an artist-residency at Platform-Garanti Contemporary Art Center. I had been to Istanbul before in 2003, hosted by Sea Elephant Travel Agency, in Loft-space run by the late artist Huseyin Alptekin. As it happened, in those months which I was staying in the city, for some unknown reason, Alptekin was not in friendly relations with the Turkish curator Vasif Kortun. This reflected on the whole art scene, and most of the people whom I met were forced to define their position in relation to this situation. I was also perceived as being on the side of the Alptekin ‘camp’, although I also knew Kortun from before. This temporary disagreement between these two protagonists in the contemporary art scene of Istanbul, which happened on a completely personal basis, or at least no professional statements or demands were announced, had a big momentary impact on the confused and vulnerable, and in those days, still very small and inter-connected art scene.

This, and some other similar conflicts in the art scene of Istanbul, where personal and professional relations were difficult to distinguish, but which had an impact on the local contemporary art field at large, made me think that this phenomenon is unique and characteristic of the Istanbul

art scene. Furthermore, as I was recently graduated from the Helsinki art academy, the art scene in Helsinki appeared to me, in comparison, as highly-organised and professional, and I naively thought that similar phenomenon could not happen in Helsinki.

The first map thus emerged as a portrait of Istanbul, from the point of view of professional-personal dynamics in the contemporary art scene. Unlike in the maps to follow, on that one I only included people, whom I had acquaintance with. Thus, it can be understood as a way to perceive the art scene along with its complicated relations, or as Süreyya Evren writes in his article, a way to become part of it. Furthermore, I thought that the map of Istanbul was a tool and a prototype, which could be used as an example by anyone to making similar research of other art scenes, or any other interlinked communities. In particular, as an aid to recognise hidden power structures, hierarchies and corruption. At the time, I thought that I would not need to repeat the form myself, in-other-words, making more maps.

The three maps, which followed: Zagreb in 2006 during a residency hosted by Miroslav Kraljevic gallery; Ljubljana in 2008 with a residency offered by Kapelica gallery, and presented again as a poster, with a print run of 3000 in an exhibition at Museum of Modern Art Slovenia in 2008; and the map of Belgrade in 2009 in Kontekst gallery, were each suggested to me by the hosting institution. Each time I accepted the invitation, because I wanted to know these art scenes better, from where many interesting artists, art groups and artistic movements had emerged. Research for a map was a good way for doing that, and provided with an excuse to stay in a city for two months, during which I was actively seeking and meeting artists and representatives of art institutions, carefully listening their opinions about the scene. I would have had the chance to make a map of other cities too, but in those occasions, some other topic and medium seemed more suitable.

After making all these maps in the South-East Europe, it was clear to me that I had to make one more map: one of the art scene in Helsinki. This was a necessary task in order to demonstrate that gossip and corruption are not only a problem in the East-European art scenes. However, the Helsinki map was actually more difficult to realise than the others,

where I had made a note of everything that I could remember, and in any way relevant, from my conversations meeting people. In the case of Helsinki this was not possible, because I was part of that scene myself and I knew too much. I decided to focus on the actual issues, which I detected in the art scene: accumulation of parallel power positions, conservative 'turn', division of the institutional scene into rightist and leftist cultural policy and tight collaboration within the shared ideology.

It is obvious that these maps do not give an accurate image of the art scene, which they claim they are representing. This is because they are only describing that brief time in which I have been a visiting artist resident in these cities, and share the issues spoken about or relevant at that moment. Another reason to question their accuracy is that I was not using scientific methods, nor relying on any textual sources. My sole material was only what the people, whom I got into conversation with, chose to tell me. Of course, this was then also filtered through my perception and memory. Also, we cannot deny that the institution, which was hosting me, surely had an influence on what I heard, and whom I met, although I was rather self-sufficient in navigating in these scenes. Despite these factors, the maps were made with a clear awareness that they were not even trying to be accurate and factual, and because of that, it was possible for there to exist many cases of contradictory information within the same diagram. Through repeating all the complaints, interpretations, gossips and suspicions, they describe a phenomenon: Of the existence of such gossip-driven discourse in these contemporary art scenes, and their major impact on the professional productions coming to public view from these scenes.