Negotiating Self-management While Producing Films
- Yugoslav New Wave and *Neoplanta Film* Studio in 1966 – 1972 -

By

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Abstract

By focusing on one of the active players of the Yugoslav New Wave, the film production studio *Neoplanta Film*, this thesis provides an inquiry into the ways in which different actors in a specific kind of self-management socialist society were envisioning and organizing a particular production process – the film industry. The immediate historical background of the events, the late 1960s – early 1970s, was marked by an intensified conflict over cultural policies in which the film industry played an important role. Focusing on both social practices (funding models, administrative relations) and social discourses, the analysis tries to cover a particular type of cultural production which was supposed to further the project of socialist self-management not only through its film production but also through its mode of functioning. In order to analyze the manner in which self-management was carried on in practice and discourse, the study focuses on the production process of two *New Wave* movies, following their development through the administrative and economic meanderings of the film industry: Želimir Žilnik's *Rani radovi* (Early Works, 1969) and Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism,* 1971). In this way it explores a variety of strategies that studio management and filmmakers employed in furthering their interest in the production of the socially critical *New Wave* films. These strategies were not merely self-legitimizing tools, but were informed by different understandings of self-management socialism structured by different ways of seeing the relationship between central bureaucracies, markets and cultural autonomy.

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I dedicate this thesis to my mother, who always finds another way.

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Introduction

In a detailed overview of the difficulties besetting Yugoslav film industry, an anonymous member of the Federal Council for Education and Culture expressed her bafflement regarding what she considered to be an abnormal situation. Namely, at a time when the education of domestic film cadres was still in need for improvement, the Film Institute had a separate school for film cadres coming from the developing countries of Africa and Asia[1]. The school was just a part of a larger educational infrastructure through which the Yugoslav Federation was trying to provide expertise not only in various applied fields, but also in a specific way of organizing these social activities: namely, socialist self-management. The global reach of these endeavors sprang as much from Yugoslavia's careful maneuvering between the two blocks as from its attempt to provide a third modernization model, different from both Soviet socialism and Western capitalism. As Josef Broz Tito put it, the aim of these efforts was to establish Yugoslavia as a "strong moral-political actor in the world".[2] Such ambitions implied a complex assistance policy for countries like India or Burma which included not only financial support, but also the dissemination of the ideas of Yugoslav "third way" – self-management socialism. Within this context, film culture and the film industry was one of the elements of what can be called an example of global pedagogy, an attempt to promote a specific film culture as a specific Yugoslav contribution to world-wide socialism.

[1] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 48.
[2] Slobodan Stanković, "Tito and "Non-Alignment", 6 December, 1967, in: OSA, 133-5-9.

These attempts did not come from an abstract and neutral notion of education and they were far from including a neutral technocratic notion of expertise. They presupposed a specific way of perceiving the role of the film industry in a socialist society. Within it, the status of film producers and the way in which the film industry as a production process could be integrated and molded according to self-management principles was deemed essential. It is these presuppositions and the ways in which they intersected with the actual workings of the film industry that will be the focus of this thesis. My claim is that an analysis of what film culture was within a socialist self-managed society can allow us a better understanding not only of the way in which culture and its socio-economic underpinnings worked in former Yugoslavia, but can also shed some light on the everyday construction and functioning of one of the most important socialist experiments of the 20th century: self-management along with its contradictions and social tensions. Consequently, although most of the events in this thesis will take place in the small city of Novi Sad, whose population never went beyond two hundred thousand inhabitants that the 1991 census numbered,[3] and although most of these events actually engaged a significantly smaller portion of this number, the present analysis is also an inquiry into the workings of one part of what can be called a global socialist culture.

Navigating through international networks of expertise such as the Film School of the Federal Council for Education and Culture, or through the geopolitical meanderings of Yugoslavia's position as a leading Third Way country, self-management was much more than an ideological construct: it was a specific way of organizing social relations, economic and cultural production. It included a specific manner of interpreting the cultural and social functions of market as well as the relationship between state bureaucracy and local

[3] Jovan Mirosavljević, Novi Sad - atlas ulica, Novi Sad, 1998.

administrative bodies. In this way, economic and administrative matters became intimately connected with issues of cultural and social identities. Within my case study, the film industry, funding schemes for instance implied not only a complex infrastructural organization of the production process, but relied on a specific role assigned to markets: seen as an instrument of expressing the cultural needs of film viewers, they could bulwark local autonomies against bureaucratic tendencies. Hence, self-management discourse was essential in assigning specific cultural and social meanings to realities such as "bureaucracy", "state", "market".

It is within this framework that the analysis of the film production house *Neoplanta Film* will be situated. Although the studio existed from 1966 until 1986, this thesis will focus on the relatively short period of the first six years its existence. These years marked a specific phase in *Neoplanta's* development. It started out in 1966 as a film production house dedicated to the promotion of Vojvodinian realities and values of self-management socialism; by 1972 it underwent major restructuring due to the dissatisfaction that Yugoslav authorities had with the studio's involvement with what was at that time recognized as the Black Wave of Yugoslav cinema. This backlash was just the final result of a conflict-ridden period marked by the gulf opening up between the studio and some of the hard line party members concerned with the purity of both the practice and the ideology of the self-management socialism. These conflicts showed the different understandings and the different practices that characterized Yugoslav self-management, a fluctuating reality shaped by various social groups legitimizing themselves through the same discourse.

Within histories of cinema, the cinematic developments that my thesis will tackle are considered as among the most important periods of post-war Yugoslav cinema.[4] Influenced by the French New Wave, Italian Neorealism, and similar developments in Easter European countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia, some of Yugoslav filmmakers strived to experiment with the film form and its language, as well as with the social and political languages of the day.[5] It was a certain pessimistic tinge which characterized many of these films and which determined the emergence of the metaphorical term *Black Wave*. While the usefulness of this term may be easily contested, the story of its emergence may help us to shed some light on the setting in which *Neoplanta Film* functioned.[6] References to the "blackness" of the new trends in Yugoslav cinema started emerging around 1968, and were eventually wrapped-up by Vladimir Jovičić in his eight page supplement to Borba entitled "The Black Wave in Our Film", in which he endeavored to explain the limitations and inadequacy of these films in a self-management society. Jovičić's article, however, marked little more than an intensification of an already ongoing conflict between the New wave filmmakers and ideological purists.[7] Most of the early years of *Neoplanta's* existence had been already marked by various conflict of one or another kind.

The nature of these conflicts included, but also exceeded the boundaries set out in Jovičić's article. Only part of the discussions evolved around the question of whether the films of

[4] The approximate timeframe of these developments is the period between 1962 and 1972.
[5] Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001*, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002): 66.
[6] This metaphoric description is often picked up by cinema historians as a defining term for cinematic developments in the 1960s, often bringing along the implicit opposition between filmmakers and regime. It is one of the reasons why within this thesis I will rely on the less suggestive term *New wave.* For a comprehensive comment regarding these two definitions, see: Nebojša Jovanović, "Breaking the Wave: A Commentary on 'Black Wave Polemics: Rhetoric as Aesthetic' by Greg DeCuir, Jr," *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 2, no. 2 (July 26, 2011): 161–71.
[7] This conflict too often limits the perspective to a false opposition between *Black Wave* films and the "ideological" production supported by the state. However, there were more players involved in the cultural game at that time: the excessive amount of Western films that were invading Yugoslav cinemas throughout the 1960s, and whose existence influenced the negotiation between the two sides.

Yugoslav New Wave, and *Neoplanta's* production in particular, negated or supported the self-management socialist morale-in-formation. At the same time, the conflict implied a constant process of negotiation that tackled the entire infrastructure of the film industry, and especially its funding schemes which were to be informed by the same self-management values and objectives that brought film students from Africa and Asia to Belgrade. This infrastructure contained a certain perspective on how film resources should be distributed and accessed, how the relationship between different institutions within the film industry should be defined, how different segments on the film production-distribution chain had to act within the framework of a specific socialist market, etc. The regulations set out by the cultural officials responsible for the organization of the film industry did indeed create the conditions within which New wave films could appear; however, this framework was riven by numerous inner contradictions which came to the fore in the ongoing conflict between *Neoplanta* and state bureaucrats. It is this framework of discursive and organizational practices that will provide the empirical background for this thesis.

Part of the reasons for such a focus is that, unfortunately, research on the workings of the film industry in socialist Yugoslavia remains extremely scarce, while attention on *Neoplanta* never tends to exceed the mere recognition of its existence.[8] Strangely enough, this absences is paralleled by an increasing interest in the development of Yugoslav New Wave cinema which is visible in both Serbian and Anglo-Saxon academia. Despite their common interest, the problems that the two literatures have are rather dissimilar. The

[8] One of the rare attempts was made by Radenko Ranković; however, as the title already indicates, its focus lies on the period between 1945 – 1951. See: Radenko Ranković, *Organizacija jugoslovenske kinematografije u administrativnom periodu [Organization of Yugoslav Cinematography in Its Administrative Period]* (Novi Sad: Zvezda film, 2004).

post-Yugoslav tradition of film critics and cinema historians show a symptomatic tendency to work on the premises of the totalitarian paradigm.[9] As Nebojša Jovanović points out, the major drawback of these studies is a tendency to view Yugoslav cinema primarily through the prism of the repressive actions that the regime exercised over the New wave film.[10] By contrast, many Anglo-Saxon works managed to avoid the allure of totalitarian simplifications. Studies by Mira and Antonín J. Liehm and Daniel Goulding provide useful and relevant reference points[11]; however, they rarely step out of the framework of a general overview of the main aesthetic tendencies and historical situation that the New Wave films occupied in contemporary Yugoslavia.

Regretfully, the only attempt to provide a comprehensive account of the Yugoslav New Wave for the English reader, Greg DeCuir's Yugoslav Black Wave[12], manages to pick up the problems of the post-Yugoslav scholarship without preserving its empirical subtleties. Thus, it manages to depict the filmmakers and the Yugoslav regime as the representatives of two disparate ideological traditions, and in this way it reproduces the unfortunate artist vs. regime paradigm that inhabits both our pop culture and our scholarly imaginary. Some critical voices made themselves heard against the tendency to analyze the Black Wave within the simplistic division between two ideological camps. The short and accurate critique by Jovanović clearly states the limitations and misconceptions of such an

[9] Some of the examples of such works: Škrabalo (1998); Musabegović (2008); Ognjanović and Velisavljević (2008); Tirnanić (2008); Pajkić (2010). For an overview of literature on the Yugoslav New Wave see: Nebojša Jovanović, "Breaking the Wave: A Commentary on 'Black Wave Polemics: Rhetoric as Aesthetic' by Greg DeCuir, Jr," *Studies in Eastern European Cinema* 2, no. 2 (July 26, 2011): 161–71.
[10] Jovanović, "Breaking the Wave.": 168.
[11] See: Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001*, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002) and Mira Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Eastern European Film After 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977).
[12] See: Greg DeCuir, *Yugoslav Black Wave. Polemical Cinema from 1963 – 72 in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Film Center Serbia, 2011).

approach. Further accounts by authors like Boris Buden or Gal Kirn[13] tend to point out the necessity of more nuanced accounts of the New Wave movement. Despite these calls, most of the research tends to focus on ideological aspects, cultural policies, intellectual networks or political issues related to the New Wave films. Despite the richness of these studies, they seem to shun any attempt at understanding the contemporary social, economic and cultural conditions which influenced the birth and decline of the Black Wave.

For the purpose of tackling these questions within this thesis, I will divide my argument into four chapters. The first chapter will outline the theoretical and methodological presuppositions that will organize my empirical material. In an attempt to conceptualize the heterogeneous Yugoslav setting I will pay attention to the way in which one can interpret self-management debates as manners of negotiating the limits of the bureaucracy and of the market. Afterwards, I will address some of the methodological issues related to the writing of a social history of film. Drawing on the socio-material turn in art history and on Gil Eyal's sociology of interventions I will contend that an analysis of film production as a social process may prove helpful in understanding how Yugoslav film industry reflected the broader framework of discourses and practices of a self-management society.

The second chapter will outline the basic features of the organization of Yugoslav film industry at large, while at the same time situating *Neoplanta* within this historical setting. It will provide an overview of the main principles organizing the Yugoslav film industry, the

[13] See: Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]* (Centar za nove medije_kuda.org, 2013), http://www.kuda.org/sites/kuda/files/Uvod%20u%20proslost_web.pdf and Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić, and Žiga Testen, eds., *Surfing the Black. Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Trangressive Moments* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2011). The latter is the collection of the papers from scholars and art critics alike. It nevertheless does raise topical questions to be tackled in the field.

ideological underpinnings that legitimized this organizational framework, and the material factors which could hindered the development of a self-managed film industry. Furthermore, this chapter will dwell on the close connections established between such seemingly divergent phenomena as the introduction of socialist market reforms and Yugoslav identity politics.

The following two chapters will provide a detailed account of the production process of two of *Neoplanta's* films: Želimir Žilnik's *Rani radovi* (*Early Works*, 1969) and Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism*, 1971). The third chapter will be structured mostly around the intricacies of the production of *Rani radovi*; however, in order to provide a more comprehensive historical account as well as a more complete picture of the workings of the studio as a coherent film production unit, I will also devote some attention to the nuances of the production and reception of Žilnik's early short films. By analyzing *Rani radovi* along with the complexities of its production I will shed some light on the financial strategies that the studio employed, the ways in which they related to the type of films the studio produced as well as the way in which these processes contributed to the formation of *Neoplanta's* production profile. At the end of the chapter, a discussion of the *Rani radovi* trial will help me to describe the divergent ways in which self-management discourse was conceptualized and negotiated by various actors. By following the production process of Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma*, the fourth chapter tries to emphasize the contextual nature of these negotiations, their dependence on historical events which could structure the balance of power within the cultural sphere. Released in the situation of tense political conflict in 1971, *WR: Misterije organizma* faced an immediate backlash. The situation was in a sense similar to that of *Rani radovi*. However, despite *Neoplanta's* attempts to employ the same

strategies of defense that had brought the *Rani radovi* victory, they had no effect in the *WR* case. Suddenly, it became obvious that the polyphony of voices that characterized the discussions about socialist self-management could be interrupted through a simple gesture of power.

Chapter 1 – Framing Yugoslav Film Industry: Some Theoretical Considerations

1.1 An awkward case: Yugoslavia

In a book which, very much as Yugoslavia itself, bears the mark of the Cold War, Dennis Rusinow remarked that The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should be viewed as an experiment.[14] The description, marking Yugoslavia's specific position within the Cold War context as well as the innovative character of the self-management state, is especially relevant for the 1960s and the early 1970s. A continuous search for the best solution between market and socialism, artistic freedom and indirect censorship, a constant balancing between nationalist separatism and Yugoslav unity makes Yugoslavia appear as a hybrid case. Film production was a litmus test for these contradictory characteristics and it shared with the Federal Republic its experimental, hybrid nature, as well as the complexity of its social and economic features. On the one hand, films were regarded as an important instrument in the formation of a socialist consciousness among Yugoslav citizens: more than simple media, they were a means of expression and a means of furthering the socialist bases on which the Federation was organized. On the other hand, rather than an ideological superstructure, films were also strongly embedded in the socioeconomic system of the Federation: the movie industry was one of the most costly spheres of cultural production. But it was also an industry, a particular production process which, like other production processes, was supposed to be organized along the specific lines of self-managed socialism. This chapter is devised so that it may provide theoretical tools which would cut through this empirical complexity and a conceptual framework needed in

[14] Dennison I. Rusinow, *The Yugoslav Experiment 1948-1974* (Berkeley: Published for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, by the University of California Press, 1977).

analyzing both the Yugoslav film industry and, to a certain extent, the Yugoslav Republic in which this industry was embedded. One might claim that this task is made necessary by the historical ambiguity of Yugoslav's position within the Cold War context: its straddling position between the two blocks also determined the relative lack of a theoretical debate about the role of the cultural sphere in a self-management socialist context or within the mixed economy of the Federal Republic. Unlike state socialism or the capitalist world, the Yugoslav experiment did not engender any theoretical experiments that might grasp this complex position of the Third Way country.

In what follows I will attempt an analysis of this heterogeneous Yugoslav setting, focusing especially on its balancing between the state and the market. While developing a full conceptual apparatus falls beyond the scope of this thesis, I will focus on one of the central issues which have left their imprint on the histories of socialism: the definition of the state. Engaging with the literature from the field of Soviet Studies, I will take a critical stance regarding substantialist definitions of the state. The main reason is that they tend to ignore the vagueness of the boundaries between seemingly dichotomous entities: state and society, state and market. Taking inspiration from the field of colonial studies and state anthropology, I will pick up Timothy Mitchell's suggestions and argue that the state should be perceived as a set of social and discursive processes that enforce these distinctions on an otherwise blurry social environment: society, state and market are daily constructed through everyday social practices. As I will try to show in the rest of this thesis, this might allow for a more sensitive account of both the ways in which "the state" exercised its power within the Yugoslav context, the manner in which objects such as the film market were set up and how various social actors talked about these processes while actively constructing them.

In the second part of the chapter I will focus on some of the methodological issues useful in understanding how film and film industry reflected the practices and discourses of Yugoslav self-management socialism. As a first step towards this, I will reconceptualize the understanding of film as a cultural object. Drawing my inspiration from the socio-material turn in cultural studies, I will treat the film as a social process whose final result, the end-product, is an object[15] consumed on the cultural market. It is exactly this understanding of films and the social processes accompanying them which will provide the subject of the present thesis: the social life of film production and the way in which, within this production, elements such as market, bureaucracy or state were debated, constructed and enacted. Within the thesis I will follow, however, the specificities of this process, its local intricacies and social complicities: maybe more than literature or fine arts, film production is a costly social process with each of its stages being subject to the intervention of a variety of agents, defined by divergent positions and interests and within which, economic considerations play an important role. Moreover, as I will try to show in the second chapter, more than a simple extraneous element putting constraints on the cultural field, the economic and administrative organization of film production was interwoven with ideological and political consideration. It is exactly this understanding of film production as a social process which might enable us to overcome the gap between a social analysis of film and the filmic text as such.

The third part of the chapter will spring from the previous one: I will try to move below, underneath macro-social constructs and follow up my social actors on the ground level, focusing on their status. Namely, since most of the people that were involved in the

[15] Sara Malou Strandvad, "Materializing Ideas: A Socio-Material Perspective on the Organizing of Cultural Production," *European Journal Of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (August 2011): 283–97.

debates included in this thesis were cultural producers, engaged in a specific process of cultural production, I will try to grapple with the problem of their status as intellectuals within and outside the film industry. Besides being a traditional question to be asked by researchers in the sphere of cultural production it is even more pertinent in the present study since the actors involved in the work of *Neoplanta Film* were of a broad variety of backgrounds, professions and positions in society. Consequently, some of the classical instruments of the sociology of intellectuals or of the sociology of professions might prove inefficient in our theoretical endeavors. Willing to do justice to their contribution as well as to account for their social, economic and cultural significance in the process of film production, I will employ some of the conceptual tools offered by the recent sociology of interventions.

1.2 Cold War social sciences and the construction of the state as an analytical category

The institutionalization process of what was to become the field of Russian and Soviet studies gained its coherence in the specific context of the Cold War. The political tension between the two blocks, the difficulty of gaining more accurate information about the societies on the two sides of the Iron Curtain, and psychological/cultural warfare which involved both of the "great powers", did structure scholarly research on the region, a type of research which was never too hesitant in getting associated with political institutions and the funding opportunities which they offered.[16] It was within this politically-laden context that research on the cultural production of the Soviet system was done and within it, questions such as the propaganda function of culture or its importance within the "social engineering" project of the Soviet Union, gained, despite the specific bias which

[16] Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (JHU Press, 2003).

they contained, particular prominence. Although approaches to this type of questions shifted several times since the Harvard Refugee Interview Project, the interest in the workings of the Soviet etatist cultural system has persisted. Even now, most of the research done by both Western and non-Western scholars (even if for different reasons) tends to focus on the centralized state socialism and, within this period, mostly on the Stalinist decades.

However, Yugoslavia represents what Iván Szelényi might call, using a framework employed for capitalist systems, a different "variety of socialism".[17] Especially in the 1960s, its self-management scheme of socialist society, was marked by an increasing autonomy of workers-managed enterprises, the salience of mixed economy, indicative planning similar to Western economic plans,[18] decentralization, openness to Western influences (both in economic and cultural terms) and a relatively loose cultural policy. Consequently, theoretical frameworks and approaches which may be relevant for the study of state socialism have to be reconsidered when working on the Yugoslav context.

This is even more momentous since some of the analytical tools used in Soviet Studies have started, even beyond the Revisionist and post-Kritika generations, to be reconsidered by state socialist scholars as well.[19] As Mark Edele has pointed out, one of the most pervasive dichotomies in the field of Soviet studies still remains the contrast between state and society. Even within the last generations of scholars, the state is a distinct entity which exercises its power in a seemingly independent manner, imagined as something "hovering

[17] Talk given in "Socialisms in Global Historical-Comparative Perspective Podium Discussion" at Corvinus University, Budapest, March 20th 2014.
[18] Cyrus Ardalan, "Workers' Self-Management and Planning: The Yugoslav Case," *World Development* 8, no. 9 (1980): 623–38.
[19] See: Mark Edele, "Soviet Society, Social Structure, and Everyday Life: Major Frameworks Reconsidered," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, no. 2 (2007).

above the society" that provides a major framework and point of reference for the actions and the strategies which social actors employed. Such oppositions between and omnipresent state and the societal "rest" (a society which can basically be defined as everything that state is not) has important implications for the studies focusing on cultural production and intellectuals. In more vulgar cases it tends to translate into "narratives of dissent", relying on a narrow image of the state as a cruel oppressor, and chosen intellectual groups as courageous saviors of intellectual independence.[20] However, even more nuanced analyses are not free from some of the limitations posed by such a dualist perspective.

Focusing on Ceausescu's Romania, Katherine Verdery's complex analysis of cultural production under state socialism may provide the ground for a tentative discussion of these limitations.[21] Her analysis of cultural production in centralized state socialism starts with the basic presupposition that the central imperative of this type of system was to increase bureaucracy's capacity to allocate resources.[22] Under this presupposition the intellectual field appears as a conflictual social space, in which different groups employ a variety of strategies in order to gain legitimacy and cultural hegemony and, in this way, have better access to these resources. While *National Ideology Under Communism* interprets these struggles for resources as struggles among different groups rather than envisioning them in strictly hierarchical terms, within this framework the strategies of the social agents remain determined and surrounded by the power and the policies of the

[20] Timothy Snyder, "The Ethical Significance of Eastern Europe, Twenty Years On," *East European Politics & Societies* 23, no. 4 (2009): 455–60.
[21] See: Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania*, Societies and Culture in East-Central Europe 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
[22] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's Romania*, Societies and Culture in East-Central Europe 7 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 76.

state.[23] The problem in applying this analytical tool to Yugoslavia is that my social actors could not have agreed more with Verdery's assessment. Far from explaining their position, Verdery's analysis replicates one of the social and discursive strategies of Yugoslav intellectuals. For instance, in his acute criticism of bureaucratic state socialism Stevan Majstorović points out that in a centralized organization of cultural life "social and cultural responsibility is replaced by responsibility to higher committees" and that "corrections in favor of one sector are carried out, as a rule, at the expense of another, thus producing antagonistic relations and an atmosphere of rivalry"[24] As a result of this type of Verderyian criticism *avant-la-lettre*, the Yugoslav take in the field of culture was much more flexible, and marked by more nuanced attitudes in respect to the state's bureaucratic apparatus. Consequently, Verdery's theoretical model, with its emphasis on the redistributive power of bureaucracy, cannot account for the Yugoslav setting (as well as many forms of reform socialism) with its mixed modes of funding and its polyphony of public discourses. To a certain extent, the importance of the market element in the structure of cultural production was important enough to reframe the question of the bureaucratic allocation of resources. Yugoslav cultural production in general, and film industry in particular, was shaped by a variety of factors which may be viewed as "extra-state": the already mentioned mixed mode of funding, the openness to the West in both cultural and economic terms, the limitations posed by both ideological and market requirements.

Consequently, it might be useful to reconceptualize the manner in which state institutions and their bureaucratic mechanisms relate to other social spaces, such as the (cultural)

[23] Verdery's work is not a single example touched by these problems. As Edele points out, Kotkin's brilliant "Magnetic Mountain" succumbs to the same problem, with its actors being directed by policies of the state, and facing difficulties of taking into account such "outside" influences as tradition.
[24] Stevan Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*, Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies (Paris: Unesco, 1972), pp. 19 – 21.

market. To this purpose, I will make use of Timothy Mitchell's conceptual framework since this approach might keep track of the blurry lines between "state", "society" and "market". At the same time, it might explicate the persistence of these lines and of the conceptual categories which determine us to differentiate between market mechanisms and state institutions. In his analysis, Mitchell observes a certain paradox: while too often the notion of the state is used to denote some stable and distinct entity, the boundaries of this entity remain too vague. Beyond Soviet Studies, carefully analyzed by Edele, the difficulties of setting up the limits of what the state is and how one should differentiate between the state and other social spaces has been one of the thorniest issues in social sciences.[25] Contrary to Edele's similar remarks, however, he also notices the persistent attempts to implement a clearly set distinction between the state and society, where "the state appears to stand apart from society in the unproblematic way in which intentions or ideas are thought to stand apart from the external world to which they refer".[26] Yet in fact, the line between the two is uncertain, as much as it is uncertain in other sets of dichotomies, such as state vs. market, or state vs. law. Thus, Mitchell argues, that state does not exist as an ontologically real and coherent whole; rather, it is a line drawn internally within a network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain political order is maintained. However, this does not mean that the prevalent perception of the state is to be dismissed; producing and maintaining that line (or what he calls a "state effect") is itself a mechanism that generates resources of power. Elements which contribute to the appearance of the state effect can be found in mundane processes of spatial organization, functional

[25] Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State (1977)," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 58–89.
[26] Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy and the State Effect", Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta, eds., *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*, Blackwell Readers in Anthropology 9 (Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 2006), pp. 174.

specification, bureaucratic administration, supervision and surveillance as well as theoretical representations which create the appearance of the world as fundamentally divided between state and society.[27] Following Mitchell, one might claim that a tradition of state socialist studies which has focused on state institutions and the relationship between "state" and "society" has also actively contributed to setting up this framework: by trying to find out the limits between a Soviet state defined by its authoritarian tendencies and a society marked by dissident attempts or between state economy and the informal markets of the "grey economy". As we know from intellectual enterprises such as the Harvard Project, this boundary-setting activity had not just an explicative role but also its political function.[28]

What Mitchell helps in highlighting is that specific discourses and practices are reinforcing these limits not only within the scholarly discourse, but within day-to-day life as well. Moreover, these boundaries between state and "civil society" or state and market are points of contestation through which various groups debate and struggle in order to implement a specific vision of the relationship between state and "civil society" or various definitions of what state, "civil society" or "market" are. Some of the instances of this approach can be found in recent works on neoliberalism which have focused on how various social groups are trying to redefine the limits of the post-World Word Two state and to propose the market as a paradigmatic model of organizing social relations.[29] As S.

[27] Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy and the State Effect" in Sharma and Gupta, *The Anthropology of the State*, pp. 185.
[28] *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, Culture, Politics, and the Cold War (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003).
[29] Jamie Peck, *Constructions of Neoliberal Reason* (Oxford University Press, n.d.).

Collier remarked these attempts include discursive constructs but also various technological devices and infrastructural elements.[30]

Although taking a different form, these debates and struggles were also present in the Yugoslav context and bore an important significance on my particular case study, the film industry. Delineating the limits of the state and the manner in which it interacted with social spaces such as the market, these discussions took place also within the particular social setting of the film production process: they were underpinning not only the discourse of various actors but also the institutional fabric which made film production possible. By institutional fabric I mean film funding schemes, the administrative bureaucratic organization of the film industry, attempts to change or circumvent these funding schemes or its bureaucratic structures, the way in which the actors defined and defended their position in a situation of institutional conflict. Thus, as I will try to show in the following chapters, funding schemes represented not only a manner of distributing resources, but it included (often contradictory) presuppositions on how a film studio, as an economic unit, should behave on the socialist market, the manner in which it should relate to state cultural institutions, the way in which the film production unit was perceived as an economic and a cultural actor. Similarly, in their turn, people working within the film industry were trying to negotiate and regulate the manner in which the role of the film studio was defined within the economic sphere, the manner in which it was supposed to behave as a market player. In this way, actors holding various social positions, political attitudes and interests were making specific claims over how the market and cultural bureaucracies should interact, over how market actors should behave and, at least as

[30] Stephen J. Collier, *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton University Press, 2011).

importantly, how could market devices influence the Yugoslav socialist project as a "civilizational project"[31] that tried to provide a third way between the Soviet socialism and Western capitalism.

The language in which these debates were framed was the official language of self-management socialism which most of the actors that I am dealing with shared, regardless of their place within the film production process: studio representatives, movie directors, cultural bureaucrats and local administrators agreed on the legitimacy of self-management socialism and on its centrality for the Yugoslav polity. The contentions, however, revolved over how self-management was to be defined: the relationship between market revenues and state funding, the influence of state funding on the nature of cultural production as such, how workers councils were involved within the managing of the film industry. Unlike in Mitchell's case or in contemporary analyses of neoliberalism, it was not the problem of state vs. markets or state vs. civil society that molded the discourse of the social actors and, in its turn, shaped the Yugoslav social reality. It was the socialist self-management discourse through which the relationships between state, markets and local communities were framed. Consequently, the terms in which the position of the Yugoslav state was posed followed the debates influencing the self-management doctrine: bureaucracy vs. socialist local autonomy, the market and administrative decentralization as possible ways of avoiding the danger of a bureaucratic rule, the importance of the workers' councils as instruments of a local grass-roots socialism. As a result, the state effect and the creation of an autonomous economic sphere that Mitchell talked about was achieved through a different conceptual apparatus than what we might expect: instead of state vs. civil society

[31] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

or state vs. market, Yugoslav actors within the film industry referred to the self-management critical tradition of state bureaucracy vs. controlled market mechanism, bureaucratization vs. local economic autonomy. In anthropological terms, these were emic concepts that influenced and shaped the social reality through which these social actors negotiated their position[32].

Within the archival material that I analyze, there are two levels on which these differences and conflicts become obvious: first, the pragmatic performance of self-management doctrine within the process of film-production. As I will try to show, funding schemes, the organization of the film studio and of its economic structure, the different requirements that firms were supposed to listen to, involved much more than pragmatic concerns: they were imbued with specific conceptualization of how economic actors should behave on the market and, moreover, what was their role as producers of specific cultural objects. As economic sociology has tried to show, markets and economic behavior are immersed within specific cultural determinations, are embedded within specific cultural milieus and convey different cultural meanings.[33] For instance, as the second chapter will make it clear, the self-management doctrine was much more than an economic organization of the Yugoslav polity: it was closely connected with ethnic and trans-ethnic (Yugoslav) identities, as well as with different manners in which people related to the socialist civilizational project of Yugoslavia. In my analysis of the *Neoplanta's* film production I will try to provide a glimpse exactly within the structure of this cultural embeddedness, the manner in which the economic infrastructure of movie production was integrated into a specific way of

[32] Marvin Harris, "History and Significance of the Emic/etic Distinction," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 1976, 329–50.
[33] M. Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1985, 481–510.

conceiving socialist cultural production, a specific manner of conceptualizing film studios as economic actors[34] and a specific relationship between Yugoslav self-management socialism, markets and cultural identities. This will come to light through the administrative and financial organization of the production process.

Secondly, these debates over self-management were obvious in the discursive strategies of the social actors involved in the film production process: self-management was an open concept which could be interpreted in different ways. The relationships between cultural autonomy, bureaucracies, and markets could be shifted along various lines and social actors emphasized different elements of this complex entity called self-management. In the third and the fourth chapters, focusing on the production process of two of the most important films made by *Neoplanta*, I hope to describe these oftentimes clashing interpretations. However, both the pragmatic performance of the self-management doctrine and these discursive strategies were embedded in the specific social context of the film production process. As it provides the basic empirical unit of analysis for this thesis, it is to this process that I will now turn, trying to provide a framework that would help me in conceptualizing both its status as a social process and the position of the actors involved in it.

1.3 Seeing the film as a process

The most commonplace scenario of the film production process can be briefly summarized in the following manner: the scriptwriter writes a script and (s)he proposes it to a certain

[34]The creation of film studios as economic actors very much listens to the performative character of economic process; see for instance Koray Çalışkan and Michel Callon, "Economization, Part 1: Shifting Attention from the Economy towards Processes of Economization," *Economy and Society* 38, no. 3 (2009): 369–98.

studio. In the case of Yugoslavia (and of *Neoplanta* in particular) the director of the studio receives the script, and asks for the opinions of the studio's workers council and of the artistic council; changes can be suggested as a condition of accepting it for production. Afterwards, short descriptions of the films are submitted to state funding institutions, who relied on them in reaching their decision. Once approved and funded, the film reached its final production stage and director, actors and film crew shaped the final version of the film on the set; a complex editing process followed. At this point film may seem to have gained its final form, but this was not exactly the case for a couple of reasons. On the one hand, the film could be altered according to the request of more diligent party members in the stage of preventive censorship, or because some ideological or formal troubles could be foreseen. On the other hand, the meaning of the visual text was interpreted and re-interpreted by film audience, critics, or party officials.

One of the persistent problems of histories of art and communication has to do with the gap which seems to appear between the (apparent) end of this chain of processes (the filmic text) and what happens before and after. In conventional theoretical discussions this gap is presented as the one separating the social context from the aesthetic analysis of the works "themselves". This problem is equally present in the studies of cinema: on the one hand, we have number of works conducted under the umbrella term of "film studies" which tend to focus on the aesthetic aspects of film, cultural and visual inter-influences, content analysis, as well as tends to view the film as a product of a single auteur.[35] On the other hand there are social (or social constructivist) histories of film, which set out to analyze the social and economic contexts surrounding film production while leaving aside

[35] One of the more recent examples in the studies of Yugoslav cinema: Vlastimir Sudar, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Political Dissident: The Life and Work of Aleksandar Petrović* (Bristol: Intellect Books, 2012).

the film itself and the ways in which its content interacted with the particular social and economic context in which it was produced and perceived.[36] These two approaches in the field of cinema studies remain relatively detached, with "context" too often serving only an auxiliary role in studies concerned with the analysis of film content, and content being largely abandoned in studies of the film industry and its economy.[37]

I will try to bridge this gap through the theoretical aid offered by the recent socio-material turn in the analysis of cultural production, informed mostly by developments in science and technology studies as well as actor-network theory.[38] While a broader comparison of these two fields of study falls beyond the scope of this chapter[39], it will suffice to point out one of the meeting points of these two apparently disparate subjects: the importance of the material object.[40] Evidently, for the purposes of the present thesis, this object is the film as such. Drawing on Antoine Hennion, I will rely on reconfigured understanding of the meaning of a film as an object. In the course of his theoretical endeavor, Hennion starts out with music, an "art of mediation itself"[41] as a way of explaining how a whole series of dichotomies which have marked the discourse on music: those between the natural and the symbolic world, or between the universe of things and universe of signs. These

[36] For instance, Arthur S. De Vany, *Hollywood Economics: How Extreme Uncertainty Shapes the Film Industry* (Psychology Press, 2004), one of the few works concerned with Hollywood economics. Also, some of the few attempts to take into consideration workings of the Soviet film industry: Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, eds., *Inside the Film Factory: New Approaches to Russian and Soviet Cinema*, Soviet Cinema (London: Routledge, 1994), Jamie Miller, *Soviet Cinema: Politics and Persuasion Under Stalin*, KINO, the Russian Cinema Series (London ; New York : New York: I.B. Tauris ; Distributed in the USA by Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[37] The exception here are studies approaching the topic from sociological perspective; one of the more interesting examples here can be self-entitled "new cinema histories" strand. See: Richard Maltby, Daniël Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers, eds., *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2011).
[38] Sara Malou Strandvad, "Materializing Ideas: A Socio-Material Perspective on the Organizing of Cultural Production," *European Journal Of Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (August 2011), pp. 285.
[39] For a brief overview of literature in this field see: Strandvard, "Materializing Ideas."
[40] Antoine Hennion, "The History of Art - Lessons in Mediation," *Réseaux. The French Journal of Communication* 3, no. 2 (1995): 238.
[41] Idem.

oppositions also structure the seemingly unbridgeable dichotomy between the film and its social context. As Hennion contends, this dichotomy is false: "suddenly a critical discourse has nothing to say besides the obvious: there is no musical object unless everyone participates in making it appear".[42] His hint, which I will follow within this thesis, is that these oppositions can be overcome by following the social trajectory of the object, the social processes in which it is embedded. I am going to follow this insight by asserting the film production process as the central concern of this thesis. To paraphrase Hennion, the basic object of this thesis will be the collective construction of the cinematic object[43], as opposed to conceiving the film in its seemingly fixed and final cinematic form at the moment of it release. In other words, I will analyze the process of materialization of cinematic ideas in their various stages, and the social, economic or political mediators that constituted this process.

1.4 Re-defining Intellectuals through the sociology of interventions

The institution which played the central part within this process was the production house, the film studio and it is within this institutional setting that the bulk of my narrative will unfold. This choice may appear as self-evident for a study concerned with the socio-economic underpinnings of film production. First, because this focus may avoid the drawback of analyzing films as stable products of specific authors and since it can take into consideration other social actors and forces that contribute to the eventual result which is the film artifact. At the same time, however, the film production house is itself a relatively complex unit of analysis. This complexity becomes clearer once we remember that film

[42] Hennion, "The History of Art - Lessons in Mediation.": 239.
[43] Idem.

studio is, to a certain extent, the nodal point of the film industry, performing multiple functions all of which result in the release of the film (but do not end here).

One of the salient aspects which requires special attention is the multiplicity of actors which were involved in the process of film producing. As well as other film studios in Yugoslavia, *Neoplanta Film* held responsibility for coordinating a variety of activities: film production houses were organizing fund acquisitions, managed film crews and works in progress, acquired technical equipment, its workers and artistic councils were drawing the production plan, the studio was the one to look for possible distribution partners. Even after the movie was released, the studio's workers and affiliated directors took active part in public and artistic evaluation. It is important to emphasize that this process implied an active participation of a great variety of actors. The institutional setting of *Neoplanta Film* embraced a heterogeneous and ever changing group of people, who were of remarkably divergent backgrounds, levels of education, professions and who held different positions in the cultural and political fields. Some of them, due to specific social and economic configurations, could hold more influence over film production than others. It is for these reasons that a focus on the film production house can and should lead us astray from the uniform definition of the "auteur", "artist" or "intellectual", posing the problem of the possible ways of conceptualizing this social group.

This problem may be tackled by engaging in the discussion regarding the usual category which would be employed in studies dealing with artistic or academic fields, namely the concept of "intellectuals". Within the framework of this thesis such an endeavor will be supported by Gil Eyal and his "sociology of interventions". While this approach was developed primarily for the purposes of the sociology of expertise, my contention is that it

provides a useful tool for conceptualizing the oftentimes fluid and heterogeneous cinematic field: on the one hand, it allows a more nuanced account of different agents involved in the process of film production while, on the other hand, it supports a reconceptualization of the film itself in a way that it becomes possible to overcome the gap between the film text and its socioeconomic setting.

In his review article "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions"[44] Eyal provides a historical outline of the different ways in which intellectuals were defined by European social science. Moving from accounts on humanist intellectuals of the early 20th century to the effects of specialization and the increasing importance of expertise in the contemporary world, Eyal observes a shift from substantialist definitions of intellectuals as a social group (the sociology of intellectuals) to what can be called sociology of interventions. While the sociology of intellectuals, developing between 1900 and the 1980s, was looking for a way to conceptualize intellectuals in terms of their allegiance, the latter's main focus lies in the act of public intervention itself. There has been a variety of ways to answer the question "who were the intellectuals and to whom or to what do they own their allegiance?"[45]: allegiance could be owned to a certain class (one's own or another); to truth and universal values; or could be defined by material interests. In this tradition intellectuals were understood qua-social substance – a social type, a group or a class – by opposition to non-intellectuals – laypeople, technical experts and politicians. Furthermore, very often intellectuals could be identified as a group holding the power to manipulate abstract knowledge or symbols, and as sharing a certain commitment to universal knowledge (as opposed to particular

[44] Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36, no. 1 (June 2010): 117–37.
[45] Eyal and Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions.", pp. 121.

interests or power). To put it briefly, sociology of intellectuals can be seen as an attempt to understand who intellectuals were by assigning them a combination of more or less stable qualities.

However, neither the issue of allegiance nor a specific set of characteristics used as defining qualities can help us to understand film production or its actors. One of the problems is posed by what substantialist definitions would have to recognize as a certain form of "sociological schizophrenia": cases in which the "independent" film director was at the same time a member of Film Review Commission, one of the few official censorship institutions in Yugoslavia. On the other hand, focusing on such qualities as "the power to manipulate abstract knowledge or symbols" would apply to just a small number of the people who could actually influence the process and outcome of the film production process; or on the contrary, if one is to follow Gramsci, would apply to too many people.[46] A significant example is provided by the figure of the studio director: he was not necessarily operating a specialized symbolic language, but it was through his decisions that films like Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* were launched into production. Another telling example is the position of those intervening in the stage of preventive censorship: they would propose certain (essential) changes in the film text actively participating in creating the final outcome. These are just a few examples of the ways in which people, who too often remain excluded from film scholarship, were actually contributing to the formation of the final result, the film as such.

One of the alternatives to such substantialist definitions is provided by what Eyal calls the sociology of intellectual fields and markets. What unifies scholars working in this tradition

[46] Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals and the State," *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader* 2 (2009): 210–16.

is a rejection of substantialist definitions and an engagement with recreating a space within which intellectual attributions and related values are created and contested. Some of the works produced within this framework moved towards an analysis of modes of intervention, understood as acts of entering specific public spheres.[47] Thus, sociology of interventions shifts its focus to the capacity of making a public intervention, of interfering into the public sphere, a capacity to which many actors of varying affiliations, backgrounds and spheres of expertise may lay claim. This makes the boundaries between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, between experts and non-experts depend not so much on personal qualification as upon a specific position within a social context: laypersons such as patients can often participate in the creation of medical knowledge or can become important actors in the development of this type of knowledge.[48] Thus, sociology of interventions depersonalizes the term "intellectual" and, in this way, multiplies the actors relevant for an analysis. And, indeed, this was the case with film production as such: the film industry featured a variety of actors (intellectuals, bureaucrats, financiers, workers) whose more or less successful contributions and "interventions" were decisive throughout the various stages of the film creation. Although they were all involved in cultural production, a vague category such as that of intellectuals cannot do justice to their divergent positions and interests. On the other hand, a historically more neutral term such as that of "cultural producers" would not make justice to the hierarchies which existed between a bureaucrat and a worker, between the directors and the film studio managers. These various actors could propose various interpretation of what a socialist film is, of what the market's

[47] The concept used by Eyal has not so much to do with the Habermasian understanding as with L. Thevenot's understanding of "the public" as a sociological concept and of "making things public". See, for instance, Laurent Thévenot, "The Plurality of Cognitive Formats and Engagements Moving between the Familiar and the Public," *European Journal of Social Theory* 10, no. 3 (2007): 409–23.
[48] See: Eyal & Bulchoz.

function should be, of the disjuncture between socialism and market or of the influence that central bureaucracy should bear on the movie script. This thesis is also an attempt to capture this polyphony of voices.

Chapter 2 - Neoplanta Film in Context: Film Industry and the 1960s Reforms

2.1 "Delegating power to society": Yugoslovenstvo and Self-Management

In 1971 a short film was released by the studio *Neoplanta Film*; the director, one of the "black wave" filmmakers, Karpo Ačimović Godina, was trying to provide, through his short *Zdravi ljudi za razonodu* (*Healthy People for Fun*) another, more critical and sarcastic perspective on the Yugoslav "unity and brotherhood" thesis. Located in the multinational province of Vojvodina, Godina's movie tries to grasp the manner in which different nationalities (Russians, Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Rumanians, Roma, etc.) understand themselves and their ethnically different neighbors; their self-describing narratives are interrupted, however, by short visual intercuts with the monotonous landscapes of Vojvodina, and by somewhat ironic musical intercuts with passionate declarations of love for each of these nations. The voice which gives these passionate declarations remains, however, unidentified throughout the movie, disembodied from the real persons talking throughout the film, representatives of different nationalities who insist in emphasizing the minute differences which renders them unique and special compared with the others. All the shots are taken in front of their houses colored in suspiciously representative colors (Croats seem to prefer green-yellow, Slovaks – blue, Hungarians – green, etc.) Characteristically for most *Neoplanta Film* productions, *Zdravi ljudi za razonodu* was well received by critics, within the Belgrade Festival of Documentary and Short Film; equally characteristic, it was soon withdrawn from public screening. Understandably so, as 1971 was certainly not the best year for taking an ironic look at Yugoslav interethnic relations. But the picture is still incomplete; there is one detail which usually remains unnoticed in the accounts on *Zdravi ljudi za razonodu*. In the midst of the film, during a routine musical

insert, a singer suddenly shouts disruptively "*Neoplanta* Film, *Neoplanta* Film!" This humorous rupture within the reality of the film, with an obvious advertising function for the small and relatively unknown production company, suddenly brings in a short glance into the intricate reality of film production, and into Yugoslav film industry at large. Within this chapter I will try to enlarge this short close-up and provide an analysis of Yugoslav film production which, just like the short "*Neoplanta* Film!" shout in Godina's movie, has been lost amidst debates on ethnic differences and strife.

What became the object of Godina's ironic cinematic eye was an essential change in the way in which Yugoslav polity imagined itself. In opposition to the prewar politics of assimilation, the postwar Yugoslav federation was built on the idea that cultural and national differences were to be embraced, and Yugoslav multiculturalism was presented as a sign of strength of the country.[49] Recognition of cultural national differences, however, was just a part of the story, as an integrative Yugoslav identity discourse was an important element within the cultural debates of the period. Moreover, these debates between regional cultural politics and an overarching Yugoslav culture were intimately connected with problems of economic and social organization, focused especially on the self-management discourse of the period. Thus, in his speech at Split in May 1962 Tito linked the development of a "uniform Yugoslav culture" with the economic organization of the country.[50] Within this perspective, it was a specific kind of Yugoslav socialism, based on a specific organization of economic production emphasizing self-management, which became an essential part of Yugoslav "identity politics". Following Tito's perspective,

[49] Andrew Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998): 174.
[50] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 283.

Kardelj tried to point out that the socialist division of labor would create a new sort of yugoslovenstvo, or Yugoslav consciousness.[51] This kind of "supranational Yugoslavism"[52] came along with another catchword of the decade: "decentralization", which was to be exercised in national, cultural and economic spheres alike. As Stevan Majstorović points out in the very first pages of his UNESCO report on Yugoslav cultural policies, decentralization is "a condition sine qua non in Yugoslavia", "a prominent feature of cultural and overall policy, [working] in full conformity with the self-management organization of society which calls for the expansion of the decision making centers and the delegation of government power to the society".[53] Consequently, far from being confined to inner debates within the cultural field, identity politics were in constant inter-dynamics with debates regarding the economic and the administrative organization of the Yugoslav federation. Through its political import and its funding structure, the film industry would be one of the social spheres in which these debates would unfold.

The principle of delegating power to the society which Majstorović mentioned was seemingly materialized in the 1963 Constitution, also known as the "Self-Management Charter"[54] as it tried to legislate the self-management model in all spheres and at all levels of social life. For the first time, the considerable powers of the federal government and the Communist Party's central hierarchy were reduced to the specific advantage of republics and regions. One of the most significant changes in this respect was the alteration of the status of Kosovo and Metohija: previously an Autonomous Region, it became the

[51] Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*: 248.
[52] Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*: 181.
[53] Stevan Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*, Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies (Paris: Unesco, 1972): 11.
[54] "The Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, April 7,1963"(found online: http://www.arhivyu.gov.rs/active/en/home/glavna_navigacija/leksikon_jugoslavije/konstitutivni_akti_jugoslavije/ustav_sfrj_1963.html (last accessed: 8 June 2014)

Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija. Together with Vojvodina, which enjoyed a similar status since 1946, Serbia now included two autonomous provinces. In general, the status of autonomous province granted a certain level of decision power on the local level: provinces had their own statute, held responsibility for indicative planning and budget management, for the usage of funds, they could establish institutions according to the needs of the Province, etc. Its finances, however, were not of an independent character and remained closely tied with Republic; even if they could use their own resources, this had to be done in agreement with the Republican leadership.[55] The two autonomous units of Vojvodina and Kosova enjoyed a similar position despite some minor but consequential differences: a different number of representatives in the Council of Nationalities, or the fact that Vojvodina enjoyed greater level of juridical independence because it had its own Supreme Court.[56] However, these changes were of greater significance for Kosovo as for Vojvodina the alterations brought by 1963 Constitution did not affect too much its previous status.

Although the influence that the new legislation had on Vojvodinian realities might be questioned, the overall discourse of decentralization and the right to self-determination was quickly reproducing itself, bearing its impact on the cultural level as well. In 1966, three years after the new Constitution had been issued, a film production house was established in Vojvodina. Starting as an initiative of the already existing amateur film group *Neoplanta*, the film studio under the same name could only be established by a state institution, in this case the Cultural Commission of the Province. Formally responsible for the establishment of *Neoplanta Film* was the Cultural Commission of the Province, the

[55] *Ustav Socijalističke Republike Srbije* [*Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Serbia*], (Belgrade: Contemporary Administration, 1963]: 68 – 69.
[56] "The Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, April 7, 1963."

only institution which also had the right to define the aims of the studio. These aims reflected rather well the quaint structure of contemporary Yugoslav nationalities policy. In terms of genre, *Neoplanta Film* was supposed to focus its production on documentary and short films. In respect to the themes which it was supposed to tackle, two appear as essential despite the strenuous relationship between them. On the one hand, it was designed as studio documenting the most significant events from the social, political, economic and cultural life of Vojvodina; on the other hand, the documentary films had to reflect the process of socialist construction without specification of any region.[57] Officially, these directions were not to be subject of violation.[58]

However, as early as 1966, when the film production in *Neoplanta Film* was just beginning, the director of the studio Svetozar Udovićki wrote a letter for the Province's Secretariat of Culture. In his attempt to obtain funding for the studio, he followed the ordinary procedure of providing a short report of the film repertoire that *Neoplanta Film* aimed at producing that year. In the list of films there were some which, as Udovićki admitted, did not necessarily comply with the official objectives set in the production profile of *Neoplanta Film*.

There were several reasons in Udovićki's explanation as for why, despite the formal breaching of the studio regulations, it was still necessary to include these films into the production plan, allowing them to take part in the contest for state funding. One of them was that short films (the important part of the official production profile of the *Neoplanta Film*) "did not have market value" and thus films deviating from the official obligations of

[57] *Svetozar Udovički, ed., Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use], vol. 1 (Novi Sad: Neoplanta Film, 1971)*: 3 – 4.
[58] Nacrt osnovnog zakona o proizvodnji filmova [The Draft of the Basic Law of Film Production], March 3, 1961, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 97, p. 2.

the studio provided a way of adding up to the budget of the studio.[59] This was just a first and rather modest attempt that managers of *Neoplanta Film* had made in order to circumscribe the rigid plan set by bureaucratic documents. However, more than mere survival strategies in a tough bureaucratic system, this type of legitimation strategies managed to tackle and to reconfigure the relationship between market socialism, regional identities and the Yugoslav federal project on which these complex bureaucracies relied. Udovićki's explanation intimated that "market value" was more than a formal constraint, it was constraint that could determine the type of cultural politics in which film production was involved. In the course of five years such attempts to rearrange the relationship between market socialism and cultural politics would grow into the studio's involvement in the „black wave" films with *Zdravi ljudi za razonodu* and its conspicuous advertisement for *Neoplanta Film* being among them. In what follows I will attempt to outline the intersection between cinematic, political and economic circumstances which surrounded *Neoplanta Film* and its production. However, rather than following the common narrative in film history which focuses on the demise of the Black Wave and the suspension of the activities of *Neoplanta Film*, I will reverse the angle and try to understand how the production of these films was possible. As I will try to show, the establishment of the studio and its functioning were closely connected to inner tensions within the self-management doctrine: these tensions interwove economic problems and cultural patterns.

[59] Zahtev za obezbedjenje sredstava [Request for Provision of Funds], 22 October, 1966, in: AV, F430, box 12, p. 2.

2.2 Cultural production as a self-managed industry: organizing local autonomy through centralized bureaucracy

The way in which Yugoslav leaders perceived film production went beyond the limited concern with the dissemination of socialist values, promotion of self-management, or creation of a particular type of the "socialist man". Although all of these ideas were crucial for the ways in which film production was envisioned and organized, there was one more aspect to it: film production was an economic activity. It is for this reason that the Federal Chamber of Commerce had a separate branch, the Council of Cinematography, which was supposed to deal with the financial problems of the film production. For them, film industry was "one of the youngest branches of industry in our economy".[60] This concern with the economic underpinning of film production exceeded the boundaries of institutions dedicated to this particular matter. By 1965 The Federal Ministry of Education and Culture broached a discussion which largely focused on the financial, administrative and institutional situation of the Yugoslav film industry. Naturally, similar concerns were present on the micro level of the film production as well, where it was not only (as the example of Udovićki's letter had shown) a matter of pragmatic bureaucratic survival, as it effected the structure of a specific studio. The organization of the film industry, the new legislation and the economic objectives set for film producers were a reflection of a larger vision of what Yugoslav self-management is and what values it should advocate.

One of the legislative acts which had a formative value for the Yugoslav film production was The Basic Film Law issued in 1956. This law went in accordance to the ongoing reforms aiming at the development of self-management structures, increased decentralization, and

[60] Materials of the discussion on the growth of the film industry in 1964 – 1970, July 1963, in: AJ, F405, box S5, p 1.

the introduction of market incentives into various spheres of economic activity. The key element of the Law on Film was the abolition of state subsidies in favor of a system of taxes (17 – 25%) on film admission tickets; these measures became effective in early 1957.[61] The adoption of such a law meant an essential change in the market structure of film production. Film studios (who were the legal owners of the film) were suddenly supposed to survive from their box-office revenues. Officially, this take on the film industry was expected to reduce the powers that state, as the main funds provider, could exercise over film production. Officially, such a reform would provide for a livelier cinematic life, as it would be able to respond more flexibly to both artistic trends and the needs of local cultural consumers; it was something that a centralized state bureaucracy was considered to be unable to do. On the other hand, this sudden cut of state subsidies imposed a hard budget constraint on film production enterprises, which were expected to increase their efficiency while rationalizing film production. Within the reforms that affected cinematic production, just like in the Self-management Charter, markets and administrative decentralization were seen as complex devices that, besides their economic and administrative function, also implied increased autonomy and power delegation towards local communities, including national publics.

The major problem was that even ten years after the Law was issued, its provisions were still far away from becoming reality. Among other factors, one of the constraints that prevented a fluent introduction of market elements into the Yugoslav film industry was the lack of a proper material infrastructure as well as the dearth of practical experience. In 1961 *Avala Film*, the biggest film studio in Yugoslavia, experienced a loss of 243 million

[61] Daniel J. Goulding, *Liberated Cinema: The Yugoslav Experience, 1945-2001*, 2nd ed., rev. and expanded (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002): 37.

dinars; *Jadran Film* in the same period lost approximately 380 million dinars.[62] Although one has to bear in mind that such significant losses could only be generated by the biggest film studios which were engaging in risky feature film production, they nevertheless do reflect the general situation in the film industry. While some of the studios could go bankrupt (like Croatian *Zora Film*), in most of the cases enterprises were bailed out by the state. Some of the bailouts could be done without the obligation of returning the money; however, it was a common practice for the state to provide a temporary credit in order to save an enterprise. As a result of these lenient policies, by the end of 1963 *Avala Film* had a debt reaching up to 700 million dinars.[63] The reasons of such difficult situations varied from one film enterprise to another: it could be the result of risky coproductions with foreign companies, or of more systematic problems such as persistent technical underdevelopment or an inefficient film distribution network. We should also keep in mind the popularity of television which was taking place throughout the 1960s and which caused a steady decline in the number of film viewers.[64] Whatever reasons might have been at play in each case, one can hardly underestimate the concern that Yugoslav government had in finding ways to rationalize and increase the efficiency of its film industry.

The envisioned solutions, however, by no means implied increasing state control; the discussions issued by the Council of Education, Science and Culture remained highly critical regarding the "administrative period" of film production and did regard it as an obstacle

[62] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 37 – 38.
[63] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 37.
[64] Goulding, *Liberated Cinema*: 64.

for growth.[65] In their view, not only did statist policies previously impede the development of a more rational economic structure for cinematic production; in fact, some remnants of the previous film production system continued to hinder the development of more effective policies, such as the allocation of state donations according to the commercial success of the enterprise.[66] Rather, a way out was to be found by understanding the nature of the problems which were plaguing the film industry, estimating the share of responsibility that each actor or institution may hold, and reorganizing institutions and policies. Within the discourse of most actors and within the public sphere, the conflict between bureaucratic centralized control and market autonomy continued to be one of the main *topoi*.

It was clear, however, that in the situation of an insufficiently developed technical base, the lack of experience in working with foreign film producers, the underdevelopment of the cultural market, and limited cultural consumption, such cultural institutions could not survive by themselves.[67] To a certain extent, the autonomy that markets and decentralization were to organize, could only be achieved through direct state intervention: one could only get rid of central bureaucracy through bureaucracy. This was especially true for the film industry which required significantly higher investments than most of other types of cultural production. Financial assistance from the side of the state was indispensable, at least for a foreseeable period of time: as I will show through the discussion on documentary films, despite the official discourse, markets did not simply

[65] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 1.
[66] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 2. This kind of policy was soon reviewed, and the state introduced a set of incentives which corresponded to both market success and the artistic value of the film. For more on this, see Chapter 2 in this thesis.
[67] Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*: 23.

existed, in some cases they had to be created. Introduction of market reforms into a self-management society brought not only a promise of a better future, but also did pose the question of how to keep the balance between state support and the studio's autonomy. Efforts of directing film industry towards financial self-sufficiency while providing constant state support lead to a curious mixed mode of production, tottering between state control and market. Far from being a simple economic issue, this mixed mode of production had important cultural and political implications: economic self-reliance and stable revenues could be used as arguments against bureaucratic interference in the strategic debates of the industry. This will be the case with both films which I will analyze in the next two chapters.

From a financial point of view, *Neoplanta Film* is a telling example of the workings of such a model. There were three types of production which characterized its output. The first and the most stable was the production of so-called commissioned films and documentation. This branch of *Neoplanta's* production profile was the most secure: in most of the cases films were ordered by particular enterprises, such as factories. The production price for such short films was easy to estimate, and the payment was arranged in advance, providing in this way a stable revenue. Knowing this it comes as little surprise that in one of the meetings of the Worker's Council Svetozar Udovićki was hoping for more possibilities to produce commissioned documentaries; "through documentaries we will acquire economic stability".[68] Stable as it was, this type of films could neither satisfy the artistic aspirations of some of the directors associated with *Neoplanta Film*, nor could it help the studio in achieving its mission as a film producer representative of socialist Vojvodina.

[68] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, 7 February, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 3.

Thus, the production of the two other types of films: short *autorski*[69] documentaries and feature films was deemed necessary, even if it was considerably less predictable.

As Udovićki had pointed out, short films did not have a market of their own, and they were often forgotten in the distribution process; consequently, they were much more dependent on state funding. For instance, the most significant sources of income for producers of *autorski* documentary films were state awards.[70] In 1971, the financial account on the production of short *autorski* films since the establishment of the studio was the following: the sales brought 385 266 dinars (10%), 2 758 000 dinars (72%) came as various kinds of support from the side of the state, and 705 600 (18%) dinars was *Neoplanta's* own input in the overall production cost. Despite generous state support and *Neoplanta's* own efforts, the concluding result was a generated loss of 474 957 dinars.[71] However, income from commissioned short films covered this loss completely and even brought modest revenue for the short film production section at large.

The production of feature films was the last and the least predictable type of *Neoplanta's* output. It is rather difficult to provide a comprehensive account of this kind of production by relying solely on the 1971 data. One of the reasons is that by that time the exploitation period of many of the feature films was not over yet and, consequently, the financial outcome could only be anticipated. It is true, however, that by 1971 *Neoplanta* did present its feature film production as being considerably profitable. Nevertheless, an expected revenue of *WR: Misterije organizma* (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism*) was also included

[69] The usage of the term corresponded to that of *auteur* in the thought associated with the French New Wave. Towards the end of the 1960s *Neoplanta* was asserting itself exactly as producer which promotes *autorski* film, and a supporter of the unique personal vision of the film director.
[70] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, 27 December, 1966, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 3.
[71] "Rekapitulacija finansijskog pokazatelja redovnih *autorski*h filmova" ["Recapitulation of the Financial Indicators of Regular Authors Films"], in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 134.

into these preliminary estimates; the fact that the film was withdrawn from public screening before it could bring any income was not taken into consideration at that point. Another problem standing in the way of generalizing the patterns in the financial scheme of the feature film production is the variety of ways in which feature films could be funded; in this sense most of them had a unique history of financing. However, on a more general level, the funding sources could be clearly stated. The Cultural Commission of the Province covered 26.84% of overall costs; co-production partners brought 29.60% and 35.70% was *Neoplanta's* own working capital.[72]

The variety of factors related to these different types of production did intertwine closely in the financial workings of the studio as an integral film production unit. Commissioned films were compensating for the losses incurred through the *autorski* short film productions. The early productions of socially critical shorts was one of the first steps in creating the image of *Neoplanta* as a producer of socially critical, modernist movies and did incorporate the studio into the already existing infrastructure of the Yugoslav New Wave film. The critical acclaim that these films received was of considerable importance when *Neoplanta Film* began realizing its ambitions in the feature film production. The input of the state funds into the production of feature films played an important part, but it can be considered as relatively limited. As the case studies that I analyze will show, *Neoplanta* often would rely on such divers factors as the reputation of the film director, expected critical acclaim, financial awards from film festivals at home and abroad, and on funds secured through domestic and foreign co-productions. These are just a few features of the complex net of connections between a variety of factors such as the type of funding,

[72] The source of funding for the rest 8% of the overall film cost at that moment was still unclear. See: "Finansiranje dugometražne proizvodnje" ["Financing of the Feature Film Production"], in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 271.

the state of the film infrastructure at that time, the financial and cultural policies of the government and the development of a relatively autonomous field of film production and peer evaluation. However, an apt navigation among these factors determined that by 1971 *Neoplanta Film* was one of the few financial solvent film studios in Yugoslavia.

2.3 Dilemmas of the self-management model

The economic reasoning underpinning the allegedly transitive period from a film industry administered by the state to a self-reliant film production, provides just a part of the motivations which were driving the reforms of the Yugoslav film. The strong enthusiasm to reduce the role of the bureaucratic apparatus of the film production was based not only on administrative and economic concerns, but also relied on a particular kind of understanding of how culture in a self-management socialist society should evolve. Refusing the role of the state as the main funding source was meant not only to provide a solution for the economic problems encountered in film production, but was also supposed to invigorate the cinematic culture. The ideology of the self-management socialism, with its distant ideal of "withering away of the state" was essentially an ideology of socialism "from below", and culture was supposed to be organized along these lines. However, the development of a socialist culture "from below" evinced tendencies which raised numerous contradictions and seemingly irresolvable dilemmas for the managers of Yugoslav cultural policy. These tendencies, however, were balanced by a dominant over-arching discourse which focused on the shortcomings of a centralized, "statist" organization of the film industry. It was this over-arching discourse which managed to provide a common ground for otherwise incompatible positions.

The problems of a centralized and bureaucratically managed cultural sphere are deftly analyzed by Stevan Majstorović, director of the Institute for the Study of Cultural Development of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, in his UNESCO report on cultural policy. Excessive administrative control over the field of cultural production was not only considered to be economically harmful, but was also deemed to abandon social and cultural responsibilities by assigning them to higher administrative structures.[73] The controlling bodies of the hierarchical state bureaucracy, Majstorović asserts, did tend to focus on the strict supervision of "ideological and political, cultural and aesthetic percepts of conformity", even if meeting these standards would come at the price of mediocrity. The "statist" sphere of culture is directed not by the unbiased judgment, but rather by subjective criteria imposed by the bureaucrats who are suddenly put in the position of arbiters of art. The situation of the cultural producers turns out to be ambiguous ("a cock-eyed culture" as Majstorović explains it), as they are forced to observe the interests of the authorities and of the public at the same time. In addition to that, the establishment of political and cultural elites went against principles of socialism as such, because the workers who contributed to the creation of surplus value could exert only an indirect influence on cultural development being deprived of any decision making power.[74]

By contrast to these bureaucratic tendencies, for Yugoslav cultural policy it was important to ensure that the cultural sphere was as democratic as possible; this was one of the key elements of the ideological basis of Yugoslav self-management. However, such an approach took specific forms once applied to the field of film production. One of the most important means, with far reaching consequences, was to increase the accessibility of the

[73] Stevan Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*, Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies (Paris: Unesco, 1972): 19.
[74] Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*: 22.

technical infrastructure necessary for filmmaking. A big number of grassroots cultural centers had the basic assets for filming at their disposal, and anyone willing, without regard to his or her primary occupation, had a possibility to learn to use it and make films. As Želimir Žilnik recalls[75], such centers were barely supervised, the only concern being that the technique would be handled properly. Gradually the usage of this technical infrastructure evolved into cine-clubs and contributed to the increasing importance of the film amateur culture. By the 1960s amateurs who started learning in this informal environment were becoming increasingly professionalized and became the basis of the Yugoslav *novi film*. *Neoplanta Film* is an important case of how such activities could be institutionalized. Not only did some of the important directors (such as Dušan Makavejev) and collaborators of *Neoplanta Film* emerge from the flourishing amateur circles such as Kino Klub Beograd; the film production house as such was preceded by the amateur group under the same name, which was active in Novi Sad some time before the studio was established.[76]

Besides the encouragement of grassroots film production, there were other criteria which were seen as important for a lively socialist culture of a qualitatively high level. Within the Yugoslav context, the monopoly that state bureaucrats held in the evaluation of artistic works in state socialist countries was deemed as morally false and inefficient. The judgment of cultural production in general and cinematic production in particular had to be delivered by both experts and public.[77] As a consequence, by the 1960s the public sphere in Yugoslavia was relatively open for discussion and conflicting opinions. The list of

[75] A talk given in Central European University, Budapest, on February 28th, 2013.
[76] *Neoplanta Film* was not a single case; institutions of similar origin appeared in Zagreb (Filmski *autorski* studio), Sarajevo (Studio film), Pristina (Kosmet film), etc. For more information see: Ekonomski položaj kinematografije [Economic Situation of Cinematography], March 7, 1969, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 97.
[77] Majstorović, *Cultural Policy in Yugoslavia*: 20.

the journals devoted to film was relatively lengthy, and provided a space of reflection for divergent opinions. Festivals provided another important platform for opening Yugoslav cinema to both the professional and the public eye. It is important to notice that even though it would not be feasible to state that all these spaces were exempt from political influence, they had secured a relative autonomy from the official line.

This was especially the case with the participation in foreign festivals, which was not uncommon in Yugoslavia due to its international policies. Moreover, throughout the 1960s the importance of professional evaluations of cinematic production did matter. On the one hand, official awards and the professional recognition received in festivals influenced the way in which state officials would qualify and assess films. In the official bureaucratic process of monitoring the Yugoslav film industry some of the required data involved listing the awards received at various festivals. On the other hand, the positive reception of a particular film provided the producer (and the director) with strong arguments; this would become especially handy, once the film was being criticized on political grounds. Moreover, the critical acclaim had a lasting value as well: once the films of a particular director was gaining recognition among professional critics, his name would put both him and her/his production house on safer ground. Throughout the 1960s this was true regardless of whether the studio would be looking for state or private funding.

It is nevertheless true that there was a certain tension between, on the hand, the urge for increasing workers' involvement in the process of cultural production and, on the other, the influence of the critics' professional bodies. The important critical acclaim that *Neoplanta's* productions received serves as an accurate illustration of this inner tension in the ideology of self-management. As a production house *Neoplanta Film* was gradually

affirming its distinct profile through the production of the so called socially critical films. Short documentaries of this kind had little possibility of reaching broad audiences; this problem was magnified by distribution hindrances.[78] As a consequence, the success of this type of movies depended very much on critical acclaim. Furthermore, feature film productions such as Žilnik's *Rani radovi* and Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* were permeated with cultural and philosophical references, which made them inaccessible to the working public.[79] Thus, the popularity and the significance of these films was asserted primarily through the critical acclaim of journalists and film professionals. Even though within the anti-statist logic these cultural professionals were entitled to assess and evaluate film production, for some official representatives of the Yugoslav self-management their opinion appeared as deviation. Thus Tito's criticism as early as 1962, directed against the intelligentsia who "places itself above the society, which lives outside our socialist reality, and which, falling under various Western influences (...) criticized and negates all the results of our development".[80]

Tensions between the attempt to bring cultural life closer to the masses and the increasing professionalization of cinema workers was just one of the sour spots in the self-management ideology underpinning the film industry. Another essential problem encountered by higher level managers of the Yugoslav film production was common to other film industries functioning under state socialism. At stake here was a tricky balance between the films which would contribute to the development of "socialist values" and the

[78] For example, in many cases the cinema theatre when arranging its evening program would include only feature films instead of combining feature and short films along the lines of theme which they dealt with. See: Materials for discussion.

[79] This problem, however, was coupled with the fact that only the limited number of people had an opportunity to see these films, for the reason that they were withdrawn from distribution in the early stages of exploitation.

[80] Quoted in: Goulding, *Liberated Cinema*: 70.

preferences of film consumers. In the case of Yugoslavia this balance was even more difficult to achieve because of its openness to Western cultural production.

Following the rejection of socialist realism after the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, leaders of Yugoslav film industry did not propose any clear and well defined vision of how a socialist film should look like. This does not mean that they lacked any criteria for evaluating films according to socialist values. Yugoslav film had its own mission; as opposed to the Western imports invading Yugoslav industry, it was supposed to engage with the themes which were "more ours, could better express our cultural heritage, historical and present state of our human and social relations, formation of these relations and formation of our socialist man, with regard to his desires, needs and aspirations".[81] Thus Yugoslav film was imbued with a certain pedagogical function (however democratic it might have been) and was supposed to serve the needs of the socialist society in formation. Foreign cinema was welcome in Yugoslavia (covered by the conviction that "no national culture can grow without interaction with the culture of the world"[82]), but with certain reservations. Apparently, popular foreign films could not provide an adequate reflection and understanding of socialist Yugoslav society and thus failed to serve its social purposes. The problem turned out to be particularly pressing as out of all films screened in Yugoslavia in 1964, 85% were foreign films and only 15% were produced locally[83]; thus it comes as no surprise that the Basic Law on Film issued in 1962 considered the protection of domestic film industry as one of its main objectives[84]. Among the possible solutions which could

[81] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 8.
[82] Idem.
[83] Materials of the discussion on the growth of the film industry in 1964 – 1970, July 1963, in: AJ, F405, box S5, p. 98.
[84] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 20.

allow a re-launch of Yugoslav products on the domestic market was a quaint form of cultural import substitution: producing film genres that would correspond with those of the imported films. The contemporary Yugoslav film production was deemed to be somewhat "monotonous" and lacked engagement with contemporary social and intimate human themes; there were not enough films of the easy and entertaining genres, reviews, musicals, thrillers, children films and even sci-fi.[85] This socialist interpretation of popular Western production had a double aim: on the one hand, pleasing the general audience, increasing cinema attendance and, of course, revenues. On the other hand, it stressed the pedagogical functions of cinema culture within the self-managed socialist Federation.

This emphasis on the educational value of film culture had its repercussions both on the domestic and on the international sectors of film production and distribution. Domestically, this idea sustained the existence of certain supervisory bodies such as the Film Review Commission. The nature and intensity of its work as well as the composition of its personnel did vary over time, and in the course of the 1960s it was extremely rare that the Commission would prevent any film from public screening.[86] However, it is important to notice that even in the context of the 1960s with its intended focus on delegating power to the workers and its proclaimed freedom of speech, institutions of this kind were still retained. Besides that, there was a set of less straightforward administrative regulations on various levels of film production – such as those setting clear limits to the activity of *Neoplanta Film* by pre-defining its focus on certain genres and on specific themes.

[85] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 12 – 13.

[86] It also has to be kept in consideration that in majority of the cases the censorship would occur in other ways; involvement of the court system, withdrawal of the film from distribution was just a few of the ambiguous means in which film production could be controlled.

In one of his articles Svetozar Udovićki provided a comprehensive list of institutions entitled to oversee the process of film production.[87] The first threshold of supervision was taking place before the filming started. Especially when the film was to be funded from the state resources, the project had to go through four different steps of approval: the Artistic Council of the studio, the Workers Council of the studio, the Commission of Cinematography of the Cultural Commission of the Province, and the Executive Committee of the same Commission.[88] What Udovićki did not mention, however, was that the influence of these institutions was rather unequal. For instance, in the case of *Neoplanta* the Workers Council consisted of four to six stable employees, most of whom were only responsible for specific technical tasks[89], and consequently were not in a position of making decisions over such matters as planning and the evaluation of the film program. More important were, in the early period of film production, the influence of the Commission for Cinematography and the Executive Committee of the Cultural Commission. The reason was rather simple: they had the power to decide over funds allocation. Another type of supervision was applied once the film production of the film was completed; at that point, besides the already mentioned four institutions, a film had to receive the permission of the Film Review Commission of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, the film jury of the Commission for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and receive the evaluation of the juries at the Pula and Belgrade film festivals.[90]

Similarly, the cautious attitude regarding international cooperation in film production and distribution was embodied in the careful supervision of co-productions as well as of film

[87] Kujundžićeve igre oko Neoplante šKujundžić's Games With *Neoplanta*], 6 June, 1971, F430, box 14/18: p. 1.
[88] *Idem.*
[89] Workplaces in *Neoplanta Film* in 1971 were the following: director, archivist of filmed material, secretary, technical secretary, helper and accountant. See: Svetozar Udovički, ed., *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: *Neoplanta* Film, 1971): 393.
[90] Kujundžićeve igre oko Neoplante [Kujundžić's Games With *Neoplanta*], 6 June, 1971, F430, box 14/18: p. 1.

imports and exports, conducted mainly by "Jugoslavija Film". However, at the same time it was coupled with a more enthusiastic approach to the possibilities of Yugoslav cinematic expansion to the West. One of the basic tasks for the film production in the 1960s was directed at the possibility of increasing the exports of film production, contributing in this way to the representation of Yugoslavia in the West. Although rates of exports were growing, they were not deemed satisfactory: "our film is not sufficiently represented in Western cinemas. (...) We surely have more to tell to the West".[91] This enthusiasm regarding the possibilities of reaching external markets was determined by the specific role that Yugoslavia played in the Cold War: skillfully maneuvering between the East and the West, while providing, at the same time through its important role in the Non-Aligned movement, the example of an alternative modernization model, different from both Western capitalism and the Soviet type of state socialism. Cinema was supposed to take a supporting role in this endeavor: "The political role that our country is taking in the world requires support from the sphere of culture, and cinema is one of the most acknowledged means of direct influence and of capturing attention".[92] The motivation of producing better films for domestic consumption went together with the desire to produce films which would deliver a positive image of Yugoslavia abroad and be able to compete on the Western markets, expecting, in this way, to create even closer ties with the Western countries. Co-productions played an important part in this regard. Once and again, the Yugoslav technical base was not really sufficient to support a fruitful cooperation with Europe ("in comparison with Western competitors we are cheaper only in extras and

[91] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 11.
[92] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 12.

horses"[93]). All means were to be taken in order to improve the state of Yugoslav film industry so that it would be able to compete in European markets.[94]

Neoplanta was skillfully navigating this complex set of financial constraints, bureaucratic regulations, and ideological contradictions that did underlie much of the rhetoric and practice of Yugoslav self-management. On the one hand, thanks to a sly use of the mixed state –private mode of production, *Neoplanta Film* did not generate losses and in this way fulfilled the objectives that were set out for Yugoslav film industry at large as a self-managed production unit: it could represent itself as a successful market player that, nevertheless, managed to express local identity issues while preserving the self-management tenets of the Federation. On the other hand, thanks to their production policy and the political-cultural context, the films produced by the studio took advantage of the favorable critical assessment which accompanied new wave movies. Part of the reasons why this critical acclaim became important was the democratization elements of the self-management discourse: as Majstorović pointed out professional evaluations of cultural products played an important part in undermining the power of the central bureaucracy. Moreover, its orientation towards foreign markets and leftist audiences played an important part in *Neoplanta's* production since its establishment; they were seeking international cooperation both among the countries of the socialist block and in Western Europe. Eventually, the close ties that *Neoplanta* developed with film festivals such as Oberhausen became one of the most important sources of prestige within Yugoslavia, as well as an important income provider. In this way the studio carefully

[93] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 43.
[94] Problemi kinematografije. Materijal za diskusiju. [Problems of Cinematography. Materials for discussion], 1965, in: AJ, F319, box 73, folder 96, p. 25.

preserved, within its cultural policy, the specific manner in which Yugoslavia fashioned itself as a third-way country, bridging the ideological difference between the East and the West. Throughout the 1960s *Neoplanta* could engage in these policies relatively undisturbed. Even though criticisms could be heard, *Neoplanta* was often able to defend its position, partially by conforming to certain expectations of the Cultural Commission of the Province, partially because both through its infrastructural organization and its discourse it preserved its image as a socialist self-managed production unit.

This skillful maneuvering, however, had to listen to contradictory constraints that were imbued within the Yugoslav self-management culture. Although markets and decentralization were supposed to express and bulwark the autonomy of local communities, it was clear enough that certain markets for certain products did not exist. Consequently, it was the role of central bureaucracy to organize the demand for documentaries which officially were the expression of local realities such as Vojvodina. In the same vein, although film production was to be under the control of the film industry's workers, it was unclear whether critics and professional bodies could be included into this category. Similarly, although film studios were supposed to assert their independence from central authorities by acting as autonomous players on the market, living out of their own revenues, it was increasingly obvious that this independence could never be achieved without state funding. In its turn, state funding meant increasingly dependence on central bureaucracy. At the same time, the studio's independence on the market could always come to a halt due to a random administrative decision and to a complex structure of production control. Institutions like the Film Review Commission remained in place, and a broad variety of other ambiguous mechanisms of controlling cinematic output could be put in use. These administrative decisions could easily affect studio's finances, requiring state

intervention which diminished the production house's independence. It is through this complex set of contradictions that *Neoplanta* had to navigate.

In the next two chapters, it will be my task to describe the discursive moves and the pragmatic strategies that could or could not be used in these dangerous waters of self-management socialism. Focusing on two films which were as much cultural objects as they were political scandals, I will follow their production processes as they summarize some of these contradictory traits.

Chapter 3 - Self-management in Funding and Public debates: The Production Process of Rani radovi (Early Works, 1969)

Novi Sad, the capital city of Vojvodina, was taking full advantage of the opening up of Yugoslav cultural sphere, both in regard to Western intellectual influences and through a new experimental attitude in art. Several years before the establishment of *Neoplanta Film*, Želimir Žilnik (1942 -) was actively participating in the alternative cultural life of Novi Sad. He was the chief editor[95] of the publication *Tribina mladih* [*Youth Tribune*], a hub of Yugoslav alternative culture which had been established as early as 1954[96] and had been providing a space for modernist art and a rather free dialogue on cultural and social issues.[97] Imbued with artistic influences varying from Situationist International to Joseph Kosuth, *Tribina mladih* also exercised a non-dogmatic Marxist position which seemed threatened the state's monopoly on Marxist discourse.[98] It was while organizing the debates taking place at the *Tribina mladih* center that Žilnik was first introduced to the ideas of the *Praxis* school. However, the activities evolving around *Tribina mladih* was not the only sphere of his interest. By the time when *Neoplanta Film* appeared, Žilnik was already an established amateur film director within the group working under the same name. In 1966, when *Neoplanta Film* was established, the studio not only continued the activities of the pre-existent amateur film group already engaged in relationships with

[95] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 159.
[96] Zoran Pantelić and Kristian Lukić, "Media Ontology Mapping of Social and Art History in Novi Sad", in: *Trajni Čas Umetnosti Novosadska Neoavangarda 60-Tih I 70-Tih Godina XX Veka [The Continuos Art Class The Novi Sad Neo-Avantgarde of the 1960's and 1970's]* (Novi Sad: Centar za nove medije_kuda.org, 2005): 20.
[97] "In the late 1960's and 1970's, Youth Tribune became the place of gathering of the most advanced artistic scene, literature, theatre and performance from Yugoslavia, Europe and worldwide. It was a forerunner of the Belgrade SKC, Student's Cultural Centre, which in the mid 1970's became the meeting point", in: *Trajni Čas Umetnosti Novosadska Neoavangarda 60-Tih I 70-Tih Godina XX Veka [The Continuos Art Class The Novi Sad Neo-Avantgarde of the 1960's and 1970's]*: 36.
[98] This argument was later used by Žilnik as a defense of *Rani radovi*.

various official companies[99]; it also appeared in a relatively lively avant-garde culture setting, where Žilnik already played an important part.

Neoplanta Film was as important for Žilnik as Žilnik was for *Neoplanta*. On the one hand, the film studio provided the director with a platform and working conditions that facilitated his career as a professional filmmaker. On the other hand, Žilnik brought to *Neoplanta Film* his innovative approach to filmmaking and subversive ideas, all of which had a significant influence on the policies of the studio. As Žilnik's films were receiving growing public attention, the name of the director often went along with the name of the studio; it was *Neoplanta's* production, and in this way the film production house was forming its public image as a studio engaged in the production of *autorski* film, quality provocative film.[100] If the need for a distinct thematic and cinematic profile was pointed out in one of the very first meetings of the worker's council of *Neoplanta Film* [101], Žilnik turned out to be central in achieving this objective – he provided a distinct take on the aesthetics of documentary film and an individual perspective on Yugoslav realities.

3.1 Documentary films: creating a non-existent demand

The legislative documents regarding the establishment of *Neoplanta Film* emphasize the function of the studio as one of the means to support the development of cinematography in Vojvodina. Five years later, the self-published report on the studio's activity set out to assert one of the main policies of *Neoplanta's* production profile: its focus on *autorski* films. These two modes of production represented two directions which the studio would

[99] As an amateur group, filmmakers could hardly secure any other means of financing. For more information see: Svetozar Udovički, ed., *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: *Neoplanta* Film, 1971).

[100] It should be emphasized, however, that Žilnik, while his input was of great significance, was not the only director contributing to the image of *Neoplanta* as an innovative studio; works by Miroslav Antić, Branko Milošević, later on – Karpo Aćimović Godina and others were nonetheless important in this respect.

[101] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, 27 December, 1966, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 5.

follow in the next years and Žilnik was deftly moving between them, despite the differences in their ideological, aesthetic, social and economic underpinnings. This maneuvering is especially sharp in his work as a documentary filmmaker. In the period between 1967 and 1971 Žilnik made five short films with *Neoplanta*. In the classification provided by the studio itself this part of his oeuvre would fall into the category of *autorski* short films. An overview of the economic and social underpinnings of Žilnik's documentaries will allow a deeper understanding not only of their production, shedding some light on the reasons of his early success, but will also help in explaining the workings of the more risky production of feature films. The latter were produced outside the official state funding scheme.

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, *Neoplanta* was established as a film studio designed essentially for the needs of Vojvodina, with an initial aim of reflecting on and promoting the specific cultural heritage of the region along with its socialist values. Since its establishment the studio was keeping a close connection with the Province's Cultural Council. The funding which the institution provided represented a significant part of *Neoplanta's* income by 1971.[102] Also, it was the main institution to which film producers could apply for funding before the production of the film had started. The procedures for acquiring the funds were relatively complex and inflexible, making it the access to funds relatively difficult: the contest for funds was announced once a year and it required a complex documentation as well as a more or less clear script for the movie. Despite these hurdles, the Council remained an important source of funding. The significance of this type of income becomes clear once we remember that for a couple of years *Neoplanta Film* was

[102] This statement bears certain amount of oversimplification, though. The sources of funding shifted during the period. For example, only by 1969 – 70 the region received powers in making categorizations and distributing recourse funds; before that it was the Socialist Republic of Serbia who was providing resources.

a new film studio, with very little working capital of its own. Besides funding, the Province's Cultural Council was the main institution to whom *Neoplanta* was accountable, both for its financial and its artistic achievements. In this way, through this administrative and funding structure, the local aspect of film production maintained its importance throughout the period.

However, there were many reasons which could not allow *Neoplanta* to remain in this secure scheme of funding. Its scope was rather limited, it posed the risk of projects being rejected[103], and in general, it was seen as expedient means before the studio could get stronger and be able to manage its finances on the basis of market relations. In accordance with broader expectations that Yugoslav policies imposed over cinematography, a film production enterprise was supposed to reach for greater self-sustainability. Along with that went the ambition and initiative that *Neoplanta* and the creative workers with whom it cooperated would demonstrate more market engagement by tackling bigger projects.

There was another important aspect which influenced the semi-private process of film production. Authorities responsible for setting directions to the development of Yugoslav film production were aware that despite the whole decentralization and market drive, the cultural sphere cannot proceed without the financial input from the side of the state. Thus, they had introduced a complex system of incentives which would grant state support, while at the same time encouraging the grassroots development of culture alongside with market tendencies.

One of these reforms was directed at encouraging producers to devote more attention to the distribution of films and the consumption side of the film market. Essentially, state

[103] The report of the results of the competition for funding, 17 July, 1967, in: AV, F430, box 12, p. 1.

resorted at providing a recourse funding, the amount of which correlated with the revenue that each film managed to bring through cinemas. While producers of short and documentary films were in a disadvantaged position regarding the distribution of films[104], recourse system made revenues more important, because the funding allocated by state often would double the actual profit made by the film.[105] However, in the case of short film production revenues usually were scarce, thus the importance of this type of income was limited.

The second type of incentives had to deal with awards for the quality of the film. The state had introduced a system of categorization which evaluated various works and which also took the form of financial awards.[106] This type of funding was deemed of particular importance for short and documentary films.[107] Distribution of these awards was related to the screenings and evaluations made during film festivals.[108] Categorization was not concerned with distribution; it was supposed to support films which might have not attracted popular attention, but nevertheless were perceived as being of high educational and artistic value. While such system of encouragement for better quality might have put the market criteria to the second place, it nevertheless did put accent on other type of competition – competition over critical acknowledgement, which alone was to determine what a "quality" film was.

[104] This problem was not limited to the short or documentary films only. Towards the end of the 1960s feature films were also suffering from the steady decline of the numbers of cinema attendees.
[105] See: Svetozar Udovički, ed., *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*, vol. 2 (Novi Sad: *Neoplanta* Film, 1971): 617.
[106] Films in the 1st category would receive 40 000 dinars, 2nd – 25 000, 3rd – 10 000; 4th category was a non-financial award. See: Communication with the Federal Fond for Development of Cinematography, in: AV, F430, box 12, p. 5.
[107] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 3.
[108] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 3.

Finally, and this was particularly important in the case of Žilnik, the international context was influential enough to change and structure this complex internal administrative and economic structure. On the one hand, success in foreign festivals was a favorable means of gaining legitimization and prestige for the film director and for the studio which produced the film. For Udovićki the possibility of distribution and exhibition abroad was more than a matter of mere chance or occasional occurrence; as his report of the trip to Chicago reveals, foreign countries were seen as prospective markets for film distribution.[109] Thus it comes as little surprise that *Neoplanta Film* started seeking for foreign connections from the very early stages of its development. Moreover, participation and success in foreign festivals like Oberhausen was not only a matter of gaining cultural prestige and acknowledgment; it could also provide a considerable financial support.[110]

While all of these factors were at play in the semi-private model of film production, the type of films that *Neoplanta* tended to focus on required a specific attention to some of them. In most of the cases, they were making films without a specific intention to appeal to the popular taste and the internal market. Rather, their target (although probably not chosen consciously) were leftist intellectual circles both in Yugoslavia and abroad. Leaving an opportunity to appeal the broad audiences aside, it became crucial for *Neoplanta* to receive critical acclaim and acknowledgement from intellectual sphere of journalists, politicians, cultural workers, students, film critics and film workers. Žilnik seemed to be incredibly important in this endeavor.

Thus, as one of the film directors associated with the studio in its early years, Žilnik had to maneuver among divergent and contradictory directions. On the one hand, he was

[109] Report from the business trip to the United States, 24 November, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.
[110] Report of the visit to Oberhausen film festival, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 3.

supposed to respect some of the expectations of Cultural Commission of the Province, while at the same time to his own understanding of how documentary film should look like and what should it talk about. At a first glance, his works may appear as complying with the official production plan set out for the studio in the beginning: themes of his works evolved in the setting of Vojvodinian villages or suburbs of Novi Sad, and he did indeed talk about the issues of a socialist society. However, Žilnik appeared to be less concerned with the achievements and development of both the region and socialism than with a variety of cracks in it – grim realities of both geographical and social margins of Vojvodina and Yugoslav socialism in general. By 1967 he released his first professional short film, *Žurnal o omladini na selu zimi* (*Newsreel on Village Youth, in Winter*, 1967), shot in villages at the outskirts of Novi Sad. As one of the opening captions reveals, it was a film about "culture and entertainment" within those villages. But it was not the entertainment of museum visits or Mayday parades. Rather, the viewer was faced with rough and unadorned images of rural realities of gathering in pubs, singing, breaking glasses to the floor or to one's head, and heavy drinking. It is difficult to say whether this grim imagery was the reason why film was permitted only to the informative section of the 14th festival of the Yugoslav Short and Documentary Film[111]; but such "realism" certainly did appeal some of the critics. *Žurnal o omladini* was deemed particularly moving because of its "authenticity, vigor of life, the power of visual expression and montage"[112], because it brought "a detail from the picture of *life*"[113]. Being unable to participate in the competition, film did nevertheless

[111] Films in this section did not participate in competition for awards.
[112] Slobodan Novaković, "Manje i više od života – manje i više od filma!" [Smaller and Larger than Life, Smaller and Larger than Film], *Filmska kultura*, 18 April, 1967, in: Svetozar Udovički, ed., *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: *Neoplanta* Film, 1971): 34.
[113] Bogdan Tirnanić,"Želimir Žilnik, prvi put" [Želimir Žilnik, The First Time], in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 40.

receive an award from the film journal *Ekran*. Furthermore, it received the 1st category from the state.

In the following years Žilnik continued his work on the "forgotten" segments of Yugoslav society, always providing an ironic and subversive take on the Yugoslav realities. Apparently, he was commissioned by *Neoplanta* to collect material for a children's film. The theme of the movie was a TV show where a popular actor-entertainer Gula (Dragoljub Milosavljević) addressed happy and care-free children[114]. As a side product of this project appeared *Pioniri maleni, mi smo vojska prava, svakog dana nićemo ko zelena trava* (*Little Pioneers*, 1968), a poignant account on socially neglected children involved in criminal activities. Its sharp critical edge did not prevent *Pioniri maleni* from participation in several festivals and receiving prizes, the 2nd award in Belgrade Festival of Short and Documentary film among them. Finally, *Nezaposljeni ljudi* (*The Unemployed,* 1968)[115] touched upon the pressing issue of socialist unemployment, rates of which were increased as a result of the economic reform of the 1960s, and received the 1st prize in Oberhausen film festival in Germany. Moreover, it was evaluated as being a 1st category movie by the state. By 1969 it was becoming obvious that the relatively independent community of Yugoslav and foreign critics were had recognized young Žilnik as an innovative and promising film director.

[114] Jovan Angels, "Nova filmska nada Želimir Žilnik" [Želimir Žilnik, The New Hope of Film], in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 50. *Laku noć, Šnjuka* was made and remained largely unnoticed.

[115] Film went through censorship, thus the second part of the film, which involved prostitutes, had to be cut out. What was presented in Oberhausen and received the award is just a half of a film. See: Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 75.

This opinion was not shared by everyone; by that time the first references to "blackness" in regard to Žilnik's oeuvre started appearing in publications.[116] However, the variety of the ways of denouncing Žilnik's achievement in Oberhausen was somewhat broader. For instance, right after the festival *Politika* bothered to publish little more than a small message[117]; but the following day an extensive critical article occurred in the pages of the same publication. Criticism, however, was directed not that much at the director, or the aesthetic and ideological aspects of his film, than at the Festival's Jury which was deemed to have made the wrong decision.[118] Such condemnations of the Jury were a rather widespread practice, reoccurring in other instances such as in the aftermath of the award received by *Rani radovi*. The roots of this type of criticism lied in the fact that in the official anti-etatist discourse the bureaucracy and state were denounced the power of evaluating the artworks. These functions, instead, were delivered to the cultural professionals, juries of film festivals being one of such institutions. Thus, for those who saw Žilnik's oeuvre as harmful for Yugoslav self-management, criticizing the film was not enough; the authority of critics who rated it highly had to be renegotiated as well.

Other reactions, however, lauded the work. As Žilnik continued making new films, some of these praising opinions continued appearing. Žilnik emerged in the midst of the Yugoslav New Wave cinema, but there was something unusual about him: he was making *documentaries* rather than fiction films. Such means of expression posed a certain challenge for the critics of his work: it was not just the mere critical fantasy or biased

[116] Milutin Čolić, "Počelo je sumorno..." [It Started Out Gloomily], *Politika*, 21 March 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 59. In this particular article two directors were identified as distorting the reality: Želimir Žilnik and Lordan Zafranović.
[117] "Žilnik, Bourek in naša selekcija nagradjeni na Oberhauzenu" [Žilnik, Bourek and Our Selection Were Awarded in Oberhausen], *Borba*, 7 April 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 60.
[118] Tomislav Ketig, "Kome je kriv Želimir Žilnik" [What is the Guilt of Želimir Žilnik], in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 61 – 62.

opinion that he was presenting; there was a dimension of reality to it. Žilnik himself had emphasized that "aesthetics" do not interest him; that it is the reality of the people that he wants to get a hold on[119]; in one of his interviews he asserted that these films were an attempt to talk about what is omitted from the public imagery of the Yugoslav society, to provide to specific social groups the possibility of being heard.[120] The harsh realities he was showing on screen thus gained an element of an intrinsic pressure for reactions with a real life effect.[121] Thus it comes as no surprise that it was the realism of his films that soon became an important element of the public debate, the validity of his depictions. On the one side stood critics and journalists who, similar to Ćolić, stated that Žilnik was presenting reality by relying on sporadic elements of it, which were unrepresentative for Yugoslavia and which, furthermore, distorted it. On the other side stood praises which admired his courage to portray problematic segments of society, segments which had grown distant from the urban cinemagoers. Essentially, it was difficult to argue with Žilnik's films and his essentially democratic and socialist standpoint ("I am making these films because there is no communism yet"[122]) since in many cases it was presented as perfectly in line with the official position of political and cultural authorities.

Whatever were the arguments approving or disapproving his work, the acknowledgment that Žilnik was gaining both home and abroad and the discussions he had sparked made him an important name in the film industry. In the spring of 1968 the biggest film

[119] Bogdan Tirnanić, "Filmska umetnost me ne interesuje" [I am Not Interested in the Art of Film], *Susret*, 5 April 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 69.
[120] Pero Zubac, "Ne postoji crni film" [There is No Black Film], *Index*, 25 April, 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 75.
[121] E. Bodanovic, "Šta da radimo?" [What Should We Do?], *Mladost*, 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 63.
[122] Bogdan Tirnanić, "Filmska umetnost me ne interesuje" [I am Not Interested in the Art of Film], *Susret*, 5 April 1968, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 69.

production house in Yugoslavia started exploring the possibilities of cooperating with Žilnik.

3.2 "Rani radovi": debating self-management within and outside the courtroom

The cooperation between *Neoplanta Film* and *Avala* had started somewhat earlier, with Miroslav Antić's *Sveti pesak* (*Holy Sand*, 1968). It is difficult to say how much this cooperation was voluntary. Being endowed with a narrowly defined production profile, *Neoplanta* did not have the right to produce feature films; when such projects came at hand, it would have to seek a coproduction with a film studio that might have had rights for this type of production. *Avala Film* was an obvious choice, not the least because of geographical closeness. Cooperation with *Avala*, however, was not always fluent; there were several cases in which the production house failed to meet their financial obligations to *Neoplanta.*[123] One of the reasons may have been that *Avala* film was not financially stable. Nevertheless, it remained the main domestic coproduction partner for *Neoplanta*, while "Avala Genex"[124] was one of its most important distributors.

Because of the series of awards and critical acclaim that Žilnik had acquired in such a short time span, the director of *Avala Film,* Dragiša Đurić saw certain perspectives in this film director and his "ugly little films".[125] In May 1968 *Avala* was already actively inquiring into the possibility of cooperation with Žilnik (as distinguished from all other authors who cooperated with *Neoplanta* at that time). It is important to take into consideration that by that time Žilnik asserted himself as a director of documentary films, which was not exactly "Avala's" sphere of activity. Moreover, this inquiry for a possible cooperation was not

[123] Such was the case with Antić's *Sveti pesak.*
[124] "Avala Genex" was a daughter distribution company of *Avala Film*.
[125] See: Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]* (Centar za nove medije_kuda.org, 2013), http://www.kuda.org/sites/kuda/files/Uvod%20u%20proslost_web.pdf.

based on any film script proposed by Žilnik. In other words, *Avala's* request was based mostly on the awareness of the previous achievements of Žilnik, and his growing success. This success had been attained, however, not by complying with the official requirements set for the studio with which Žilnik was associated, nor through market success, but through critical acclaim and peer-recognition.

Žilnik recalls a personal encounter with Dragiša Đurić which seems to have accelerated the cooperation plans further. In summer of 1968 the Pula film festival was taking place. At some point Đurić invited Žilnik for a conversation; in Žilnik's memory of the situation, Đurić pointed out that "he is that Žilnik", that he had heard about the awards Žilnik had received in Belgrade and in Oberhausen, and that a lot was written about his "ugly documentaries".[126] Đurić invited Žilnik to produce a full feature film with *Avala*. As there was no script at hand, Žilnik suggested that he might work on the material that he had collected in filming student protests in Belgrade earlier that summer.

The Belgrade protests he had in mind had broken out in early June: rather than simple local Yugoslav events, they were part of the global 1968 moment. Although not proposing a coherent political programme, the students' strike was a way of expressing a critical stance regarding the growing inequalities between classes and regions of Yugoslavia, the failure of implementing the real self-management socialism (the dominating role of the managers was of particular importance), the migration of young people as *Geistarbeiters* to Germany, all of which went along with demands a the better higher education system. However, the strike did not undermine the role of LCY; protesters even stated that "We do not have our own program. Our program is the program of the most progressive forces of

[126] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]* (Centar za nove medije_kuda.org, 2013), http://www.kuda.org/sites/kuda/files/Uvod%20u%20proslost_web.pdf: 63.

our society—the program of the LCY and the Constitution. We demand that it should be put into practice."[127] Although the protest was quenched with the help of police forces, eventually Tito publicly admitted that the student strike had a good reason.[128] As soon as student protests were quieted down (and at the time when Žilnik was working on the script of *Rani radovi*), another shock followed: the intervention of the Warsaw pact countries in Czechoslovakia. The Czech protest had actively been supported by LCY as among the demands of the reform movement, the requirements for the self-government and councils modeled on Yugoslav example were voiced.[129] The intervention of the Warsaw Pact countries was a shock for the Yugoslav public. The fear for a foreign intervention occurred in Yugoslavia and was so widespread that led to the mobilization of the army.[130] This fear was also used by the authorities n order to promote the unity of the Yugoslav Federation, which in some cases would become a legitimating tool for repressive political actions. In this heated setting, the script for *Rani radovi* was finished by early September.

When in early September Žilnik sent the script to *Avala*, the question of risk management immediately came to the fore. For Đurić the film appeared interesting, but he pointed out the lack of "drama", as well as the possible problems with "bureaucrats" regarding "quotes of Marx" and "nudity and love scenes". The latter concern was especially pertinent because of the topic of the film and its references to recent events. All in all, it seemed the film did not present any qualities required for the market success, while at the same time it

[127] Martin Klimke and Joachim Scharloth, eds., *1968 in Europe: A History of Protest and Activism, 1956-1977*, 1st ed, Palgrave Macmillan Transnational History Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008): 222.
[128] However, this did not prevent expulsion of some of the members of the faculty from the LCY. See: Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe:* 223.
[129] George N. Katsiaficas, *The Imagination of the New Left: A Global Analysis of 1968* (Boston, Mass: South End Press, 1987): 61.
[130] Klimke and Scharloth, *1968 in Europe*: 223.

exposed itself for every possible ideological attack.[131] However, considering that none of Žilnik's previous films was strikingly "dramatic" or working in line with the expectations of the "bureaucrats", the director of *Avala* should not have been surprised; neither could expectation for qualities of this kind have been the reason why he sought collaboration with Žilnik in the first place. Thus, he offered an option which took the risks off *Avala Film* (and which *Neoplanta* was usually reluctant to resort to): taking a loan from the bank. According to the contract, *Avala* would fund the production of the film in credit, with Žilnik mortgaging his flat as a guarantee that *Avala* will get their money back in the case of failure; thus, Žilnik bore tremendous financial risks in this project. Another important point of the contract was that *Neoplanta Film* held rights to the income gained from local and *Avala Film* – from foreign distribution. Eventually, this financial contract remained the only base of the cooperation between the two companies: for Žilnik, it was more comfortable to work with *Neoplanta.*[132]

The case of *Rani radovi* may serve as an example of the disorganized and vague workings of the Yugoslav cinema censorship system. Produced outside the state funding scheme, the film was not restrained by any directions and regulations in the process of its making. However, once made, the film had to go through the Film Review Commission. It received its approval, however, not without the request for certain alterations. One of the members of commission, Milutin Ćolić, insisted on taking out the love making scene, and eventually Žilnik agreed, leaving just the prelude. Another problem appeared in regard to the opening titles: immediately after the title of the film appeared description: "comedy of the

[131] Such attacks, in case they resulted in withdrawal of the film, was not only an intellectual loss, but also a financial one.

[132] The reasons were that in *Neoplanta Film* he could work with people he knew well from the previous productions, avoid the hustle of *Avala*, and also get "more freedom as an author", in: Gal Kirn, Dubravka Sekulić, and Žiga Testen, eds., *Surfing the Black. Yugoslav Black Wave Cinema and Its Trangressive Moments* (Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie, 2011): 34.

ideology". For one of the members of the commission such combination seemed logically incompatible; thus "ideology" was omitted, with leaving just "comedy".[133] These were the only provocations identified by the Film Review Commission; after cutting out the undesired scenes, film received permission for public screening as well as the permission from the jury of Commission for the Cultural Cooperation with Foreign Countries.

Within the following four months the film was screened mostly in intellectual circles and the first reviews, positive as well as condemning, started appearing[134]; finally, *Rani radovi* was invited to compete in the Berlin International Film Festival. However, already by March *Neoplanta Film* started receiving certain signs of dissatisfaction. The Film Review Commission attempted to hinder the film's promotion campaign by refusing the permission to distribute the trailer of the movie (for the reason that it contained some shots which were not present in the film). Suspiciously, at the same time an anonymous article appeared in *Večernije novosti* (*Evening News*), in which it was announced that the trailer of *Rani radovi* was banned by the Film Review Commission because it was "deceiving the public".[135] Obviously, the anonymous author had more information than any public could have had at that time, because the trailer could not have been screened without permission.

These small hindrances reached their culmination in late May the same year. Decision was made by the District Attorney of temporarily banning *Rani radovi*. It is nearly impossible to judge what exactly led to this decision four months after the film was completed and after it had received all necessary permissions. In his somewhat divergent accounts, Žilnik

[133] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 76.
[134] Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni Bez Zabrane: Zona Sumraka Jugoslovenskog Filma [Banned Without a Ban: The Twilight Zone in Yugoslav Film]* (Beograd: Jugoslovenska Kinoteka, 1995): 110.
[135] Žilnik's letter for the Film Review Commission, 24 March, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.

contends that Tito stood behind this and that court decision was issued after he watched the film and stopped it in half an hour with the question "what do these lunatics want?"[136] In other interview Žilnik recalls how immediately after receiving the court decision he was going to the high party officials in order to figure out, what were the actual reasons of the ban. What he seemed to figure out was that no clear reasons could be stated, and that in fact no firm decision over the permanent band of the film was issued.[137] In any case, with the encouragement of Đurić (apparently, also because of the financial pressure to have the film released)[138], Žilnik decided to make an attempt and defend the film. Holding a degree in law, the director received an authorization from *Neoplanta* to defend his own film. The fact that he could do so in the public process of trial is not self-explanatory; rather, it points out just another aspect of the vagueness of the case.

Gisele Sapiro had pointed out the usefulness of trial cases in sociological and historical research. Evolving mostly around the questions of interpretation, they become a rewarding testing ground for understanding the limits of what can be expressed or represented in a given sociohistorical configuration.[139] The trial of *Rani radovi* provides such a case, opening the possibility of understanding the complexity of the position that Žilnik occupied in his contemporary Yugoslav cultural setting. The case opened with a highly unimpressive one-page document signed by a certain prosecutor Spasoje Milošev; the indictment was expressed in incredibly vague and general terms, and did also include a lengthy list of violations that *Rani radovi* had imposed over Yugoslav society. It seemed,

[136] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 125.
[137] Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni Bez Zabrane: Zona Sumraka Jugoslovenskog Filma [Banned Without a Ban: The Twilight Zone in Yugoslav Film]*: 112.
[138] Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni Bez Zabrane: Zona Sumraka Jugoslovenskog Filma [Banned Without a Ban: The Twilight Zone in Yugoslav Film]*: 111.
[139] Gisèle Sapiro, "Autonomy Revisited: The Question of Mediations and Its Methodological Implications," *Paragraph* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 41.

that by a single film Žilnik managed to touch upon every painful point of social, economic or international wellbeing. Primarily, the film was accused for "harsh violations of the social and political morals"[140] and for "debasing all the basic postulates of social, ideological and political relations between people in general and us [Yugoslavs] in particular". *Rani radovi* did approach "political questions, international relations within Yugoslavia, agrarian politics, employment and unemployment, the stance regarding recent events in Czechoslovakia in August previous year, the role of the of the League of Communists in society", etc. with intrusive ridicule, irony and sarcasm.[141] For Žilnik it was relatively obvious that questions regarding the interpretation of the film were just a part of the set of reasons that grounded the intention to ban the film.

The following day he responded with a lengthy defense letter. Only part of the letter had to deal with the interpretation of the film that the prosecutor of the District Attorney had expounded. Realizing that the content of the film was only part of the problem, Žilnik included into his defense letter other aspects related to the intended ban; some of them had to do with the critical praise that the film had received, others – with negative practical consequences that the ban would inevitably cause.

First of all, Žilnik deemed the interpretation of the court as too general and imprecise; he asserts that the prosecutor, in his reading of the film picked up themes with which film does not deal with at all. Yet, even when he succeeded to identify the themes which the film actually do address, Žilnik claimed, it was immediately followed by the surprise that the film treated certain problematic questions exactly the same way as respective political bodies did. One of such cases was the representation of the Czechoslovak spring: *Rani*

[140] Decision of the District Attorney, 19 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.
[141] Decision of the District Attorney, 19 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.

radovi condemned the intervention of Warsaw pact countries in exactly the same way as Yugoslav political leaders did. Similarly, the treatment of such problems as the unequal status of Albanians or the problem of unemployment were widely discussed in political as well as public spheres; thus for Žilnik it was unclear "whether the prosecutor thinks that these problems do not exist or that all other means of information and political forums can talk about some problems, but the film cannot?"[142] Furthermore, he pointed out the mistaken identification of the young protagonists of the film with the Communist League of Yugoslavia. The actual subject of the film, Žilnik explained, was the participants of the revolutionary movements that had been shaking Europe and the world in the course of the previous year. Thus, ultimately the film was addressing the complex situation of the student movements rather than possibility of the revolution or self-management as such. Finally, Žilnik objected to the statement that *Rani radovi* was debasing revolutionary ideas in general. Assuming that this accusation was a reference to the four quotes of Marx used in film, film director-turned-attorney framed the problem in the following way: "it is not possible to reserve classical ideas for some official forces".[143]

In the course of negotiating the different aspects of interpretation of the film Žilnik did something else. In the final point he tackled the issue of freedom of expression by framing it as the possibility for various actors of society to touch upon sensitive problems despite their social or political status. The very fact that he could present such arguments in court tells us about the specific position he was occupying in the Yugoslav ideological setting. The limits of his argumentation were set by the official discourse of democracy, socialism with a human face and freedom of expression: tenets of the officially declared ideology of

[142] Žilnik's defense letter, 20 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 2.
[143] Žilnik's defense letter, 20 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 3.

self-management socialism. It was within such a discourse that it was appropriate for him to ask such rhetorical and suggestive questions in the court. Žilnik did reinforce this argument in the closing remarks of the defense letter. Banning the film would be directed against the artistic freedom as well as against freedom of criticism. Such a decision could not comply with the principles of Yugoslav politics, and would violate "progressive, anti-dogmatic, and self-management postulates of social relationship".[144] The underlying point that he was making was a contraposition of the actions of the court and the basic values of self-management, this way exposing the contradiction and inadequacy of the intended decision to ban the film.

The following cluster of arguments included the critical acclaim that the film had received until then. It was not enough to simply mention this; attached to the letter was a lengthy list of positive reviews. Also, Žilnik was willing to push the publicity of the process of the trial even further: another attachment to the letter contained the list of film authors and critics, public and cultural workers, who could offer an expert opinion on the problem at hand. One of the underlying arguments in his defense was that the prosecutor was simply incompetent in judging and evaluating the film. Therefore in his final speech in court Žilnik pointed out that banning the film would mean creating the precedent for "dogmatic, bureaucratic and unreasoned arbitration in the sphere of culture and arts".[145] The prosecutor, Žilnik contended, "in general does not understand the medium of feature film".[146]

[144] The final defense speech of Želimir Žilnik, 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 179.
[145] The final defense speech of Želimir Žilnik, 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 177.
[146] The final defense speech of Želimir Žilnik, 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 179.

Further arguments included a list of practicalities. Žilnik explicitly stated that film was invited to the Berlin Film Festival, and was mentioned in festival publications that were already issued internationally. Banning the film at this point would compromise the image of Yugoslavia, not in the least because of the baffling situation when one state institution is trying to recall decisions made by another. Alluding to the recent developments in Czechoslovakia he asserted that regarding the "complications of the current international situation, [such an act] may be perceived mistakenly and be interpreted as provocative".[147]

Eventually, the court recalled the decision to ban the film. Žilnik remembers that he had a conversation with the judge, who appeared to be surprised that the director is defending his film so fiercely when everything is already decided. Žilnik explained that this was not necessarily the case, and thus the judge decided to lead the court normally.[148] They invited Oto Deneš, assistant of the president of the Commission for the Foreign Cultural Relations, who confirmed that the film was seen by a group of specialists and received the permission for screening abroad. Eventually, a somewhat vague decision was made: even though the film was seen as problematic, the court stated that "our socialist society is sufficiently strong and thus one such film like *Rani radovi* cannot question our inter-republican relationships, agrarian politics, our attitude to the situation in Czechoslovakia".[149] Furthermore, the court admitted that it was not the task of the state administration to take over the "objective scientific and artistic criticism".[150] Importantly enough, in the trial taking place in 1969, Žilnik could defend the film by appealing to the self-management

[147] The final defense speech of Želimir Žilnik, 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 175.
[148] Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni Bez Zabrane: Zona Sumraka Jugoslovenskog Filma [Banned Without a Ban: The Twilight Zone in Yugoslav Film]*: 112 – 113.
[149] The decision of County Court in Belgrade , 30 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 4.
[150] The decision of County Court in Belgrade 30 June, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 4.

doctrine, even while criticizing the official authorities. As the trial ended successfully, the film was absolved and could enter the film festival in Berlin.

3.3 Making things public: Rani radovi within the national and the international public spheres

The fight for sending the film to the Berlin International Film Festival proved to have been worth it: *Rani radovi* received the highest evaluation, the Golden Bear. However, the list of awards and critical acclaim that the film was honored with was way more extensive: in the same festival it was received an Award of Young Generation and FIPRESCI. In the 16th Pula Film Festival it was awarded the special Jury Prize, and it also received several awards from the specialized film journals. *Rani radovi* was also widely distributed in foreign film festivals.

After the festival in Berlin Žilnik recalls the huge public pressure for banning the film. Negative criticism was extensive.[151] In some of the cases, the positive reception among the public was deemed to be "conventional", and the film itself created for the "experts" (quotation marks in original) of Western festivals and "com-parlors"[152]. Žilnik contends that by "the autumn 1969 and for the following six-seven years, the film was fully withdrawn from contemporary cinema life".[153] This did not necessarily mean that *Rani radovi* was not shown anywhere; it could participate in festivals (e.g., Geff in Zagreb in March 1970). However, Žilnik did observe that the crowd [of cinema goers] was lessening

[151] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 67.
[152] M. Maksimović, "*Rani radovi* mladog reditelja Žilnika" [Early Works of Young Film Director Žilnik], *Politika*, May 18, 1969. Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 226 – 227.
[153] Milan Nikodijević, *Zabranjeni Bez Zabrane: Zona Sumraka Jugoslovenskog Filma [Banned Without a Ban: The Twilight Zone in Yugoslav Film]*: 113 – 114. There were more consequences, like Žilnik being blamed for his "anarcho-liberalism" and forced to withdraw from the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.

after the release of the law.[154] But domestic reception was not solely negative, though; positive voices were also heard. Many of the reviewers seemed to accept Žilnik's idea that it was not the Yugoslav self-management socialism that fell under Žilnik's scrutiny, but the young revolutionaries of the 1968; that it was the Yugoslav reality which he was continuously resorting to criticize, and not the Marxist ideas as such.[155]

There was one more important aspect in the public reception. The continuing harsh debate regarding the film was even less important than the fact that the whole situation of the film "approved, banned, approved again and winning a Golden Bear and award in Pula Film Festival" generated an extensive discussion in the public sphere. Žilnik became the center of discussion.[156] As Bogdan Tirnanić[157] contended in Zagreb's *Telegram*, the result of this process was that publications on the Žilnik's issue would appear in press day by day, creating in this way "a peculiar atmosphere of expectation of the "forbidden fruit" and "the specific taste" of one cultural-political scandal".[158] In many publications the process of the trial became at least as important as the film itself.[159]

After the successful end of the trial, and maybe somewhat encouraged be winning the Golden Bear, both Želimir Žilnik and Svetozar Udovićki were not trying to conceal and forget what had just happened which might have helped to get in better terms with the ambiguous powers, decisions of which had led Žilnik to the courtroom. On the contrary, the intention was to make more public the story of the conflict. In late August 1969

[154] It is not clear what "the law" refers to here. Might be the case that the order to withdraw *Rani radovi* from cinemas; but it's just a guess. See: Žilnik's letter to Udovićki, 3 March 1970, in: VA, F430, box 14/18.
[155] Studentski list, Zagreb, 21 October, 1969.
[156] "In last months, everybody is talking about him", *Hrvatski književni list*, April 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 199.
[157] He was an actor in *Rani radovi*, as well as a friend of Žilnik.
[158] Bogdan Tirnanić, "Kucanje na otvorena vrata" [Knocking at the Open Door], *Telegram*, 22 August, 1969, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 192.
[159] Nikola Lorencin (unidentified article), in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 190.

Neoplanta Film sent a letter to the Province Cultural Council. They were asking the Council to allocate some money from funds devoted for the development of cinematography so that they could cover 50% of a book publication costs. The intended book had to deal with the whole public debate related to *Rani radovi.* It was Žilnik's idea: to release a book, which would deal with the conflict which surrounded the film, including both positive and negative reactions. The book was seen as a way of demonstrating the fate not only of *Rani radovi*, but also of the *new Yugoslav film*, and to open the discussion about the crisis of values that Yugoslav cinema was going through at that moment.[160] It appears that, even if indirectly, the Cultural Commission of the Province provided financial support for such an idea.[161] In November 1969 the preparation of the 3rd issue of magazine *ROK*, devoted solely to the *Rani radovi* was finished and distributed.[162] Sometime later it appeared that the magazine was very well received in Zagreb, and Žilnik was insisting that remaining copies should be sold in GEFF as well.[163] The reason why it mattered was that such publications, in the context of the 1960s, provided *Neoplanta* film and its directors with an important defense argument: it exposed the attempts of the authorities to limit the scope of the studio's production through administrative means. In this way, it highlighted the contradictory nature of the central authorities attitude, the differences between their actions and their declarations regarding cultural production under self-management.

Because of the nature of the contract of co-production with *Avala* the exact account of the financial situation of *Rani radovi* is not available in the archive of *Neoplanta*. However, eventually it turned out to be a successful project. The production cost of the film reached

[160] Udovićki's Letter to the Cultural Commission of the Province, 25 August, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.
[161] Letter to the Cultural Commission of the Province, 19 November, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.
[162] Minutes of the meeting of the Worker's Council, 6 November,1969, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 2.
[163] Žilnik's letter to Udovićki, 3 March 1970, in: VA, F430, box 14/18, p. 2.

711 000 dinars, with *Neoplanta's* investing only 41 000. "Avala's" part of costs was fully covered[164] because they were responsible for international distribution, a right with which Yugoslav authorities never intervened. Having their part of production costs covered, *Avala* did not have any further claims to *Neoplanta*, let alone Žilnik's flat. From the domestic distribution revenues, despite the quick pressure to withdraw the film from cinemas, within two years of the film exploitation *Neoplanta* gained around ten times more than it had invested.[165]

Despite its relatively positive outcome, the end of the story of *Rani radovi* was also a moment of decision making. "The law taken into consideration - are you going to narrow down the plan, are you going to work with *Avala* again, what is their situation, etc. etc."[166], asked Žilnik in his letter to Svetozar Udovićki. It appeared, that the latter had little doubts regarding all of these questions.

[164] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]:* 67.
[165] The estimated return reached 384 000 dinars. See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 242.
[166] Žilnik's letter to Udovićki, 3 March 1970, in: VA, F430, box 14/18, p. 2.

Chapter 4 - "WR: Misterije organizma" and the End of the Debate

The production and postproduction stages of Dušan Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* evolved in a period of rapid change within the political climate in the country which caused a gradual shift in the policies regulating both film production and film supervision within Yugoslavia. At the beginning of film production the reputation and related institutional background that the *new wave* films had gained since the early 1960s was still influential. This professional recognition facilitated a relative collusion between the "official" sphere (institutional and discursive tools intended to represent the interest of socialist society) and the "alternative" artistic milieu (which relied mostly on peer recognition from the fellow film workers, critics, festival juries and foreign acclaim). Even though this recognition did not go unchallenged, as we have seen in the case of Žilnik's *Rani radovi*, it played a crucial part in making possible the appearance of *WR: Misterije organizma*. However, this was just one part of the factors which enabled the production of the film. In its efforts to circumscribe the inefficiency of the Yugoslav private sector of film production, *Neoplanta* was also relying on foreign markets which provided important financial support. The possibility of such support was a result of the reputation and institutional skills that both Makavejev and *Neoplanta* as such had gained in the previous years.

In the course of the film production the Yugoslav political situation was destabilized due to the growing nationalist sentiments throughout the federation, connected to the aftershocks of 1968 and the inner-contradictions of the self-management discourse. Domestic and international tensions led political bodies to increase their control on cultural production, cinema included. It was exactly at this point that *WR: Misterije*

organizma was completed and released, only to meet a fierce political backlash. As the bureaucratic control over film production was increasing, diverse contradictions of the economic organization and of the self-management discourse that *Neoplanta's* director Udovićki and Želimir Žilnik seemed to have managed to circumscribe in the case of *Rani radovi* became acute. Developments evolving around *WR: Misterije organizma* appears as a litmus test of these seemingly insoluble contradictions. In what follows I will provide a detailed account and analysis of these developments in the institutional and discursive setting that framed the production process of the film. *WR* and its production will allow me to analyze how the same pragmatic and discursive moves had, in comparison with *Rani radovi,* radically different effects in 1971: similar manners of framing and conceptualizing self-management and the role of cultural production were, unlike in 1968, unsuccessful, affecting the life of the studio in the years to come. In this sense, this chapter will partly be a plea for methodological and theoretical modesty from the historian's side, showing how the Yugoslav cultural context of the period allowed for radically different outcomes of what might seem radically similar social actions. There was no winning card within the power struggles that defined the relationship between bureaucracy, markets and self-management within the Yugoslav cultural sphere: the results depended on contextual and relational alliances which, although taking place within the general contradictions of the self-management discourse that I tried to describe, could bear various results.

4.1 State, Professional Opinion and Foreign Markets

Svetozar Udovićki did not seem to have many doubts about continuing the risky policies he had resorted to before the controversy of *Rani radovi*. In fact, the idea that *Neoplanta Film*

should produce Makavejev's film on Wilhelm Reich was conceived as early as December 1969[167], in a time when Žilnik's film was being withdrawn from distribution.[168]

By that time Makavejev was already an established film director. He had produced three films with *Avala Film*[169], which earned him awards at important film festivals such as Chicago, Berlin or Pula. Exactly around the time when he proposed *WR: Misterije organizma* to *Neoplanta Film*, the Cultural Commission of the Province announced its funding competition. In haste, *Neoplanta* decided to participate in the contest with two scripts: one of them was Puriša Đorđević's *Nešto* (*Something*)[170], another – Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma* (*WR: Mysteries of the Organism,* 1971). Udovićki was the one who personally proposed these two films. He explained to the Worker's Council that his choice was determined not only by the quality of the ideas presented in scripts; directors themselves also had to be taken into consideration. "Nobody could deny that Makavejev is an internationally renown film director. The same can be said about P. Đorđević. Among other scripts – and this is according to the opinion of other professionals – there are no authors on whom we could rely for a 100% success".[171] The choice of submitting Makavejev's and Đorđević's scripts evinced film studio's determination to continue its orientation towards the professional and the international public. But there were also other considerations which determined this decision. Udovićki was very much aware that applying for state funding was a competition similar to other types of competition in which he had to cater for the needs of the audience. As a film producer, he had to predict what

[167] Izvod iz zapisnika [Excerpt from the Minutes], 8 December, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 1.
[168] Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 67.
[169] *Man is Not a Bird* (1965), *Love Affair, or the Case of the Missing Switchboard Operator* (1967), and *Innocence Unprotected* (1968).
[170] Puriša Đorđević was one of the Yugoslav New Wave filmmakers. His *Morning* (*Jutro*, 1967) was awarded in Pula and Venice film festivals in 1967, but at the same time received criticisms regarding the inappropriate depiction of the partisans. For more on Đorđević's oeuvre, see: Goulding, *Liberated Cinema*: 91 – 97.
[171] Zapisnik [Minutes], 11 December, 1969, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 1.

would be the interests and demands of its client. In this particular case the client was state institution, assuming to be the representative of self-management socialist society and to further its educational needs. These needs (namely, short documentaries, socialist and local themes) had been defined rather differently from what Makavejev might have proposed.[172] Despite this risk, however, Udovićki expected that the Cultural Commission of the Province will be as enthusiastic about the possibility to produce Makavejev's film *within* Vojvodina as *Neoplanta* itself was.

In fact, since 1969 *Neoplanta* was more and more often taking directions that deviated from the initial social function assigned to the studio by engaging in productions that were similar in nature to the early Žilnik films and *Rani radovi*. For instance, one of the tasks of *Neoplanta* was to contribute to film education of young and inexperienced filmmakers. This continued to be declared as part of studio's "social mission" in the Province, and *Neoplanta* did not miss the opportunity to emphasize their achievements in this field. For example, in the yearly report of 1968 Svetozar Udovićki mentions that besides its basic functions the studio was looking for ways in which they could support the promotion of amateur film production and international film exchange. Moreover, that they had organized a special film program in Vojvodina and were engaged in other projects supporting "the development of the cinematography of Yugoslavia".[173] There were even less expected forms through which *Neoplanta* could contribute to this common socialist enterprise: "It is very important that this year four-five young people (*unemployed*) were coopted in the *Neoplanta* activities and who (...) in a foreseeable future will become

[172] Regretfully, it is not possible to access the original documents with which the film applied for funding. However, even if we refuse to speculate about the extent to which the original idea of the film was presented to the Commission, it is clear that by that time its members knew aesthetic and thematic profile of Makavejev as film director.

[173] Izveštaj o radu ustanove za 1968 godinu [Report on the work of the Institution], 1968, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 5.

authors, director's assistants, camera assistants, organizers, etc." (emphasis added).[174] The emphasis on the educational value and the social function of the production house were evident in 1971, when in the introductory pages of the mimeo report about studio's work and achievements it was stated that the studio also served "as a school for cadres".[175]

However, this façade did hide a different attitude within the actual workings of the studio. The negotiations with the Artistic Council[176] over the production plan of 1970 provide just one, but very straightforward illustration of these contradictions. In the midst of the meeting Udovićki declared, rather unexpectedly for the other participants at the meeting, that "we [*Neoplanta Film*] are relying on outstanding authors, and will leave only one place for debutants"[177] in the production program. The justification that he provided, that this is a logical consequence of the growing number of scripts coming into studio, did not convince other participants of the meeting. Some of them appeared to have not known about the existence of such a rule. Some of them tried to contradict Udovićki with the argument that by employing such policies *Neoplanta* risked to secure a creative monopoly for a certain number of already accomplished people, and that the studio should not aim at living from "authors rather than from raising authors". Udovićki refused to take these suggestions into consideration.

The policy of relying on the critically acclaimed *auteur*s and "provocative" type of production were further asserted the following year, when *Neoplanta* was developing another plan of film production plan. The list of films to be included in the program for the

[174] Izveštaj o radu ustanove za 1968 godinu [Report on the work of the Institution], 1968, in: AV, F430, box 53, p. 7.
[175] Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 5.
[176] An advisory body established for the evaluation of submitted film projects; see: Minutes of the meeting of the Workers Council, 6 January, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[177] Minutes of the meeting of the Workers Council, 25 April, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 19/67, p. 3.

competition for funding in the field of short documentary film included broad range of critical topics: criticism of the pertaining power of authority, suicides (both scripts by Bronislav Šajtinac[178]), the divergence between "principles and deeds" of self-management society ("does this mean two-facedness and crisis of morals?", asked Branko Milošević), negative effects of modernization, and the melancholy of emigrant workers returning home for Christmas[179] (both by Želimir Žilnik).

Probably somewhat less surprisingly, names of accomplished directors were supposed to sell not only in the state sector; they were also used in the hunt for funds in the private sector. Market orientation in *Neoplanta*'s production sometimes went as far as to the intention of inserting advertisings into films; it was the directors (in this case, Žilnik's) name and achievements expressed through awards and critical recognition both home and abroad that was expected to ensure the wish of the company to advertise within the film, - and pay for it.[180]

Udovićki's intuition that the Cultural Commission of the Province will be willing to support such projects appeared to be right. Towards the end of the 1960s it seemed that new wave of Yugoslav cinema, and its socially aware films were gaining some space in the state supported cultural sector. On a regional level, the Cultural Commission of the Province supported such projects: by the end of the 1970 feature films by Miroslav Antić, Žilnik, as well as short films by Borislav Šajtinac, Žilnik, Godina, Branko Milošević comprised the bigger part of *Neoplanta*'s state-supported production plan.[181] However, these tendencies

[178] Who was a rather acknowledged director of animation films. For the list of films and awards see: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 8 – 21.
[179] Proposed program, 3 March, 1971, in: F430, box 14/18.
[180] Such was the case of Žilnik's *Sloboda ili strip* (Freedom or Cartoons), the film which was never completed. See: Udovićki's letter to the general director of "Interkomerc", 19 April, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 14/18.
[181] Report on the status of production, 19 November, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 14/18.

were also present on a federal level. By 1972 the international film festival *Hrabri novi svet* [*The Brave New World*], organized "under the auspices of the President of the Republic Josip Broz Tito"[182] included, among other, two important sections. The main part of the program was devoted to the films that had received international acclaim, this way emphasizing the significance that foreign festivals and critics had for the domestic cinematic setting of Yugoslavia. Even more interestingly, one of the specialized programs was entitled as "Film on Social Confrontations"; both directions fully corresponded to the production profile of *Neoplanta Film*. Later on, the organizers of the festival, Petar Volk and Milutin Ćolić, would be very keen on having *WR: Misterije organizma* in the program, despite the fact that by that time Makavejev's film was heavily compromised within certain political circles and institutions. The professionalization of cinema production and evaluation standards, the importance of critical acclaim started penetrating the official institutions which were supposed to represent the needs of the self-management society. It is in the context of these tendencies that in 1970 the Cultural Commission of the Province decided to provide support for *WR: Misterije organizma*.

Another important source of funding for *WR: Misterije organizma* came from the foreign private sector: *Neoplanta* entered into a co-production with the West German companies from Munich "Telepool" and Bavarian Television.[183] This reflected not only on *Neoplanta*'s growing engagement with international film markets, but was also a sign of the problematic situation of the Yugoslav film industry. Until then, one of the main *Neoplanta*'s co-production partners was *Avala Film*, which, from a financial point of view remained a problematic partner, while did provide an opportunity for *Neoplanta Film* to

[182] Letter from the organizers of the festival to *Neoplanta*, 5 January, 1972, in: AV, F430, 19/67.
[183] Report of the business trip to Munich, 25 March, 1970, in: AV, F430, box 14/18, p. 1.

engage in feature film production. As mentioned in the last chapter, *Avala Film* was listed among the co-producers of *WR: Misterije organizma* for some time; however, when the first signs of bureaucratic and ideological trouble regarding *WR: Misterije organizma* appeared, *Avala* immediately withdrew from the project.[184] Furthermore, the existence of any financial input from its side remains doubtful.[185] The number of other ways of securing funding from outside of the state sector was limited; even though *Neoplanta* sometimes attempted to attract some investment from the enterprises to some of their projects, there is no proof that such endeavors were successful.[186] All these circumstances kept in mind, the choice of a Western German partner appears as an obvious and productive one. The final funding scheme was the following: the Cultural Commission of the Province provided 400 000 dinars, another 500 000 came from "Telepool". The rest – half of the cost of the film – was covered by *Neoplanta.*[187] In this way the studio imposed huge risks over itself. However, as the funding was secured and the primary stage of state supervision was passed, *WR: Misterije organizma* was launched to production.[188]

[184] R. Popović, "Ko stvara misteriju oko misterije?" [Who is Creating the Mystery Around the Mystery?], *Politika,* 4 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 811.
[185] Jovan Kesar, "Pucanj u revoluciju!?" [The Shot Into the Revolution] *Večernije novosti* [*Evening* News], 11 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 829.
[186] Cooperation with enterprises worked well in the case of commissioned films, but not necessarily so when funding was needed for "*Neoplanta*'s" own projects.
[187] The composition of these resources is not entirely clear. However, the fact that investment of this kind was considered to be "*Neoplanta*'s" own working capital of sorts is of no less importance.
[188] See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 257.

4.2 Redefining the balance of power, redefining self-management

While *WR: Misterije organizma* was being produced, the political climate in Yugoslavia began to change rapidly, both on domestic and international levels. The sharpest expression of rising discontent with the unifying ideology of self-management Yugoslavism came from Croatia, and was marked by the stance taken in the Tenth Congress of the Croatian League of Communists in January 1970 that the problem of Yugoslavia was not nationalism, but unitarism and centralism. In a re-appropriation of self-management discourse, the Croatian League of Communists claimed that centralized control, bureaucratic over-grow and the Serbian hegemony over this expanding bureaucratic apparatus were not only affecting the Croatian "tribe" and its place in the Yugoslav polity, but also basic principles of Yugoslav socialism: based on local autonomy and the decentralization claimed by the self-management doctrine. The contradictions which we identified in the second chapter made themselves acutely felt. In a contradictory move, self-management was to provide both the social and economic underpinning of a common Yugoslav identity and the means of expressing local ethnic or regional identities through markets and local workers' councils. Consequently, it could be used by both Belgrade and national elites in competing claims that would often clash. This was just a starting point of the harshest outburst of national discontent in Yugoslavia in years which came to be known as the Croatian Spring. Following the congress, Matica Hrvatska raised the language question once again, refused to accept the notion of Serbo-Croatian and demanded the recognition of two separate languages on the grounds that Serbian was overrepresented in comparison to Croatian. However, national conflicts were not confined to Croatia only; by

summer 1971 they became widespread throughout the Yugoslav federation.[189] Vojvodina remained the most peaceful in the context of national uprisings; however, not entirely exempt from them. One of the trigger cases which led to disbalance of Serbian – Hungarian equilibrium present in the region was the so-called Rehák affair. László Rehák, an active member of LCY had complained about the delay in setting up an improvement for Hungarian Studies Institute.[190] The Serbian press accused him of nationalism and prevented his advancement to the post of the vice president of the Executive Committee of the Serbian Republic. This conflict was followed by an article in Hungarian periodical *Új Symposion*, in which a student Sándor Rózsa described the inferior position of Hungarians and their language, depicting Hungarians as "niggers" of Yugoslavia.[191] This again caused Serbian backlash as Rózsa lost his scholarship.

By spring 1971 the relationship among and within republics got so tense that Tito started considering putting the reforms on hold.[192] There were two interrelated reasons of Tito's concern. On the one hand, rising nationalist aspirations were destroying the apparent equilibrium within the federation and the political situation was getting increasingly tense. On the other hand, the political instability within Yugoslavia was seen as a possible trigger of aggressive Soviet response. Even if the formal reconciliation between Yugoslavia and USSR after the Czechoslovak spring was achieved rather quickly, the fear of the greater socialist "friend" was maintained. Political instability within the country was seen as a precondition for Soviets of increasing their control over Yugoslavia. Tito was increasingly

[189] For more on national conflicts in different republics and provinces of federation see: Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias: State-Building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*, c2006: 240 – 243.
[190] Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*: 241.
[191] Ramet, *The Three Yugoslavias*: 241.
[192] Batović, Ante, "The Balkans in Turmoil - Croatian Spring and the Yugoslav Position Between the Cold War Blocs 1965-1971" (presented at the LSE Cold War Studies Programme, LSE Ideas, 2009), http://www.lse.ac.uk/IDEAS/publications/workingPapers/batovic.pdf: 14.

cautious about this, and the argument of Soviet danger started gaining weight in the political sphere, despite its rather exaggerated dimensions.[193] Outside of the boundaries of negotiation within the political field, tense political situation required certain re-negotiation of the general official discourse and policies as they were applied in the course of 1960s. Regaining political stability within the country was becoming a priority, and this priority resulted into growing control over the cultural sphere. As I tried to show in the second chapter, problems of national identity and regional autonomy were intimately interwoven with the self-management discourse, as well as with the function of markets and workers' councils as harbingers of local autonomy, capable of expressing the will of (national) local communities. At the same time the self-management discourse and its institutional practices could be used in totally opposite manners, either by emphasizing local autonomy and identities or by stressing the importance of Yugoslavism. The 1971 situation brought this contradiction once again to the fore, lead to a reshuffling of positions regard the relationship between local autonomy, bureaucratic authorities and the structure of the self-management discourse which greatly affected the film industry as well. One of the collateral victims of this reshuffling of discursive and institutional practices around self-management was *Neoplanta* itself and *WR: Misterije organizma*, the empirical focus of this chapter.

As these developments were taking place, Makavejev was travelling through different countries from USA to Yugoslavia making a film about the socialist psychologist Wilhelm Reich. What attracted Makavejev's attention to the eccentric figure of Reich since he first encountered this author in the 1950s was Reich's theory that unreleased sexual energy (or, as he called it, "orgone energy"), can cause a neurosis will erupt. Makavejev used this

[193] Ibid, 14.

theory of sexual liberation as a satirical commentary of political matters. The film consists of two parts; the documentary part elaborates on the life and work of Wilhelm Reich, which intertwines with the fictional plot of a love story between sexually and politically liberated Milena (representative of the self-management Yugoslav socialism) and the Soviet ice skater appropriately named Vladimir Illych. The plot lines of the liberating powers of sexuality and the revolution intermingle, connected by an underlying idea that both an orgasm and the revolution can be very difficult to achieve, and the reason for this lies in top-down constraints imposed by various regimes. In *WR: Misterije organizma*, Makavejev incorporated Nazism, right-wing tendencies in the McCarthy era, Stalinism, Soviet Union and Yugoslavia within the overarching framework of Wilhelm Reich's theory. However, and probably unfortunately for the movie, the love-hate relationship between Milena and Vladimir occupied a central role in the fictional part of the film. Makavejev relied on these figures to represent two different types of socialism, self-management and autocratic, with an intention to reflect on possibility to of enabling people to engage in their own liberation, to question the dilemma of spontaneity and organization: how to allow spontaneity without destroying organization, and how to organize without killing spontaneity?[194] To a certain extent these were the dilemmas that the self-management discourse was facing through its double role as both a unifying discourse of trans-ethnic Yugoslav identity and as an enabler of local autonomy through markets and workers' councils, as both a bureaucratic structure spanning over the country and as a fertile ground for local initiatives and spontaneous socialist organization.

Spontaneity, however, was the last thing Yugoslav authorities needed in 1971. The confusion regarding Yugoslavia's stance in respect to the Soviet Union was increasing, and

[194] Dušan Makavejev. Interview by Christian Braad Thomsen. Video recording. Denmark, 1972.

was reflected well in some of the criticisms voiced against the film. *WR: Misterije organizma* appeared as possibly offensive for countries like People's Republic of China or the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the film did not provide any clearly set ideological guidelines; it appeared to be criticizing communism and anti-communism, anti-Stalinist and anti-Soviet attitudes along the same lines.[195] Furthermore, the film was seen as politically harmful for it appeared to be discrediting the revolution, People's Liberation War, and self-management socialism, the basic tenets of Yugoslav socialism. Naturally, the comparison between sexual and socialist revolutions and the strong sexual content in the film did not pass unnoticed; besides being politically dangerous, the film was deemed to violate public morals and be harmful for the youth.[196] Makavejev may have stated that he was looking for a better solution for self-management socialism, but he was doing this in a way which not only did not refuse clear statements as for what is good and what is right, but also denounced the usefulness of any kind of overarching ideology or authoritative control. And he was doing so at the moment when it appeared that control is the only means to regain political stability within the country and cut off the inner-contradictions of self-management as such.

4.3 Tensions within the film industry

Thus *WR: Misterije organizma* entered the second stage of state control in the very unfavorable period of the 1971 spring. In the beginning it seemed that Yugoslav commitment to the professionalization of the cultural field and freedom of speech still applied: the film received permission for public screening from the Film Review

[195] This feature of the film was often defined as “ideological confusion”.
[196] Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 726 – 727.

Commission of SR Serbia.[197] Members present at the screening were writer Antonije Isaković, film critic Milutin Ćolić, scriptwriter Arsen Diklić[198], and, as *Neoplanta Film* later suggested, Makavejev himself. Most of the present members of the Commission could not be considered to be overt supporters of the critical stance and avant-garde tendencies asserted by the new wave filmmakers; as we have seen in the case of *Rani radovi*, Ćolić had certain reservations regarding the perceived *blackness* of his oeuvre. However, the Film Review Commission provided permission the film for public screening "without doubts".[199]

However, this decision was soon contested. A week after the film obtained the official document that validated its rights for public exhibition *Neoplanta Film* received a letter from the Ministry for Education, Science and Culture of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. Authors of the letter emphasized that the previous permission is not valid because only four members of the required five were present at the screening.[200] In their response *Neoplanta* attempted to rely on the intersection between the official decision making and "alternative" cultural scene that was growing in scope and importance before the production of *WR: Misterije organizma* started: the studio appealed to Makavejev's presence in the Commission.[201] He was considered to be the fifth lacking member who, being the director of the film, abstained from voting. This bureaucratically correct

[197] R. Popović, "Ko stvara misteriju oko misterije?" [Who is Creating the Mystery Around the Mystery?], *Politika,* 4 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 811.
[198] Dragan Gajer, "'Luis Bunjuel' na popravom ispitu" ['Luis Buñuel' on a Retake Exam], *Express*, *Express*, 30 May, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 796.
[199] Idem.
[200] Letter form the Republican Secretary for Education, Science and Culture of SR Serbia, 18 May, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 586.
[201] "*Neoplanta*'s" response to Republican Secretary for Education, Science and Culture of SR Serbia, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 587.

argument remained without response, and for a period of time the decision to recall the permission for public screening remained active.

Suspending the film from public screenings was only one of the means through which action against *WR* was taken. One of the most consistent and critical opinions regarding the film came from the side of the SAP Vojvodina Province Commission of SUBNOR (the Union of Civil War Veterans Associations) for Cultivation and Development of the Tradition of NOB (the Struggle for National Liberation).[202] It is difficult to judge what influence this organization[203] generally had in the Province, but in this particular case it seemed to have had an extensive impact. They proclaimed the film to be a "thought over and calculated political diversion", with a clear intention to undermine the basic achievements of socialist revolution and of the self-management society. Moreover, the indictment continued, the film demonstrated the "lack of differentiation between the progressive and reactionary systems and ideologies" and in this way it attacked the ideology of communism and socialism in general. Furthermore, the emphasis that *WR: Misterije organizma* did allegedly put on the sexual revolution "as the basic power and motive of contemporary people's community" declared an attack against the societal norms.[204] Besides the common criticisms of the film, the declaration of SUBNOR contained one more important element: the list of guilty ones was expanded. The responsibility for *WR: Misterije organizma* was to be taken by the author of the film, the production house, and the institutions which provided funding for this project. SUBNOR even had a suggestion as for what the retribution should be: the state funds that were invested in the production of the film had

[202] Declaration of SAP Vojvodina Province Commission of SUBNOR for Cultivation and Development of the Tradition of NOB (the Struggle for National Liberation), 10 June, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67. Henceforth: the SAP Vojvodina Province Commission of SUBNOR.
[203] The task of which was protection of the memory of the liberation of Yugoslavia, as well as memory of the socialist revolution.
[204] This was not something specific to Yugoslavia; the film was censored for this reason in Britain as well.

to be retrieved, and the film had to be banned.[205] This letter had several consequences. On the one hand, obviously, it put the film in a very tight corner. But at the same time it asked the Cultural Commission of the Province to take responsibility of the negative impact that the film had, which was something not present in the trial of *Rani radovi*. Suddenly, the discussion about the ideologically harmful contents of the film was complemented with questions regarding the status of public institutions and of the public funds which they had invested in the making of this non-socialist production. Were this local institutions capable of assessing the appropriateness of certain cultural products, did not a badly understood self-management scheme support non-socialist declarations and non-socialist practices?

References to the declaration made by the SUBNOR SAP of Vojvodina appeared several times in the press.[206] Even more importantly, though, it seemed to have directly affected the Cultural Commission of the Province and its position as a public funder. Early in June, as the nationalist aspirations were complicating the situation in Yugoslavia further, a public screening and a follow-up discussion on *WR: Misterije organizma* was organized in Novi Sad[207]. The immediate objective of the meeting was to make a relevant decision whether *WR: Misterije organizma* should be included into the official film register of Yugoslavia. Rejecting the film's registering would have meant that the Cultural Commission of the Province refuses *Neoplanta Film* the right to the funds that it had received from the Commission in the early stages of the production of the film; as a consequence, *Neoplanta* would be obliged to return the allocated funds.

[205] Declaration of the SAP Vojvodina Province Commission of SUBNOR, 10 June, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[206] Articles referring to the SAP Vojvodina Province Commission of SUBNOR declaration appeared in *Dnevnik* and *Borba*. See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 826, 830.
[207] 400 people supposedly participated. See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 687.

The discussion opened with the speech of Božidar Kovaček , the president of the Executive Committee of the Commission.[208] The accusation that members of SUBNOR expressed regarding the financial supporter of the film was lurking in the background of his speech: the whole Kovaček's talk took a form of an intricate excuse. The main concern of his was not the aesthetical or ideological values of the film, but rather an explanation of how it happened that the Commission provided "social resources" for this film. Kovaček was delivering a narrative about how the scripts submitted in late December of 1969 were not sufficient, how the Executive Council (and him as the chair of this Council) did reject the application in its primary form. It mentioned that they had been accused in public of holding a monopoly over cultural matters in the Province and, as a result, once they received a fully developed script from Makavejev sometime later, they eventually decided to approve the project. However, the initial project, Kovaček argued, did not have much in common with the final result which the participants of the meeting had just seen on screen[209]. This was of essential importance as deviation from the initial form of the film might have meant a breach of the contract and this was a sufficient reason for excluding the film from the official register.[210] However, both the SUBNOR declaration and Kovaček's speech tended to ignore the fact that only one fifth of the funding for the project was provided by the Cultural Commission of the Province.[211] This ignorance was as much crucial as it was inaccurate: it provided the film's critics with a strong argument as they could fashion themselves as representatives of the social cause and defenders of the self-management society: public funding also meant public responsibilities and, consequently,

[208] Transcript of the sound recording of the meeting, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 615.
[209] Transcript of the sound recording of the meeting, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 618 – 619.
[210] Bogdan Tirnanić, "Polemićni novosadski vikend" [The Polemical Weekend of Novi Sad], *NIN*, 13 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 838.
[211] 400 000 out of 2 000 000 dinars required for the production of the film.

the need for public legitimation. At the same time, this apparent inaccuracy managed to put into the background the complex set of funding schemes which, by organizing film production, also set responsibilities and liberties, hierarchies and autonomies. In this particular case, the terms in which the problem of *WR* was put excluded the market and informal connections from the picture, it fashioned the film as a sole product of a socialist society which was the only resource provider: it was not so much the empirical reality which backed Kovaček's arguments as a discursive reframing of the whole situation and a conscious exclusion of the function of the market from the picture.

The Commission felt pressured and did respond as such. Even though immediately after the discussion it was decided to inscribe *WR: Misterije organizma* into the register, a few days after the Executive Committee of the same Council denied the registration for the film.[212] The financial consequences for *Neoplanta* were dire, as this meant that they had to return the 400 000 dinars that the Commission had allocated, while at the same time the screening of the film (along with any possible revenues) were suspended. However, this film was not the only way in which Council's pressure was exercised. Increased control over the production of other films that were still in the making started to be felt within the studio.[213] Furthermore, the Cultural Commission of the Province was not the only means of increasing control over *Neoplanta Film*. In the course of 1971 the separate Film Review Commission of the Province was established. Their attitudes proved to be particularly stern. In early 1972 a long list of film-bans over the right to public screening occurred: Godina's *Nedostaje mi Sonja Heni* (*I miss Sonia Henie*, 1971)[214], Viček Karolj's *Krst sa*

[212] "'Misterije organizma' nisu upisane u registar snimljenih filmova" ['Mysteries of the Organism' Were Not Enlisted into the Register of Produced Films], *Politika*, 16 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 870.
[213] Request from the Province's Council for Culture, 10 June, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[214] Udovićk's letter for Province's Film Review Commission, 29 February, 1972, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.

zvezdom (*Cross With a Star*, 1972)[215], Žilnik's *Žene dolaze* (*The Women are Coming*, 1972).[216] The reasons were as varied as vague: pornographic content, unacceptable political stances, negative depiction of Yugoslav realities, etc. For *Neoplanta* such decisions meant that they could not recover the investments they made for these movies. Eventually, *Neoplanta* was led to the border where she needed to request a bailout; paradoxically, it was the Cultural Commission of the Province that was supposed to provide it.[217]

The situation reflected well on one of the essential contradictions in the organization of the Yugoslav film industry. Before 1971 *Neoplanta* was a rare case of a solvent studio in Socialist Yugoslavia, which was confidently moving towards greater self-reliance by maneuvering between different modes of production and by affirming its distinct aesthetic and thematic profile. According to the logic set out in the Federal Council for Education and Culture, the funding scheme of *WR: Misterije organizma* might have served as a good example of efficiency, with only one fifth of this budget coming directly from the state. *Neoplanta* was successfully asserting itself as capable of fulfilling the social and cultural function assigned to market mechanisms: the capacity to express and encourage local socialist cultures in contrast to central bureaucratic mechanisms, the capacity to encourage local autonomy while preserving a common Yugoslav framework based on a the self-management framework. Now, as the need for political pressure was growing, it was exactly that one fifth that stood for all the funding that the film received, and became a tool of crushing studios financial situation and turning it into a production house dependent on the state funding. Moreover, it provided the reason for a more active

[215] Decision over the public screening, 29 February, 1972, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[216] Decision over the public screening, 29 February, 1972,in: AV, F430, box 19/67
[217] Letter from the Cultural Commission of the Province, 30 December, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.

participation of the Communist League within the institutions responsible for the organization of the film production of the Province, definitely toppling the balance which the self-management discourse was supposed to maintain in favor of central authorities and by curbing the autonomy provided by the market.[218]

4.4. Neoplanta on the defense

The period of the imposition of bureaucratic restrictions on *WR: Misterije organizma* and the studio as a whole was a prolonged one, although it was also full of indecision. The permission for public screening was issued, recalled and left open for a while. The gfilm was included and recalled from the register of films. While bureaucratic institutions were receiving and withdrawing their decisions (often made within the same institution), the public discussion over the issue was escalating. By July 1971 the film was screened only five times, mostly for selected public of intellectuals and cultural workers[219], but the number of publications about it was disproportionally abundant. News about the film entered even the pages of *Ekonomska politika* (*Economic Policy).*[220] Bureaucratic indecision itself provided just a part of the material for discussion. In the period of spring and summer of 1971 *Neoplanta Film* and Makavejev were employing all the possible methods that might have asserted their position and defended the film: reaching for publicity, appealing to the advocacy of critical acclaim and to the success that the film was still able to achieve in dire conditions, and to the rights that a self-management society had to provide for the artist and his creation.

[218] Informacija sa Savetovanja komunista [Information for the Assembly of Communists], 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 355.
[219] Milutin Ćolić, "Balada o patnji i zabludi" [Ballad About Suffering and Misconception], *Politika*, 5 July 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 899.
[220] "'WR' ili povod diferencijacije" ['WR' or the Cause of Differentiation], *Ekonomska politka*, 14 June, 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 847.

Firstly, the restriction did not apply to foreign festivals and Makavejev and *Neoplanta* tried, as it was also the case with *Rani radovi,* to make full use of this: *Neoplanta* still managed to send the film and the film crew to the Cannes film festival. Even when *Neoplanta*'s rights for distribution of the film were fully suspended, the German company "Telepool" still held rights over the film and took care of distributing the movie outside the borders of Yugoslavia. The positive feedback that the film received in Cannes and many other foreign film venues was widely represented in the press, this way cultivating a favorable attitude towards the film. However, screening in Yugoslavia was close to impossible. Some of the greatest controversies were raised by preventing the film from participating in the Pula film festival. Participation in Pula was important for *Neoplanta* because they thought that festival jury, as a semi-independent body of evaluation of the cinematic oeuvre, would have provided a specialist opinion[221] (expectedly, a favorable one), and thus an argument for the studio. For their disappointment, on 19th July, as the beginning of the festival was approaching, the Public Attorney of Serbia decided to put the full stop in the ambiguous situation regarding the public screening of *WR: Misterije organizma* and cancelled the permission. This situation led to a series of protests from the side of Association of Film Workers of Serbia, Conference of Film Workers of Yugoslavia; a group of "young authors and film critics" issued a public letter[222], the Festival of Yugoslav Feature Film sent the appeal to the court.[223] Essentially, the federal film workers and critic's community expressed a clear condemnation of the withdrawal of the film from the festival program. However, their opinion, both professional and public, which under the laws of self-management should have had importance, was left without a consideration. The critics

[221]Letter to the District Attorney, 12 July, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[222] See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 715.
[223] See: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 720.

and the film industry employees were recognized as workers and, consequently, they were seen as having an important role in the management: nevertheless, their criticism remained unanswered. It seemed that the discursive negotiations over what self-management was and could be, over the position of the (film) workers in the production process, could be interpreted as one might have wanted to, but this did not affect the central authorities' position and their final decisions.

As numerous positive reviews in the press and protests from the side of film workers did not seem to achieve its effect, *Neoplanta* was looking for other means of publicity and resources of "objective" opinion. Hoping to gain a strong argument which would counter the fears of public and political disorder that the film was often accused of raising, Udovićki decided to order a "sociological and psychological research which was supposed to find out how different social structures react to the film".[224] The research had to be conducted by Newspaper Publishing Company "Borba" Institute for Marketing and Preparative Propaganda UNIMAR. The planned exploration intended to focus on a variety of aspects of public opinion and perception of the film, asking questions such as: what opinions were held, how they were affected by the passage of time, and could other means of information alter the understanding of the film. Officially, the insights gained through this research were supposed to provide directions for *Neoplanta Film* as for how the film should be exhibited in the future.[225] Apparently, the Executive Council of the Cultural Commission of the Province agreed with this plan[226], and the inquiry was launched. However, this research project was hindered by the fact that the film was withdrawn from

[224] "*Neoplanta*'s" letter for Cultural Commission of the Province, 14 June, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[225] Letter to the Cultural Commission of the Province, 14 June, 1971, F430, box 19/67. This letter also demonstrates a level of leniency from the side of *Neoplanta Film*; they were asking for advice of the Commission regarding the participation of the film in Pula film festival; and also seemed to be open to the possible reorganization of the studio production profile.
[226] Letter to the District Attorney, 12 July, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.

the public showing. This meant that UNIMAR could not organize screenings even for "test audiences". The Institute did not halt their research; however, they had to admit that the results they achieved were only partial, this way losing any conclusive credibility they may have strived for. The attempts to build up a form of objectivity[227] which, based on the prestige of scientific discourse, could have negotiated between the studio and the authorities, was in itself hindered by the infrastructural needs of this form of objectivity: there could be no experimental screening without the screening.

At the same time when *Neoplanta* was trying to reframe the negotiation by employing social sciences as an ally, the other possible third party that might have acted as an arbiter, film criticism was also under attack. Dušan Popović, the President of the County Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia[228], had declared in 1971 that "film criticism is far below the level of our needs, both in terms of professionalism and political-ideological understanding. We should take these questions seriously".[229] Such denunciations of the film critics and the professional juries of festivals had occurred before. However, by 1971 it was not simply a rhetorical tool aimed at certain film directors or ideas: it was happening in the context of extensive bureaucratic offensive affecting the workings of the film industry. What previously was part of an (angry) dialogue now turned into a monologue of the exercise of power.

[227] I am using here the term objectivity in the sense in which Lorraine Daston employs it in her article Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective."
[228] Letter for the Cultural Assembly of the Province, 17 May, 1971, in: AV, F430, box 19/67, p. 1.
[229] Informacija sa Savetovanja komunista [Information fot the Assembly of Communists], 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 349.

4.5 Self-management in the plural

Just like in the *Rani radovi* case, one of the important moves in *Neoplanta*'s affair was also related to their attempts to publicize the conflict evolving around Makavejev's *WR: Misterije organizma*. Unlike in Žilnik's movie, however, the strategy would fail. Similarly to the magazine ROK, which was designed to expose the conflict evolving around *Rani radovi*, in 1971 *Neoplanta* issued a two-volume, 1000 page long mimeo report, edited by the director of the studio Svetozar Udovićki. The biggest part of this book consisted of a collection of documents on various aspects of the production of the studio and public reception of its films and authors. The whole second volume of the publication was devoted for documentation of controversies evolving around *WR: Misterije organizma*. This aspiration for publicity was closely connected to the way in which the studio interpreted the constraints continuously imposed on it since the spring of 1971. From *Neoplanta*'s point of view, the methods used against *WR: Misterije organizma*, its director and producer were based on the "hidden political pressure", and being such, did contradict the essential premises of self-management.[230] It was a form of bureaucratic intervention, and an expression of lack of trust in the self-management body of the film studio and the film workers.

The 2nd volume of *Neoplanta. For Internal Use* was banned in the early 1972[231], by the initiative of the Public District Court. The stated reasons of banning implied the need of preserving authority and order which, in the opinion of the prosecutor, were systematically undermined by both the book and the film. Similarly to the film that it was devoted for, the book was seen as propagating "politically inimical attitudes and statements, contradictory

[230] "*Neoplanta*'s" letter for Province's Council of Culture, 17 May, 1971, F430, box 19/67.
[231] After all, it was not that internal; *Neoplanta* had printed several hundred copies and began distributing it in cultural and intellectual circles when the trial was launched.

to the policy of SKJ and social-political situation in our country"[232]; moreover, it was "offensive and assigned malevolent labels to social organizations, primarily to the SUBNOR", along with the tendentious negative interpretation of the role and influence of LCY. The conclusive remark in the court decision was that the book was "causing disturbance of the citizens".

Such accusations were just one part of the story. The Public District Court did set out to defend the authority of institutions like SKJ or NOB. The language that they were using was, again, the same language that *Neoplanta* employed: the self-management discourse. The prosecutors of the court did not become outspoken advocates of the bureaucratic and autocratic version of socialism. Even if in a somewhat ambiguous manner, the values of self-management, such as democracy or publicity, were sustained. Actually, it was one of the problems that prosecutor had with the book: that in its pages "Novi Sad is shown as environment permeated with the political pressure of the highest level, that there is no freedom of creation.[233] Thus, defending the conservative communist institutions did not mean an advocacy of the centralized rule or censorship. Both sides were speaking in the name of self-management. However, *Neoplanta* was relying on the powers that were at some point delegated to the intellectual workers of Yugoslavia; the court (as well as SUBNOR) relied on their status as authoritative representatives of the Yugoslav people and, in the end, as official arbiters of what self-management was.

The way the question of publicity was interpreted allows us to shed some light into the contradictory ways in which, as the conservative communists of Yugoslavia imagined, the

[232] Court decision over the temporary ban of distribution of the second book of "Documentation of *Neoplanta Film*, 23 February, 1972, in: AV, F430, box 19/67.
[233] Idem.

cultural production should be organized. The materials prepared for the meeting of communists intended to discuss the pertinent questions regarding *Neoplanta*, pointed out that one of the reasons why the film was so important was exactly because it was an exclusively public art.[234] And exactly because it was public, communists[235] were supposed and obliged to enter the discussion. Suddenly, publicity and transparency, central values of a self-managed society, deprived industry workers of their rights for the control of production. At the same time, film industry workers were not enough; they could not simply decide and invigorate the cultural life all by themselves. The development of a decent socialist self-management culture required an intervention of loyal party members with a well-defined understanding of what socialist culture is.

This understanding, however, was not that well defined and explained. The problem, within the discursive struggle over what self-management is and what it is not, made it necessary to frame *Neoplanta's* activity so that it would fall outside the boundaries of socialist principles. The meeting provided an interpretation of *Neoplanta* which, despite its empirical flaws and inaccuracies, was a powerful interpretative contender: it was at this discursive level that *Neoplanta*'s claims for representativity as a self-managed socialist production unit were dismissed one by one. Thus, the development of *Neoplanta* appeared as a crack in the whole self-management ideology as it was laid out by the participants of the meeting of Federal Ministry of Education and Culture in 1965 and by Stevan Majstorović in his Unesco report of 1972. In 1971, when the whole of *Neoplanta*'s activity was called into question, one of the criticisms was that it failed to fulfill its social

[234] Informacija sa Savetovanja komunista [Information for the Assembly of Communists], 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 346.
[235] In the document under consideration the term "communist" does not simply refer to the holder of Party membership card; it referred to the members of institutions created for the purpose of cherishing communist tradition, or simply more conservative Party members.

mission; that *Neoplanta*, even though the achievements of the studio had to be acknowledged, had departed from the social obligation of working with young amateurs and providing cinematic education for ordinary people.[236] The amateur back-ground of the studio or the fact that two of its most important directors came from the amateur film culture of Belgrade and Novi Sad were left unmentioned in the meeting. Grassroots *Neoplanta* had provided a technical base and film education for inexperienced film workers in accordance with the principles of self-management; their autonomy, however instead of representing self-management principles was seen as running contrary to the Party and to socialist ethics in general.

Furthermore, Dušan Popović (who had arranged the materials for the meeting) did not seem to be willing to pay much attention to the circumstances of *Neoplanta*'s growth. Being critical of *Neoplanta*, he nevertheless had to admit that *Neoplanta Film* was successful in many respects. However, he seemed to have a mistaken understanding as for how this success was achieved. He asserted that *Neoplanta*'s choice of authors and themes was accidental[237], which did not take into consideration relatively careful and considerate programing that was an important part of the policy of the studio. This negligence may have been conscious or not, but it allowed Popović not to question the set of economic, cultural, social and political circumstances that reverberated *Neoplanta*'s efforts and led to rapid growth and acknowledgment of the studio.

[236] Informacija sa Savetovanja komunista [Information for the Assembly of Communists], 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 348.
[237] Informacija sa Savetovanja komunista [Information for the Assembly of Communists], 1971, in: Svetozar Udovički, *Neoplanta. Za Internu Upotrebu. [Neoplanta. For Internal Use]*: 347.

He did admit, however, that it was the socially critical films that contributed the most to *Neoplanta*'s reputation.[238] This social involvement became, however, a disadvantage: *Neoplanta's* films were distorting reality and this type of production was one of the reasons why closer supervision by communists was needed. He supported the idea that Yugoslav films should be represented in foreign countries; but did not mention that this was one of the main achievements of *Neoplanta*, nor did he take into consideration the whole set of circumstances that determined both *Neoplanta*'s strive for cooperation with foreign festivals and producers, or the fact that the reasons for which films by Žilnik or Makavejev were appreciated abroad did partially coincide with the reasons why they were criticized by certain social and political actors at home. Neither did he ask the question whether anybody in the West would be willing to watch and praise the works of inexperienced amateurs on which, as he had previously suggested, *Neoplanta* was supposed to focus. In late March 1972 the Excutive Committee of the Province initiated the dismissal of Svetozar Udovićki from his position as the director of the studio. Abiding the law and following discussions among "socio-political, social and cultural organizations" a new director, Draško Ređep, literary scholar by profession, was appointed. He appeared to be much more of a diligent "communist"[239] than a skillful manager.

[238] Idem: 349.
[239] Žilnik recalls that Ređep immediately began pushing him to cut out certain scenes from *Sloboda ili strip* (*Freedom or Cartoons*). See: Boris Buden, Želimir Žilnik, *Uvod U Prošlost [Introduction to the Past]*: 95.

Conclusions

By theoretically structuring my empirical material around the film production process, one of the aims of this thesis was to enable a more versatile take on the historical study of film. Although trying to conceptualize the film industry as a particular space of the cultural sphere, my attempt was also to historicize the latter in an attempt to see it through the lenses of the principles which organized its structure and its functions: a specific form of self-management socialism. In this way, I tried to shed some light not only on the film industry as such, but on the specificities of this mode of organizing (cultural) production and social relations.

The second chapter allowed me to continue this analysis by describing the ways in which self-management socialism was envisioned by the authorities responsible for setting up the general lines of Yugoslav cultural life. I tried in this sense to point out the inner contradictions of this vision and the way in which it allowed for various interpretations that could easily swerve from the official LCY doctrine. Supported by strong anti-etatist sentiments, the idea of "socialism from below" framed the ways in which different spheres of social, cultural and economic life were imagined and, consequently, organized. Emphasizing the need for a cultural sphere which would enable the active participation of the working people resulted in assigning them decision making power over cultural matters. Thus, in a contradictory move, building a notion of Yugoslav identity based on self-management socialism triggered increased cultural self-determination in different regions and republics within the Federation. The introduction of market incentives was also supposed to bulwark this aim: film producers were to become self-sustainable market

players not only out of a concern for efficiency, but also in order to enable local autonomy. In this sensemarket incentives implied that consumers and producers – and not the state -- would be responsible for the nature of the film production.

I tried to follow up these contradictions in the two case studies which I analyzed in the last two chapters. The focus of these studies was twofold. On the one hand, I intended to follow the pragmatic strategies that film producers (both *Neoplanta* as such and its affiliated directors) employed within an industry organized along the lines of self-management. Thus, I focused on the particular way in which the two films were funded and the effects these types of funding had in subsequent debates. I tried to show how *Neoplanta* tried to define its production profile by focusing on critical recognition and innovative film making: gaining the support of cultural professionals in the form of positive film reviews, festival awards, international collaborations, etc. This strategy allowed them to preserve a cautious financial policy which could take advantage of both state subsidies and market revenues or other non-state incomes. To a certain extent, *Neoplanta* seemed to perfectly fulfill the requirements asked from a self-managed film production house: it preserved its educational function and artistic prominence, while being able to avoid financially turbulent waters.

Paradoxically, despite these successes, *Neoplanta* would become one of the first production houses accused for not abiding by the principles of socialist self-management. Seemingly, outcomes of a self-managed industry could appear as a violation of the principles of self-management socialism for some of the conservative communists. Not only the content of the *Neoplanta* films were occasionally interpreted as not complying with the postulates of self-management; it was feared that the sheer presence and

publicity of these film may have negative effects. What these accusations made obvious was the diversity of interpretations that marked both the discourse on self-management and its practices. As these interpretations would often clash it is this conflictual space that I tried to describe in my chapters.

Firstly, conflicts over a specific film exceeded the interpretation of the cinematic text or the simple affirmation of one's position regarding a particular film. It was usually the case that the conflict situation provided a setting in which one's position within the film industry was intimately connected with specific visions of what the relationship between markets and state bureaucracy should be or how a self-managed society should negotiate the limits between artistic freedom and the socialist pedagogical project. For this purpose I relied on Mitchell's analysis of the state effect, while trying to preserve however the concepts that the actors themselves were using: state bureaucracy vs. controlled market mechanism, bureaucratization vs. local economic autonomy, etc. The attempts of the New Wave filmmakers to publicize these debates (through the magazine ROK, or the mimeo report *Neoplanta Film. Za internu upotrebu*) were also forms of imposing specific "state" or "market" categories that relied on a particular version of self-management which emphasized their role as grassroots cultural producers within a democratic socialist society.

Secondly, the conflicts related to the two films which I analyze revealed numerous contradictions that self-management ideologues appeared to have left aside. It asserted grassroots freedom of creation and public engagement in cultural production while enforcing a certain pedagogical function; it pushed for market freedom while at the same time recognizing, that markets do not simply exist and market actors have to be actively

created by the state; it strived for the self-reliance of film enterprises while trying to direct their activities through a complex form of bureaucratic control; it promoted a certain eagerness to enter Western markets, while suggesting that not every type of film production should be allowed to leave the country, etc.

Thirdly, it is important to emphasize the contextual nature of these pragmatic and discursive strategies and that negotiations over what self-management was could have their limits. A comparison between the production process of *Rani radovi* and that of *WR: Misterije organizma* can be very useful in this respect. Despite the similarity of the strategies employed in producing the two films, the results could not be more different: despite *Rani radovi*'s success, they bore no effects in Makavejev's case. Suddenly, it became obvious that the polyphony of voices that characterized the discussions about socialist self-management and the different perspective that could co-exist within the same public sphere, could also be interrupted through a simple administrative decision. In the case of *WR: Misterije organizma* there was no court trial and the only result of these heated debates was a book, the 2nd volume of *Neoplanta. For Internal Use,* that could no longer change anything and which itself was banned in the spring of 1972.

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