

Orfeo's Maoist Utopia

*The Emergence of the Cultural Critique of
Existing Socialism*

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ABSTRACT

The thesis studies the way Orfeo, an artist group operated in Hungary between 1969 and 1972, formed and disbanded. The group criticized the existing socialism, and the lack of implementation of its ideologies, from a Maoist standpoint. The context of the research is the reform of the institutional system of state socialism, called the New Economic Mechanism. The goal of the paper is to analyze the relation between social position of cultural producers, and their ideologies, therefore I use archival data and life histories to study the process, how the cultural-economic changes of liberalization period of the country provided opportunity for the emergence of a leftist opposition. I will argue against the depiction of the intellectual social space as dichotomous, divided to an oppositional and official group, and analyze it as a continuum, structured by series of contestation and the reactions of state power to them.

“But historicizing them [cultural products] means not only (as one may think) retrieving them by reading that they have meaning solely through reference to a determined field of struggle; it also means restoring to them necessity by removing them from indeterminacy (which stems from a false eternalization)[...] H[h]istoricization of form of thoughts offers the only real chance, however small, of escaping from history.” (Bourdieu 1993:253-4)

INTRODUCTION

The artist group Orfeo was formed in 1969 by students of the University of Fine Arts in Budapest. The group had five studios, a puppet theater, a theater group, a graphic studio, a photography studio and a music band. Additionally, it was a life-style experiment; two communes were established to provide place for the rehearsals and performances of the group. Orfeo was a peculiar project during socialism. It was a political movement of artists which tried to reform their life through merging life and work in time and space. Although they criticized the state’s policies they were supported by cultural governance. In 1972 a press-scandal started against them based on previous criminal investigations about sexual harassment cases in the commune, and the group became marginalized. The thesis focuses on this first three years of the group and investigates their position and ideologies in the socialist field of cultural production between 1969 and 1972.

Orfeo criticized the regime for the lack of full implementation of the ideology of the rule of the proletariat, and positioned themselves counter to the hegemony of the state-party. Their ideology was based on the writings of contemporary Post-Marxist Lukács-school¹ members’ work but they appropriated certain tropes from Maoism and its Albanian interpretations, Hoxhaims. Based on Mao Tse Tung thoughts they claimed that bureaucracy and cadres became the ruling class in socialist countries, and they imported from Hoxhaimism the idea that socialist countries practice

¹ Lukács-School, also called Budapest-School, or in the jargon of historians Lukács-kindergarten, was the group of students of György Lukács who developed their theory based on humanist Marxism. Ágnes Heller, György Márkus, Mihály Vajda and János Kis were the most well-known members.

imperialist foreign politics. Orfeo could use the socialist publicity: buildings of the Hungarian Young Communist League *Kommunista Ifjúsági Szövetség* (KISZ) and the Patriotic Popular Front *Népfront* (HNF) were offered to them, they were allowed to play even in front of a wider audience on television. They operated in the context of the New Economic Mechanism, which was an economic policy targeting the liberalization of the socialist economy, while trying to stimulate the competition between different companies of the state, it had a profound effect on cultural governance and led to the softening of political censorship.

In this thesis, I describe the field of cultural production of socialism, with its internal tensions, and how it was embedded into the institutional, ideological, economic and social complex of socialism in Hungary between 1969 and 1972. Consequently, I handle the material culture and ideologies which were produced within this field as utterances trying to establish agreements on what was considered the right way of living, acting, thinking, and making culture. By following the emergence and disintegration of the Orfeo group, I will demonstrate that changes of positions within the field of cultural production were more dynamic than was shown in previous analysis. Since only fragmented research was made on Orfeo, these either focused only on the band (Ring 2008, 2015), the theater (Jákfalvi 2006) or political activism (Gildea et. al. 2013:143), my first question regards the way the leftist cultural opposition emerged. The main puzzle is how it was possible that existing socialism was criticized by the ideologies it produced. In my thesis, to be able to answer this, I will study the way the field of cultural production was structured, and transformed in relation to its ideological claims and its *doxa*.

Scholarship dealing with intellectuals of the socialist period and their role in the post-socialist integration of the region into the world market mainly focused on economists leading the transformation of the socialist states (Böröcz 1999) and leading figures occupying prominent

positions after the political transition (Bozóki 1999; Eyal 2000). We can find emic descriptions of socialism, which cannot be understood without taking into account the position of the actors (Haraszti 1988; Rév 2005), or analyses which are decontextualized and reused (Buchowski 2005; Hann 2005) by the anthropological tradition focusing on post-socialism. (Szelényi & Konrád 1979; Konrád 1984; Kornai 1980).

On the one hand my research focuses on, compared to the scholarship cited above which studied economic experts, an understudied strata, from the perspective of sociology of intellectuals, the cultural producers. On the other the thesis does not take emic descriptions for granted and defines ideologies from the perspective social trajectories of members of Orfeo during late-socialism. The concept of intellectuals itself has a long and contradictory history in social sciences. From the functionalist approach: “creators, distributors and employers of culture” (Lipset 1958:31), to structuralist: “dominated faction of the dominant class” (Fowler 1996:24), or relationalist: “(intellectual work) ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities [...] have their place within the general complex of social relations,” (Gramsci 1999:304) there are countless approaches to define the position of intellectuals within the society. Since intellectuals do not constitute a class, they do not occupy a distinct position within production, but their position within the social hierarchy, and relation to dominant and dominated classes of the society changes according to structural changes in the society. Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu 1990:140-150) generic structuralism is the theory which is capable of integrating structural position, its relations, and its functionality within a broader social context. Consequently I analyze ideological utterances in relation with the position of the ones who articulate them.

Defining intellectuals as a social category becomes significantly complicated when we turn our gaze to Eastern-Europe. As Iván Szelényi describes: the *differentia specifica* of Eastern-

European societies is the omnipotence of the state (Szelényi 1982: 308), i.e. the state historically had a considerable role in the production and dissemination of culture, and in the allocation of resources for its production. For that reason, intellectuals address their claims and counter-claims mostly towards the state. As the educated stratum of the society, within this peripheral region of Europe, they elevate their interest to national or universal interest of the society. The analyses they make usually follows an imagined picture or an idea which is considered to be realized in Western-European social contexts. (Janos 1982; 2000) Consequently the relation of the state and intellectuals is one of the most important aspects within the study of production of ideology in Eastern-Europe.

To be able to study the relationship between social position and ideological thinking, in my thesis, I use the notion of *utopia* developed by Karl Mannheim. He claims (Mannheim1997:146) that utopian thoughts are self-legitimizing thoughts of the dominated intellectuals. Counter to ideology, which has a direct impact on structuring the social world and skepticism, which is an escapist gesture and withdrawal from the struggle for domination, utopia is the creation of habits, morals and practices within a small enclave of individuals, for the sake of challenging the dominant factions of intellectuals. “U[u]topia [...] poses both a counter-image of the existing order and a critique of its ideology” (Mannheim 1992:146 In the case of the group I study, the content of utopian thinking was Maoism, which, simplified, was the belief that in Eastern-Europe not the working class, but the peasantry was the revolutionary subject. Furthermore, they claimed that red barons, the bureaucracy and cadre elite, became the new ruling class of the society. This idea was complemented by anti-bureaucratic sentiments, stating that the power of bureaucracy produces new forms of oppression. These statements were translated to different aesthetic forms, expressions,

and a certain way of militarized, self-imposed discipline: an ascetic way of living. These utterances were the means to challenge the dominant factions of the socialist field of cultural production.

Few researches were made from the perspective of social sciences about how cultural producers operated during socialism. Analyses of art history mainly dominated the field, providing empirical data on oppositional artistic groups. (Sasvári 2003; Jákfalvi 2006) Although the material produced by these researchers was rich, it fails to re-embed the processes into the actual social environment, and was rather motivated by the production of an image of art which would have been marketable and competitive within Western-European cultural production. (Piotrowski 2009:19) As a consequence, it discredited the works and institutions, like Orfeo, that could be associated with the official ideology of the regime. These works also constituted an official and alternative² dichotomy, which described both sides as homogeneous closed units. They took the emic descriptions of socialist cultural production for granted, considering the “velvet prison” (Haraszi 1988) an existing phenomenon. These analyses, like József Havasréti's on the music scene and neo-avant-garde art scene (Havasréti 2006), or Anna Szemere's on the alternative rock of the 1980s (Szemere 2001), reproduced the formal-informal distinction. One of the most successful attempts to leave behind this aforementioned dichotomy was Dominic Boyer's *Spirit and System*. He follows the dialectic of Hegel and makes a distinction between the inner “spirit” and outer “system” of consciousness of intellectuals. He describes two centuries of (East) German intellectual tradition in relation with social structural changes. (Boyer 2005). Another successful analysis was Katherine Verdery's

² I was working for the art of the '60s research group in Kassák Lajos Museum led by Edit Sasvári between September of 2014 and January of 2015. The main intention of the group was to go beyond this dichotomy. The findings and empirical data of my individual work is integrated in the thesis, however since I left the group in an early period of the collective research, the results of the work of the group did not influence my thesis writing method. The group chose to adapt the theory of artworlds developed by Howard S. Becker to avoid the official-oppositional distinction. The results were presented on the conference *Contested Spheres: Actually Existing Artworlds under Socialism* in the Kassák Lajos Museum on 27th and 28th of May. The author of this thesis did not participate on that conference, consequently the findings of the group are not integrated into this thesis.

study on nationalism and the Romanian intelligentsia. She tried to modify theories of Pierre Bourdieu to be able to use them in a socialist environment. According to her, culture and ideology had a distinct role as the means of domination within a socialist context, thus until the system was omnipotent, the intelligentsia addressed their claims and counterclaims to the Party by seeking recognition and utilizing the allocative power of the Party. Hence, in her revised table of Bourdieu, the vertical axis which for Bourdieu is the economic capital, marks the political status, while the horizontal axis, which is the cultural capital for Bourdieu, signifies the cultural, scientific authority of the actors. (Verdery 1991:93)

Her analysis is revealing, since it decomposes the official-alternative distinction by claiming that intellectual struggles were happening within a unified cultural field. However, I do not see the utility in translating the theories of capital to a socialist environment, as informal relationships and relations to the state were significantly stronger structuring factors in defining intellectual positions. I would not claim that the theory of the field is applicable to the whole history of socialism, since the teleological understanding of culture, which means that culture is essential in sustaining the political system, was present in the majority of the history of socialism, and thus no relative autonomy of the field could develop. And yet, despite these observations, in the period that I study here, between 1969 and 1972, socialist cultural production had field-like features.

Pierre Bourdieu describes the field of cultural production as a sum of negotiations and conflicts which constitute a dynamic structure, in which the struggles for material goods and prestige are mediated through symbolic struggles. (Bourdieu 1996) According to him, the field of cultural production is contained within the field of power, nevertheless it has relative autonomy in relation to it. "It occupies a *dominated position* in this field, which is itself situated at the dominant pole of the field of class relations." (Bourdieu, 1983:319) The actors within the field use ideological tools

to change their dominated or to protect their dominant position. Since Bourdieu views the nature of these processes as agonistic (Wacquant 2001) and not consensual as Howard Becker's theory of *art worlds*, (Becker 1982) or Peter Bürger's *theory of avant-garde*, which describes a one sided challenge of institutional structures, (Bürger 1989), I find his theory the most suitable to describe the relation between the emergence of leftist cultural opposition and the socialist state between 1969 and 1972.

The thesis has three empirical pillars: semi-structured interviews in which I follow up the individual trajectories of my subjects; archival materials; and, finally, visual and audio data on the shows. I reconstruct the happenings, ideologies and utterances from the aforementioned materials. I conducted nineteen interviews with sixteen members of the group and two people who were outsiders but had close connection with the group: Miklós Haraszti and Miklós Vámos . I tried to balance the interviews in terms of gender and studios, however my attempts were only partially successful. I did not manage to conduct interviews with three important members of the group and male members were more reluctant to speak with me. The first interviewee I missed was István Malgot, who was an influential authority. He declined to meet me and suggested working from a life-history interview done by Eszter Götz (Götz 2013). Although the interview is highly biased, it provided me with a basic understanding of his ideological trajectory. The other two interviews I was unable to do were with Zsuzsa Lóránt, who was a central female figure in the ideological committee of the group, and Mihály Kiss, who was an important member of the graphic studio. In two cases I did a group interview, the first with Miklós Haraszti and Tamás Fodor, and twice I visited the commune in Pilisborosjenő, where Tamás Fodor and Ilona Mélykúti live together.

No written text produced by the members of the group, except for one writing by Péter Fábry on bureaucracy, remained researchable. As they said, every piece of written material was burnt to

prevent the secret police from finding it. Apart from what they tell now about what they thought then, I am not able to reconstruct their ideology just from the interviews in the present of the research. Although I can analyze the works they did to outline the main ideological elements in them and then describe the collective action frames (Snow 2004) of their thinking, I must first describe the practice of ideology with the tools of historical ethnography (Smith 2014:11) and then analyze the ideological claims they recalled in the interviews. As Ágnes Gagyí (Gagyí 2015b:24) writes, there is an epistemological gap because of the time-space biases of social sciences, which impedes the understanding of ideologies of new social movements during the 1960s, and, more broadly, the social trajectories which determined the form and content of these ideologies. Consequently, one has to engage with actual practices and the social-cultural background of the actors in order to reveal the way these claims and symbolic utterances were rooted in the social context of their birth.

I use two types of archival materials; one is the report of the secret agents who operated within the group, and the others are articles, descriptions, letters and reports by the authorities about their activities. Kathrine Verdery (Verdery 2014) and Florin Poenaru (Poenaru 2010) describe reports of socialist secret services as situated knowledge. Struggling with the historical, political and self-referencing understanding of archival material, Poenaru states that this type of knowledge is “not academic, but it is scientific, rational and methodological”. (Poenaru 2010:6) It is a different form of epistemology which needs to be interpreted and re-interpreted when one organizes knowledge, for the sake of the analysis of a certain phenomenon. As situated knowledge, the agent's reports should be juxtaposed with interviews. Orsolya Ring already mapped the agents who worked on alternative theaters and their institutional, socio-economic background. (Ring 2008, 2015) Her

work helps me to identify the potential problems with the data and to distinguish the highly biased and more descriptive parts of them.

My thesis consists of two chapters and each has four sub-sections. The first empirical chapter describes the three aspects of the socialist cultural production of the studied era. Since Bourdieu did not study intellectuals as epistemic individuals, but analyzed their relationship to one another, in order to reveal the laws of the field (Bottero and Crossley 2011:100), my analysis attempts to describe these social relations to show how Orfeo was embedded in them. First, I describe the institutional environment the group operated within and the political and economic process of liberalization of the late-1960s and early-1970s. Following this, I will create a sketch of the Marxist-renaissance of the 1960s in the country, the radical leftist youth subculture of Budapest and the relationship between them and the studied group. Finally, I describe the way youths and youth movements were criminalized in the 1960s and show the different reactions of youth groups to this criminalization. In the second empirical chapter I reconstruct the history of Orfeo, as well as the ideological and aesthetic thinking of the group, by showing their everyday life and analyzing the content of the shows. Finally I will demonstrate how utopian thinking is both a criticism and the acceptance of the *doxa* of the socialist cultural production.

My research argues that in the studied period, because of the liberalization of cultural policy and the general acceptance of the *doxa*, the field of cultural production existed. This socialist field of cultural production worked in such a way that the state and state authorities were targeted by the claims and counter-claims of the contenders. The dominant factions were in discussion with the new-left, who challenged the *doxa*, but did not want to replace it with a radically different one. In the new-leftist youth culture, people with the cadre or socialist intellectual background were over-represented, and they believed that they would inherit the leadership of the country. On the one

hand, because of structural changes this did not happen, and these youths addressed their existential claims on the level of ideology and politics. On the other hand, the welfare state of socialism sustained its own opposition until the 1980s, when the content of criticism from Marxism shifted to liberalism in economy and politics and existentialism in art.

My research and interests, due to my training in art-theory, are integrated in the contemporary field of cultural production. As there is a structurally similar situation to the time of Orfeo, its canonization as a good practice of socially engaged art is happening. I have to problematize this process to show my position as a researcher. As a result of reaction to the neo-conservative shift after 2010 in Hungary, a growing demand for “socially engaged” art within the circles of marginalized intellectuals started. In the field, the disinterest within art was no longer a tool in the symbolic struggles, but morality of how close is the alliance between the cultural producer and the dominated groups of the society became an ultimate asset in the struggle for the domination of the field. Moreover the field became divided into two different ones. The first field received state subsidies following a neo-conservative taste for the intention of “serving the nation”. Consequently, in that the utility of art is understood as a tool of nation making. The second field consists of the former liberal intelligentsia. It receives fewer resources from the state but is funded by foreign NGOs and different CSR funds. The 2007 crisis hit these intellectuals profoundly and they became disenchanted by the promise of the 1990s. Parallel to this shift, and similar to how Pierre Bourdieu described the turn towards the avant-garde in the early 20th century (Bourdieu 1996:56), “socially engaged art” happened. Another means of the symbolic struggles is the notion of autonomy. It presumes that art should be independent from state institutions to produce social equality. This distinction produces a vast amount of marginalized intellectuals between the two fields. They, because of their socialization, consider it morally inferior to receive funding from

state institutions, yet they are not as established or do not have the social capital to ask funding from “independent” organizations, hence they are forced to rely on state funding and thus they are stuck between the two fields. Consequently my research is situated in a field which is looking for examples of art which were engaged with social inequalities and remained independent from the socialist state. Contrary to the understanding of Orfeo as an “example”, my research shows the flexibility of intellectual knowledge; the way it is embedded in the social position of the producer.

2. CULTURE AND IDEOLOGY IN THE LATE 1960S IN HUNGARY

2.1. LIBERALIZATION OF CULTURAL POLICY: NEW ECONOMIC MECHANISM AND ITS CULTURAL REFORMS

In 1966, a group of reform-socialist economists published the program of economic reforms called the New Economic Mechanism. The reforms were policies on different fields of governance, targeted a utilitarian adaptation to the changing world economic conditions. (Wallerstein 1976, Gagyí 2015a) The goal of the consolidation was to reduce the intolerable strains on socialist economy. (Brenner 2006:141) The reformers claimed that with the changing world-economic environment too much burden was put on the central leadership. They added that the economic prosperity caused by the extensive development of the Stalinist period was decreasing. As a result of the crisis in the Soviet economy, it was no longer capable of providing cheap raw material for its Eastern-European sphere of interest. So that space for political and economic decisions expanded in these states. (Argentieri in Wolchik and Curry 2010:218; Bockman 2011) With emulations of the interior market and forcing the industries to contest for state subventions through profitability indicators, the reforms forced state companies to be interested in profit maximization. (Kalmár, 2004:162)³. However the side effect of it was a bigger burden on informal relationships within the bureaucracy and strengthened the power of the bureaucratic and economic elite. (Szelényi and Konrád 1976; Kornai 1980) We can also interpret the reforms as an implicit austerity, whereas certain state spending were cut back, like political censorship, and made the state companies and their leadership more exposed to the processes of the world market. In 1972, Soviet

³ I used the Hungarian original of the article. However, it is accessible in English: Kalmár, Melinda. 2005. "An Attempt at Optimization. The Reform Model in Culture, 1965-1973." In *Muddling Through in the Long 1960s Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary*, edited by M. János Rainer and György Péteri, 53–82. Trondheim: Program on East European Culture and Society.

leadership stopped the reforms and the economic orthodoxy became triumphant for a short time, however the position of the country changed. It started to occupy a bridge position between the West and the East. In other words Hungary started to get loans from capitalist countries, from which they imported certain technologies and exported these goods to the COMECON countries. Although the reform transformed the economy, it was followed by political restoration. (Gerőcs and Pinkasz 2016)

The New Economic Mechanism was ambivalent: it led to destabilization, yet it made development more dynamic. Ideological puffers – especially apparent in the field of culture (Kalmár, 2004:163) – were introduced, with which the harmful ideological effects of the reform were reduced. Although it was still consensual that ideological work was essential in sustaining the socialist state, the reforms profoundly affected the cultural production. Before 1966 civic cultivation (*művelődés*)⁴ and culture had an important role in sustaining the state hegemony. It was thought through the equal access to culture social inequalities could be diminished. With the reforms, the basis of the legitimization of the state became mainly economic, i.e., as long as the material needs of the population were satisfied, there was no need for harsh political control, and consequently the incentives and censorship became economic too. A system was elaborated in which the tax on economically sustainable art pieces (Western-European and American movies, pop songs) (Tordai 2005) supported the less profitable, but ideologically beneficial pieces. Moreover, the profit was spent on the unsustainable community center system and its renovation⁵. Paradoxically enough, culture was still perceived as a *system constitutive standard* (Kalmár

⁴ The discourses of the Kádár-regime use civic cultivation (*művelődés*) as the internalization of intellectual and cultural goods. (Vitányi, 1981, Taylor 2008:3)

⁵ By this time the community center system, which was built up by the inter-war cultural politics and later during the Stalinist period, (Taylor 2008:90; White 1990; Kovalcsik 1986) was slowly amortizing. The state could afford just the maintenance, but the renovation of them became urgent. (Horváth K. 2010)

2004:166), which is in essence unchangeable. Hence, the cultural reforms fluctuated between economic reform and political orthodoxy (Kalmár 2004:166). The theorem of the three Ts⁶ (“forbidden, tolerated, supported”) was replaced by the “required, permissible, tolerated” distinction, with one closure, that the system upheld the right to censorship.⁷ (Kalmár 2004:166) In summary, emergence of policies related to making the cultural production profitable lessened the political censorship in the era.

Culture partly lost its function as a tool of political propaganda and it made compromises possible. In Hungary in the 1960s, the dogmatic understanding of socialist-realism had already softened. "Classical" socialist-realism, combined with moderate post-impressionism (a figurative, but less ideological, more decorative style), and twentieth-century non-figurative modernism, at least in cultural diplomacy, was recognized. (Berend 1996:171) The art which had a smaller audience had less funding, but received new important allowances. This liberalization was articulated by the Party itself unusually openly: “On these forums [which reach more people] the idea of socialism, socialist democracy and overall the socialist-realism⁸ should be propagated. With the differentiation of distribution [...] place and opportunity should be given for publication of art pieces which keep count of narrower public.” (Vass 1978:505) Accordingly groups and individuals, who did not do political work with their art were not sponsored, but they could use public spaces apart from their oppositional ideology. (Kalmár 2004:190) This ambivalent system led to the

⁶ The three T is a system of censorship associated with György Aczél. It means that the cultural products were categorized in three type: *tiltott* – forbidden, *tűrt* – tolerated, *támogatott* – supported. Although György Aczél himself used these words, they were never used as purely, authors and products could shift place in line with their support in the party or changes within the cultural policies.

⁷ *Prologue for Notions of Cultural Governance*. 1967. XIX-I-4-ggg, 48. National Archives of Hungary, Budapest

⁸ After 1956 the socialist-realism no longer indicated the same formal, aesthetic and political ideas as the art before. It was more a conception which collected all the tendencies of art which were considered useful for the state. Ákos Szilágyi from an emic perspective put it this way: “The eclecticism of socialist-realism becomes visible if one consider that before, except for socialist-realism, there was no acceptable contemporary style. By now every style which are acceptable tried to be brought inside the category of socialist-realism, therefore the aesthetic notion of the socialist-realism became meaningless, moreover an empty political category.” (Szilágyi 1984:162)

liberalization of censorship and gave place to different groups. Orfeo could enjoy the new allowances to a certain extent, since as leftist artists they were supported informally by state authorities.

2.2. MARXIST RENAISSANCE IN HUNGARY IN THE LATE 1960S

The late-1960s in Hungary marked the upsurge of the Marxist criticism of the socialist state. In line with the intellectual criticism of western welfare democracies, where the young Marx was re-discovered, in the field of philosophy, social sciences and economies, in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the doctrines of Marxism and Leninism were questioned. (Balázs et.al. 2009:226) The period, which was called by Hungarian historians as 'the Marxist renaissance' (Kovács in Rainer et. al. 2005; Szabó 2008, Vázsonyi 2014), produced an extensive critique of the social economic conditions of existing socialism.

The reconsideration of Marxist thinking was happening on two fronts: social sciences and philosophy. Social sciences through empirical research questioned the very basis of existing socialism, they revealed the existing inequalities within the society, (Éber 2013) though because of the big data it needed to produce in order to prove its stratification theories, critical sociology was highly dependent on state subsidies. Although most of these actors were banned from publication, their research at the Hungarian Academy of Science could go on somewhat uninterrupted. Many young critical intellectuals found their place in these researches. Critical sociology produced important analysis of the existing socialism notwithstanding, in that period it did not become the basis of extensive criticism. The most well-known and popular work became the *Intellectuals on the Road to Class Power* written in 1974 by Iván Szelényi and György Konrád. Their work can be considered the summary of ideas and debates proliferated during the New Economic Mechanism, however it summed up the main tropes of criticism of socialism extensively. Iván Szelényi's and

György Konrád's main claim was that the bureaucracy and technocracy became the ruling class of socialist states because of their capacity to allocate resources through the state. (Konrád and Szelényi 1976) Their work followed the tradition of Marxist criticism of existing socialism from Leon Trotsky (Trotsky 2004) to Milovan Djilas (Djilas 1983). Trotsky called the socialist state, "*degenerated worker states*", while Djilas described the birth of a *new class*; the class of "red barons". According to them, in the name of socialism these state officials captured the state to accumulate through it. Moreover these actors made the state the capitalist body which organizes the oppression and exploitation of the dominated social groups. Konrád and Szelényi managed to capture the role of the state as the instrument of capital accumulation, but devoted an agency to marginalized intellectuals as the challengers of the technocracy. The revolutionary subject in their work were marginalized intellectuals like themselves.

Because of the authority of György Lukács, and since the philosophy mainly questioned the moral and not the material premises of socialism, it received more allowances from the state. (Vázsonyi 2014:39) Accepting that from the production of the absolute surplus value, a shift happened to the production of the relative surplus value, i.e. for a certain extent existing socialism moved towards the realization of real socialism, Ágnes Heller claimed that the recognition of *radical needs* could be the key to the creation of the new revolutionary class. (Grumley 1999) Members of the Lukács-school stated that in socialism, the wage negotiations and the Marxist notion of interest lost their meanings, therefore the revolutionary class should start the struggle for *radical needs*. This notion covered the services provided by a fully-fledged welfare state, from healthcare to education. Furthermore, they demanded rights based on abstract values, like right to creativity or the need for developing an autonomous identity. (Vázsonyi 2014:45) György Lukács

himself in his last book⁹, (Lukács 1991) based on the Marxian understanding of *radical needs*, claimed that only if the production was organized in autonomous units, led and owned by the workers in a non-hierarchical way, could be socialist democracy achieved. From the side of critical economics, the book called *How is Critical Political Economy Possible?*, written by György Bence, György Márkus and János Kis, represented the Marxist criticism of the existing socialism. They argued that the social democratic way discredited the *radical needs*: the post-war Marxism elevated political thinking, either on the metaphysical level, or by using it in a utilitarian way to support the Stalinist centralization. They criticized the New Economic Mechanism because of its neo-conservative economic thinking, and claimed that only the association of free producers can be the way of the socialist political development. (Kovács 2005) These criticisms were read and known by the members of Orfeo. They associated themselves with the new left, yet they claimed to fight on the front of culture.

In brief the mainstream thoughts of critical intellectuals was an anti-bureaucratic ideology, which claimed that a syndicalist solution can reform the existing contradictions of socialism. Although the Hungarian 1968 was dominated by intellectuals and no popular movement emerged, small counter-cultural cells existed beyond the official reforms, its criticism, and intellectual debates. In 1967 from the circle of Katalin Imre¹⁰ (Simor 1999) and from the camps of the Young

⁹ The basic argument of this book is very similar to the political last will of him. The Process of Democratization written in 1971, first published in German in 1985 and in 1988 in Hungarian, contains all the elements he said in his last interview. However his last will practically is an interview made by Ferenc Bródy on his deathbed. Although it was planned to be a radio-interview, it was never published before the transition. (Krausz ed. 2010: 307-356)

¹⁰ Katalin Imre (1923-1989) was a radical left-wing actress, writer and editor. She edited the *Tűz-Tánc* (Fire dance) anthology in 1958 and the *Tiszta szigorúság* (Unsoiled Rigir) in 1963. Both anthologies were well known and liked by Orfeo. She was influential among the young leftist writers of the era. She had a huge impact on the work of Miklós Haraszti or György Dalos and Imre Györe, who wrote the first drama performed by Orfeo. As a mother figure she did not just have the right of thorough criticism, but she, as Haraszti said to me, had the right to manipulate the private life of the people with deciding who can be in a relationship with whom. Since she was against the post '56 social consensus and criticized the regime of János Kádár as the triumph of right wing reaction,

Communist League, a Maoist group emerged, who based their ideas on the anti-bureaucratic ideologies of Mao Tse Tung and Hoxhaism while having a good relationship with Greek dissidents. They were caught when they addressed a letter to every important intellectual of the era, asking for political support. Only the first accused, György Pór, was sent to prison; the others received suspended sentences. István Malgot, one of the founders of Orfeo was among the Maoists of the group as the quartier co-defendant. In 1969 in the Eötvös Lóránt University of Budapest the philosophy department started to organize itself. In the name of socialist democracy they tried to reform the local cell of the Young Communist League (KISZ). Although they re-elected their representatives, their choice was not approved by the officials, thus they started to organize a strike. Even János Kádár had to go to the university to calm down the students. They did not give up their position but the impact of the elected representatives was minor in the general assembly of the university. (Dénes 2008)

Among the youths, the political songs and the participation in concerts became important. The music bands, *Gerilla* and *Monszun*,



Picture 1 Demonstration against the Vietnam-war (Anna Komjáthy's photography)

grew out from a group which was organized around a young communist girl, Júlia Bársony. They

she was kicked out from the party in 1967 and was put under constant surveillance. However she could work at the biggest publishing company called Magvető, until she retired. She committed suicide on 23rd of October in 1989, supposedly because it was the date of the first official celebration of the '56 revolution as revolution and she considered the socialist project betrayed.

regularly played at demonstrations against the Vietnam War and the Greek civil war. (Gildea et. al. 2013:175-176) These political bands were called *pol-beat*, the name of the genre was found out by Miklós Haraszti¹¹ and covered a similar style to Bob Dylan's, Peter Seeger's, or the Peter, Paul and Mary's political folk-rock. Group members of Orfeo already participated in *Gerilla*, such as János Vas. The group travelled to music festivals in the socialist countries and enjoyed the support of the officials. In their early work, mostly they sang about the imperialist politics of the capitalist states. Miklós Vámos¹² told me in an interview that they even voluntarily applied to fight in Vietnam, which evidently was denied by the socialist state. In early 1970 they started to write political songs about internal politics and inequalities. Their first song in this category, called *Gazsi cigány* was about the continuous suppression of the Roma population and the lack of implementation of social policies targeting these groups, while the other called, *Bálint gazda*, was a political position taking about the Prague spring and its violent oppression by the Warsaw-pact countries. These songs encountered with harsher political censorship, but after small modifications could be played on the radio. In 1971 the band dissolved. These *pol-beat* bands and Orfeo had close connections. On the one hand the *pol-beat* movement was an antitype of Orfeo band, on the other similarly to Orfeo they were supported by the cultural governance but they were critical with socialist politics. Nevertheless, compared to Orfeo, there were no political, but personal reasons behind *Gerilla's* dissolution.

¹¹ Although Miklós Haraszti (1945-) is more well-known about his contribution to the samizdat movement and the liberal criticism of socialism in the late 1960s he was an influential figure in new-leftist circles. His book *Költők, dalok, forradalmak* (Poets, Songs, Revolutions) published in 1969, contained South-American and other worker's movement songs, had a huge impact on Tamás Fodor's and theater's work.

¹² The Gerilla group was an important stage in the development of new-leftist subculture in Budapest. Miklós Vámos (1950-), a popular liberal writer established it with Tamás Berki (1946-), a respected Jazz musician, in 1966. They were supported by the state for a long time, and their position was constantly questioned. Later they were considered as to be opportunistic and ones who were serving the socialist state.

2.3. "GENERATIONAL PROBLEM"

My subjects were not fully-fledged intellectuals, but youths who were in their early-twenties. They were the contenders of the field, yet due to their age, their legitimacy, as critics of socialism was questioned by the socialist authorities. In the press scandal the focus was on the question of whether they knew the "classic literature" of Marxism-Leninism or if they had done enough work in the movement or not.

However in the late-1960s and early-1970s the new-left was not the only criticism of socialism articulated by youths. Different social groups formulated their claim in different ways. In the *youth clubs* the beat movement proliferated and marked a new wave of leisure time spending of the youth. The first one was organized around the new music genre the *beat*. Their ideas about leisure based on claiming autonomy of the self and the right to joy. Members of the *beat* were also obsessed with American pop-culture. (Horváth 2008) However despite their demands for independence, the Young Communist League and the cultural industry slowly incorporated this genre. The audience on these concerts was socially mixed. Another way of spending leisure time were the *galleris*, which were small groups assembled near squares or other landmarks. The members of the *galleris* came from a significantly lower status than the ones in the new-left movements.

The generational experience of my subjects, as youth contributes to the epistemology they developed within the studied period. Kürti claims that in the late-1960s and early-1970s there was a massive criminalization of the youth implemented by the socialist state. He proposes attempting to understand generations as they were created by policies and generated by existing power relations. Consequently he does not deny the biological factor of changing age-cohorts but says that the emic understanding of generation is more a result of an interaction of a certain age-group, the apparatus of the state and the material opportunities they experience. (Kürti 2002:16) The

individuals who were born in the late-1940s and early-1950s, and were young in the 1960s and 1970s are considered to be the “big generation” or other words the “baby-boomers”. As they describe, their generational experience consisted of two factors: The first was the promise of social mobility and lively cultural life, and the second was the militancy of the reaction of the state to their claims and demands. Following the analysis of Mary Taylor and Péter Fonyódi, I see also a relationship between the shrinking capacity of state, as the result of the liberalization process, to integrate intellectuals in the establishment and the proliferation of oppositional thinking and new cultural products. (Fonyódi 2003) Consequently, through the overproduction of intellectuals, the state constituted its own internal opposition, and through expelling them from the country (Verdery 1995), the external alike. (Taylor 2008:221)

2.4. PLACES OF AMATEUR ART

The progress of *youth clubs* above all was a spontaneous process. The beat culture of the 1960s started to expropriate these places and for the beginning of the 1970s, most youths were members of clubs. In 1962, the *Közművelődésügyi Minisztérium* Ministry of Civic Cultivation (MM), the *Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa* National Councils of Trade unions (SZOT), the Central Committee of the Young Communist League (KISZ KB) and Institute for Civic Cultivation published governing principles to make the status of *youth clubs* clear. In this they stated that the life of the *youth clubs* is the integral part of community centers. From then on the impact on *youth clubs* by KISZ was massively extended. In 1964 KISZ drew attention to the KISZ based organizations with the free-time regulation, that KISZ life is inseparable from *youth clubs*. The same year at the VI. Congress of KISZ the aim to set up 500 *youth clubs* was declared. In 1966, according to the statistics, 1500 clubs were already working. (Andrássy, Vitányi 1979) The Institute for Civic Cultivation supported this program, since officials of the institution thought that the

ideological education of the youth could be worked out through communal experiences and pleasure.

KISZ won the right to run relatively autonomous *Youth clubs* from 1966, in which the theater groups and bands could make rehearsals or present their shows. (Taylor 2008) Sándor Striker distinguishes two waves of “art oriented voluntary activities” in Hungary under state socialism. He calls the studied era the second wave, which provided relative autonomy for the leaders of the places that made decisions about shows, although the Institute for Civic Cultivation and the Ministry maintained the right to control the participants if it was needed. (Striker 1989) Moreover, Orfeo was considered an amateur group in spite of their artistic training. The socialist civic cultivation supported amateurism and considered it as a democratic way of culture making. At the same time Orfeo did art full-time, and the members considered it as a profession. It turns out from the letters sent by authorities of the cultural governance to each other, that Orfeo was not considered as challenger since it was associated with other amateur theaters.

Orfeo enjoyed the advantages of the reforms of cultural policy attached to the New Economic Mechanism. Moreover, the parallel institutional structures, places of the HNF, KISZ and Institute for Civic Cultivation, allowed them to frequently change the places of their shows. If they were banned from somewhere, reported Tamás Fodor, they started to seek out a new public space. Above all the HNF provided buildings for the group; they could work in the Peace-clubs (*Békeklub*) of Kinizsi Street and Zugló. The puppet theater used *Pataki* Community House in Kőbánya, which was led by a formal illegal communist, Éva Benkő¹³. Their shows were performed in the presence of members of *youth clubs*, young students and prominent intellectuals of the era.

¹³ Benkő Éva was an illegal communist between the two World Wars. Malgot Istvánt, knew her from Universitas Theater.

The fact that groups like Orfeo could reach such publicity was the result of two processes: the liberalization of cultural policy reduced the central planning in the management of community houses; and this propagated the self-organization of the youth because their ideological progress was known to be safer in public spaces of the state. At the same time, the new-leftist ideology of Orfeo was not considered to be dangerous. The Communist past of Benkő Éva was also an assurance for the authorities that the group would not be deviant in terms of ideology and practice. Moreover, in the studied period the group was supported by numbers of intellectuals, who occupied prominent positions in the institutions of cultural governance. These factors allowed Orfeo to enjoy a relative autonomy within the institutional system and to take advantage of this independence the state provided them.

3. THE FIELD OF SOCIALIST CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND ORFEO

3.1. "NOT AUTONOMOUS BUT IN OPPOSITION": WHAT WAS ORFEO?

In 1969, self-declared Socialist students and teachers of the University of Fine Arts in Budapest established a puppet theater. They got their name, Orfeo, after their first show called *The Love of Orfeo*. The group did not have a clear ideological stand-point, but claimed that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is not identical to the rule of the proletariat, and the Party is not identical to the working class." (Nánay 1998) Ágnes Kamondy¹⁴, a singer in the music band, and Tamás Fodor¹⁵, the leader of the theater studio, claimed that "compared to other theater and artist groups of the era we were oppositional not autonomous, the neo-avant-garde managed to be totally unattached from politics we imagined ourselves in relation with it." In this comparison, the way they frame the neo-avant-garde of the era is not significant, but rather the claim that they had a certain relation to state authorities, and that was the position of the contender in the field of cultural production. In this chapter of the thesis I am going to study Orfeo from its beginning in 1969 until the Orfeo-scandal in 1972, which tore apart the amateurism and movement-like features of the group. Until 1972 the group had around fifty members and several hundred fans who regularly attended their performances and exhibitions. After the scandal, the base of the group began to shrink. The chapter describes the scandal and its reception. Following this it reconstructs the everyday life of the group and shows the ideologies they were engaged with. Finally it is demonstrated how the form of thinking they developed was utopian and what the implications were regarding their marginalized intellectual positions.

¹⁴ Kamondy, Ágnes. Interview by author. March 16, 2016.

¹⁵ Fodor, Tamás, and Ilona Németh. Interview by author. April 23, 2016. Fodor also argues for this distinction in his publication on the neo-avant-garde theater of Péter Halász (Fodor 1991).

In my interviews my subjects claimed that the period between 1969 and 1972 was the most intensive politically. After the scandal in 1972, their focus shifted from open political activism to the “quality” of the art pieces, which they produced. As Tamás Fodor said,¹⁶ “István Malgot imagined the role of the peg for Orfeo, “we go into the body of socialism and destroy it slowly through art, without open movement or political work.” Consequently, open political work was not the goal; their political standpoint was more represented in their lifestyle, than in the art pieces. Their motivation in establishing such a group was twofold: First, there were members who were not satisfied with the formal education they got at the universities; they claimed that it was boring and conservative. The other was the disenchantment from existing socialism and a critique of its incapability to realize its ideologies. Other members joined the group from Szinyei Merse Pál Secondary School, Kölcsey Secondary School and the Szilágyi Erzsébet Secondary School. Typically the children of socialist intellectuals were educated in these schools and their turn to the new-left began there. András Simor, a Spanish-teacher at Szinyei Merse Secondary School, wrote that all of the participants in the Vietnam demonstrations came from these schools. (Simor 1999) László Elek, who was a member of the theater group, claimed that in Szilágyi Erzsébet Secondary¹⁷ School during the reforms of the local Young Communist League, based on the idea of socialist democracy, they overthrew the former leadership and established an independent committee, which did not have a teacher in it.

Their idea of life-style reform was based on Ágnes Heller and János Vajda's *Form of Family and Communism*, and Zádor Tordai¹⁸'s writings on community and its function in making and

¹⁶ Fodor, Tamás, and Ilona Németh. Interview by author. July 6, 2015.

¹⁷ Elek, László. Interview by author. March 21, 2016.

¹⁸ Zádor Tordai (1924-2010) was a student of György Lukács. He was working for the Institute of Philosophy of the Hungarian Academy of Science. He signed the Korcula declaration on 21th of August 1968, which was against the Prague intervention of the countries of Warsaw agreement. Consequently, he was among the authors after

building socialism. They claimed, that the petty-bourgeois dispositions of the people would be reproduced within the institution of the nuclear family. They recommended building adult and children's communities where the principles of democratic socialism could be thought from early ages. Orfeo built two communes to be able to work together as intensively as possible.



Picture 2 Commune in Szentendre

The first commune was built in Szentendre in 1970 by the core members of the group. Since it was not big enough, they later moved on, and built up two houses between 1972 and 1974 in Pilisborosjenő. The land was bought by four members, and everybody added his or her spare money for buying raw materials. The work was distributed and even the bricks, radiators and professional work, like the



Picture 3: The Pilisborosjenő commune under construction

structure of the roof, were made by them. Fans of the group helped in the building. The building of the second house was slower and it began to produce tensions. Szabolcs Szőke¹⁹ even claimed

György Lukács's death who were marginalized. However he stayed as a fellow at the Academia until 1988. He was writing about the modern history of philosophy. His main interest was community and communal living, which derived from his analysis on alienation in real socialism. Later he turned towards existentialism and published several books on the oeuvre Jean-Paul Sartre.

¹⁹ Szőke, Szabolcs. Interview by author. March 10, 2016.

that the leader of the puppet theater group, István Malgot, “used women of the group to seduce the men of the theater group and made them work on the second house.” Everybody got a small cell from three to six square meters in size, and additionally they had two twenty square meters of communal space, like a library and a rehearsal room. They worked parallel in official jobs, on the performances, and on the houses in tight shifts. First the theater commune was ready, then they built up the commune for the puppet theater group. In everyday life, each week two members were responsible for getting and distributing food. They held the rehearsals there, and in the short interregnums, when the authorities banned them from all the houses of culture, they held the

performances in the rehearsal room.

The first group was established by two sculptors István Malgot and Zsuzsa Lóránt. And then Péter Fábry, who was a photographer then, Ilona Németh, the only puppet artist in the core, and Huba Bálványos, who was teaching assistant and the secretary of the Young Communist League of the university, joined them. (Ring 2015:139) The first show made by the puppet theater group was based on the drama by Imre

Györe²⁰ called *The Love of Orfeo*. Students of



Picture 4: Lőrinc as Che Guevara from the performance called 1514

²⁰ Györe Imre was a Marxist writer and poet. With other radical left-wing writers he was part of the *Tűz-tánc* anthology. This collection of poems was published right after the fall of the '56 revolution in 1958. On the one hand the poets ensured the authorities of their loyalty towards socialism as an ideology, and the state as the actor which was able to accomplish it. On the other hand they were against the “petty- bourgeois” restoration and its welfare contract, and argued that the intensive politics of class struggle was still needed to be able to reach Communism as the final

the Szinyei Merse Pál Secondary School joined them, since “the artists had a voice of the mice and they needed actors with a better intonation,” László Elek²¹ said. In the show the central figure was Che Guevara and the way he reached his love: the real socialism. The drama followed a journey of a singer in the jungle; the metaphors of the show referred to a revolutionary intellectual trajectory, and certain social groups were represented, like workers and peasants, by symbolic figures. South-American music served as background music for the show. In 1970 they performed the drama *1514*, which told the history of the peasant insurrections of 1514. Lőrinc, the radical Franciscan advisor of the peasant leader György Dózsa, resembled Che Guevara. The show was based on György Ránki's composer's piece, that was inspired by an inter-war period artist's, Gyula Derkovits²², woodcut. The third show was the drama by Peter Weiss called *Mr. Mockinpott*. The “actors” wore black dresses in front of a black background. The puppets were moved on a complicated system of ropes, represented the complex system of domination of the state. They said their goal was to show the bio-politics of the modern state, and the way it humiliates and alienates the “common people” with a perplexing system of bureaucracy. The fourth performance, called *Games of Children*, reused common children's games and plays, in order to tell the story of socialization of children, and the way the indoctrination of young people to the society happened through seemingly the most neutral tools and acts. It showed the world of adults as naturally violent and alienating. (Nánay 1998)

The theater group was formed when Tamás Fodor joined the group in 1971 and transformed the existing poet reading group. The reading group did performances from the oeuvre of Bertold

stage of social development of the country.

²¹ Elek, László. Interview by author. March 21, 2016.

²² Gyula Derkovits (1894-1934) was considered to be an archetypical socialist artist. His social realism and biography as a working class child and militant Communist made his canonization, as an example for socialist artists, possible. The woodcut he made about the insurrection was a table ordered by the Hungarian Communist Party for a demonstration in 1928. (Bajkay et. al. 2014)

Brecht. After carefully selecting the “actor material” in the Bertolt Brecht poet reading group of Orfeo, he established the theater studio. He also brought some actors from the *Irodalmi Színpad*, where he worked before as a director. The first performance they did, was based on the script of Jorge Semprún, adapted for the cinema by Alain Resnais, called the *The War is Over*. The show was named after the *Etoile* underground station in Paris, where Spanish illegal communists met to exchange packages and bombs, after the Spanish-



Picture 5: Still from *Etoile*

civil war. The performance was actualized to speak about the relation between the historical movement and the Party and youths of the 1960s who were critical of the authoritarian organization of the movement. The second show in the studied time frame was called *Amusement Park (Vurstli)*, and depicted the scenes of a festival, showing how the petty-bourgeoisie of socialism were addicted to generated, artificial feelings and emotions. The third one was called *Grape-harvest (Szüret)* based on Ferenc Halmos²³ drama. The script took place during the 1848 revolution in Hungary, in a village where the peasants, claiming that the revolution did not represent them, during a grape harvest killed their representative. The show's metaphor was based on the claim that socialism was not the rule of the people, but produced its own elite. They stated that historically all elites, who based their claims on the interest of the people, just used populism to act in line with their interest. From 1974 the theater studio worked under the name of *Stúdió K*. After the break-up there was no

²³ Ferenc Halmos (1947-) was a respected socialist writer. The group chose him because of his sociographical style of writing.

contact between the members of the puppet theater and the theater, in spite of the fact that both of groups were living in the neighboring communes. According to Tamás Fodor,²⁴ the cause of the break-up was the different dispositions of the members of the two groups; the puppet theater was more folkish, while the theater was more urban.²⁵ However, other members like Péter Fábry²⁶, saw it as a strategic decision in order to get away from the marginalization and liberate themselves from the weight of the corrupted name.

Parallel to the shows a music band formed, which was arguably the most successful, in terms of popularity, among all the activities of the group. Their repertoire consisted of the mixture of



Picture 6: The band in Berlin on the Rote Liede Festival in 1972 (From the left: János Vas, Péter Dabasi, István Nemes, Ágnes Kamondy, Ágnes Zsigmondi)

*Canto Nueva*²⁷ songs, called in Hungary *pol-beat*, which were beat-based political songs, folk or folkish songs and translations of Latin-American songs of the era. They played translations of the songs of Victor Jara and the Quilapayún band. János Maróthy²⁸

²⁴ Fodor, Tamás, and Ilona Németh. Interview by author. July 6, 2015.

²⁵ Urban and folkish distinction of intellectual blocs in Hungary has a long tradition, rooted in the ideological struggles of the inter-war period. It is most significant in the literary field, yet it is highly symbolic distinction in different intellectual debates. However there are certain patterns in how intellectuals associate themselves with certain blocs within this distinction. Urban intellectual usually marks multiple generational, mainly Jewish, bourgeois dispositions which prefers Western-European culture and want to catch up with the economy and culture of these countries. The Folkish bloc's legitimizing argument is that they are the ones who represent the people, mainly peasants. Among them first generational non-Jewish intellectuals with descendants from the rural areas are overrepresented. (Taylor 2008; Hófer 1995 in Banac and Verdery) It is a very adaptable typology of the intellectual debates in Hungary throughout its modern history, however this distinction is very contingent and artificial in most of the cases and signifies a more epistemological position, than the actual causes of debate. In this case it signifies the difference of dispositions between István Malgot and Tamás Fodor. Fodor frames it in this historical context to show how Malgot's shift to the right wing in 2010, was already apparent at that time.

²⁶ Fábry Péter. Interview by author. April 8, 2016.

²⁷ Through János Maróthy the members knew the new stream of political songs and tried to integrate their main features, like choir, folk lyrics and folkish instruments, in their music. They considered themselves as the local representative of the South-American and Italian political song movements. Similarly to *Canto Nuova*, *pol-beat* received massive state funding, though compare to the South-American version of it, these protest-songs did not become as significant a basis of political identity as in South America. (Taffet 1997:91)

²⁸ János Maróthy (1925-2001) was the student of György Lukács. He established the musicology and sociology of

was a supporter of the band and provided scores of musics from different bands from Western-Europe and South-America. As they said their main inspiration was the *Quilapayún*, a Chilean leftist folk-beat band, with which János Vas, who established the band, met at a political song festival in Berlin, called *Rote Lieder* in February of 1971. He had been a member of the aforementioned *Monszun* band, which was already dissolved by that time and he was looking for new ideas and opportunities. With Iván Lantos they realized that Hungarian *pol-beat* was too sterile with the two guitars/one female singer structure, and thus choir and folkish instruments should be involved. Two female singers joined the group: Ágnes Kamondy and Ágnes Zsigmondi. In 1972 the band won second prize on *Ki mit tud?*, an important song contest on television. As János Vas²⁹ told me, the editor of the TV show told him in private that they could not win because of political reasons. According to Vas the authorities thought if they received the first prize, which was traveling to Venice, they would join local radical leftist groups or even become members of the Red Brigades. After the competition, tours were organized for the band, they became known country-wide. When the Orfeo scandal started they were also harassed regularly by the police forces. The places for rehearsals and performances were shrinking, therefore they decided to change their name to *Vízöntő* (Aquarius), to be able to play their repertoire in the houses of culture and other state institutions. Their political commitment, as they said, remained intact and the name change was a utilitarian choice. However, in the autumn of 1972 the music band was expelled from Orfeo. Later some of the members formed *Kolinda*, a folk band which had a significant impact on the folk dance movement of the 1970s and the 1980s. (Ring 2015:141)

music institute in the Hungarian Academy of Science. The institute first collected worker's movement songs, then from 1961 on specialized on pop songs. Maróthy had a good relationship with Italian, French and Spanish communists, and the most recent albums of political pop music bands were sent to him. János Vas was working for Maróthy and he could listen to these songs.

²⁹ Vas, János. Interview by author. April 6, 2016.

The graphic and the photography studio had a shorter history; they formed parallel to the group but worked with them only until 1972. Tamás Eskulits, Péter Forgách, Péter Fábri, Anna Komjáthy, Huba Bálványos were important members of these two groups. The photography studio visited factories and depicted the working conditions of the workers there. Mihály Kiss, who was sent by



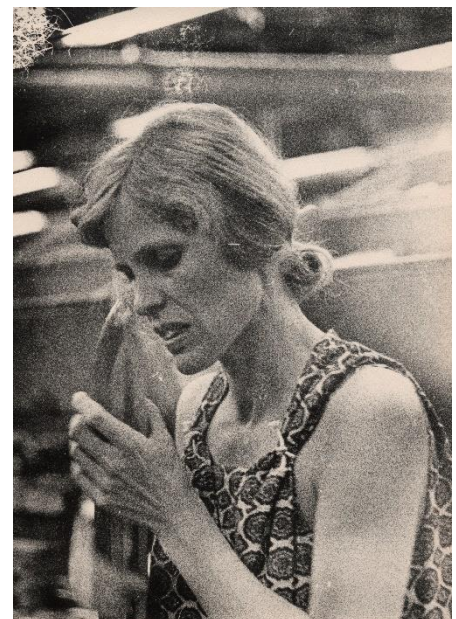
Picture 7 Anna Komjáthy: *Freedom for Angela Davis, poster for an assembly of the Young Communist League*

the group because of his “bourgeois dispositions” to work as an oil miner in Algyő, took pictures of the everyday life of the workers there. Tamás Eskulits took pictures in a weaving factory, which was led by his father. The graphic studio’s work was inspired by the contemporary South-American realist artists like José Clemente Orozco, Santiago Martinez Delgado or David Alfaro Siqueiros. Their main claim was that socialist realism became meaningless as it served the former Stalinist regime. They stated that the contemporary art was not socialist at all, since the state subsidies depended more on the loyalty of individuals, who produced it than the content of the work. Thus they wanted to develop a “social realist” way of visual style, which is in content socialist but pointed out existing inequalities in the socialist regime. The graphic studio made posters for the performances of the theater groups but they had original works too. The main topics were political statements about Che Guevara or Angela Davis, and they depicted Angela Davis as a prisoner, or the corpse of Che Guevara

surrounded by working class people deep in grief. There were also pictures about the miseries of

the group because of his “bourgeois dispositions” to work as an oil miner in Algyő, took pictures of the everyday life of the workers there. Tamás Eskulits took pictures in a weaving factory, which was led by his father. The graphic studio’s work was inspired by the contemporary South-American realist artists like José Clemente Orozco, Santiago Martinez Delgado or David Alfaro Siqueiros. Their main claim was that socialist realism became meaningless as it served the former Stalinist regime. They stated that the contemporary art was not socialist at all,

since the state subsidies



Picture 8 Edit Miklai: *Weaver, work of the photography studio*

the Hungarian working class or about the starvation of African children. As the topics were openly Marxist, in line with the foreign politics of the country, they could be shown in public spaces of the state. But when it came to internal politics, as we saw above in the case of *Gerilla* band, the art pieces met with the censorship of the state.

Apart from the group's cultural work they organized reading groups, where obligatory readings were assigned to the members and were discussed in a bigger circle. The works they could recall in the interviews were Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's *State and Revolution*, works of young Karl Marx, like the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, or Anton Makarenko's *The Pedagogical Poem*. They watched movies together which were criticized, and their ideological content was either approved or rejected by the members. Most of the notable debates they could remember were associated with these occasions. Although the group called itself democratic, certain figures had more authority to determine the strategic decisions or political opinions. To demonstrate this inequality, my interviewees recalled an event which, according to them, represented the hypocrisy of their ideology. Once the group watched together, without István Malgot, the *Queimada*, a film on slave insurrection, directed by Gillo Pontecorvo. Although they liked it, after István Malgot watched it, at a general assembly he forced the group to condemn the film because of its political statement. Although they could not remember what the object of the debate was, they said it lasted until everybody agreed with István Malgot. They organized debates for wider audiences for which public intellectuals were invited, mainly from the Lukács-school, like Ágnes Heller, but less political speakers were also invited, like József Tótfalusi, who made a presentation on the relation between reality and music. They tried to cover a wide variety of topics, even Even Ervin Hollós, a historian who considered the 1956 revolution in line with the official statement of the regime counter-revolution, was a speaker on one of the nights. A big debate developed, although nobody

openly questioned the statement that it was a counter-revolution, the debate itself, according to the members whom I interviewed, very much brought of the secret agents on the group.

3.2. MARGINALIZATION WITHIN THE FIELD: RECEPTION OF ORFEO AND THE SCANDAL

We can have little sense how the audience saw and interpreted the shows through the analysis of agent reports. Although these are informative, quasi-ethnographic descriptions of the performances, the position of the agents is not well known. Orsolya Ring (Ring 2008) reconstructed how the band was observed, but there is no knowledge of what the intention of the agents was, if they distorted the reports to mislead the authorities, or if they tried to find proof of ideological biases against the group. It is common in the reports that the members tried to avoid being associated with any easily circumscribable ideological stream. If an agent asked them about the “message” of the performances they answered with: “We want the people to think about it, we do not claim anything”³⁰. Moreover when the shows, like the Etoille, were not about the Hungarian political situation, the agent tried to push the actors towards claiming something which was about the everyday politics of the Hungarian state.³¹ In the reports the members tried to avoid giving answers to such questions and claimed that the show was about a general understanding of socialist politics and highlighted the universality of their claims.

From the beginning Imre Vitányi³², former illegal communist and appreciated member of the Party, and György Aczél³³ the most influential cultural politicians at that time, handled them as

³⁰ M-38311 agent's code name Regős. Hungarian National Archives, Budapest.

³¹ M-38310 agent's code name Kárpáti Emese. Hungarian National Archives, Budapest

³² Iván Vitányi (1925-) is a sociologist. He was among the most influential members of the cultural governance. During the studied period he was working for a journal called *Valóság*. He became the director of the Institute for Civic Cultivation (*Népművelési Intézet*) in 1972. This institute was the central authority of organizing civic cultivation.

³³ György Aczél (1917-1991) was the most important cultural authority after 1956. During the studied period he was formally the secretary of the Central Committee of the party. With the end of the reforms his influence shrunk, however since his power in cultural governance did not depend on his authority but on his wide web of informal relationships his impact on cultural governance never disappeared.

good raw-material for the future of socialist art. If we follow the reception of Orfeo in 1972, we encounter a slow shift from an understanding of Orfeo as an exotic, playful experiment of some youngsters to a massive accusation of immoral sexual lifestyle or treason against the state. There was no press coverage of their shows before 1972, nor any letters about them written by the authorities. The first article published on Orfeo was in *Színház* in April 1972, written by a supporter of the group, István Nánay³⁴, then another one was published in April in *Népszava*³⁵, and finally in *Nők Lapja* in September³⁶. It was common that these pieces were descriptive with open sympathy towards the young socialists. In October János Szántó³⁷, a friend of the group, wrote an article on the group which caused the scandal. He mainly focused on the sexual life in the commune and cited from the transcript of István Malgot's trial. His access to the documentation of the trial implied that the article and its content had some connection to the authorities. The members suggested that it was ordered, however the letters which were sent to each other by the important figures of the cultural governance did not prove their theory. It was possible that the press acted voluntarily, however it would have been still suspicious since the scandals and the attacks against reform communists started parallel to the power of the supporters of the liberalization decreasing. An argument started between Szántó and a publicist of *Élet és Irodalom*, Endre Varjas,³⁸ complemented by different letters from the readers. Although the letters are less telling, the debate between Szántó and Varjas was significant. Parallel to this a correspondence started between the

³⁴ Nánay, István. 02.04.1972. "Fesztivál: Ifj. Horváth János Emlékére". *Színház*. 38-40.

³⁵ Kiss, Rita. 07.05.1972. "Az Orfeo együttesek". *Népszava*. 7.

³⁶ Kormos, Valéria. 23.09.1972. "Orfeo". *Nők Lapja*. 10-11.

³⁷ Szántó, János. 1972. "Orfeo az álvilágban" *Magyar Ifjúság*. 41:5-7.; Szántó, János. 1972. "Még egyszer az Orfeo együttesről". *Magyar Ifjúság*. 46:5-6..

³⁸ Varjas, Endre. 28.10.1972 "Orfeo". *Élet és Irodalom*. 9 Their debate was extreme compared to other cultural or political debates of the era. Endre Varjas was a defendant of the Maoist trial and he was originally named Vizl Eduárd and, after the trial he was forced to be an agent. Szántó refers back to his original name, in this case it is hard to decide if he was referring to his political past or to his Jewish background.

Young Communist League of Kőbányai House of Culture³⁹, where the puppet theater had their rehearsals, Iván Vitányi the director of the Institute for Civic Cultivation⁴⁰, György Aczél the deputy minister of culture⁴¹ and László Gyurkó the director of the 25th Theater. The arguments were around the question of whether Orfeo was essentially socialist. The ones who supported the group claimed that the group was socialist, but the state failed to educate them hence they fell off the right path. It was peculiar that Varjas, Vitányi, Gyurkó, and the Young Communist League claimed that if they failed to express the “right thoughts” it was because of their age and they “wanted to do the right thing”. However Szántó was relentless and stated that the members of Orfeo were reactionary and they veiled these reactionary thoughts with socialist content. The members of Orfeo were lobbying to different state institutions, and repeated what their supporters said. What we see from these documents that the oppositional nature of Orfeo was expressed in a very public way, however the debate was basically around the question of if they knew the *doxa* or did not, and acted against it unconsciously. If the latter had been true their well-meaning would have not been questioned. The scandal did not as radically influence their position as in other cases of the era,⁴² since they could continue their work, and positions were even provided at public spaces, but it influenced the internal dynamic of the group. It affected the structure of the group profoundly, in brief it was the time when the open politics within the group ended and the coalition of the five studios ceased to exist. Before there had been more than fifty members with a wider audience, yet

³⁹ Kőbányai Ifjúsági Klub 1972 A kőbányai ifjúsági klub véleménye a Magyar Ifjúságban megjelent “Orfeo az Álvilágban” című cikkről [The opinion of Kőbányai Youth Club about the article called “Orfeo az Álvilágban” Published in Magyar Ifjúság] [Letter] M–KS 288. 36. National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.

⁴⁰ Vitányi, Iván. 1972. *Az Orfeo ügyéről: Az ifjúsági amatőr művészeti mozgalom vitás jelenségeiről* [About the Orfeo-case: Notes about the Controversial Symptoms of the Amateur Youth Art Movement]. [Letter]. M–KS 288., 36. National Archives of Hungary, Budapest.

⁴¹ Aczél, György. 1972. *Levél Gyurkó Lászlónak* [Letter for László Gyurkó]. [Letter]. M–KS 288., 36. National Archives of Hungary, Budapest

⁴² I refer here to other trails after 1972 against intellectuals, like Miklós Haraszti, Szelényi Iván and Konrád György the neo-avantgard artists of Balatonboglár. For further readings: Rainer M., János, and György Péteri, eds. 2005. *Muddling through the 1960s: Ideas and Everyday Life in High Politics and the Lower Classes of Communist Hungary*. Trondheim: Program on East European Culture and Society.

since after the scandal they were pushed out to suburban houses of culture and youth clubs, this wider audience and participation ceased to exist.

3.3. POLITICS IN PRACTICE: EVERYDAY LIFE OF ORFEO

Through the interviews I was able to make a reconstruction of the everyday life of Orfeo, this section of my thesis focuses on the values and practices of the group. I reveal the way these practices were embedded in their ideology or contradicted it. Their ideological preferences and the imagined ideal society they were working towards was unclear. They claimed that they did not think about the tomorrow but were driven by the considered importance of their work. Apart from some exceptions, such as the ideological leaders of the group like Péter Fábry, István Malgot and Tamás Fodor, my interviewees reported that they were not interested in or did not understand the ideological debates within the group. Péter Fábri⁴³ and János Vas⁴⁵ even stated that they were bored during the reading sessions and the arguments which were organized around them. As Ágnes Kamondy put it: “What we learnt at the school was boring and conservative. Orfeo gave us the creative community where our art could proliferate.”⁴⁶ The main pillar of the interpretation of my interviews was Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *biographical illusion*, which describes the way one creates a coherence of one his or hers life history. (Bourdieu (1987) 2000:300). He claims that the “autobiographical narrative is always at least partially motivated by a concern to give meaning, to rationalize, to show an inherent logic, both for the past and the future, to make consistent and constant through the creation of intelligible relationships, [...] which are thus turned into steps of a

⁴³ Péter Fábry was older and a member of the puppet theater, while Péter Fábri was a photographer who later became a writer. In Hungarian both i and y is pronounced as „ee”, thus in the group the younger one was called Little Fábri and the older was called Big Fábry. The former left the group in 1972, while the latter stayed in the puppet theater group and lived in the commune until 1978.

⁴⁴ Fábri, Péter. Interview by author. March 22, 2016.

⁴⁵ Vas, János. Interview by author. April 6, 2016

⁴⁶ Kamondy, Ágnes. Interview by author. October 7, 2015.

necessary development.” (Bourdieu (1987) 2000:300) According to his conclusion, the biographical description of the self does not give us an answer about how the individual manages to move within certain fields, but we see the representation of the self. However this does not mean that information within the interviews should be discredited, but rather that they should be studied in line with the individual trajectory of the subject. According to Bourdieu, trajectories of successfully occupied positions by the same agent [...] in a space which itself is constantly evolving and which is subject to incessant transformations.” (Bourdieu (1987) 2000:303) These trajectories were the structuring logic of my interviews. Consequently I will describe their practices to reconstruct the ideological claims they had.

It is hard to grasp any central author or the ideologies they believed in, as there were only some main ideas and values in line with the group was organized. The first was self-imposed discipline and the priority of work over joy, which was an integral part of living together as the idea was; that the basis of their community was work. (*munkaközösség*) The second important practice they were engaged with was the constant criticism, self-criticism and self-reflexive inquiries. These practices happened in assemblies, where they were looking for the bourgeois dispositions in themselves and in others. And finally, they believed in the ethos of free love. Free love within the commune was more spontaneous than ideological, and in terms who could use the possibility of free love and who could not, produced very apparent inequalities between men and women,

The most important attribute of the group was the creation of an ascetic moral of work and its prioritization over other activities. The idea of work on the self-derived from and idealization of working class dispositions which, similar to their ancestors in the inter-war period, they wanted to acquire. Ascetic morals have a longer history in left-wing cultural movements. It was already present in the inter-war communist and social-democratic movements. Orfeo shared the idea that

working class disposition was superior and more adequate for work in movements. (Szolláth 2014)

It was also not typical only of Orfeo at that time in Hungary. In the *pol-beat* movement, from where some of the members of the band joined to Orfeo, existed a structure for presenting the development of the work of the individuals. Miklós Vámos, in his novel called *Félnóta*⁴⁷ (Vámos (1986) 2009), describes the assemblies of another, more informal group, in which Miklós Haraszti, György Dalos and other, radical leftists (at that time, who later became liberal intellectuals) participated. For every occasion one had to bring a piece of work, which marked their personal development. Work produced for other occasions did not count; they had to come up with a new piece for every assembly. Vámos described in his book how he failed to bring a new piece, since he presented a song he had written for *Gerilla*. He was accused of laziness and the group claimed that he “did not take himself seriously”. The community valued above all else hard and constant work, not just on the art but also on the self.

Many of the members also participated in the work of KISZ, and shared their idea, as we also saw with their fellow travelers in the Philosophy department Eötvös Lóránt University, that the existing institutions could be taken over. Work and idealization of work was important, since they considered it preparation for the bigger task: the rule of the country. They criticized each other's work and if they found it unsuitable for performance in front of a bigger audience the other groups could prevent it being shown. Tamás Fodor claimed that the group could be very strict⁴⁸. Their work *Vurstli* was censored because it was too ideological and didactic, but in other cases, such as that of Mihály Kiss, the divergence from the ideological stream could be as punishable for being

⁴⁷ *Félnóta* is a play on words, which means at the same time ‘half of a song’ and ‘being wacky’. For Vámos, participating in the left-wing opposition and cultural movement was shameful. In this novel he tries to depict their endeavors to establish a left-wing criticism of the regime as naivety typical of young people.

⁴⁸ Fodor, Tamás, and Ilona Németh. Interview by author. July 6, 2015.

too open to ideological claims. At the first commune they created an exercise. It was compulsory to run from the train to the house, and they even organized small competitions. As Péter Fábry says⁴⁹, not just their skills but their bodies developed. This idealization of work considered the body, the art they produced, and every other segment of life a totality, which contributed to the development of each other as they were practiced not just parallel, but together in the everyday life.

They formed a central committee in which Tamás Fodor, István Malgot, Zsuzsa Lóránt and Péter Fábry assigned important readings to the group. Their whole work was based on the assumption that they were going to follow the heritage of previous socialist traditions and develop socialism further in state positions. Tamás Fodor said that they imagined themselves based on Antonio Gramsci's theory as the *organic intellectuals* of the society in opposition with the *traditional intellectuals* of the cadres and socialist intellectuals.⁵⁰ Although only two members came from a working class background and the others had cadre or socialist intellectual parents, the main assumption behind it was that they knew the social reality better than the existing regime, and accordingly they could be the true representative voice of the people. This assumption changed with time, when they decided to focus on cultural work, and leave aside the militant political agenda.

In 1971, New Year's Eve was spent on the evaluation of the work of the previous two years. Péter Fábri⁵¹ said was fed up with that no joy or free-time was permitted for the members. He started to shout and cry at the group members at the meeting. He quoted the work of a Hungarian communist poet, Attila József⁵², "Let your beautiful and serious child play too," and then left the

⁴⁹ Fábry Péter. Interview by author. April 8, 2016.

⁵⁰ Fodor, Tamás, and Ilona Németh. Interview by author. July 6, 2015.

⁵¹ Fábri, Péter. Interview by author. March 22, 2016.

⁵² „játszani is engedj szép komoly fiadat” (József (1936) 2008:136) Attila József (1905-1937) was an important Hungarian poet for the socialist regime and Orfeo alike. The poem, quoted by Péter Fábri, has no available English

group. As he remembers it, he encountered no understanding, his outburst was followed by harsh criticism, and nobody except for an actress, Erzsébet Gaál, tried to calm him down. These dynamics were accelerated when they started to work on the commune, since monitoring each other to make sure they stuck to the values of the group became stronger.

This militancy was also present in their appearance. Everybody was wearing a “Che Guevara” shirt, which meant a khaki-green suit with epaulet. When László Gyurkó⁵³ invited them to watch the performances shown in the 25th. Theater, he ordered the porters to let the people with khaki



Picture 9: Csaba Oszkay in khaki suit

suits in. Since there were more than fifty active young people involved in the early 1970s in the work of Orfeo, half of the house was full of people wearing these jackets, and consequently a scandal developed. Csaba Oszkay and Iván Angelus two members of the group were

playing in the movie called Petőfi⁵⁴ '73. It was being performed for the one-hundred-and-fifty-year anniversary of the birth of the poet. The Orfeo members in this actualization of the '48 revolution of Hungary played the populist proto-socialist faction of the revolution and they wore the same clothes as they did every day. This militant appearance drew the attention not just of the authorities

translation. It is an argument against authoritarianism. Fábri chose it to point out the similarities of the oppositional militancy and the official discourses of socialism and the authoritarian nature of them.

⁵³ László Gyurkó (1930-2007) was a writer and member of the party. Throughout the history of Orfeo he was a close ally of the group. He provided a place for Tamás Fodor in the 25. Theater after 1974. After the scandal, he wrote letters to party officials to protect Orfeo.

⁵⁴ Sándor Petőfi (1823-1849) was one of the most important Hungarian poets. Coming from a lower class background his work was propagated by the socialist state. He contributed to the making of national poetry and the literature of the Hungarian nation state, thus his oeuvre was accepted by socialist and nationalist regimes alike. This particular movie was a reenactment of the 1848 revolution in a Middle school, creating a continuity between the revolutionary youth movements of 1968 and 1848.

but also their fellow students. Anny Komjáthy⁵⁵ said that at the University of Fine Arts the neo-avant-garde oppositional artists looked at them suspiciously. She claimed that because of this they were associated with the official stream of cultural production and were not considered oppositional. They were often accused of being sectarian, too. My two external interviewees, Miklós Haraszti⁵⁶ and Miklós Vámos⁵⁷, claimed that it was impossible to speak with the members of Orfeo if one did not contribute to their work.

Physical work and the ethos of the encounter with the working class was an important feature of the everyday life of the group. Although, it was necessary, since many members had to complement their funding from the families with work in factories, some of the members worked only for political reasons. László Elek worked at a printing factory, and⁵⁸, Miklós Székely⁵⁹ and Szabolcs Szőke⁶⁰ in a ship factory, but all the members were sent to and were encouraged to work in factories. Ilona Mélykúti⁶¹, an actress in the theater group, said that she went to work for a textile manufacturer only for ideological reasons in the summer of 1971. The most archetypical case was Mihály Kiss' affair came up in every interview. Mihály Kiss was a member of the graphic studio and like many members of the group came



Picture 10: Mihály Kiss: Dawn Line

⁵⁵ Komjáthy, Anna. Interview by author. September 21, 2015.

⁵⁶ Fodor, Tamás and Miklós Haraszti. Interview by author. October 6, 2015.

⁵⁷ Vámos, Miklós. Interview by author. March 3, 2016.

⁵⁸ Elek, László. Interview by author. March 21, 2016.

⁵⁹ Székely B., Miklós. Interview by author. February 25, 2016.

⁶⁰ Szőke, Szabolcs. Interview by author. March 10, 2016.

⁶¹ Mélykúti, Ilona. Interview by author. March 21, 2016.

from a cadre-socialist intellectual family, living on the Buda side of Budapest, historically associated with the bourgeoisie of the city. At a general assembly one of his works was evaluated. He depicted the workers as they were going to the factory with public transport in the morning. The work was called The Dawn Line. The figure on the right can be seen wearing a watch. The members started to argue about whether it is a proper way to depict working class people, with such a valuable possession. If one wanted to fulfill the ideological calls and present the misery of the working class, it would have been best to depict them as ones who live in absolute deprivation. István Malgot said that because of Mihály Kiss' social position he did not have any experience with the working people and that was why he put the watch on the wrist of the man. As the members were living in strict self-discipline, Mihály Kiss accepted the criticism and left the group. For a year he worked as an oil miner in Algyő and took sociographical photos the everyday life and work of Roma under-aged workers. After a year, he rejoined the group and his self-criticism was accepted.

The idea of establishing a commune had been present since the beginning of the group's work, though the motivation was not to make a community of free love but to strengthen the community of work (*munkaközösség*) that they already had. They were inspired by the aforementioned work of Heller and Márkus on the socialist family and Zádor Torday's ideas on how to eliminate alienation through strong ties within a community. They thought that if they lived together, the work they did on art could be more effective and inspirational. When I asked my interviewees what was most important for them in Orfeo, without exception they answered the community of people who thought similarly, and that was the reason they managed to endure debates and the pressure that came from ascetic work.

Although sexuality was not a central agenda in establishing the commune, it became important when living together. As the socialist state considered gender equality important at the ideological level, yet perceived female subjects to be homogeneous in its egalitarian policies, (Fodor 2002) the commune made no difference. Couples constantly changed, but there were more influential personalities for whom sexual freedom was more lucrative. In my interviews often the men spoke about an active sexual life as a normal part of a life of young people and they framed this as an integral part of the youth experience. For example, one interviewee, when I asked how he got in to Orfeo, claimed that it was “through a girl [and] then [I] had sexual intercourse with all the “pretty ones” and left.” However it was significantly different in the case of women. They reported very traumatic experiences. Some of them who had sexual intercourse with István Malgot claimed that it was a requirement, as on the one hand they felt that they could be expelled from the commune if they did not act according to his will, yet on the other hand, since he was an informal leader of the group, they said it was hard to resist his aura. In 2009 a movie was made by former members about Orfeo, and the focus of the documentary, unconsciously, became these traumatic experiences. One of my interviewees said that it was shocking for the males to find out how differently the life in the commune was experienced by women, and it was the only time when they managed to reveal how sexually exploitative life was for female members in the commune.

3.4. ORFEO IN THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Similarly to the global 1968 and its social and cultural movements, the Hungarian new-left based its claims on anti-bureaucracy and anti-authoritarianism. (Arrighi et.al 1989:36-37) It criticized the welfare contract of the socialist state, and its inability of putting into practice its ideological utterances. There were similar structural aspects to the Western-European new-left, like the overproduction of intellectuals, as the downturn of the post-war prosperity meant they did not

need as many intellectuals in state positions as before. Consequently, the discrepancy between shrinking opportunities and ideological claims was experienced by young people. Between 1969 and 1972, contrary to Western cultural criticism, it did produce a turn away from modernist claims and aesthetics, or the criticism of modernism because of its traditionalism. (Huyssen 1981; Balázs et. al.2009:124) The modernist morals such as ascetic work, evolutionary understanding of social development, social importance of culture and its function as a accelerator of social change, were the basis of the claims of urban new left groups. Until 1972 they worked towards being the new leaders of the socialist state, and after that, their political commitment did not change but their strategies were transformed. They claimed that in the socialist state open political work was not possible, hence cultural education had to be the tool, through which political claims and critique were mediated. The commune was not an escapist gesture, they did not leave behind the society to produce an ideal community amongst themselves, but it was a utilitarian choice, where they thought they could work more effectively towards the goal, and provided an example for a wider strata of the society.

I call the form of the critique of Orfeo, after Karl Mannheim, *utopian*. My subjects call the content of the thinking Maoist; however its main features, criticism of bureaucracy and authority, demand of democratic socialism and the claim that peasantry is the revolutionary subject, are the tools of challengers of the field. Karl Mannheim distinguishes ideologies bonded to certain social positions in time of social change. Utopian mentality is the state of mind which is “incongruous with and transcends the immediate situation” (Mannheim 1991:173) Compared to ideology, utopia is unreal in the sense that its content cannot be realized in the social structures that exist. However it is a relative term; an unrealizable form of thought from the perspective of a dominant faction of intellectuals in the struggle to form the historical reality. But utopia as a form of thought as

relational knowledge cannot be understood without “the structural situation of that social stratum which espouses them.” (Mannheim 1991:187) For Mannheim, utopia is attached as a state of mind and instrument of challenging the ruling faction of intellectuals in order to move them out from their position. He claims that intellectuals whose rise is blocked but whose socialization originates in a boom period are more likely to “adopt a prospective utopia of an ascending class.” (Mannheim 1992:153) It is less likely that their disenchantment is complete, as the *sceptics* are the ones who either became accustomed to their privileges or their rise happened in spite of the social and economic context they were embedded in. This utopian thinking is the drive of a rising intellectual sphere. My interviews and the memoirs written on the era demonstrate that among the members of the new left people with cadre and socialist intellectual origins were over-represented. (Dalos 1989; Vámos 2009; Révai 2012) Their parents' mobility was the result of either post-war development or political mobilization, and in the case of Jewish ancestors, of the promise of total assimilation and ethnic equality. Although their claims were in line with the ideology of the dominant faction it was unrealizable because of the social reality they made their claims about. Furthermore the ideology of the new left had no social basis. As I demonstrated the consolidation of late socialism started with the New Economic Mechanism in 1966, its social contract was already signed. Although in 1972 the New Economic Mechanism ended, its principles remained intact in a depoliticized way. However, austerity politics continued: informality and the second economy became an ideologically problematic but supported action of the lower strata of socialism based on fulfilling the material needs of the wider society. (Szelényi 1988)

It is very tempting to apply the theory of the field to social processes during socialist Hungary, but the actual historical and social conditions were different. However, the basic features of his methodology, i.e., agnostic relations structuring the social world, and ideological utterances

embedded in the struggle for a certain social unit, can be adapted. I would not claim that the theory of field is adaptable generally to the socialist environment, however the late 1960s and early 1970s marked a period of economic and ideological liberalization, therefore the laws of cultural production changed significantly compared to the previous period and late-socialism. If we take seriously Iván Szelényi's (Szelényi 1988) argument, then the power of individuals depended on their relation to the state, which had the capability of allocating resources for products, they found suitable within the frame of socialist art. Moreover he made a distinction between intelligentsia and cadres. The intelligentsia was the strata of intellectuals who were producing teleological knowledge but not participated in the realization of them. Cadres were those who allocated state resources, worked out and realized policies. In this framework, the field of power was identical to the state.

I call *doxa* the “[S]ystems of classification which reproduce, in their own specific logic, [...] make their specific contribution to the reproduction of the power relations of which they are the product, by securing the misrecognition, and hence the recognition, of the arbitrariness on which they are based: in the extreme case, that is to say, when there is a quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles of organization (as in ancient societies) the natural and social world appears as self-evident.” (Bourdieu 1977:164) Consequently, we can speak about a field when there is a system of mutually accepted rules and values through which the symbolic struggles for the domination of the field are mediated. In the studied period the legitimacy of the *doxa* was not questioned by oppositional or marginalized intellectuals, but rather whether the dominant fraction followed the *doxa*. Since it was not questioned during the studied period if socialism had to be the goal of social development, I can claim the *doxa* was strong. Moreover, because of the liberalization of the institutional system, funding and censorship and the strength of

the *doxa* of socialism, a relatively autonomous field was present during the studied period. In this view, the strengths of the claim, that the production of art is teleological, i.e., it directly contributes to the making of socialist society, was an asset to the cultural criticism of existing socialism in order to challenge the utterances of the dominant intellectual factions.

The purpose of “Bourdieu's field is to provide the frame for a “relational analysis”” (Calhoun et.al. 1989:5), thus this theory explains thinking or cultural products as they are the result of the social relations between certain groups and individuals. It provides a frame to identify which structural forces, pushed intellectuals in what direction in certain historical moments. (Fowler 1996:66) A “field is a space of objective relations between positions defined by their rank in the distribution of competing powers or species of capital.” (Bourdieu 1993:64) Consequently, there is a naturalization of certain values in the case of socialist cultural production because it is the socialist content of the products. However, in late-socialism, as Ákos Szilágyi writes, it is a more flexible requirement than during Stalinism. I call this socialist content the *doxa* of the field.

I would not like to deny the presence of censorship, or political causes behind the expulsion of certain groups from public spaces. But compared to Miklós Haraszti, who claims that intellectuals during socialism were closed to a *velvet prison* which satisfied their material needs but in the meantime forced them to make compromises and censor themselves, I consider the intervention of the state not to be a top-down process, though as I demonstrated, intellectuals had space for negotiations. Without doubt deviation from the mainstream thoughts was sanctioned, however the generative and unifying principle of the field is the struggle itself (Bourdieu 1995:232), and the struggle in representing and making socialist culture between 1969 and 1972 was very much present. Hence I consider the theory of field applicable to the studied period, and claim that the logic of the field was the main structuring structure of marginalization of certain intellectual

groups. Socialist criticism of socialism was present because the unquestionable structuring reality of the field was considered to be natural. The state intervened just after 1972, with this type of militancy and only in cases where the social equality was questioned as the basis of its legitimacy, or where its foreign policy was questioned.

4. CONCLUSION

My thesis analyzed an artist group, called Orfeo, and described, how it was embedded in the social cultural complex of late socialism. It reconstructed the economic and cultural reforms of the late-1960s and early-1970s called the New Economic Mechanism. This thesis demonstrated the way these reforms influenced the changes within the field of cultural production in Hungary between 1969 and 1972. Orfeo claimed that they were engaged with new-leftist thinking, however framing the ideologies Orfeo developed with emic words, or words which invoke a certain easily circumscribed bloc of ideologies, like Maoism, Stalinism etc., distorts the understanding of the practices of the group. It simplifies to already existing categories in their activities and produces an implicit comparison to other movements of 1968 in Western-Europe. Consequently my thesis was trying to avoid widening the epistemological gap of understanding intellectual thinking in Hungary. Based on archival and visual materials, such as life history interviews, the thesis reconstructed the ideologies of the group and highlighted the idiosyncrasy of the Hungarian 1968. It used the methodology of historical ethnography to study the everyday life of Orfeo. Almost all of the members were born in cadre or socialist intellectual families and considered the goal of their life to continue to work on the realization of socialism and to follow the heritage of the Communist movement. The thesis argued that this social trajectory highly determined their position in the socialist cultural production.

Based on the theory of the field of Pierre Bourdieu I claimed that during the reform between 1969 and 1972, because of political, economic and personal factors, a relative autonomy of the field of cultural production was constituted. Because of the cultural policies of the New Economic Mechanism the teleological understanding of culture was suspended; i.e., culture was no longer considered an amalgam of the socialist society and the main tool of agitation. Censorship existed,

however it was a post-production censorship, in which subsidized works which had oppositional views were only banned after they were ready or had been played several times. The *doxa*, that art had a social function and its content had to be Marxist, was still strong enough to make even the criticism of existing socialism think within the terms and ideas about real socialism. Moreover the official policies gravitated away from the ideological basis of it. Although the *doxa* was still strong, it was not being realized by state institutions, so it produced a paradoxical situation. The state could be criticized on a moral level through its very own claims and ideologies.

Leaving behind the official-oppositional distinction of intellectuals of socialism I proposed a more dynamic and relational understanding of marginal intellectual positions during the New Economic Mechanism. The main premise of the thesis was that intellectual knowledge on society can be analyzed as its producers are embedded in a certain social context. Following Karl Mannheim on the relation between social position and knowledge, I claimed that relative marginalization of an intellectual group produces certain ways the dominant thinking was challenged. The new-left of the late-1960s and early-1970s used *utopia*, as a form of knowledge, to challenge the ideologies of the state. Utopian thinking was a result of a certain acceptance of a frame of thought, but its criticism was on a moral level. It promised more within the frame of social equality but its function was to challenge the dominant faction of intellectuals. The result of the implicit austerity was that youth of the 1960s became disenchanted by the promises of the regime, since the positions which were promised to them during their education were closing down. This marginalization produced a lively leftist subculture in urban centers. However, when they were speaking about the failure of existing socialism, they elevated their epistemology on the level of ontology universalized their social position, and spoke in the name of the “suppressed of the third world” or the exploited working class.

As I described in the positionality section, there was growing interest from the side of the contemporary field of cultural production towards research on the new-left of socialism. Marginalized intellectuals in the context of the growing neo-conservative hegemony are looking for “morally-pure” examples of cultural activism. During my research I presented Orfeo to foreign and Hungarian cultural workers alike. It could be possible, since with the collapse of liberal thinking, there is a new wave that wants to frame intellectual marginalization and these intellectuals are seeking new legitimizing arguments. A new *doxa* emerged which claims that art is socially responsible, thus it should be a tool of social change. However with the emergence of the new-conservative hegemony these claims do not have their social basis in non-intellectual circles. I demonstrated in my research that claims and counterclaims about the dominated classes were barely about the object of the claim but about the social positions of intellectuals who made these claims. Intellectuals, because of the mobility of their cultural capital, which can be converted and transposed, are more mobile. Their thinking and the knowledge they produce changes in line with their position within the field and the society. Since the capability to produce knowledge that intellectuals possess is fluid enough to make it adaptable with modifications to any social context, without realizing that change was happening, my research demonstrated the necessity of intellectual self-reflection. As depressing as it may sound, but I think it is liberating, if one knows the structurally determined opportunities and its relation to one's life and intellectual trajectory. This knowledge makes it possible to make meaningful activism which is not about just gaining a dominant position within a certain field, nor a tool to challenge a dominant faction of marginal intellectuals.

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