

**CULTURE, POWER, RESISTANCE:
COUNTERSTRATEGIES IN POLISH AND HUNGARIAN
THEATER AFTER ILLIBERAL TURN**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the implementation of the new cultural policy introduced by illiberal governments of Hungary and Poland, and the reactions of theater professional towards the organizational and financial changes. In spite of a large number of existing studies which compare policies of post-2010 Hungary and post-2015 Poland, the relations between the field of state power and hegemony, and the field of theater production, have not yet been an object of comparison. The primary goals of the thesis are: firstly, an analysis of the governments' understanding of the role of theater production. And secondly, the exploration of the responses of the theater artists to the new situation, which are understood as counterstrategies. In the thesis I show how the nationalist drift of Polish and Hungarian governments cultural policies creates new elites, whose role is to ensure the reproduction of hegemony. By examining theater institutions such as Krétakör, Trafó, The Polish Theater in Wroclaw and National Old Theater) I also illustrate strategies of negotiation, protest, institutionalization, and survival. I argue that while in Hungary those strategies were mostly unsuccessful, in Poland institutionalization and self-organization led to a rise of the counterpublic.

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Introduction

In October 2015 at Teatr Powszechny [The Popular Theater], Warsaw, Árpád Schilling, acclaimed Hungarian director and leader of Krétakör company showed one of the last performances of the group – Loser. In the play, Schilling performs a theater director who lost all state funds for his company because of his public activity and critique of the government. This autobiographical show asks questions about the autonomy of art, artists' responsibility as public figures, and strategies which members of cultural elites choose in order to sustain their activity in a changing political environment. Warsaw audience reacted keenly to the performance, having in mind the pre-election announcements of the new conservative government of the Prawo and Sprawiedliwość [Law and Justice] party. During discussion after the show, Schilling warned the public that changes in culture policy, which took place in Hungary, might happen in Poland.

Since 2010 Fidesz introduced organizational and financial changes in the Hungarian cultural field, which affected the situation of different theater organizations. Accusations of “ideological” or “irrational” art successfully deprived some groups of state funding (Nagy and Szarvas 2016; Tompa 2017). The funding cuts were accompanied by legal changes regarding both public and independent artistic institutions (Tompá 2017, Kristof 2017a) Moreover, several directors of public theaters were replaced by state and local authorities in order to form the new elite under political patronage (Kristof 2017b).

Similarities such as cuts in funding and appointing new directors can be seen in post-2015 Poland, since Law and Justice party won the elections. Moreover, the Polish minister of culture reorganized the logic behind distribution of public funds, which now are directed to traditional and nationalist organizations. In acclaimed theaters in Wrocław and Kraków directors unfamiliar to the theater community were appointed.

In response to institutional and financial changes, theater organizations and individuals came up with short- and long-term interventions, as well as successful and unsuccessful counterstrategies, which I analyze in this thesis. My main research interests are counterstrategies, not limited to protests, but understood also as coping mechanisms for changes in state cultural policies of both post-socialist countries. How did different independent theater groups or local- and state-run theaters react to those changes?

The thesis draws on four cases of theaters, two from each country: Krétakör and Trafó from Hungary and The Polish Theater in Wrocław [Teatr Polski we Wrocławiu] and The National Old Theater in Cracow [Narodowy Stary Teatr w Krakowie]. These four cases are intentionally selected in order to, firstly, show the effect that the implementation of cultural policies of Hungarian and Polish governments have on different organizational companies – from independent, like Krétakör, to state-run, like National Old Theater. Secondly, to manifest how the members and leaders of chosen theaters used at some stage a wide range of counterstrategies: from negotiations, through protests to establishing new institutions.

The thesis compares cultural policies of two East Central European countries after the illiberal shift, and reactions of theater artists towards the changes which the policies caused. Comparison of the political situation in post-2010 Hungary and post-2015 Poland has been widely conducted in scholarship in both social and political sciences (Borbély 2018, Rech 2018, Rydliński 2018) as well as in the media (Buras 2018, Kingsley 2018, Pogany 2018). Drawing on cases of changes in judiciary systems, hostile attitudes toward migration, and seizure of public media, authors of those articles and papers consider both countries as illiberal states.

However, the recent struggles between theater producers and the states, have not been a subject of comparative sociological analysis. To fill in this gap, I compare recent Hungarian

and Polish cultural policies, their implementation in the field of theater and responses of theater institutions towards changes.

Firstly, the thesis shows the relations between the field of theater production and state as a social actor. Secondly, it reveals how artists' decisions on counterstrategies are based on the organizational form of the institution, resources and the symbolic capital of theater leaders. Further, differences in outcomes of the strategies depend on ability to mobilize supporters, like the audience and broader public, and solidarity within the cultural field, which is stronger in Poland than in Hungary. In spite of the fact that many of the approaches might be considered unsuccessful, some of them created opportunity for counterhegemonic discourses and rise of counterpublics (Warner 2002).

The thesis is organized into four parts. In the remaining part of this introduction, I present the methodology of the research and reviews and develop the theoretical framework for the analysis of the illiberal shift, cultural policies and their relation to hegemony, and strategies of resistance. In this section I draw from the literature on political regimes, sociology of culture, theory of hegemony and social movements. The first chapter compares recent Hungarian and Polish cultural policies, and their implementation in the field of theater. I use official speeches and manifestos of the ruling parties, as exemplifications of their cultural policies, and trace the implemented changes on the examples of four different institutions. The second chapter discusses and compares the empirical findings of the research on resistance strategies in theaters in Hungary and Poland. Finally, the last part of this thesis concludes the argumentation.

1.1 Methodology

In order to study the cultural policies of Hungary and Poland, I apply discourse analysis to Viktor Orbán's speech given in 2009 at the village of Kötscse (Orbán 2009), and Law and

Justice party's manifesto for 2015 elections (Law and Justice 2014). The reason I compare the speech to the written manifesto is the fact that Fidesz since that time did not produce an official document relating to cultural policy (Bozóki 2016). Conversely, the Law and Justice printed manifesto is the main source of the party's view on relation between culture and politics.

As part of the exploration of theaters' strategies of resistance to the changes, during the research I conducted nine in-depth interviews with theater experts and leaders in Hungary and in Poland. Those materials allow me to reconstruct processes of changes in the field of culture and theater in post-2010 Hungary and post-2015 Poland. In addition, the personal stories of people involved in the struggles has been the main material for analyzing the counterstrategies.

In the thesis I focus on two Hungarian cases: Krétakör and Trafó and two Polish cases: The Polish Theater in Wrocław and the National Old Theater in Cracow. I decided to choose those examples for two reasons. Firstly, all of the institutions were strongly influenced by the post-2010 Hungarian and post-2015 Polish state cultural policies. As a reaction to the attacks of the local and state authorities, cuts in funding and the appointment of new directors, these institutions came up with short- and long-terms strategies. Secondly, the organizational and administrative characters of the institutions (from independent to local- or state-owned) show the whole spectrum of the reactions of different artists to the changes: from negotiation to protests. Moreover, all the examples are characterized by the experts and media in both countries as artistically significant (e.g. Tompa 2013, 2014, 2017; Mrozek 2015).

Personal narratives of leaders of these institutions are the primary sources of information. Having in mind that such materials give space for personal motivations or emotions of the speakers, I supplement them with analyses of documents and press materials. Additionally, interviews conducted with leaders of other theaters, which are not used as main examples in the thesis, particularly serve to describe the issue of solidarity within the field of theater as one of the main resources in resistance strategies.

I juxtapose the cases from Poland and from Hungary to conduct a paired comparison (Tarrow 2010). As Tarrow claims, countries of similar history, which went through similar processes at the same time and are located in the same area, are frequent choices for paired comparison. Gisselquist (2014) adds that such case selection is natural due to the fact that countries in the same region may share many characteristics. Structured by similar historical processes and political contexts, being in the same area of Central and Eastern Europe, Hungary and Poland share some similarities in approaches to culture, and relations between the field of cultural production and the state. Moreover, the theater systems in both countries are based on state patronage. Additionally, the paired comparison allows for causal-process analysis, with greater descriptive depth (Slater and Ziblatt 2013), which might be the base for further methods of study, such as discourse analysis.

To summarize, the parallel and reflective use of different research methods, from the discursive analysis of official texts and of personal statements in interviews to paired comparison of counterstrategies, helps me show the complementary nature of recent state cultural policies in Hungary and in Poland, and the theaters' reactions toward changes.

1.2 Theoretical approaches

In order to construct the theoretical framework for the analysis of Hungarian and Polish state cultural policies and reactions to its implementation in the field of theater, in this section I draw on the scholarship on recent political character of both states, cultural policy, Gramscian theory of hegemony and social movements literature. With this overview I describe the illiberal turn, its relation to cultural policies of Hungary and Poland, the role of theaters and culture in both states, and counterstrategies taken by theater artists.

1.2.1 Illiberal shift

Hungarian and Polish theater makers should be considered as actors in the field of cultural production (Bourdieu 1993), which interacts and is shaped by the larger field of power and state. Thus, the political organization of state policies should be described and analyzed as the background and backstage of actors' mobilization. I propose to consider the current Hungarian and Polish political systems as authoritarian regimes.

In the analysis of current political regimes in Eastern Europe, scholars use various terms and concepts. Post-Eastern Bloc countries, like Poland and Hungary are described as “illiberal democracies” (Zakaria 1997), “managed illiberal democracies” (Szelenyi 2015, Scillag and Szelenyi 2015) or “electoral or competitive autocracies” (Levitsky and Way 2000, 2010). However, the most common categorization based on the periodization of capitalism and the relation between states and the free market leads to two concepts in describing the regional regimes: “authoritarian neoliberalism” (Bruff 2014, Tansel 2017) and “authoritarian statism” (Bekmen 2014; Poulantzas 1928; Fabry and Dale 2018). Both terms emphasize the authoritarian character of the governance, but also the neoliberal¹ logic which can be understood as a driving force of state policies, and which has an effect on different public and private spheres, like healthcare or education, that the market reasoning has not yet mastered (Harvey 2005).

As Matthew DJ Ryan (2019) shows, “neoliberalism” as the term has been widely contested after the 2008 economic crisis. Scholars came up with the ideas of more adequate concepts such as “authoritarian neoliberalism” (Bruff 2014, Tansel 2017), which embodies the change in the nature of contemporary capitalist states (DJ Ryan 2019). Tansel (2017) writes

¹ David Harvey defines ‘neoliberalism’ as a “theory of political economic practices”, through which “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills” (2007:2). The best facilitator for this is free market and strong property rights (Harvey 2005).

that after the crisis of 2008 some states in order to preserve the neoliberal project shifted towards more authoritarian state form, which could be called “authoritarian neoliberalism.” This form of a regime ‘increasingly relies upon (1) coercive state practices that discipline, marginalize and criminalize oppositional social forces and (2) the judicial and administrative state apparatuses which limit the avenues in which neoliberal policies can be challenged’ (Tansel 2017:2). “Authoritarian neoliberalism” secures the reproduction of itself through the “intensified state control over every sphere of social life” (Poulantzas 1978:203–204). As such, the logic of this system is also spread among the field of theater production, which like other spheres is controlled by governments through policies or reactions.

While most scholars agree on authoritarian and neoliberal character of Hungarian government’s policies (Fabry and Dale 2018; Fabry 2019), it is hard to find such reference to Polish government of Law and Justice party. As such, I propose to consider ‘authoritarian statism’ as other framework of the analysis of the illiberal shift in Poland.

Bekmen (2014) in the definition of “authoritarian statism” describes a feature of a gradual transformation of state apparatuses, which has critical effects on the functioning of liberal democracy. Among them are political parties, the parliament, the judiciary and some sections of bureaucracy, which empower the technocratic-minded elite (Bekmen 2014:47). Those state apparatuses, among them the cultural institutions, strengthened by the ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 2011), are used in the drift towards the far-right (Fabry 2019:174). This drift is characterized by the nationalistic discourse, its relation to the Church (“ideological pressure”, see Tompa 2017), and the rise of the new elite (Kristof 2017a, Kurz 2019). Moreover, it reflects on Orbán’s or Kaczyński’s approach towards culture, which is “based on a reluctance to view culture as an autonomous, multi-colored, free organism.” (Bozóki 2016:106, see Kurz 2019)

In this understanding, the field of cultural production can be seen as a potential place of counter-hegemonic narratives and critique of neoliberal logic. Thus, for a state which used different methods to secure the reproduction of ideology and hegemony, culture might be a threat for the state's official narratives and policies.

1.2.2 Cultural policy

Adorno claims that when one speaks about the culture, they should also speak about the administration and its intentions (Adorno 1992:93). The cultural policy is one of the main concepts which describe the relation between the state and the field of culture.

In order to understand the Hungarian and Polish shift toward the centralization of cultural institutions (Kurz 2019), I propose to describe cultural policy as sets of “activities, processes, artifacts, distributions and experiences which governments on national, regional and local levels have decided to include in a politically defined ‘cultural sector’” (Vestheim 2012). Although cultural policy might be seen as not the most important activity of the government, some scholars claim that it is “undoubtedly a central feature of the contemporary public sphere” (Fabiani 2014: 218; see McGuigan 2004, 2011). In the Western (Anglo-American literature) the culture as arts is seen as a “structural feature of modern social orders” (Goldfarb 2005: 57), which has a relative autonomy from other structures of public powers, and as such is independent from economical or state politics. However, in many European countries, and especially in the former Soviet Bloc, cultural institutions are funded and managed by the public authority, which controls and funds the cultural activities, and shapes them in the required ways. As such they are important part of general politics.

András Bozóki (2016) tries to describe the post-2010 Hungarian cultural policy as inseparable from Viktor Orbán’s concept of “power and symbolic politics” (Bozóki: 2016:89). One of its aspect is Orbán’s policy of pleasing far-right voters. Accusations towards Robert

Alfoldi, the former director of the National Theater, were raised mostly by the Jobbik party. Furthermore, Bozóki claims that culture was firstly being instrumentalized by the government in order to promote “state interest” or “national interest” defined by the ruling party. Bozóki’s paper also highlights possible theoretical approaches to the Hungarian politics. The first approach emphasizes the clientelist system of the ruling party (2016:109) and reflects on the situation in theater institutions. The second, on the nationalist character of the cultural policy, which devotes resources to cultural activities which deal with tradition or history.

Thus, the discourse about the cultural policy in Hungary and in Poland is related to the political activity of the government, and serves the aims of the state’s external and internal politics. “It would mean that the nationalist and conservative cultural production satisfy the needs of the new elites and constructs the identity, ideology and culture of them” state Nagy and Szarvas (2017). In this term, the field of cultural production can be seen as a tool of the reproduction of hegemony.

Similarities can be seen in the paper of Iwona Kurz (2019) about the cultural policy of the Law and Justice government. Kurz writes about the importance of historical aspects of cultural activity of the Ministry of Culture. With the relation to nationalism and to Catholic religion, she proposes to call it “national [narodowa] cultural policy.” In her view, the government wants to control the whole cultural field, even though the legal basis prevents it. The issue of administrative centralization of institutions and grants, which is missing in Bozóki’s or Tompa’s descriptions of the cultural policy of Fidesz, is the important aspect of Polish cultural policy of Law and Justice government (see Kurz 2019).

1.2.3 Hegemony and ideology

As the examples from this research, and recent changes in the field of theater show, some actions, repertoires or individuals, who lead or used to lead theaters are perceived as a threat to the hegemonic narrative theory, or as a promotion of leftist values. This took place in the National Theater in Budapest, but it also happened in Poland. Such accusations were targeted at The Popular Theater in Warsaw because it staged Olivier Frljic's play *The Curse*. The accusations entailed different effects – from far-right protest in front of the theater, to the cuts of public funding for those festivals which staged the controversial play. In the National Old Theater, the former director was not reappointed due to his too critical artistic and political views.

I propose to look at those struggles can as fights for the artistic vision and autonomy of the theaters and their artistic choices. Taste is not based on the individual judgments but is fundamentally social in nature (Becker 1982, Bourdieu 1984). As Temper argues, “claims against cultural expression are social because grievances arise out of particular social contexts; get articulated through conversation with others, mobilized by organizations or groups, reported in press; and defended, attacked, amplified, or deflected by fellow citizens” (Tepper 2011).

Moreover, the taste of certain groups requires from their members to react when art mixes categories, which are normally distinct – such as the entertaining role of the theater and politics or religion. This notion, in the spirit of Mary Douglas's (1966) concept of purity and danger, shows why the authorities and state protested against critical theater and changed the theater directors in order to promote conservative, traditional art. Steven Dubin, who writes about arts conflicts in the 1980s, claims that the notion of an “offense” [against one's taste] is a part of the collective definitions, not individual preferences (Dubin 1992). It entails the

opportunity to think about the struggle between members of theater and authorities as a cultural struggle, which belongs to broader field of social relations.

I propose to consider changes in the field of Hungarian and Polish theater as a struggle over gaining symbolic power. Bourdieu (1991:166) defines the symbolic power as “a power of constructing reality”, which gives a meaning of the world for different social actors. The symbolic system within the society is political in the sense, that it is a system, which stands behind the reproduction of the social order through struggles “over monopoly of power to make people to see and believe, to get them to know and recognize to impose the legitimate definition of the division of the social world” (Bourdieu 1991:221). This division in the politics of the illiberal governments is based on the division between us and them, Hungarian or Polish and some foreign powers, which would like to shape ‘our’ national culture. The division entails also the issue of recognition of the legitimacy of the dominated culture (Bourdieu and Passeron 1997:41). However, as Mander (1987) argues the recognition of the legitimacy of the dominant culture, at the same time shows the “the illegitimacy of the dominated cultures”. This is an attempt of ruling parties to show the liberal, leftist artists activities and production as those who should not be supported by the state.

Moreover, Bourdieu shows on the examples of the scientific field (1975:19) how winners are awarded the insignia. I propose to consider the artistic field as the competitive struggle for a monopoly of artistic authority. In the recent cases in Hungarian and Polish theaters, the insignia were awarded towards new directors or institutions, where money or symbolic power strengthened their position within the field of cultural production.

I analyze the Hungarian and Polish state cultural policies and responses of the theaters through the relation of power and culture. As such, cultural policy is a terrain of hegemony. The conflict, which lies in the center of hegemony, produces different challenges for the theater sector and the governments themselves (Bennet 1998). Hegemony is secured by governments

through control over education, religion, advertising or art. Domination over culture is then the field of struggle, where the state is dedicated to the task of rising “the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class” (Gramsci et al. 1971:258). The changes in leaderships of theaters and new models of distribution of funding serve as a tool for the building the new elites. Furthermore, hegemony is not only sustained by the state, but also by some of the independent social actors in the field, such as the theater association lead by Attila Vidnyánszky in Hungary, or obscure directors in theaters in Wrocław and Kraków, which in the moment of crises identifies opportunities to replace the incumbent elites (Fligstein and McAdam 2012).

1.2.4 Strategies

Culture, power and resistance, as Bennett (1998:167) claims, are three terms widely discussed together in the field of cultural and social studies. In the Gramscian understanding the field of culture is constructed through the struggle between two powers. On one side is the state with the hegemonic power and ideology, which uses the ideological apparatuses of both state and civil societies. The other side is the counter-hegemonic power, which comes from the subordinate classes (Bennet 1998:69). I propose to look into the situation of different theaters and groups which opted for different strategies and tactics as a response to hegemonic cultural policies of Hungary and Poland.

Some of the groups I researched have been the object of social inquiry. The case of the Polish Theater in Wrocław was the object of research conducted in 2017 by Bartek Lis (2017). The report from the research focuses on two cases of self-organizations: the Underground Polish Theater and the Audience of Polish Theater in Wrocław. The author focuses on those aspects as the examples of self-organization within the field of culture. This strategy is worth

of being seen as ‘counterpublic’ (Fraser 1990, Warner 2005), “where members of subordinate social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990:123).

Counterstrategies of theater groups in contemporary Poland and Hungary are connected to resistance. Theaters did not limit themselves to one strategy, but they tried using different ones. The important concept in addressing these issues is the term “repertoire of contention” coined by Charles Tilly (Tilly 1978, 2008). He describes “the whole set of means [a group] has for making claims of different kinds on different individuals or groups” (1986:4). As a useful metaphor to structure analysis (Traugott 1995:3), the “repertoire of contention” shows an array of tactics, which were taken by different theaters, such as negotiations, boycotts, petitions, protests, or establishing new institution such as the Underground Polish Theater or the Audience of the Polish Theater in Warsaw. I propose to look at them as an organized and sustained effort of a community of individuals, groups and organizations, which attempt to resist social change (Neidhardt and Rucht 1991:450).

The second chapter of this thesis is devoted to the analysis of recent Hungarian and Polish cultural policies and its implementation in the field of theater. Through the sources, I explore how do the Polish and Hungarian governments envision the role of art and what they value as a positive and negative contribution to national culture. This serves as a political and social background for the following part of this study.

The third chapter compares and examines the activity and agency of the social actors, who reacted to the changes in the state cultural policies. I look into those strategies in relation to the cultural policy in order to explore whether artists and institutions have remained active actors of the cultural field and the public sphere. To what extend the field of cultural production is able to become free, and how can this freedom arrange the public space alternative from social and political practices? “Cultural freedom is a base for political freedom”, states

Goldfarb (2005:57). I propose to explore whether actions taken by the independent theater companies can contribute to the broader field of political actions and public discourse.

Chapter 1. Culture Policies in post-2010 Hungary and post-2015 Poland.

Before I analyze the counterstrategies of Hungarian and Polish theater professionals, I devote this chapter to the analysis of recent Hungarian and Polish state cultural policies and its effects on theaters. In the first part, I focus on governments' perspectives on culture. Although on the governmental level there are no official documents or strategies for cultural policy, I propose to analyze Viktor Orbán's 2009 speech, and Law and Justice manifesto for the 2015 elections as the main sources that reveal governmental visions of culture and the role of cultural elites. In the second part of this chapter, I discuss the implementation of cultural policies and its repercussions on the examples of four institutions: Krétakör and Trafó from Budapest, Hungary, and The Polish Theater in Wrocław, and The National Old Theater in Cracow, Poland.

Cultural policies, understood as the relationship between the cultural and political fields, have four dimensions: ideological, normative, economic and organizational (Vestheim 2012:497). In order to analyze a cultural policy, Vestheim proposes four aspects which are important to consider: (1) aims, norms and ideologies; (2) institutional structures, agents and interest; (3) access and participation; (4) and distribution of economic resources (2012:496). Thus, I propose to firstly describe the organizational and financial conditions of theaters in Hungary and in Poland. Secondly, I analyze the ideology and aims of both governments, which resonate in the field of public theaters in both countries.

1.1 Theater systems in Hungary and in Poland

Cultural funding systems in Europe are based on two models: the “patron” and the “architect” (Hillman-Chartrand and McCaughey 1989). The patron model is based on the so-called arm’s length principle, when a government matches or otherwise supports independent and private institutions. In this system the patrons might be also private donors or organizations. The architect model is based on the strong position of the authorities - usually the minister of culture and/or local authorities. In this model decisions are made on the bureaucratic level and they reflect the political guidelines and, ideally, also on the needs of a social public. However, this model also entails the threat of instrumental use of culture and art in political goals which might decrease the autonomy of cultural institutions such as theaters.²

In Hungary and in Poland both systems are in use. The patron model is a foundation of the grant application system designed both for independent cultural institutions and state- or local authorities-owned theaters. The architect model is responsible for the day-to day activity of state or local-owned theaters, which allows them to pay constant expenditure.

The Hungarian public theater system is based on state-funded theaters, run mostly by local municipalities (Kristof 2017a). Local authorities have the right to appoint directors (alongside the ministry responsible for culture, which after 2010 has been the Ministry of Human Resources). This structure is financed mostly through the state support. Additional funding comes from ticket sale revenues and corporate tax breaks. In Hungary, the production of new performances is supported also through the National Cultural Fund based on theater experts’ evaluation of grants applications. In the current situation, where members of the Fidesz government rule in a large number of cities and county governments, the theater field is strongly dominated by the party’s political vision of culture (Tompá 2017).

² For the analysis of advantages and disadvantages of both systems see e.g. Lewandowska 2017.

Polish public theaters constitute a network of 119 state-owned artistic institutions across the country. Three of them are owned by the Ministry of Culture, and the rest are organized by the regional authorities (voivodships) or municipalities. Some of them, such as the Polish Theater in Wrocław, are co-run by the Ministry and the regional authorities. According to the Act on Organizing and Running Cultural Activity local authorities play mostly an administrative role (they focus on economic performance auditing; however, they have the right to appoint a new director after consultations with the Ministry of Culture). Furthermore, the authorities cannot interfere in the institutions' program or artistic decisions. However, the authority's expenditure on theaters covers mostly operational costs, due to which theaters very often need to apply for Funds of the Ministry of Culture in order to produce new performances. As a result, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage can be seen as the major source of "aims, norms and ideologies" (Vestheim 2012).

In summary, both organizational and financial aspects of theaters in Hungary and in Poland are based mostly on the architect model, in which the state molds the field of theater production. For this reason, public institutions dominate over independent structures, which can rely mostly on state or private grant systems (the patronal model). However, the state can shape cultural fields through both funding models. Depriving independent companies like Krétakör of grants can easily suppress these institutions. Although public theaters are independent from the market, and their funding is ensured in contracts with organizers, very often the institutional subsidy might be insufficient in order to produce new performances. Consequently, as the history of The Polish Theater in Wrocław shows, director de-leverages the institution, giving the authority an argument for dismissal or/and change of theater leadership. The distribution of economic resources, therefore, is a significant source of new cultural policies implementation.

1.2 Hungarian and Polish cultural policies

Following the parliamentary elections of 2010 in Hungary and of 2015 in Poland, the new right-wing governments introduced new approaches to cultural institutions and to the field of cultural production. On a discursive level, policies of both governments moved in a conservative and nationalist direction. This move entails a shift in the organizational and funds distribution system, and changes in leaderships of art institutions.

Two programmatic texts from both countries illustrate the vision of the role of cultural institutions. The first one is Orbán's speech from 2009 given in a village of Kötscse. The second is a political manifesto published by Law and Justice before the 2015 parliamentary elections. Orbán's speech has been characterized (Bozóki 2016, Kristof 2017a) as one of the most important speeches related to the cultural field in contemporary Hungary. In Poland, except from some interviews made by different politicians, cultural institutions were not a main topic during the parliamentary campaign. The manifesto of the ruling party, which devotes 4,5 pages out of 168 to culture is, however, the main document which concerns the field of artistic production. Both sources show the discourse and the vision of culture of the governments that stand behind them. I analyze these texts because they are the main sources of knowledge about both the parties' visions of the theaters' position and role in a society.

Orbán in his speech and Law and Justice party in their manifesto devoted significant attention to the critique of the former governments' activities, and the elites that supported it. In order to deprive them from power, the politicians expressed the need to establish a new artistic and intellectual elite, which would benefit from the new cultural policies, but also ensure the necessary changes in the field of art.

Orbán's speech in Kötscse was given during a meeting with the pro-party intellectuals and artists. In the speech, Orbán accuses former elites of supporting the bankrupted politicians

who governed. He claims those cultural elites should feel responsible for the intellectual and financial bankruptcy of the country. He diminishes the achievements of former authorities and announces the appointment of the new elites, who were not recognized or represented as a cultural elite. Moreover, he accuses some “Left” which was responsible for creating the politics, procedures and governmental structures after 1990, “to use it for its own purposes.” He calls cultural and intellectual elites “the hidden society” - dependent on the funds and state subsidies, which will ensure votes for the left.

Similarities can be seen in the Law and Justice party’s manifesto. The authors accuse the governments ruling since 1989 of promoting neoliberal values. As they say, promoted neoliberal individualization entails the destruction of the national consciousness in the cultural field; art works and events too often attacked the national “tradition”. Polish government uses the discourse, which differs and stratifies the audience and the society. Politicians in Poland and Hungary exclude the artistic values of some projects that are perceived as a threat to tradition and hegemony and they promote nationalist and historical aspects of culture (Bozóki 2016, Kurz 2019).

Orbán’s and Kaczyński’s attack is focused on the left and ‘liberal elites’, which Kaczyński refers to as the realization of “the plan of the long march inspired by communist philosopher Antonio Gramsci” (Pawłowski 2014). Orbán and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość politicians use the terms of “hidden society” “liberal elites” or “Cultural Marxism” as an intellectual and artistic threat with which they have to fight with. Those terms are commonly used in the discourse of the far-right movements in Europe and United States (see Jamin 2018). As a counterbalance to those elites, Orbán proposes to establish or give the opportunity to a new elite which will ensure the promotion of shared values and sustainability of his hegemony. I propose to look at this proposition through the concept of strategic action fields. Fligstein and McAdam (2012) argue that in the situation of crises organized actors might identify or

construct the opportunities that provide the possibility of displacing the incumbent elite. In this situation, new cultural elites are not imposed from above, but they also rise from below, by actors who want to swap the incumbent elite. Thus, the speech in front of intellectuals is an incentive for intellectuals to become agents in the process of building the new social and political order of Hungary.

Orbán's and Law and Justice's cultural policies favor nationalist values. According to the Hungarian prime minister "in our community, if someone really wanted to create, they could always count on our [state's] support." This community of citizens of Hungary, as Orbán explains, share the values of the "Hungarian quality of life" characterized by commitment to family values, state, church and to what is constantly repeated in the political discourse for the past couple of years, to the reluctance to migrants. The role of the government is to "preserve the cultural quality that distinguishes us from all other national communities," claims Orbán (2009).

Kaczyński's vision of culture is based on the historical and nationalist values connected to Christian foundations. The state should finance high art which focuses on the historical uniqueness of Polish culture. Moreover, Kaczyński accuses former governments of funding "pseudo-artistic" or blasphemic activities. Preserving the role of the Catholic Church is one point of cultural policy according to this political vision (see Kurz, Adamiecka 2015).

Polish and Hungarian cultural policies share a common understanding of the uniqueness of their own culture, and national and traditional values. According to Csillag and Szelenyi (2015), the popular ideology of post-communist traditionalism and conservatism is used to legitimize illiberal democratic capitalism. This ideology is focused around five characteristics: (1) social conservatism, (2) populism, which inspires social movements around conservative issues (culture wars, accusations against former 'leftist' elites and appointment of new ones), (3) differentiation between those who 'deserve' and 'undeserve' (4) anti-immigration and (5)

patriotism and religion. All of these features can be seen as part of cultural policy. In Hungary those values are represented by the triad: ‘patria, church and the (traditional) family’ (Csillag and Szelenyi 2015), whereas in Poland it is mostly ‘Hellenic, Latin and -primarily- Christian’ fundamentals (Lewandowska 2018).

Cultural policy in the eyes of Orbán and Kaczyński, is a part of the broader political field, and it is not autonomous from other aspects of their policies. Speaking to the new elites, Orbán announced the start of the “new era”, in which the role of intellectuals is to cooperate with the government and to avoid the mistakes made by the former Hungarian elite. This will lead to new conditions of the “calm state of mind, creative creation and beautiful noble life” (Orbán 2009). The role of the leaders is to bring people and groups who create and inspire cultures, and channel their activity. The elite’s role is to control art, as well as mass culture, so it can serve the interest of the Hungarian nation in Fidesz’s understanding.

Both Orbán’s and Kaczyński’s understanding of the role of culture has the goal of constructing reality and social order which will be based on conformism, where cultural producers will be the guarantors and the legitimacy of social order. In Durkheim’s word, it is “a homogenous conception of time, space, number and cause, one which makes it possible for different intellects to reach agreement.” Bourdieu (1991) calls it the gnoseological order, an order of knowledge shared among participants. The cultural policy and art in this sense are important, because they are a symbolic power responsible for a construction of social reality.

1.3 State culture policies and theaters: four cases

The discourse analysis discussed above points out to the three aspects of the cultural policy of Fidesz in Hungary and Law and Justice in Poland. These are: conservative and nationalist character of the policies, the agency of elites and policy’s role as the symbolic power in broader

political projects. After the elections in 2010 in Hungary and in 2015 in Poland such policies were implemented through changes of law and in organization structures of institutions, and by redirecting financial resources to loyal institutions (Tompa 2017, Kristof 2017a, Kurz 2019).

The question arises: how did these new governmental policies impact the theater world specifically? Although many theaters in Hungary and in Poland have not been affected by changes in leaderships or deprived of funding immediately after the elections (with the exception of independent Hungarian theaters), the official discourses of politicians affect the situation of the whole field. To study the implementation of the cultural policy in the field of theater institutions I draw on four cases: Krétakör, Trafó in Hungary and The Polish Theater in Wrocław and The National Theater in Cracow, in Poland.

1.3.1 Krétakör

Árpád Schilling established the theater group Krétakör in the 1990s. He quickly became a famous director, even abroad where he and his group toured. The group was created as an NGO and its direct funding was independent from the public system. The Soros Foundation was its main funder. After 2002, Schilling petitioned the Ministry of Culture to allocate public funding to private theater groups (Schilling. Interview 2019). The new grant system for the independent scene was implemented. The group started receiving funds each year, permitting them to hire staff, rent permanent space – the office, and produce more performances. After a few years their budget became comparable with that of small public theaters (Schilling).

Schilling's position within the field of theater in Hungary can be described as incumbent (Bourdieu 1993): he was a well-recognized theater director, a successful leader of an independent theater group with success outside Hungary, and as such he can be seen as the dominant player in the theater field. He used his dominant symbolic position and persuaded

the government to reorganize the funding system, further establishing himself as a regular, legitimate player. “The [grant] system [for independent theaters] was established because of us,” says Schilling (Interview 2019). Schilling calls those times a “golden age” of the theater. The term “golden age” is used by other people I interviewed when they describe the period between 2005 and 2010 or 2015 both in Hungary and in Poland. During this time the funding systems were expanded and stabilized and allowed the groups and theaters to produce shows regularly. In 2008 the the Hungarian parliament voted in favor of the Performative art law, which guaranteed 10% of state subsidies for theater to independent companies. It entailed the promise of professionalization of the field of independent cultural production (Tompá 2013). After the election in April 2010, Orbán’s government withheld one third of the subsidy (around 1.5 million EUR), and later in 2011 abolished the Law, partly at the request of Attila Vidnyánszky’s Theater Association. As Schilling claims, the association opposed to funding the independent scene with public money, arguing that it was unfair competition for state and municipal institutions.

The position of Krétakör subsequently declined. The company received less and less founding, and he experienced increasing difficulty in covering productions costs for his theater and pedagogical activities. After a period of political activism, in 2015 he terminated the company and later left Hungary.

1.3.2 Trafó

Trafó was established in 1992 as an art institution by economist and manager György Szabó. First sources of funding for Trafó were governmental and municipal grant systems. However, the scarcity of funding made it difficult to produce plays. In 2002 Trafó became a theater: its main organizer was the Budapest municipality and as a consequence, its budget increased from

120 million forints to 220 million per year. It quickly became one of the main Hungarian performance spaces. Without a permanent group of performers, it worked as a production hub for theater as well as for dance and visual arts. As Szabó claims (Interview 2019), the legal transformation into a theater allowed for funding from the theater budget section, which is higher than those for cultural centers.

That time, the director of Trafó György Szabó was a prominent player in the Hungarian theater field, but soon he lost his privileged position. As the founder of one of the very vivid cultural institution in Hungary, he cooperated with Árpád Schilling and Kornél Mundruczó, two of the most famous Hungarian directors abroad. Moreover, as an expert he advised the government on funding issues. In 2011 the situation changed. Firstly, he was dismissed from the professional board of advisors, which oversaw the independent theater and dance company funding system (Jászay 2013). Later in 2013 the new director of Trafó József Nagy was appointed by the Budapest municipality. Surprisingly, after a few months Szabó came back to Trafó to work as the advisor and manager for Nagy. When he resigned after a year, the former artistic director during Nagy's term Beata Barda was appointed as an executive director. Again, Szabó become the artistic director. The authorities would not let him work as the main director, treating him as too controversial person (Tompá 2017).

The case of dismissal Szabó from the office of Trafó executive director, shows how political actors and cultural producers maneuver and struggle in pursuit of desirable resources (Bourdieu 1993). It also shows the outcome of the negotiations and silent agreements (Tompá 2017), which are one of the counterstrategies that I describe in the following chapter.

1.3.3 The Polish Theater in Wrocław

The Polish Theater in Wrocław for the past years was one of the most important and successful in Poland. In 2006 Krzysztof Mieszkowski, a manager, was appointed as its director. He decided to build a public theater, understood as a cultural hub (Rudzki. Interview 2019). Besides performances, the theater organized meetings, talks with writers and artists, small performances with a free entrance, pedagogical group and workshops for teachers. This understanding of theater as a cultural hub, according to Piotr Rudzki, the literary director of the theater, reflected the understanding of the role of the public theater as a place through which different activities contribute to the development of the public sphere, and affect its shape (Klaić 2012:6).

During Mieszkowski's two terms (until 2016) as the director, the theater had to face several problems. Blaming him for the theater's financial ills and impending bankruptcy, the local municipality tried to dismiss the director from office. The reason behind the debt were day-to day expenditures, which were not enough for producing performances and other activities. Despite this, the theater produced several most important and successful performances during the Mieszkowski's terms. By many it was called as the "golden decade" of the theater (Zaręba).

In 2016 the theater produced the play *The Girl and the Death*. The information about hiring two pornographic film actors for the play leaked to the media and received huge attention. As a response, the Minister of Culture from the Law and Justice party tried to censor the play. Consequently, Mieszkowski was not reappointed to the office. The call was put out, and the new director was appointment by a committee chosen by the local authorities and the Ministry of Culture in 2016. It begins the long-lasting struggle in and outside the theater, which will be described and analyzed in chapter 3.

1.3.4 The National Old Theater in Cracow

On November 14, 2013, dozens of people interrupted the performance *To Damascus* directed by Jan Klata, the director of the National Theater in Cracow, with shouts and whistles, accusing actors and director of a salacious performance. The same groups and journalists protested against the play *Un-Divine Comedy. Remains* directed by Olivier Frljić. They opposed the performance about Polish anti-Semitism. The newspaper described fragments taken from the scenario such as singing the Polish national anthem to the melody of *Deutschland, Deutschland uber alles* (Kęskrawiec 2013). As a result, the Minister of Culture in 2017, in the end of the term of Jan Klata, decided to appoint a new director through a competition which was won by the obscure cultural journalist - Marek Mikos. This started a period of struggle within the theater, and responses both from public and actors working in the theater.

The National Old Theater is one of the four theaters (together with the National Theater in Warsaw, The Great Theater-the National Opera and the Royal Opera) run by the Ministry of Culture. Moreover, the legend of the theater and its history put it on the map of the theater field in Poland as one of the most important nationwide. Thus, it represents a sphere highly structured by power relations among cultural producers and state authorities. Moreover, the leadership of the theater raises its director's symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984) within the theater field, and as such is a resource which different social actors fight for.

All of the above-mentioned examples share few common features. The interviewed members of these institutions talked about either a 'golden era/decade' of its theaters under the former political conditions and leadership of former directors. Despite the bureaucratic character and organizations of the cultural institutions or occasional tensions, the formal and

informal relations between theater directors and authorities created flourishing conditions for the autonomy of these institutions before elections in 2010 in Hungary and in 2015 in Poland.

During the past years the fields of theater institutions in Hungary and in Poland have been influenced by and structured according to the implementation of new cultural policies. In both cases, the state became a stronger architect of cultural activity. The critique of former elites resulted with the new distribution of financial sources and positions, which were transferred towards new politically motivated elites. In response to institutional and financial changes, organizations and individuals came up with short- and long-term interventions, as well as successful and unsuccessful counter strategies, which I analyze in a comparative perspective in the following chapter.

Chapter 2. Resistance and counterstrategies

In this chapter I explore how different social actors — theater directors, leaders and whole organizations — reacted to the political changes in the field of cultural production. I propose to call those reactions a counterstrategy. The term “strategies” is not limited to a plan created to reach a goal, but as “a general way of organizing action (...) that might allow one to reach several different life goals” (Swidler 1986:227) In this sense, the strategies describe not only the actions taken as a response to changes in the field of theater, but also actions which incorporate and depend on artists and theater groups habits, moods, sensibilities and views of the world (Geertz 1973). The experiences, personal stories and the context are the foundation of the strategies taken by the theater leaders, and strongly influence the choices of the repertoire of actions.

Krétakör, Trafó, The Polish Theater in Wroclaw and The National Theater in Cracow are four different institutions which function in different contexts. Thus, even if their members chose the same strategies to cope with political changes, the effects differed. Their political resources: such as coercion, capital and commitment (Tilly 2008) depend on history, the position within the field of culture and on public recognition. Although Árpád Schilling and his Krétakör were famous in Hungary and abroad, his financial and symbolic capitals as an independent artist was different from the established, municipal and state-funded Polish Theater in Wrocław. The coercion, described by Tilly as a means of action that can cause loss or sustain social relations to social actors, are different in TRAFÓ, which does not have the permanent artistic employees (mostly actors), and in the National Old Theater in Cracow, with its rich historical tradition, position in the social imagination and with well-known actors, who have easy access to the public and authorities. However, all of the researched institutions are characterized by the commitment of its members, supporters and external organizations.

In these different contexts of institutions within the broader cultural and political field, some of the choices of the repertoire of contention (Tilly 2008) - the strategies become more effective than others. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, the position of some theater leaders in the field of cultural struggle is stronger than others. Secondly, the effectiveness of different repertoires, which rely not only on the side of the individuals but also on its expression, are understood as “creating a public self which [is] expressive” (Ringman 1998) in the public space and for the broader audience. Thus, in the analysis of the strategies I do not limit my interests to the strict causes or effects, but I try to explore mechanisms and processes that occur in different varieties, and which lead to different outcomes, that depend on the specific context of the occurrence (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2011).

I can identify four types of performances based on my interview material: negotiation with authorities; protests; institutionalization and self-organization; and a strategy of survival. The reason behind the choice of these strategies are their repeatability and regularity among different researched institutions. During the interviews my interlocutors stated that they knew about each other’s struggle or performances and were able to repeat them or at least discuss their reasonableness. In this sense the researched theaters and individuals did not limit their strategies to one but used all of them in different stages.

Those counterstrategies are then the responses in forms of protests which counter the changes in cultural policies, but also organizational strategies of surviving and negotiations. Whether protest, establishing new institution or negotiations can be seen as Hirschman’s (1970) “voice” – an attempt to improve or oppose the symbolic and political power of state, the surviving strategies are “exit” – withdrawal from the contentious. However, all of the strategies are cases of interactions of theater producers and state policies.

2.1 Negotiations: seeking compromise and gathering allies

One of the first strategies to resist changes in the financial or organizational structure of the theater are negotiations with authorities. In order to negotiate, one needs to have the formal structure or a strong symbolic position, or ideally both. This strategy can be divided into two subcategories: the institutionalized talk and unofficial talk. Whether the first is based on the formal and legal basis for talk between authorities and representatives of theaters, the second is based on connections, relationships and mediation with the help of supporters. The latter is characterized by the use of the symbolic capital of involved actors, with which authorities might want to talk.

In order to be eligible for the talk, involved actors needed to use tools of formal recognition, such as existing associations or trade unions. “Our prestige was high at that time. We could go to the Minister. We could talk to a high figure like political leaders, the president of the House [Orszaghaz]”, says Árpád Schilling (Interview 2019) about the time between 2003 and 2010. These sentences do not only show the position of the Krétakör group, but the importance of the social relation and interaction between authorities and theater makers. Social connections and organizing efforts are an advantage for collective action, according to the testimony of veteran organizers and members of the student social movement (Polletta and Gardner 2015). The quality of social actions, however, relies on the position of the power in the field, experience and social capital of the individual and their ability to mobilize the resources.

With the changes of the decisive people in the local or state authorities, the position of Krétakör in Hungary or The Polish Theater in Wrocław decreased. As a response, the artists decided to use the existing structures such as independent theater associations, trade unions or

a theater's artistic council. It is worth mentioning that the use of these kind of institutions happen usually at the very beginning of struggles.

In 2011, after the performative law (Tompá 2017) had been called off after only a year, and a new one, inspired by the leader of the Theater Association, Attila Vidnyánszky, was enforced, Schilling called for the solidarity among independent theater companies. He became the president of the existing independent theater association, which was not a strong institution before (Schilling. Interview 2019). With his symbolic capital, he was able to reform it. He asked other companies to participate financially in the association's budget. They rented a regular office, hired two people on a regular basis, and started to organize meetings. Two of them took place in Trafó with the close collaboration with Szabó. As a formal and recognized institution Schilling, as its leader, called for the meeting in the House of Representatives. Around twenty theater leaders came to the meeting, but the spokesperson for the group was Schilling. Their claims were refused, under the argument that the legal and financial consequences of changing the law are too serious. All of the twenty-one detailed propositions were dismissed. From this description one can say that the talks were a part of the political contention between different individuals. The authorities acknowledged the claims, but easily refused them, showing their position.

In Cracow and Wrocław artistic workers of the theater (mostly actors) decided to establish the new trade unions belonging to the central trade union Inicjatywa Pracownicza.³ One of the reasons why decided to do it was an willingness to have the leverage to appointing the new director (Kujawski. Interview 2019). The law requires the representation of trade unions in the jury. The trade union allowed them to secure the position in three aspects. Firstly,

³ Inicjatywa Pracownicza is an anarcho-syndicalist trade union, however it is the most vivid recently in the cultural institutions. The old trade union in theater - the Solidarity is composed mostly by the technician worker. Actors from theaters in Wrocław and Cracow either were not a member of the trade union or sing out from Solidarity and sign in Inicjatywa Pracownicza during the struggle.

to have the formal representation in different theater bodies. Secondly, to have the representatives to talk with the organizers - the municipality and the ministry of culture. And thirdly, to secure the job position against the process of firing actors by the new directors (unsuccessfully in case of the Polish Theater). Having the trade union allowed protesting actors to communicate with the local authorities and the Ministry of Culture. Through the eight months they met with the authorities, but mostly with the members of the Board - Tadeusz Samborski, who was responsible for cultural institutions in the board of local authorities and as such was responsible for the appointment of Cezary Morawski, the new director. Moreover, the actors spoke twice with the deputy minister of culture Wanda Zwinogrodzka (Kujawski. Interview 2019). Although the Ministry showed their support, the governor stopped the local authority's decision to fire the director. Only after another few months, after the rapport about the financial disturbances was issued by the Supreme Audit office, the director lost the job.

The power asymmetry between the local authorities which have the right to appoint a new director, and the actors, who are in legal terms employees of the theater, was one of the reasons why the negotiation did not work. In the negotiation process an agreement is seen as a point where interests of both sides can be balanced (Bartos 1972). However, the organizational and legal circumstances do not give much possibilities for actors. "In Wrocław there was not a chance to talk with the new director or the authorities, or ministry. I think there was not a chance. In the National Old Theater, with its position and prestige it was easier for actor to negotiate with the authorities," says Dorota Buchwald (Interview 2019), the founder and former director of the National Theater Institute. She was involved in the talks between the Polish Theater and the Ministry and propose to be a mediator. The authorities refused.

The actors of the National Theater in Cracow learned from the example of Wrocław. They decided to lead talks with the Ministry of Culture, who is the organizer of the theater. The representatives of the artistic team met with the Ministry, although it did not change its decision

of giving the leadership of the theater to the widely unknown journalist Marek Mikos. As a response, actors decided to start unofficial talks through people, who are in touch with the Ministry. I did not help, not even with the support of the people from the artistic field. “I quickly understood how arduous the process is of building the unofficial ways of communication and constructing the group of support. Many phone calls, some talks you don’t want to have, but you have to do it”, states Radosław Krzyżowski (Interview 2019), actor and currently the chair of the Artistic Board.

Actors in the National Old Theater not only started the different channels of communication, but also decided to talk within the institution among 150 employees, artistic and technical teams. Krzyżowski called this attempt a building of the “critical community”, which helped them survive without an internal struggle like in the theater in Wrocław, where the artistic team was divided between the protesting group, and those open to changes.

All of the groups chose the negotiation and talk as the first strategy. All of them decided to conduct the talks in a frame of the formal organizations such as the Independent Theater Association or the trade union. Although all of them have different organizational relation to the authorities: Krétakör is an independent theater, Polish Theater is the co-run by the local and state authorities, and the National Old Theater is a state institution; their approaches were discarded. Additionally, in the legal system of Poland the use of the structures such as trade unions are limited to few possibilities such as collective labor dispute, which takes a long time to come into action.⁴ Due to this fact, further theater makers decided to use different strategies.

⁴ Fired actors of the Polish Theater in Wrocław, needed to wait almost two years, for the court order which order to bring them back to work. Other examples are the law suits against the Ministry of Culture, who dismissed from offices directors of the national institutions: Adam Mickiewicz Institute, National Audiovisual Institute, The Polish Cinematography Institute. Two first cases had their final after few years of the court case, when a court rule in favor of former director and order to pay compensation.

2.2 Protests: addressing the public

As the strategies of negotiation have not changed the situations of theaters, their members decided to use different tools from the repertoire: protests and boycotts. The articulation of a protest is twofold: on the one hand there is the language of the protest, its visualized and vocalized side, and on the other, the internal organization of protest movements (Steyerl 2018:332). Thus, within this strategy one can observe the marches, protests outside of the theater building in the public space, but also the organized ways of petitioning to authorities, letters of support, and use of social media.

In Wrocław after the decision to appoint the new director, the part of the artistic team started to protest outside of the theater building. They were joined by members of the audience and other organizations. As a visual sign they covered their mouths with a black tape, as the symbol of being deprived of a voice (Rudzki. Interview). The pictures of the actors holding hands with the audience in front of the theater building spread quickly across the press, tv and social media. This sign was quickly reproduced by different artists across different Polish theaters, who in a gesture of solidarity covered their mouths with tape after each performance. After few months of covering mouths in the Polish Theater in Wrocław, the new director Cezary Morawski dismissed eight of the artists on disciplinary grounds. He accused them of criticism of the supervisor, loss of trust, critical post on social medias and protests during applause after the performances (Kujawski. Interview 2019).

The provocative visual rhetoric as the standard of the moral protest (Jasper 1997) was the first sign of a bigger movement. After that the audience of the theater organized themselves and organized a manifestation during which actors and supporters marched through the city to the office of local authorities. Piotr Rudzki and Igor Kujawski claim that the protests at the beginning had been organized against the local authorities that chose the obscure director for

the theater and his conservative and “not progressive” artistic manifesto for the theater. Moreover, they accuse the authorities of disregarding the voice of the artistic team of the theater. Thus, I argue that the protest was organized as the moral protest against the lack of listening to the artists, and at the same time, as a protest against the different vision of the theater proposed by Cezary Morawski.

In case of Árpád Schilling’s activities and the association of the independent theaters, the group was divided after the meeting in the Parliament. Not everybody wanted to organize demonstrations and some of leaders chose to withdraw from actions. In response to this Schilling decided to resign from the association and step back to his foundation – Krétakör, focusing on the pedagogical project. Schilling became involved in pedagogical projects, which lasted until 2012, when public schools refused to invite them. In order to continue their theater practices Krétakör applied for state money in open calls competitions. The money they gained was insufficient for their needs. To show his anger and disappointment Schilling organized a happening in front of the Ministry of Culture building, and tore the grant contract with insufficient funds he received. The video of the act was published on YouTube and Facebook page of the Krétakör group. The activity outside of the production of theater’s shows also Schilling’s isolation from other theater groups. As the next step, Krétakör and Schilling protested and organized a demonstration against the government and its politics. The theater activity of the group was suspended; however, Árpád Schilling was directing plays in theaters outside Hungary, such as Germany and Poland.

Schilling said he fought for the funding for the alternative theater’s scene in order to work independently. The autonomy of art was at stake. Later however, he opposed not only to the changes in the field of art funds, but to the policy of the government. At the same time, he worked in theater, produced performances, but also stated that the protest on the street is more important than art (Schilling. Interview 2019). This conviction led to this active participation

in the protest against the reform of the education law in 2016. Moreover, Schilling's position but also his creativity as an artist, was used not only in direct protest but also in social media. Schilling widely used the facebook page of Krétakör, and produced videos, which attack the Hungarian governments and its political reforms.

The social media has been widely used as a tool in Wrocław and Cracow, where actors used traditional and digital media, as a platform for promoting their claims. While in Wrocław the role of the local media, especially the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza*, has been widely seen, in the National Old Theater the artists decided not to talk to the media. As Krzyżowski (Interview 2019) states, they would rather negotiate with the director and ministry, than talk with media. However, social media became relevant for their protest as a space of support, not linked directly to the artist, but rather to the representatives of audience. Similarly, when György Szabó lost the position, some volunteers set up a facebook fan page supporting him. As Negt and Kluge (1993) state, the computer-mediated communication has transformed the capacity for protest and interventions of movements. The activity in social media of the Audience of the Polish Theater in Wrocław has been of a high importance. They posted cases of attacks on theaters by local and state authorities all around the country.

Internet and social media were also used to spread letters of support and petitions to the authorities. Such actions happened both in relation to Trafó and Krétakör in Hungary, as in Poland for The Polish Theater and the National Old Theater. However, the issue of the success of similar actions is problematic. "All the petitions online, open letters, we do it, sign them, but nobody cares about it" states Karolina Ochab (Interview 2019), the director of the New Theater in Warsaw. "Maybe because we do not have so much power", she adds. None of the claims raised by protests resulted in changes of the authority's decisions. Local and state authorities often hide behind the cultural law which forbids dismissing the director without a serious legal reason such as breaking of the financial law. Unofficially one can hear that the ministry does

not want to make a precedence after which other institutions might want to raising claims. Such attitude is would then a threaten their hegemony.

2.3 Self-organization: creating a counterpublic

Theater artists do not only focus on claim making and visual publicity, but also recruit other people to support their cause in order to ensure the long duration of their activities. They plan strategies privately, collect money and dedicate their time for the cause. All those politics, as Tilly claims, belong to contentious politics (Tilly 2008). Tilly enlisted three classes of activity of social movements: “(1) routine social life; (2) contention-connected social interaction and (3) public participation in collective making of claims” (Tilly 2008:8). The first aspect is the one which is often the less publicly visible, but essential for the success of the movement.

Schilling’s activity in the leadership of the independent theater association can be perceived as an engagement in such a “routine social life.” At the beginning the aim of this activity was mostly to negotiate with authorities and unite the theater community. However, after the failure of negotiations, the group could not agree on further movements. Schilling left the association and decided to raise claims on his own. Another attempt was a meeting held in Trafó, which, except from the discussion among theater artists, did not developed into any more strategic actions. Despite the commitment of individuals, in the long run both cases of self-organization of the Hungarian theater community failed.

In comparison, in Wrocław and Cracow the actors decided to establish new institutions, which would guarantee the longer life of the movements. Moreover, they transformed, as the example of the Underground Polish Theater shows, into new institutions. The strategy of self-organization weaves the fragmented story of previous resistance into a larger piece, a counterpublic sphere (Schollete 2017).

Counterhegemonic activities are based on long-standing communities, where people know each other and share the common sense and values (Polletta 1997). This can be seen on the example of the Underground Polish Theater in Wrocław, where spontaneous activity and protest as the resistance to new director and local authorities, become more institutionalized. The Underground Polish Theater was set up by accident, as Piotr Rudzki and Igor Kujawski (Interviews 2019) claim independently from each other. As Francesca Polletta (1997) points out, social movements participants often describe the major events as organized spontaneously, however it is not always the truth. One should remember about the social connections among the participants. In the case of the Underground Polish Theater those were the theater's artistic workers-mostly actors and literacy workers. They knew each other and had been working for many years, and therefore, the context is important to understand the beginning of this organization.

The case of the Polish Theater in Wrocław was the object of a research conducted in 2017 by Bartek Lis (2017). The report from the research focuses on two cases of self-organization: the Underground Polish Theater and the Audience of Polish Theater in Wrocław. The author concentrates on those aspects as the examples of self-organization within the field of culture. Lis conducted his research shortly after the changes in the theater, when the level of emotions was high and some processes still ongoing. From the perspective of my research conducted on the same topic after three years, some changes have occurred, and the role of the bodies such as the trade unions now seems as overestimated.

At the beginning Piotr Rudzki created a Facebook page, under this name, whose aim was to archive the story of the “destruction of the Polish Theater in Wrocław” (Rudzki. Interview 2019). He wanted to document the changes - the organizational and artistic changes introduced by Cezary Morawski, the new director. The next step was the organization of the

performance under the auspices of the Underground Theater. The first play was directed by Krzysztof Garbaczewski and performed by the actors from the Polish Theater.

Rudzki and Kujawski (Interviews 2019) emphasize the horizontal character of decision making in the organization, which consists of the majority of actors, who protest against the changes in the theater. However, after some time in order to cooperate more effectively the group of five people were selected as the organization body. Some of the people were delegated to negotiate with the local authorities, whether other started to organize more performances and happenings. After few months, the decision of further professionalization was taken (Rudzki). Members of the movement used the foundation, which was inactive for years, as a legal framework of the organization. With it, instead of collecting private money from the members, they could apply for grants and prepare more developed theater performances, hire people and pay them for the job.

One of the ways, which allows social movements to reach the audience for their claims, are changes in the structure of social movements. Professionalization and formalization of some of them, can be described as changes from informal movements into more permanent organizations, such as NGOs. This process took place in Wrocław, where the Underground Polish Theater is formally the NGO, funded with grants from the municipality and local authorities. Something which at the beginning may be named the social performance and act of protest, evolved into the independent institution. Because the core of the team is still working in the Polish Theater, the side project is probably not economically sufficient yet, however it guarantees the production of the new artistic performances, which is one of the goals of the protesting actors from the beginning. In this sense the Underground Polish Theater can be seen as a movement which challenges the institutionalized changes.

The movements of the actors from the beginning had support from the members of the audience. Although the two main figures in the Audience of the Polish Theater in Wrocław -

Magda Chlasta-Dzięciołowska and Paweł Zaręba (Interview 2019), claim in they did not have any experience in the social movements, they were able to gather a group of dozens of people, negotiate with the local authorities, involve other people in the movement, and organize two debates and a rally.

After that, the group decided to professionalize. Firstly, they established an association and then the foundation of the audience of the public theaters. While the association is now almost inactive, the foundation is actively involved in talks with the authorities and with the new theater director to resume “Dziady”, a 24-hours performance, in which all of the actors who were employees of the theater before 2016 play. They are also planning to publish books about their activity in the protests, but also about the “golden decade” of the theater (2006-2016). For all involved people this is a volunteer job (Chlasta-Dzięciołowska and Zalewski. Interview 2019).

The story of the Underground Polish Theater and the Audience of the Polish theater shows the two clear periods of self-organization. The first one is spontaneous and “romantic” (Lis 2017). It is characterized by rapid reactions, organization of spontaneous rallies or marches, and a fluctuating number of people involved in actions. The second one, which Lis called “positivistic,” is based on the formal structure, where a decision-making body consists of few involved people. The activities and repertoire of action is planned in advance, and funds for those are secured.

Both Underground Polish Theater and the movement of the audience of the public theaters are involved in activities not limited to the theater and performance. Underground Polish Theater is thinking about the institution as a community, which integrates the local groups and is actively involved in the public discourse. Thus, it can be seen as the counterpublic (Fraser). Michael Warner in his analyses of heteronormativity and presence of homosexual people (the marginalized group), calls for different counterpublics as one of the ways to

participate in the broader public discourse (Warner 2002). The multiplicity of counterpublics is probably the most egalitarian solution, when different groups but also social movements can address their claims, and where their voices can be heard. Furthermore, the importance of counterpublics is based on their ability to resist against stronger enemies – such as the state and the hegemony.

Another form of self-organization can be seen in the National Theater in Cracow. After unsuccessful attempts to negotiate with the director, actors proposed to create the artistic council, which would be responsible for the repertoire (Krzyżowski. Interview 2019). The status of the theater states that the council is appointed by the director. However, the actor, who boycotted working in some of the production, proposed that they would choose the members of the council. The director agreed, and 45 out of 48 actors chosen their representatives. The role of the council was to talk with theater makers, who announced before that they will not work in the theater. After three months, in spring 2017, they came to an agreement between the theater director, the artistic council and directors - artists, who agreed to prepare new productions. Since then, the artistic council was responsible for the new artistic terms in the theater. The strategy of establishing the Artistic Council affected the structure of the theater, and broadly the regime inside the theater. I propose to call this consequence as incorporation (Giugni 1998), where a part of the movement is absorbed into the institutional level and procedures, without changing the whole structure and hegemony of the institution (Polletta 1997).

The organization of the team is horizontal. The organizational board made the status of the new artistic council with a help of the lawyer. Radosław Krzyżowski was chosen as the head of the artistic council, in order to ensure fast decision-making, when immediate decisions are necessary. Otherwise the decisions are made collectively. To answer the question how the actors succeeded in organizing themselves, one should pay attention to the experience of the

people, who are members of the council. Among other members, there are Dorota Segda, the rector of the theater academy, or Anna Dymna, who runs a large charity foundation. The organizational know-how of these people helped to establish the frame for the self-organization.

Another aspect, to which Krzyżowski (Interview 2019) pays attention, are the discussions among the actors in the theater. Contrary to the situation in Wrocław, artists in Cracow decided to talk to each other first, and established the same goals which were: not to erode the artistic team, and produce progressive performances on a high artistic level. The solidarity of the workers was at the high importance in mobilization to establish the Artistic Council and to have an influence on the program of the theater.

2.4 Survival as a strategy

“Depression, humiliation, abjection – these are states of mind of the artist, although everybody is looking for a way of survival”, argues Andrea Tompa (2017). Tompa enlisted the strategies that independent theaters in Hungary adopt in a hostile political environment: international cooperation or dismissing the companies, and switching to project-basis work. But in the fact of the challenging situation, some of the groups simply chose the strategy of survival. However, the research of the strategy of survival evokes particular difficulties. The strategy of survival is hard to research, as the theater leaders did not want to talk about it or refused to give interviews.

Looking at the reports on the Hungarian theater scene, it is clear that despite the Fidesz’s changes in cultural policy, many of the directors that had been governing the theaters were not dismissed and they continue their work (Jaszai 2013, Tompa 2017). Although it is not possible

to determine how those individuals remained at their positions, one may suppose that the strategy of survival was chosen by many.

The case of the independent theater association, led by Schilling shows how some of the leaders decided not to protest, in order to keep their positions. Szabó (Interview 2019) recalls the discussion which took place in Trafó, where in the last hour of the meetings the representatives of Attila Vidnyánszky came, and people suddenly became afraid.

Fear is a feeling which reoccurs in some of the interviews. Because of the fear, the creators try to not mention anything controversial when applying for grants. Nowadays, as one of the theater leaders put it, the most useful words in the application form are now: “innovation” and “youth.” This can be seen as a process of self-censorship, when in order to get funds, theater workers decide to use either different language or not to use political language. Conversely, one can also argue that this is a strategy of professionalization and searching for the niche, in which the institution can operate.

In 2017 The Popular Theater in Warsaw was attacked by the right-wing media after the premiere of the anticlerical play the “Curse” directed by Olivier Frljić. As a reaction to the controversial play, the Polish ministry of culture threatened that it will not support any cultural enterprise which invites Frljić to its premises. Again, it is impossible to assess how many theaters would have invite Frljić if it was not for the minister’s threats. But in consequence, only handful of institutions decided to host the “Course.”

Still, the self-censorship mentioned by my Hungarian interlocutors, does not yet seem to appear frequently in Poland. Theaters run by the municipalities work without major disturbances and try to remain independent from the ruling government. Some professionals emphasize the local support, as Powszechny’s director Paweł Łysak (Interview 2019), who explicitly speaks about the large support from the president of Warsaw.

Conclusion

In Hungary after 2010, and in Poland after 2015, the ruling governments' understanding of culture influenced the field of theater production on a wide scope: from the distribution of financial resources, to the ways in which individual creators work and collaborate with others. This thesis discussed the changes implemented by the two governments, which share the devotion to national values and the urge to exchange cultural elites, and explored the coping strategies as a reaction to this situation.

In both countries, cultural policy – understood as a process of distributing funds and shaping the cultural law, and the capability of forming leaderships of cultural institutions – is used in the struggle over gaining the symbolic power in society. In countries after the illiberal turn, like Poland and Hungary, the field of cultural production is perceived by authorities as a potential threat to their hegemony. In order to preserve its position, governments decided to redistribute funds and power to the new conservative elites. In this sense, governments of both countries see the role of the state in relation to the field of cultural production as that of an architect who actively shapes and controls the field.

Despite almost similar approaches to the field of theater production, the implementation of changes differs in the two countries. The difference can be seen on two levels. The first level derives from the fact that the Fidesz government has been ruling almost for a decade, whilst the government of the Law and Justice party is finishing now its first four-year term. Consequently, more legal changes in the field of theater were conducted in Hungary, including the change of the Performance art law which partially reorganized the theater scene. In Poland, although the Ministry of Culture frequently addresses the need for systemic changes, such processes have not yet taken place.

Second level of difference speaks to the place of elites. In Hungary, the new “cultural elite” actually came into existence. Individuals and institutions generously nourished by the Fidesz government, such as Attila Vidnyarsky or the Hungarian Academy of Art, throughout the years managed to gather the resources, and gained a significant influence in the cultural field, strengthening the party’s hegemony. In the Polish context, however, such a situation did not take place, and the government did not successfully replace influential groups and artists. Despite the singular acts of attempts for a censorship or the appointment of new leadership, like in the Polish Theater in Wrocław or National Old Theater in Cracow, the theater field to a large extent continues to work according to the old principles.

As a response to the changes implemented by the governments, theater artists in Hungary and in Poland decided on different counterstrategies. The strategies from their repertoire of contention vary from protests to negotiations, but also include the withdrawal from the struggle as a way to maintain the position, and cope with the difficult situation. The decision behind the choices of the strategies should be considered in the relation to the symbolic capital of the leaders, resources, mobilization, but also to the context, and the public and community-based support.

Some of the patterns can be observed in regard to the order of perused strategies. In all the discussed cases, the strategies of the negotiations with the authorities or the new director were the first ones that were taken. Some of the discussed groups, in order to strengthen their negotiating position, institutionalized in trade unions or associations of theater makers. The next type of strategies, protests, were targeted towards the authorities, but at the same time towards the theater community and the audience, who could potentially support the raised claims. Although it is not an initial goal of the resistance, as the example of The Underground Polish Theater shows, decisions on self-organization and institutionalization lead to establishing new institutions which can be interpreted as counterpublic. Lastly, the strategy of

survival was popular. This strategy is the hardest to research, due to the fact that neither the interviewees nor press want to address it. However, it can be perceived as the most common one, due to the vast number of theaters where leadership has not been changed, but whose leaders also decided to focus on non-political, and in a sense non-controversial, artistic activities.

The main differences between strategies taken by Hungarian and Polish theater artists differ not in choices from repertoire, but rather in their result, which depended on the particular context. The variables which influence each case include the extent of changes of the cultural policy, relations with other actors from the field of theater production such as the new elite, the quality of solidarity among professionals, and individuals' symbolic capital and capacity to mobilize people outside of the field.

While in Hungary the strategies of resistance were mostly unsuccessful, in Poland institutionalization and self-organization led to a rise of the counterpublic. The initiatives in Wrocław and Kraków led to the emergence of new organizations, but also created communities around them. The communities managed to survive and develop into political entities which to the some extent can resist authorities and maintain independence. Moreover, their activity reaches beyond the field of art, as they express their voice in other important social discussions, such as the role of the Catholic church, migration or abortion.

Comparison in sociology, as Payne (1973) claims, discloses the interrelation of processes in differing societies. In the times of rise of populist, illiberal or authoritarian politics, the artists' counterstrategies might be the field of an experimental way of resistance. While this research deals with the comparison of power relations between the actors of the field of cultural production and state in two similar Central European societies, it did not claim to produce a general theory applicable to others affected by the illiberal turn. However, it reveals how certain

theater professionals react to the changes imposed by the hegemony, negotiate with it, or simply try to maintain their positions.

This research offered insight into the changing situation of cultural institutions, and ways in which some of the individuals coped with the interference of authorities in the field of theater. The long-term consequences and political effects of coping strategies described in this thesis are still hard to assess, but this is precisely the reason why they require a careful, continuous study in the future.

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