

**Temp:
Temp about Temp, or a Quick and
Unsystematic Retrospective of the
Workings of One Temporary and Informal
Multidisciplinary Group**

A group that had been gathering for almost two years under different names, hanging out and creating a multidisciplinary activist movement, a conglomerate of different praxis-actions, researches, concerts, parties, and the like, found itself faced with the need to write down a history of whatever it was doing. The core members of TEMP were forced into this unhappy situation by a process of mythologisation and exploiting the name of TEMP.

On this topic comrade Grega presents some thoughts.

I have been taking TEMP seriously to such a degree that I am no longer able to conceive an introspective, retrospective, historical thought... possessing/naming as any kind of iteration, i.e. property. As I understand it, our main concern was to 'make' relationships; 'space' was just the field where we lived them. Whether that space be geographical, capital, psychological or ideological, theoretical questions are solved only through praxis. Challenge as provocation in the system we pay taxes to, willingly or not, becomes an investment in the future – (yet another) policy/politics colliding with culture; theory transiting into art; and will power, evident as survival strategy. Are things simpler if you look at them from a distance? Irrelevant question; reduction is, after all, a twin of habit. A monument turns into the foundation and finishes off with the classic 'so what?'. From shouting slogans to a new temporality! A reflection of Bey's *imaginarium* in the middle of the eternal story of the collective and individuals, disappearance because of somebody else, and death because of yet another. An occasional suicide? Yes. An occasional tear? Most definitely. An occasional original idea? Of

course. Production, mother of mine! Another circle, defying resignation with a relationship, every moment and everywhere. Putting it all into words is just the practice of alienation – from side by side to parting ways.

TEMP was just a temporary name of an informal group and its production, which marked the last period of our work, but it became a brand so the only conceptually right decision was self-destruction. It is interesting to note that in modern art and academic/curator circles concepts are so marginal and distant that many didn't even notice that TEMP stands for something that is temporary and by manifest does no longer exist. Often when we were invited at festivals, symposia, round tables, trademark TEMP appeared on the lists of participants. With a view to demystifying TEMP we accepted the invitation and assignment to try and recount our past activities.

Considering the fact that the main characters of this mystified phenomenon are actively taking part in similar 'projects' across the world, the text you are reading is not a result of numerous discussions in informal circumstances but of few email and phone exchanges. The first text that came in was from Andrejček, who as a friend has observed our activities since the beginning, commenting on supporting the work, but being too tired to take an active role himself.

Introduction

The passage of TEMP through a considerably short period of time has again shown that an existing order is put in danger every time a group of unknown individuals decides to live differently. TEMP was an adventure in which individuals with different trajectories and from different

scenes were brought together in continuous action. Along the way it uncovered the poses of those who under the guise of subversion are turning their mediocre careers in the fortresses of ruling consent into monuments. A theory of life surrounded by an ever-present sleep combined with a wish to build something new was the chain that linked the TEMP group internally. No wonder that soon nobody could escape its effects. Yesterday's fortresses of politics, art and other self-proclaimed authorities joined a journey they did not understand, rather than risk their downfall. Such is the power of truth spoken at the right moment.

About Theory

Step by step and from action to action TEMP was constructively resolving the eternal problem of the relationship between theory and practice. Various theoreticians of passivity and fascination – the contemporary market of theoretical artefacts never seems to run out of them – with their acts of mental masturbation, even about TEMP, did not even notice this. Most of the so-called theoretical production on this topic clearly confirms this. TEMP did know what the power of the concepts that it had been defining itself could amount to when being used in political struggle and in confrontations with consumers, even consumers of theory. When the radical subjectivity of TEMP entered into alliance with those elements of the local environment that were also aware of the meaning of revolutionary theory and when this new alliance was realised through a unified action platform, the results clearly showed. Yet, in the margins of these manoeuvres a crowd of spectators and consumers that reproduced the roles of either fans or cynical commentators came into being. This did not stop them from pinning medals to their chests and

enjoying the glory of events they were not able to predict or participate in – except by blocking them. That’s how it goes.

About the Irrelevancy of Art and the Flimsy Efforts of Those Who Make a Living through Art to Recognise as Such

TEMP has not advertised its analysis of the role of art in capitalist society. It did not write scientific papers and sacred texts, even though it could, and the moment when the art world tried to recuperate its political aspects TEMP borrowed from this world only the things it had to offer: space and other resources to develop the project of collectively producing real activities in the context of the dominant conditions of the capitalist system. When it was offered ‘an exhibition’ in the Škuc Gallery, TEMP did not seek to establish a new fashionable trend in contemporary art. Rather, it raised the stakes and moved its activities to the terrain of political action. No coincidence here. And no art either. Many bystanders and curators were vainly searching for art in all this. Things are arranged in such a way that, due to the inventiveness, ambition and access to resources of the people writing the articles and texts (also in publications such as this), eventually the TEMP adventure will be put under the mantle of contemporary art practices. Once again it confirms that the creativity of the eternal latecomers and coopters stretches only to their amazing ability to advance their own careers.

On Motives

With measured strokes, starting with the forced entry into the Faculty of Architecture parking lot – someone trained

in spectacular noise could recognise just an act of “questioning the usage of urbane space” – TEMP showed that even in a state of alienation and within the circumstances of contemporary capitalism it is possible to intervene from the margins and disturb the balance of political power. The actions were not taken to sell images of it on the market but to make life worth living. The stakes were indeed high, but there would be no point otherwise.

On Rog

The entrance into Rog confirmed the analysis on the basis of which the whole process was initiated. Of course the plan was not prepared in advance, but TEMP at least did not beforehand reject the possibility that things might turn out the way they have. TEMP articulated the concepts, communicated them, established new relations between individuals who did not know each other before. One thing led to another and, as the interests were set high already from the start, when the moment of opportunity to expand the battlefield came it was recognised as such. However, this was not TEMP anymore, but a new subjectivity in which people who had previous experience were brought together with those who found themselves for the first time in the middle of a political project. The mobilising potential that was being generated through the TEMP adventure created a window of opportunities to transform the various investigation techniques into a physical occupation of the space. With the entrance into Rog the TEMP experience was exhausted. A new situation emerged and new subjectivities along with it.

TEMP is also a story of concubines. Failing to recognise their importance would be short-sighted. Despite all their ignorance the faithful and the hangers-on were indeed

instrumental in constructing a myth and in convincing kindred spirits holding various government positions that there would be little point in confronting such a powerful crew. These people felt something big was happening but lacked the theory to truly comprehend it. *Essentially-by-products* as they were, they still played their part in sidestepping the weak-minded elements of power who were already fearing the future election defeat. Lacking ideas some were making grandiose statements on their own autonomy and artistry, while for others the ultimate outcome of the occupation of Rog was the factory's transformation into a museum of contemporary art. But who needs museums for new and meaningless artefacts whose only content is submission? Not us. The fact that "made in Rog" was soon established as a desirable fashion label should not surprise anyone. Yet resorting to cynicism and going on and on about it would be just too easy.

The lives of those who were part of this adventure testify to the fundamental truth of TEMP. Some hangers-on and worshipers now bask in the shining light of artistic achievement, symposia and colloquia. But others continue their work like they always have, through struggle in other towns, forming other structures and alliances. No secrets there. And no regrets. As revolutions must bury their dead, TEMP also must resist the temptation to blow its horn. TEMP *did* happen. Making it was easier than 'the end of history'-propagandists would like us to believe. It is an experiment whose full ramifications are not yet clear. In any case, even now it is obvious that no one completely escaped its results. A short walk in the city centre, flipping through the pages of catalogues and magazines, or browsing through the Internet, show this quite clearly.

On History

TEMP does not need an official history. The many texts and empty phrases with which the official analysts and curators paint it (in exchange of symbolic or actual fees), paint the general conditions and climate that TEMP was determined *to oppose*. The inability of official interpreters to come to terms with the weakness of their own positions clearly demonstrates how far the intellectual decay has already advanced. The pinning of medals and building of myths is precisely what it was never about. The signatures under the texts themselves will show which side everybody is on. And such lists are not to be misplaced. A wise political strategy says that it is good to count from time to time. We observe and take notes. Those who strive to understand the TEMP experience in order to further the explorations of their own lives, will definitely know how to use all these testimonies, they will know what to keep and what to throw away. The legacy of TEMP is safe with those who are already here or will come in the future and have personal interests in living beyond exploitation and class.

The importance of TEMP that Andrej has sketched stems from the organisation of the group whose final results were largely unplanned. The most important was the working method in which the 'how' actually had precedence over the 'what'. We were organised horizontally – full self-initiative and self-organisation were paramount. We gave up authorship and thereby converted personal intellectual property into public knowledge, an effective practice that had better effect through conspiracy and reduced the numbers of

c.v.-hunters in our midst. We worked as a team, but we had very different educational training and experiences. This enabled us to have a very wide spectre of production (activating spaces, organising and starting events, publishing, graphitti art, sculpture works and space installations). It was an organic and dynamic structure. We cooperated on the basis of desire, not necessity. The group was changing and expanding, which resulted in a further widening of the production spectrum, but the problems of the gap between theory and practice and the dispersion of goals became apparent. The positive side was a large human “platform” that was established when we reactivated the abandoned Rog factory. This in turn sparked the support of even more institutions and institutionalised individuals and groups... so the benefits were mostly in the area of quantity...

The core of our efforts was reduced to three or four sound-bytes. Being repeated over and over again like a broken LP lodged in the stomachs of many – they opened their mouths and sounds come out whose meaning never reached the brain. The position of TEMP began to formalise, which, together with the media response, started the inevitable decline. But the ‘story-telling’ aspects of TEMP were just getting started.

This is why comrade Emil contributed a text that reflects on the space between what TEMP wanted to be and what it actually was.

The group gathered in October 2004 with the objective to actualise the problem of disappearing public space in Ljubljana. Its first action was to occupy the parking lot near

the Faculty of Architecture where a temporary student gallery was established. Actions in public space continued in different forms until March 2006, when the former factory Rog was occupied.

The main goal of the group was to create an ambient conflict through constructing an event in which a debate about specific abandoned space would develop and would possibly trigger ideas about the manner to use this space in an evolutionary way. This idea was tested through several experiments in Ljubljana but it was never entirely confirmed.

Actions in public space did not manage to stimulate the townspeople into a different use of this space and did not create direct politics. The only intervention with long-term effects was the occupation of the Rog factory. This act attempted to establish a public space inside the building in which closed spaces would represent daily city space or townspeople’s political space. This idea soon gave rise to creating art and a cultural centre for artists. Art as a neutral field of criticism and creation that does not represent a real threat to the existing political system has shown to be a compromising form of activity. The very moment the TEMP group was about artistic meaning instead of political it stopped to exist.

Two years later Ljubljana is experiencing the greatest privatisation wave in its existence. Current megalomaniacal projects, which are being built through public-private partnership, threaten to entirely transform the city into a market for products or goods. Now there is less public space than at the time when TEMP was still active. Every day the closing of the Rog factory seems imminent. Architects who publicly supported TEMP activities are today among the main performers of Ljubljana’s ‘capitalistic bloom’. From

this perspective we must consider TEMP as an experiment that failed in its concrete objections or as a short-term adventure of individuals.

We were interested in working in a bottom-up way; we took a full grassroots approach. We wanted to know to what extent we could influence the problems we identified as individuals. How strongly can we motivate the public to demand back its space? The sincerity of our position was illustrated by our reluctance to function in an academic manner. We provoked public debates with the representatives of power and used all scientific and artistic arguments available to present our position.

Comrade Urban was directly and intensely involved in civil initiative that openly opposed the building of a highway. He sent the following short comparative analysis.

TEMP as Part of Civil Society

In the decade after the great economic changes the cities of Slovenia basically stopped developing. In the new millennium there is an upsurge in civil societies due to the many large-scale projects being developed (highway sections, third dock in Koper, gas terminal, Kolizej, cement factory in Zagorje, Ljubljana marketplace, waste sites and so on) that are putting pressure on regular (often confused) urban planning. The local initiatives are gaining in relevance, strength and visibility. The TEMP group's approach is similar to that of these initiatives, so I will try to present the similarities and differences.

The civil society represents the interested public, which forms around a problem that affects the wider community.

Usually it comprises interdisciplinary, non-professional individuals who share views or beliefs. The driving force is the belief that any individual can take part in shaping the city or landscape. The organisation is often informal, to accentuate independence from centres of power (political, economical, religious and so on). Often these groups parasite on established organisations in short-term partnerships, so the energy can be spent on work rather than bureaucracy. The protagonists are usually not driven by the desire for self-promotion, even though some activists get media coverage. Because they oppose centres of power they are often – unjustly – given a political or ideological label.

Authorities or experts rarely express their support publicly; consenting with critical thought is considered almost shameful. The observers distance themselves cynically or patronisingly from the events and await the outcome. The rare moments of triumph or resolution are succeeded by waves of retroactive congratulations and support.

Despite the above-mentioned similarities, there is an important difference between other local initiatives and TEMP. Regular initiatives are predominantly conservative, inert, retrograde, orientated towards the right and romantic in their views and goals. The main reason for activity is centred on problems against which the slogan 'WE DON'T WANT TO' is used to motivate the larger population. The goals are clear: against change and the reasons for change. The focus is on protection from change for worse. The "not in my backyard"-mentality is ever-present.

TEMP, however, has shown that its actions are pro change, generated in an avant-garde and pro-active atmosphere. TEMP was to be a catalyst of change in urban space, of impulse leading to dynamic adaptation and the discovery of final goals. While civil initiatives find their jus-

tification in the care for the local environment, the basis and legitimacy of TEMP lies in the analysis of the general situation, the basic analysis of degraded urban zones, which was completed before the first actions.

The crucial difference between TEMP and the majority of other initiatives lies in its attitude towards change. All these initiatives are unquestionably legitimate, but TEMP's provocative stance has remained marginal and very rare indeed.

And here is another 'TEMP-orary' collage... probably the last of its kind. This is the form that our fanzines usually took... Most often it was a conglomerate of raw and unpolished thoughts, nothing special, really – just some pluralism with trust. I.e. without correction or censorship. The focus was on the process, not the result. We tried to keep our grassroots base and continue to actively voice our thoughts about the problems we noticed. The actions we took were designed to allow the authorities only one possibility – reaction. The rest was up to chance, spontaneously, inclusively... with all the tools at our disposal... knowledge, experience, social contact... The text of comrade Blaž on the criteria for choosing an appropriate space illustrates this logic.

The work done by the group TEMP can be succinctly described as raising public awareness about the crucial value of public space. Do the working environments where actions were prepared and plotted retrospectively show this? Were these places in any way related to the content of the work or were they only haphazard choices related to nothing other than availability?

A list of workplaces and group offices states the following: a few apartments, some faculty facilities, two faculty parking lots, one functionally undefined space in a sports park, at least one public park, one mobile unit, the city's river bank, garden allotments, one abandoned factory, and a gallery in the city centre. It is hard to find a common denominator for all of these spaces, as there is not one. So this of no use if we want to answer the question above. In spite of this, if we chronologically try to order the list of spaces where TEMP operated, it is possible to get some strain of logical development that is connected to the aim of the group's work.

All the places mentioned can be grouped in three categories: 1. places where work was prepared that was to be shown at a different location; 2. places where work and its presentation was the same and 3. places where the place itself was part of the group's work.

Firstly, when the group TEMP started to operate, it used available places that were either private – homes of group members, the unused part of a small private sports park – or controlled public places – buildings of faculties that individual group members attended. Here the projects were prepared that would be presented to the public elsewhere. In such an environment the group's mobile pavilion was built, which was a basis for the second approach towards group's workplace.

The latter was characterised by joining the place of work with the place of presentation – at the same time. An example of this was the project on unused spaces in the old city centre of Ljubljana, which was prepared, discussed and presented in an NGO gallery called Škuc. Not only did working and presentation spaces merge, also the time of

presentation and preparation became one. In fact the work in progress was part of the presentation. By doing so the group worked for and in public space at the same time and by this token the members had strengthened their position regarding the value of public space.

The final project by the group TEMP, the reconstitution of an abandoned factory for public use, meant also a new work setting for the group. On this occasion the workplace itself was the goal of their work. Basic renovation works in the factory's buildings were being done for the purpose of providing diverse workplaces, performance spaces and the like that were publicly accessible. The group's workplace was thus not a public space but a public space in becoming. The work itself focused on creating public space in a form of spaces suitable for non-profitable work by different parties.

Despite the different places the group TEMP operated in did not have intrinsic common features, the different usages of these spaces did lend themselves to an interpretation that connects the group's principles to the ways in which the work was done.

Having reached a massive scale, the project was labelled a utopia that was not sufficiently functional by the same groups and individuals who originally rode this concept like a horse that would take them to their personal achievements. I am glad that this is the way it happened. It was a worthwhile experience. To gage what is possible when individuals come together to influence something that really matters to them. But maybe we were being too serious... maybe we should have taken more time to have fun.

**Greetings from a cloudy and
gentrified Ljubljana, Sanja**