THE IDENTITY OF REX

The REX cultural center, located at Jevrejska 16, operated as a significant cultural and social hub for 23 years, not only in Belgrade but throughout the entire post-Yugoslav region.

Situated in the former Jewish social and cultural center[1], which witnessed the tragic suffering of the Jewish community at the beginning of World War II, the B92 cultural center REX was a place for alternative culture, critical thought, and opposition to the nationalist political narrative from 1994 to 2017. Given the inadequacy of this space for cultural production due to its location within a residential building, the team at REX designed and organized their own programs and those of other organizations every day for more than two decades, serving as a hub for numerous artistic, cultural, and social initiatives. Local initiatives, informal organizations, civil society, foreign and local volunteers, and academic workers, ranging from students to PhD professors, all contributed to the program organization at this venue, aimed at presenting and promoting the local and global culture and art scene. These activities took different forms, including educational workshops, presentations, lectures, discussions, concerts, exhibitions, plays, performances, and multidisciplinary events. A more in-depth examination of program content would reveal key subjects that preoccupied contemporary post-war Serbian society, such as nationalism, migration, gender concerns, and human rights, which were addressed only by contemporary culture, art, and the civil sector.

The identity of REX was shaped by diverse values not commonly found in cultural institutions at the time: cooperation, dialogue, openness, processes, resistance, responsibility, inclusiveness, and togetherness. Whether as partners, activists, or members of the audience, we all shared the values that defined REX's work and approach to contemporary culture and art.

WORKING CONDITIONS

A typical workday at REX was a mixture of organizational tasks, meetings with associates, intensive email correspondences, planning with partners, administration, coordination of volunteers and interns, preparing project drafts and reports, maintaining a clean workspace,

[1] A piece by Radivoje Davidović provides more information on the history of the building, at: https://jevrejskadigitalnabiblioteka.rs/bitstream/handle/123456789/2096/OnegSabatIGemilutHasadimOCR.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

participation in various activities, discussing various social and political subjects with colleagues, networking at the local and international levels, communication with the media, donors, and colleagues from the field, conversations and planning with partners in neighboring countries.

Although there was a formal job description for each position, the tasks of employees at REX were fluid and often overlapped depending on the current workload, the nature of the project, and duties that would arise during implementation. We encountered many organizational challenges, from administration to event production, with limited resources and low salaries. In addition to the usual coordinating tasks, there was frequently extra unpaid work to be done, including providing support to technical staff, assisting associates with realizing their programs, selling tickets at the entrance, etc. We worked with existing, moderate resources, and we rarely addressed overtime work. Many things were simply understood. I regarded working at REX as a privilege because of the numerous possibilities it provided, at least in theory – personal development, mobility, a pleasant work environment, access to engaging content, connections with distinguished authors and artists, and flexibility. At the same time, such work was insecure and precarious, and I often struggled with feelings of personal inadequacy and self-exploitation. Looking back, most of us worked under constant pressure to complete projects under unfavorable financial, political, and work conditions, all while motivated by professional ethics/masochistic enthusiasm to ensure that the quality of the culture center's program and production does not suffer. Despite this, those of us employed at REX regularly received our salaries and fees and were in a much better position than most colleagues in the independent cultural scene. We had advantages such as a consistent workspace, access to technology and funds, and the resources of the B92 Fund, which allowed us to continue the program and pay associates until new grants arrived or until we bridged the current cashflow gap, as well as rely on local funds for European projects. We relied on the B92 media house's digital resources, particularly the individual help of B92 friends, whose knowledge helped us resolve production issues (wedding, technology, radio jingles, contacts).

I joined REX in the summer of 2000, during a very tumultuous period, as a program and PR activity planner with little prior experience. My first tasks, which were completed concurrently, were related to exhibition production, film tours around Serbia, and regional project organizing. I quickly fell into a state of hyperproduction that I was unable to escape until my departure from REX. From my colleagues, Katarina Živanović, Nebojša Milikić, Siniša Rogić, none of us professionals in the fields we were working in, I picked knowledge on the fly. We decided on many issues and aspects of the work on the spot, with no real

strategic planning, clear systematization of roles, analysis of the work of employees and management, or monitoring of work processes and collective dynamics. Proper assessments were seldom; we moved from project to project. Unfortunately, we never prioritized them since we believed it was more important to keep working on other projects. Time was always short. We had unrealistic expectations of ourselves and each other. Our interpersonal relationships were dependent on individual traits and capacities for collegiality, solidarity, togetherness, and professionalism, which was often a source of frustration during teamwork.

Many of our associates, demonstrating goodwill, often worked for us for free – such as Siniša Rogić and his team (website maintenance), Dragan Protić and Đorđe Balmazović from the Škart Group (design, program heading, kindly sharing his knowledge and associates), Zoe Gudović (program planning, contacts), Marko Aksentijević (program planning, technology, documenting), Ebart Media and Kaza Ćurguz (free press clipping). They are always the first to come to mind, but I am sure I left out many. If there was something like a REX Order of Merit, they would definitely wear it on their lapel. It is hard to imagine what my professional and private life would have looked like without the unwavering support of Prota, Žole, Zoe, and Marko – my lifelong friends and colleagues. Together, we did everything we could to make the programs a place of togetherness, trust, and solidarity in the civil and culture-art scenes, to make the doors open to everyone and invite everyone to come.

PROGRAM PLANNING

The programs had either their own editors or permanent associates, chosen based on their expertise. The music programs were proposed by Bojan Đorđević, the director and founder of the RING RING festival,[2] Relja Bobić, the director and founder of the Dis-patch Festival,[3] colleagues from the "Treći program" (*Third Program*) of Radio Belgrade, including Ksenija Stevanović and Ivana Neimarević, as well as Ivan Lončarević and many others. They participated in our programs, provided their opinion, and proposed alternatives without ever being compensated for their contributions. The entire CyberREX team was in charge of the new media projects, which were completed by 2004, at which point associates left the REX team. The theatre programs were suggested by members of theatre groups that comprised the Association of Independent Theaters. Although this association ceased to operate in the first half of 2000, we continued to stage their plays. We collaborated with independent authors,

[2] The RING RING new music festival took place at REX from its founding, https://ringring.rs
[3] The Dis-patch festival of electronic music and art took place at REX and other places in Belgrade from 2002 to 2011, organized by the collective Belgrade Yard Sound System.

including Irena Ristić, with whom B92 produced its first theatre production at REX (*People at the Table*[4] by Srđan Valjarević), and who continues to stage participatory plays at Jevrejska 16. The dance scene was quite dynamic; we worked from the beginning with the founders of today's Dance Station[5] (Stanica - Servis za savremeni ples), a contemporary dance initiative, as well as other independent dance organizations, including Dalija Aćin, Dragana Alfirević, Bojana Mladenović, Dušan Murić. The film program featured a variety of arthouse genres. Low-fi movie gatherings were organized by Aleksandar Gubaš and Miloš Kukurić, calls were issued for video works and films; we edited many documentary movies and artistic video works and held B92 documentary film premiers. The regular movie program was later edited by the selectors of the Free Zone (*Slobodna zona*) film festival[6]. As editors, we consulted with colleagues, long-term associates, and friends from the local and European scenes. We approved programs that reflected REX's long-standing editorial standards, principles, and experience. We frequently had local and foreign guests, both planned and unplanned, proposing excellent programs. For a while, after the fall of Milošević, Belgrade was a popular destination for foreign artists and cultural workers; many wanted to work for us, often for free or a small compensation. Oftentimes, they would use our resources or space as a studio, and in turn, they would hold public events.

The enormous potential of REX was its ability to respond swiftly to various social and political events, arrange discussions on current subjects, and accommodate the program to the needs of the audience. This programming flexibility enabled us to postpone all our programs for one year and lend our space for three months to the Center for Youth Integration after the forcible closure of its "Drop-in Center" for children living and working on the streets, leaving their young beneficiaries without food and a warm shelter.

POLITICS OF SOLIDARITY

The leadership positions at REX were always occupied by women; this was not unusual considering that women were in charge of most independent cultural organizations and initiatives, as well as institutions. Managerial positions in public institutions were shaky since they were dependent on the present political climate of a ministry or city. The highest position in the Ministry of Culture was always held by a man. It was the same at places in charge of

[4] https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/ppp-fest-eid-66.1.204.html
[5] https://dancestation.org/
[6] The Free Zone film festival, which showcases social commentary films, was founded at REX in 2005. The festival includes accompanying educational programs, creates room for debates, promotions, reflection, and comprehending human rights and related issues, social issues, and global and regional concerns, https://slobodnazona.rs/

deciding on and allocating funds; the national cultural policy was established by politicians, all of whom were males who espoused conservative beliefs under the banner of nationalism. We worked during a period that was predominantly patriarchal, and patriarchal values were reflected in the cultural sector. Though one would have expected our workplace to display gender equality, the reality was often different. Men were more dominating at events, in the media, and in taking credit; even in production, the backing of male colleagues was frequently more declarative than sincere. We completed all operational tasks, managed relationships with associates, solved production problems, and maintained the workspace, and this work was invisible even within our own collective, and thus undervalued or unacknowledged.

For this reason, we identified with projects led by feminist collectives and women's organizations, whose work we wholeheartedly supported and from whom we learned feminist politics. They employed REX's physical and technical resources; we assisted them with media marketing and attended their events as supporters. We would always schedule Women's Day Marches and street actions as part of *16 Days of Activism* on our calendar for next year. I was tremendously proud that these programs were created in collaboration with us and that REX serves as a starting point for barricades in Serbian squares. Women in Serbia were the most vociferous opponents of war, social inequality, and violence. One of my favorite programs at REX was Women's Day (*Ženski dan*)[7] since it brought together a huge community of women from many generations and professions. Their Saturday exchange of skills was a feast of female solidarity, knowledge, and friendship.

We provided space for marginalized groups who saw REX as a place of their own. Many activist collectives and volunteer initiatives saw in us a safe haven where their activities would be unconditionally supported, and many saw Jevrejska 16 as their second home, complete with keys to the front door. Because of that, expectations were at times unrealistic; they would forget that REX did not work on a state or municipal budget and that our production capacities were limited. REX maintained the continuity of their programs; some of them worked with us for years, while others moved on, created their own groups, and opened their own places.

In 2000, Ivan Stanić, an activist and curator, hosted the "100 Years of Gay Rights in Germany" exhibition and accompanying program, which included exhibitions, performances, discussions, and movie projections promoting LGBT rights, with the involvement of local

[7] Program oriented toward women's mutual empowerment by the organization Women at Work (*Žene na delu*) and later the ACT women collective, https://www.facebook.com/people/Zenski-Dan/100072101712837/

activists and artists engaged in LGBT issues. This project, named *Coming Out With Nick*[8], laid the groundwork for numerous subsequent cooperations and programs that linked art and activist queer initiatives. REX also organized many debuts of various queer festivals[9], as well as numerous programs that supported the work and struggle of the LGBTIQ+ community. As members of the *Article One* Swedish queer collective in 2011, we insisted on putting on local supplementary programs showcasing the work of the most prominent queer collectives[10]. In 2011, we worked as coproducers on the daring cabaret *Behind the Mirror*[11], developed by a creative team of artists at the proposal and with the participation of a group of transexual sexual workers from Belgrade in 2011. These were bold programs, politically relevant in our homophobic climate, that brought together the vulnerable LGBTIQ+ scene despite constant threats to organizers and participants. To keep both the participants and the public safe, we always informed the police about these programs, as well as programs critical of nationalist politics, so there was always a police force in the neighboring street.

Numerous inclusive projects were held at REX, including festivals, discursive platforms, performances, and plays dealing with gender inequality, violence against women, femicide, and sexual freedom. One example is the "Out of Borders" festival by the *Hajde da*[12] group, a bold blend of art and activism, which used its theater and debate programs to promote the rights of social minorities and had been held at REX since its inception.

NETWORKING

The long-term strategy of REX was based on cooperation and partnerships, which resulted in an extremely diverse program and resource sharing. REX was constantly engaged in networking and advocating cultural politics-related issues. It was involved in connecting the independent cultural scene with institutional entities in projects such as Srbija.net[13] at the turn

[8] Coming Out With Nick – a program that presented the contemporary queer discourse through workshops, panel discussions, presentations, exhibitions, performances, lectures, and films organized by the Gayen LGBT collective.

[9] Queer antifascist collective that organized the annual festival at REX, and later other locations, starting in 2005, https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/queer-fest-eid-622.1.209.html

[10] Article One was a Swedish traveling exhibition, first showcased in Stockholm during the summer of 2008, aimed at offering substantial help to those endeavoring to fully realize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/clan-1--eid-346.1.212.html

[11] https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/iza-ogledala-eid-1993.1.204.html

[12] Festival of engaged and inclusive theater "Out of Borders" (*Van okvira*), took place at REX starting in 2011, https://www.facebook.com/festivalvanokvira/

[13] The Srbija.net project brought together cultural workers from both independent and institutional organizations through meetings, lectures, and workshops in 1999-2000.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iOQv_MS4Vg
https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/srbija-net-eid-135.1.213.html
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_iOQv_MS4Vg&t=113s

of the 21st century[14]. REX also helped develop the Association of Independent Theaters, which was quite active in the early 2000s. REX is a co-founder of the Association of Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia[15]; the Association's framework was formed at workshops held at Jevrejska 16, and we played an active role in the network's formation and operation. After that, we were actively involved in formalizing regional cooperation and developing and forming the regional culture platform "Kooperativa"[16], which I helped organize and found and where I continue to be active as a delegate of the organization I work for in Zagreb. A significant segment of our networking was membership in the European Network of Independent Cultural Centers TEH[17], where my colleague Katarina Živanović and I served on the board. This allowed us to actively involve REX in the network's operations and establish a strategy of networking, production, and advocacy at the European level. For a while, I served as a representative of TEH at the Platform for Intercultural Europe[18]. The center's international efforts were focused on strengthening the local context, so REX was always primarily oriented toward various local communities even through European projects.

REX maintained good relations with certain public organizations, such as the Museum of Contemporary Art and its Salon, the Culture Center Belgrade, and the Youth Center, mainly owing to colleagues who work there in various capacities. Even when official cooperation was lacking, we exchanged equipment, technical support, and even programs. When our calendar was full, or we thought a suggested program was better suited to another center, we would often recommend other centers and institutions, and because REX was always well-equipped, we frequently loaned our equipment for various other programs.

[14] Association of Independent Theaters of Serbia (*Asocijacija nezavisnih teatara Srbije - ANET*) consisted of seven theaters: DAH Theater, Plavo pozorište, Ister Theater, Omen Theater, Objektivna drama, ERG status, and Swan Theater. Annual presentations of their work included festivals, post-show discussions, and symposiums, as well as the multiyear project Play against Violence – research and educational process, which was part of the program "Art for Social Change" of the European Cultural Foundation. https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/godisnja-prezentacija-asocijacije-nezavisnih-teatara-eid-571.1.209.html

[15] Association Independent Cultural Scene of Serbia, founded in 2011, is a collaborative platform between organizations, initiatives, and individuals in the fields of culture and arts in Serbia, https://nezavisnakultura.net/

[16] Kooperativa – a regional platform dedicated to culture, is the result of long-term cooperation between independent cultural organizations from countries in the region. It was established by 21 independent cultural organizations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Slovenia, and Serbia, https://platforma-kooperativa.org/hr/home-hr/?topmenu=about

[17] Trans Europe Halles (TEH) is a network of independent cultural centers in Europe, founded in 1983. It gathers multidisciplinary, artistic, and socially engaged centers. REX became a member in 1999, https://www.teh.net/

[18] Platform for Intercultural Europe, a civil society initiative inspired by the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008, brought together practitioners, organizations, public organizations, and European institutions, https://www.emc-imc.org/cultural-policy/potpourri/knowledge-base/eu-agenda-for-culture/eu-culture-sector-platforms/culture-platform-for-intercultural-europe

PROGRAMS

From the onset, priority in programming was given to participative projects and programs, knowledge transfer, collective processes, open space politics, and networking. Starting in 2008, when I took over as coordinator, REX also supported collaborative programs and projects, whose emergence and development I helped facilitate: "Pesničenje"[19], Who Builds the City (*Ko gradi grad*)[20], Women's Day[21], the music program Post piano, Volunteering in Belgrade (*Volonterski u Beogradu*)[22], the intensive volunteer program with foreign and local volunteers, knowledge transfer programs: accepting interns through collaboration with Duke University, the Swiss program Syni, and the Department of Cultural Management, University of Art, as well as working with associates in neighboring countries, retirement clubs, discussion programs, and intercultural dialogue[23].

It is impossible to decide what was the most significant among all those activities and programs, whether by REX or other organizations: Low-Fi video gathering[24], Pesničenje, CyberREX's educational workshops for new media[25], green urban initiatives like Who Builds the City, educational film programs through Free Zone projects, workshops for contemporary dance and circus, engaged theater festival "Van okvira," knowledge transfer through volunteer programs and internships, unforgettable concerts at noncommercial music festivals for singer-songwriters like RING RING and Dis-patch, street programs by Soundscapes[26],

[19] Between 2008 and 2017, the Škart Group initiative "*Pesničenje*, active poetry training" brought together professional and amateur poets on a monthly basis at REX and other closed and open locations. The program concept was based on self-renewal – poets recommending other poets – creating a platform for previously unknown creativity and readiness for action and communication. Poetry books, designed by Škart, were handed out at each "Pesničenje" event. The books were printed with proceeds from the tickets from previous shows (tickets cost one euro).

[20] Platform for establishing a broad dialogue on urban development https://www.kogradigrad.org/

[21] Činč and the Dis-patch festival presented a series of Post-Piano concerts, which showcased the most existing and innovative approaches to using keyboard instruments.

[22] Program dedicated to volunteers created by REX volunteers https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/dobrovoljno-u-beogradu-eid-2127.1.210.html

[23] The debate program Crossroads East-West as part of the three-year European project Engine Room Europe, focused on independent cultural workers and their field of work, https://www.teh.net/inititatives/engine-room-europe/

[24] Festivals of short alternative films https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/low-fi-video-sabor-eid-545.1.210.html

[25] REX laboratory for new media; in addition to workshops and lectures, a website for alternative culture and the art scene was launched, but it is no longer accessible https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/cyberex-eid-191.1.211.html#description

[26] Program by the Belgrade Yard Sound System collective (founders of the Dis-patch festival), which promoted new electronic music, with events organized on the street outside REX in the early 2000s, https://kuda.org/sr/prezentacija-grupe-belgrade-yard-sound-system-relja-bobi-2002

comic publications *Grafička zavera*[27], exhibitions *Neighbors No Longer There – Jews in Dorćol Between the Two Wars* and *Belgradians: Roma People in Belgrade from the Early 20th Century Till the Present*, participative program *Short Electronic Form Fair*, Flux[28] programs of culture decentralization – presentation of contemporary art in suburbs and other cities, feminist support and solidarity programs like Women's Day, discussion *Searching for Truth and Accountability* by the documentary film center Wars 91-99[29], and the project *Visit to Staro Sajmište*[30], which dealt with contemporary history and revisionism, annual preparations of the International Women's Day march and 16 days of activism against violence against women[31], and finally, rehearsals of Horkeškart, later Horkestra[32].

WORKING WITH AND IN THE COMMUNITY

We had a diverse audience. The most numerous were the student population that interlaced with the middle generation for programs involving artistic and cultural practices, educational programs, and music and film content. The older audience would attend documentary film screenings, music festivals such as RING RING, and content on human rights and contemporary social subjects. Some programs, such as the participative program "Pesničenje," dedicated to poetry, Women's Day, and film programs of the Free Zone Festival, brought together people of various ages. Regardless of our programs' wide and diverse artistic reach, the audience expected critical noncommercial programs that were authentic, experimental, and inclusive, and they would attend programs that they could rarely see and hear elsewhere. We knew most members of our audience because we enjoyed greeting them at the door and eagerly started conversations with them. REX was not located in a bustling neighborhood where one might simply drop by; the audience had to make plans to visit the distant Jevrejska Street and be interested in the upcoming program. My previous

[27] In 2000, REX created a comics publication called "Grafička zavera" (meaning "Graphic conspiracy") with editor Zoran Penevski, publishing dozens of comics, https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/promocija-strip-izdanja-graficka-zavera-vi-i-vii-eid-2054.1.212.html

[28] https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/flux-02-eid-1942.1.212.html#description

[29] The documentary film center Wars 1991-99 was created on B92's initiative; between 2002 and 2004, it held discussions and film projections at REX, https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/u-potrazi-za-istinom-i-odgovornoscu--eid-1270.1.211.html

[30] The project *Visiting Staro Sajmište* organized educational seminars, student travels, and public tours to study the past, present, and future of Staro Sajmište, a Nazi concentration camp. It later evolved into the project "How Does Fascism Emerge?" which is concerned with the context and conditions that enable and encourage fascist ideologies, as well as how to present or represent war, occupation, collaboration, terror, war crimes, as well as liberation and anti-fascist struggles. https://www.starosajmiste.info/sr/

[31] https://www.rwfund.org/category/vesti/16-dana/

[32] Horkeškart is a self-organized choir (choir + orchestra) founded by the Škart Group in 2000. Škart pulled out in 2006, but it paved the way for the choir now performing under the name Horkestar, http://horkestar.org/

experience as a visitor taught me how crucial it was for visitors to feel welcome as they walked down the dark alley to the poorly lit building. For that reason, I most enjoyed outdoor programs when the crowd occupied the street before, during, and after the event, shaking up and attracting the Dorćol neighbors. For me, attending REX's programs in the 1990s and then working on them for 15 years was a transformative experience in every way. All of my friendships formed around and at REX. I was at the source of all things that interested me and that opened new perspectives. I met wonderful artists and dedicated activists, phenomenal people whose perspectives I shared, with whom I collaborated, and who became friends. Furthermore, the nature of the collective and work, as well as REX's location, shaped my perspective on society and the community. Working at REX was an intercultural dialogue in practice, as it took place in a part of Dorćol with many underprivileged people, individuals with nationalist and right-wing beliefs, hooligan groups, and a community not particularly inclined to contemporary culture; in general, not our primary audience. Our programs were participative, but not for many of our neighbors who had more right-wing and conservative attitudes. Despite these barriers, I believe we were able to find a common language and cohabit without many incidents or resentment. Our efforts to address shared communal issues, such as façade and heating issues, backyard floods, roof and front door repairs, the daily life we shared, as well as our excellent relationship with owners of nearby shops, café pizzerias, and restaurants (much due to the increased traffic from our visitors, as well as ourselves) gave us some credit in the lower Dorćol area. At the local cafe pizzeria, we would always encounter football fans and the local crowd seated there like in their own living room. The owner was their friend as well as ours, and we all entered the establishment freely. If they made comments about LGBT individuals, trans women, or Priština artists, I would sit at their table and listen to their actual struggles, which were poverty and social injustice. They all performed poorly in school and were only legally able to work in low-wage occupations. Despite ideological differences and disdain for our programs, they always greeted me on the streets – I never saw them as a threat. I had known many of them since their childhood, and I saw them every day on the street, so I was always saddened that we lacked the capacity to engage in a structured dialogue with them. They helped us when the B92 Fund, with the assistance of REX, collected aid for the flooded people in Obrenovac, and they assisted us in setting up the tables in the street during our 20th-anniversary picnic[33]. Stefan, a football fan

[33] To celebrate the 20th anniversary of REX, we closed the street and invited several initiatives with which we collaborated to join our full-day public program. https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/pozivamo-vas-na-rexov-rodjendanski-piknik--eid-2147.1.209.html

and himself a sheltered child, entertained our young guest from the Shelter for Abandoned Children (*Dom Za nezbrinutu decu*).

I left REX and Belgrade almost 10 years ago, but I always pass through Jevrejska Street whenever I visit the city. The closure of REX had an impact on the tiny shop across the street, which shut down due to poor traffic, as well as the overall appearance of the neighborhood. This is not only my impression but also that of neighbors I frequently meet; although many of them disagreed with our program ideology, they were equally saddened by the closure of REX.

Despite numerous difficult conversations and negotiations regarding our programs, as well as occasional visits to their doors to ask for patience due to the loudness during Dis-patch or the RING RING festival, the tenants now mentioned togetherness, good relationships, and respect. For during our stay there, we also cared about the neglected building that had its facade fixed due to our instance, as well as all windows both on the street and yard side; we took care of street lights and introducing heat; in winter, we cleared the snow and ice from the sidewalk along the whole street; we would lend electricity through extension cords when some neighbors' power was turned off due to unpaid bills; we helped beneficiaries of social aid, and handed out New Year's gifts to children. In the tense tenant dynamic, REX acted as a mediator. By abandoning Jevrejska 16, both sides lost: REX lost its identity, while the building lost its vocal and energetic tenant, which infused the dynamic of an open cultural and artistic environment into their daily lives. Despite the presence of a new Jewish Cultural Center that conducts programs in the same area, the street has silently fallen into a state of neglect while oversized and expensive blocks of new construction continue to thrive just one corner away.

LEGACY

Various communities formed around REX, including the Low-Fi gathering of alternative videos, the participatory poetry collective "Pesničenje," the collectives Who Builds the City and Smarter Building (*Pametnija zgrada*), the new circus "Cirkusdere"[34], and the comics festival "Novo doba"[35]. They did not stay at REX but instead expanded, grew, and developed into new successful collectives and spaces. Through numerous projects, these associates

[34] Contemporary circus collective that since its inception held its rehearsals and shows at REX https://cirkusfera.org/en/

[35] https://www.facebook.com/NOVODOBAFESTIVAL/

combined their own experience with that of others, resulting in new productions and organizations. By acting as a host and working with multiple initiatives, REX significantly contributed to the creation of a progressive cultural climate for the development of an independent cultural and art scene, strongly supporting social activism and leftist solidarity politics, and sharing its resources with various practices, initiatives, and organizations.

Changes that resulted in the marginalization of REX and similar projects in Serbian society did not occur overnight. There are various reasons: social and political situation, lack of stable institutional and project financing, insufficient professionalization in the sphere of independent culture, commercialization of culture, indifference of mainstream media to modern independent cultural creation, and lack of strategies and support for participative practices within the organizations themselves. The discontinuity caused by the loss of space at Jevrejska 16, the cancellation of program lines, and the loss of associates who worked on them, as well as the consistently poor working conditions and the constant problems of REX's autonomy, had an impact on the visibility and quality of REX's production in other spaces following 2017.

Working at REX from 2000 to 2015 was a transformative experience for me as an activist and performer in the independent cultural scene, and it is difficult to explain all aspects of the work and the highly charged social backdrop of the period. I have left out a lot of facts, associates, and programs because it is hard to describe a place like REX's very dynamic life and hyperproduction. I began working at REX while it was in exile in Zmaj Jovina 7[36], although I never mentioned this 18-month period of REX's history outside its well-known location. While looking for material for footnotes, I was astonished to discover that the majority of the associates and REX programs and projects have left absolutely no digital traces. I was expecting far more public material, especially because REX and its creator, B92, had an exceptional digital repository. Associates' websites, which once held significant information, were no longer maintained, domains had expired, and some content may have been removed owing to copyright or regulatory changes. Furthermore, many had departed the independent sector, and organizations critical to producing this material had ceased operations. This loss of archives shows the importance of archiving for organizational memory, especially since many vital testimonies about the development of the independent

[36] At the beginning of April 1999, a new administration took over B92 (which included radio, TV, and video production, publications, an online department, and REX). The new leadership was led by self-proclaimed director Aleksandar Nikačević from the leading political party. For a time, REX associates worked from their own flats, and then from a rented flat in Zmaj Jovina 7. The associates managed to obtain equipment and other materials from REX, while the B92 editor, Jovana Krstanović, kept them in her own house on Trnska Street. REX returned to Jevrejska 16 in November 2000.

cultural scene and civil society, which played a critical role in social and cultural changes, had already vanished. That is why initiatives to archive and chronicle are essential for conserving the unique cultural heritage of the independent cultural scene and civil society. On the 30th anniversary of REX's opening, it can be concluded that REX, now without a permanent address, can gain a new life through its past and the vast potential of its archive, which must be accessible to all[37]. In an environment that does not support independent culture, REX's legacy shows that a different world of production, collectivity, cooperation, and cultural policy, was and still is possible[38].

[37] Borka Pavićević, antiwar activist and founder of the Center for Cultural Decontamination, concludes her piece on REX's relocation from Jevrejska 16 with the question: "Do we understand what we are losing, what we have, are we all an archive?" https://www.czkd.org/stance/rex-cinema-rex/

[38] REX's motto was: "REX reminds you – it is possible!" https://rex.fondb92.org/sr/pozivamo-vas-na-rexov-rodjendanski-piknik--eid-2147.1.209.html, https://www.b92.net/o/kultura/vas_komentar?nav_id=900488