

Working group 9

CREATIVE SCHOOL OF LOBBYING
Successful Models of Lobbying on a National and European Level

Saturday April 25th – 10:00 12:30

Moderators:

Henk Keizer - Utrecht - Vrede van Utrecht <http://vredevanutrecht.com>

Ondrej Hrab – Prague - Archa Theatre www.archateatre.cz

Speakers:

Darina Kárová - Nitra - Divadelna Nitra www.nitrafest.sk

Davor Miskovic - Rijeka - Drugo More <http://drugo-more.hr/>

During the meeting in Zurich we had a working group about the same subject: advocacy. The title of this working group, here in Bratislava is a bit misleading: we are not teaching. The aim is to share experiences and learn of this.

In Zurich we did not discuss the European level because that is a different kind of sports. We asked Daphne Tepper to tell us here in Bratislava, about her work for Culture Action Europe.

In Zurich we could formulate some conditions for a strong advocacy, both on a local and on a national level.

- *Critical mass* if the group of people is being represented;
- *Leaders*;
- *Access to power* members including influential people
- *Altruistic approach* for everybody must be interested
- *Platform* in order to have a place where we can be known, and to also invite others
- *Critical analysis* to make everything we do clear and understandable, to have a “story”,
- *Media* to plan the time for communication

It is also useful to be aware of possible risks:

- *Burn out*, if there are not enough people to help
- *Satisfaction* with my own work that it is effective .
- *Innovation stops being used by authorities, keep responsibilities clear*

Then the sharing followed. Participants were asked to share what the word ‘lobbying’ means to them and what comes to mind in connection with it. Many truthful, humourous, sharp, witty and occasionally positive answers were given. To refresh these your memories, here are some of them: corruption, advocacy, process of power, unused possibilities, creative work with politicians, a lot of undiscovered, creativity, lots of thinking, difficult fights, powers disputes, one of the conditions to survive, etc. We decided to use the word advocacy and stop using the word lobbying. For many people lobby had a negative meaning.

The rest of the meeting was also in the sharing spirit when the participants came forward with various experiences of how to get what we need to get.

The contribution of the never-ending story of the Slovak National theatre followed, which was presented by Ms. Karova. Rather than a full example, it was the vicious story of the Slovak history of culture. The story lasted from 1986, when the foundation stone was laid until 2007, when the theatre was opened. More than 20 years of long power struggles for money and wise conclusions followed. It is significant to mention that the most unfavourable were the changes in politics- changes of regime, reorganisation of the system and new governments every four years. An important voice in all the process was an organisation called “Hlas pre kultúru” (voice for culture) whose presence polarized society in two parts. What was essential to make things move was our own **self-confidence**, the acquirement of media, and the persuasion of politicians; and of course the voice of the people who never stopped loving the theatre as the national sign it has been throughout its short history.

Mr. Miskovic thought about the query of power. He discussed the power of society in a new way- in a way of harmonic perspective, where we should use society for our own purposes. The experience with their national network was when they tried to prove that their demands are in opposition to public demands. Success was just accidental; some were convinced while others remained untouched. Their focus was headed to the powers of politicians rather than their own powers; so they weren't critical of themselves in order to prove their own importance in society. It is essential to make one's stand and of course **to use one's own power** with the most creativity possible..

Another example comes from Scotland where the National Theatre has no building. They used the situation of changing governments and new parliamentary elections perfectly, when everyone was promising everything. So success was undoubted. Hand in hand, it was possible to ask for subsidies for independent artists since the question arose ‘why not support them if the National theatre can be subsidy funded’.

Slovenian participants proposed using the language of politicians in order to succeed. Their experience as an organisation of independent artists was that they were more understandable when *using very formal language*, that is statistics, finances, charts but also a certain kind of expert knowledge. The best that can happen for artists is to predict and **be always one step ahead of the politicians**, which enables them to present finished results and resolved solutions.

Brussels European Culture's proposal is not to wait until a solution will be found, but to find it oneself. To focus on money and funding isn't always the best solution. The question brings the answer: Do we keep arguing for money or rather go to the public good?

Another prospect is to **use the administrators** who know about the possibilities and how to find them if needed. The problem that might appear is corruption (as it is in some countries of Eastern Europe)

Let's remember that *culture is never only agenda*. And also, there are not only us and the responsible ones who can resolve the questions. To use the audience is a negotiable way, because **the audience can help a lot**.

Overcoming barriers is about the usage of *proper language* that might be understandable to those who cannot understand cultural language. The question is how far can we go in the use of simplified language in order to be comprehensible?

There are many *possibilities; they just need to be articulated*. It is important *to handle in a friendly way* that is not always necessarily combative. It is primarily important to find the proper way to break in awareness and good-favor.

What might cause certain troubles is disharmony in the voice of *artists that might have unequal ideas and views*. It's difficult to present this clearly to the politicians.

Problems can occur when governments are changing every 4-5 years. If we want to have project e.g. for 6-7 years, there is no guarantee to stand for us. The helpful argument might be: "You should leave something behind you".

It is important to reveal ourselves, to constantly develop our thinking and of course, to be confident about what we believe ourselves. Our creativity can be the answer- in other words we must find a level of communication and then be creative on this concrete level; because we need to make the politicians understand.

Sometimes the only first step is problematic and then everything goes by itself and we can be encouraged to find the way for dialogue by searching for all possibilities and inexhaustible creativity.

One of the conclusions of this meeting was that in many reactions and examples the role of the audience, the public was important of successful advocacy.

We certainly have to add this to the "conditions for successful advocacy" that we found in Zurich. We became aware that we, to often, have developed a habit to look at and talk with politicians. The voters of politicians and our audiences often are the same people. Why did we forget them in our attempts to make our voices heard?

After the meeting in Bratislava I receive by mail a really helpful book regarding the last subject. It was sent by Mike Griffith>The book is written by John Holden, it is a so called DEMOS publication with the beautiful title: "cultural policy is a closed conversation among experts. What culture needs is a democratic mandate from the public" the subtitle: cultural value and the crisis of legitimacy. Why culture needs a public mandate.

Ondrej and Henk offer to moderate one more working group at the next meet focusing "our arguments". It would be great to have John Holden as a speaker.

Report by:
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