

# THE DEMOCRACY PAVILION FOR EUROPE

Ljubljana, March 9-11, 2022

ZRC SAZU, Novi trg 2



Allegory (photo: Željko Stevanić / IFP)

Plans for the Democracy Pavilion were first drawn up some months ago. However, with the current Russian's army invasion of Ukraine in our minds, L'Internationale association wants to use this platform to stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people and condemn the military invasion that affects the lives of millions of civilians.

During the three days, we will discuss many issues of democracy, Europe, colonial legacies and contemporary empires. We will do this with Ukraine in our minds and our hearts. We share the urgency of stopping the war and [we are taking the actions](#) that are in our hands as civilians to demand an immediate end to the attacks. In addition to solidarity with those who directly suffer from Russian aggression, we also want to stand with those who resist from inside Russia and who risk their own lives and well-being to defend others. Together, we must try to use art to imagine a society that will prevent such conflicts in future, and then go on to build it. We hope our conference can contribute a little to all these urgencies.

While condemnation of the war is crucial, it is in itself only one necessary step. We also find it important to maintain the spaces for public debate and analysis of the causes of the war and the position of arts and culture when life and democratic values are under threat. In that light, we carry the pain of ongoing conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and elsewhere, as well as the histories of exploitation and erasure that still manifest themselves in the present. Our question remains what does democracy mean in these current, bleak conditions? How do we both seek to defend the limited space to think and act that we still have, and push for a new sense of living well and caring for the planet we share?

We will begin the sessions on Wednesday with news from artists and cultural workers in Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora. We hope that some of them will be able to travel to Ljubljana so that we can listen to what they want and need. With this invasion, it is more clear than ever that real existing democracy is under existential threat. While it is true that European democracies are imperfect, they have allowed for governments that are to some degree responsive to open, independent elections decided by debate and argument. Today, even that version of democracy is something we need to defend, as well as to nurture the better, more equitable, more joyful versions we hope can yet emerge. Re-energizing our common futures is something to which everyone can contribute; but we believe that the arts can play its role as an initiator of imaginative epistemologies and a new ethic of living together within the limits of the planet. We want to use this opportunity to explore that belief.

Curated by Zdenka Badovinac and Charles Esche, the Democracy Pavilion for Europe aims to contribute to the rethinking and potential revival of communal forms of decision making as a vision and practice, with artists playing a key role in their conception of different and better worlds and an ethics of living together differently on this planet.

The aim of the **Democracy Pavilion for Europe** conference is to concentrate artistic, activist, and institutional energies. The objective is to find ways for the creative community to understand democracy and its limits, articulate its values, and propose forms through which to build a new commitment to shared control, public interest and the commons.

The Pavilion will start as an international conference in Ljubljana on 9–11 March, organized by the L'Internationale association in cooperation with ZRC SAZU. This is the first step in the Pavilion's planned programme that will unfold through local workshops at L'Internationale confederation member locations and transform into an online pavilion at: [www.internationaleonline.org](http://www.internationaleonline.org).

The Democracy Pavilion for Europe is part of [The European Pavilion](#) – an initiative by the **European Cultural Foundation** that aims to support and promote artistic projects that imagine desirable and sustainable futures for Europe. The European Pavilion was initiated by the Amsterdam-based European Cultural Foundation and is developed in partnership with the Camargo Foundation, the Kultura Nova Foundation, and Fondazione CRT.

Over the course of 2021, seven arts and cultural organizations in various countries across Europe have joined this exciting new initiative: ARNA (Sweden), Brunnenpassage (Austria), INIVA (London), OGR Torino (Italy), State of Concept (Greece), Studio Rizoma (Italy) and L'Internationale (Ljubljana, Belgium, Netherlands, Spain and Poland).

More information at: [theeuropeanpavilion.eu](http://theeuropeanpavilion.eu)

Coordination of the Democracy Pavilion: Nika Ham, Maria Mallol

# SCHEDULE

9 March, Day 1.

Should we stay or should we go? Leaving or reforming liberal democracy

This day will be devoted to looking at people/groups/organizations that are questioning their experience of existing democracy and investigating an “elsewhere”, thinking about cultural efforts in communities, in cultural education, in other forms of change. Is existing liberal democracy a viable way towards emancipation, inclusion, and social justice? What is the potential relation between culture, social justice, and democracy? What cultural forms might sensibly contribute to these aims?

**10:00–10:30 Welcome.** Oto Luthar, Zdenka Badovinac, Charles Esche. On zoom: André Wilkens (Director of the European Cultural Foundation) and Lore Gablier (ECF program manager) presenting the European Pavilion Program and the [European Culture for Solidarity Fund](#).

**10:30–12:00 Artists and Democracy - Panel 1**

**Emergency action. Contributions from / for Ukraine.**

Open panel. Artists and cultural workers in the Ukraine and the Ukrainian diaspora. including Nikita Kadan (artist and curator) and others depending on the current situation.

COFFEE BREAK

**12:15–12:45** In conversation with Iskra Geshoska (zoom)

**12:45– 14:00 Artists and Democracy - Panel 2**

Gabriella Riccio - IRI

Nika Autor

Moderator: Charles Esche

**14:00h- 15:00** Lunch

**15:00–17:00 Artists and Democracy - Panel 3**

Dmitry Vilensky (zoom)

Antifascist Year

Eszter Szakács

Moderator: Charles Esche

**17:00–17:30** In conversation with Hazal Halavut (zoom)

COFFEE BREAK

**18:15** EVENING LECTURE Peter Klepec

10 March, Day 2.

Using Democracy

On the second day, actors are invited who are active in politics, theory and institutional organisation and who make use of culture and art in their work. They are working within and around the liberal democratic nation state and the public sector, often looking for the opportunities it affords for dissent and for taking democratic power. How to use or access the languages of art and culture to question democracy or hold the state to its stated ideals? What is the relationship between democracy and public cultural institutions and subsidies? What is needed to reshape existing liberal democracy away from its apparent capture by the conservative and revolutionary right?

**10:00-11:00** Conversation (zoom): Manuel Borja-Villiel and Joanna Mytkowska  
Towards the Museum of the Commons.  
What is the use of apparently democratic public institutions today?  
Moderator: Zdenka Badovinac

COFFEE BREAK

**11:00-13:00 The Use and Abuse of Existing Structures**

Asta Vrečko  
Tomislav Medak  
Aleksi Borisionok

Moderator: Bojana Piškur

**13:00-14:00** - Lunch

**14:00- 17:30 Constituting and reconstituting: practices and repairs**

**14:00-14:30** Tania Bruguera (zoom)

**14:30-15:00** Sandi Hilal (zoom)

SHORT BREAK

**15:20-15:40** Rolando Vasquez

**15:40-16:10** Marcelo Expósito

**16:10-16:30** Jonas Staal

**16:30-17:30 Questions and open discussion**

Moderator: Corina Oprea

COFFEE BREAK

**18:15** EVENING LECTURE, Tomaž Mastnak

**11 March, Day 3.**

**Kakšna sramota! (What a shame!) The Case of Slovenia**

The case of Slovenia: what is happening here and why? What is to be done about it in the cultural field? Artists, cultural workers, and activists from Slovenia are invited to discuss their role in the fight for democracy as it is currently threatened in Slovenia. The day will be dedicated to the sustainability of such resistance – to its economy, structure, networking, and archiving.

**10:00** Introduction of the Historical Context

Oto Luthar, historian and director ZRC SAZU (introduction by Zdenka Badovinac)

COFFEE BREAK

**11:00-12:30 Artists and Activists - Panel I**

NON-GRUPA

Protestna ljudska skupščina (The Protest People's Assembly)

Aktiv delavk in delavcev v kulturi (The Culture Workers Active): Petja Grafenauer, Miha Zadnikar

Vladozlom (via Zoom)

**12:30-14:00** LUNCH

**14:30-15:30 Artists and Activists - Panel II**

Miha Blažič, N'toko  
Tjaša Pureber

COFFEE BREAK

**15:30-17:30** WORKSHOPS

**Workshop 1: Artistic approach as basic tool of non-violent protests**, Jaša Jenull (representative of The Protest People's Assembly)

The workshop will discuss the mechanisms, experiences, and practical approaches that have helped us carry out more than 90 mass protests and a large number of small activist interventions over the past two years of struggle against the far right government in Slovenia. Through practical examples, we will present our answers to some of the key questions we have faced in our two years of constant presence on the street. Among others: How to make the invisible visible? How to effectively utilize mass media? How to maintain protest mobilization with the help of art in the long run? How to empower and connect the wider community of protesters using artistic approaches. The second part of the workshop will present a concrete protest action that will take place on the same day and offer participants the opportunity to participate in the protest itself.

**Workshop 2: Culture, art, and political activism – key problems today**, Miha Zadnikar (representative of the Culture workers active)

This workshop will touch on crucial points of the (quite changed) activism / art / culture relationship that are critically seen from a critical perspective today.

The main topics will be:

- a) older, recent, and unconscious traps of liberal / illiberal democracies
- b) aggressive times of biopolitics; radical state repression and "predatory capitalism"
- c) disintegrated subjects within the so-called cultural and creative sectors; cultural fetishism; defetism; recent unexpected difficulties in shaping heterogeneous political movements
- d) questioning the "activism of names and family names"; personal career-making activism; grass-roots vs. NGO trends; autonomy and non-hierarchical politics
- e) spontaneous inclinations towards a liberal political worldview / liberal jargon
- f) opportunities and obstacles in attempts to move away from ideological struggles (with using reorganized and sharpened "national culture") towards more productive (class) ways of struggle.

Participants:

Antifascist Year (Bogna Stefanska and Jakub Depczynsky), Nika Autor, Zdenka Badovinac, Miha Blažič - N'toko, Aleksei Borisionok, Tania Bruguera, Charles Esche, Marcelo Expósito, Iskra Geshoska, Petja Grafenauer and Miha Zadnikar (representatives of The Culture workers active), Hazal Halavut, Sandi Hilal, Jaša Jenull (representative of The Protest People's Assembly), The Protest People's Assembly, Nikita Kadan, Peter Klepec, Oto Luthar, Tomaž Mastnak, Tomislav Medak, Joanna Mytkowska, NON-GRUPA, Corina Oprea, Tjaša Pureber, Gabriella Riccio, Jonas Staal, Eszter Szakács, Rolando Vásquez, Dmitry Vilensky, Asta Vrečko, Miha Zadnikar (representative of the Workers in Culture Task Group), Vladozlom