



HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST: PUBLICATION

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Rekonstrukcija
Ženski fond*

#HSCDIB HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST: PUBLICATION

Published by: Reconstruction Women's Fund

Publisher: Mirjana Miroslavljević Bobić

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Traslation and proofreading: Ana Imširović Đorđević

Financial Support: Mama Cash

Printed by: Tukan print, Belgrade

Print run: 500

Belgrade, 2017.

CIP - Каталогизacija y publikaciji -
Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

061.235.058(497.11)

342.726:336.1/5(497.11)

KAKO da sestre to rade najbolje : publikacija / [uredništvo Marija Jakovljević, Zoe Gudović ; prevod Ana Imširović Đorđević]. - Beograd : Rekonstrukcija ženski fond, 2017 (Beograd : Tukan print). - 71, 71 str. ; 24 cm

Nasl. str. prištampanog engl. prevoda: How Sisters Could Do it Best. - Tiraž 500.

ISBN 978-86-910101-6-4

1. Јаковљевић, Марија [уредник]

а) Како да сестре то раде најбоље. Пројекат б) Јавне финансије - Србија с) Цивилно друштво - Партиципација - Србија

COBISS.SR-ID 252860684

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INTRODUCTION

The journey from Sarajevo to Belgrade takes time and while travelling down the winding road I was overwhelmed by thoughts on making ends meet, politics, money and responsibility when it comes to money. I was at the **Pitchwise festival** in Sarajevo **2015**, where I attended the workshop held by art activists from Guerilla Girls. This group uses facts, humor and unusual visualizations to expose discrimination and corruption in arts, movies, politics and pop culture. The workshop lasted for few hours and was attended by around 30 activists from former Yugoslavia. Its aim was to help us think of good ideas for campaigns in our local communities. Listed subjects were mostly about improving social circumstances, life without violence and discrimination, protection of environment etc. When it was my turn, I said I would like the most to dedicate the campaign to MONEY/FINANCES! People laughed and I felt somehow alone, watching all those people sharing the same activist space with me, the same burn-out problem and same chase for projects and, yes, money!

Then I realized we had no idea about what money was or how to manage it, we were just talking about it and capitalism established it as a social value we should all aim for, while we actually never learnt a thing about money and have been totally financially illiterate. We were just superficially mentioning issues that were of our concern, defining them as problems, but not digging much below the surface.

When I got back to my office, I said to my colleagues it would be good to start, within our feminist philanthropy programme, an educational campaign that would advance our financial literacy, responsibility and transparency when it comes to public – i.e. our – money, but would also give us ideas on how to invest our private money.

Within the feminist philanthropy programme, we in **Reconstruction Women's Fund**, have been developing various strategies, from public actions and events, donors evenings, to socializing, exchanges and visits – with a common objective – to get people to know us and donate money. What we lacked were more people that would get interested and contribute to spreading the RWF mission¹ but also to developing local philanthropy. When RWF director, Mirjana, and I made the campaigning plan, we were aware that this was a broad subject that might get people interested, might scratch the surface of some issues, and is of concern for all of us. Our idea was to include into the campaign persons from the most diversified fields, not just from NGO sector.

In 2017 we launched the educational campaign **HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST!** First as a pilot project that included a seminar, workshops and practical actions, as well as a press conference where 23 persons from 7 towns of Serbia took part. Participants of various interests came from several fields of work and activism, such as struggle against violence against women, struggle against human trafficking, work on human rights – particularly LGBTQ, labor, students' and rights of persons with disabilities, economic empowerment of women and social entrepreneurship, art (literature, music, animation), social theory, education, local policies, preserving and conquering public spaces, but common ground for all were feminism and struggle for social justice. This group of people of different experiences, ages and knowledge, went through practical and theoretical education on: public money distribution and managing, kinds of corruption and how widespread are they, usefulness of collecting and spending public money, right to information of public importance, budgeting and human rights, austerity measures, public participation in decision making at local level, with a special emphasis on the budgeting process, our own responsibilities and obligations when it comes to spending money that is not ours, practices of raising money at local level, communication, planning organization and producing actions, as well as working on our bodies, voices and public appearances.

All these topics are important for us to understand the very essence of relationship between state and money, and to set up a system for us as citizens to be able to ask, react, demand information and influence future steps of distribution of public money.

1] **RWF mission is to support and maintain the feminist platform against war, nationalism racism, militarism, and all forms of discrimination and violence against women.**

Recently a conference *The Return of Utopia 2* was held in the organization of Centre for Politics of Emancipation and Mašina portal, where Maja Krek, within the lecture titled *Strategies of Socialist Feminism*, talked about impact of economic crisis and austerity measures on worsening of quality of life of women in Serbia. According to the data I heard that evening, women who work all their lives, take care of themselves and of others, live shorter even when they do live to get retired. I memorized vividly the table of budget distribution for 2018. I asked Maja to publish the table here, even though the research *Feminist Approaches against Austerity Regimes*, done by Isidora Jarić and Maja Krek in cooperation with RLS SEE in 2017, will not be published before 2018.

Projected maximal amounts to be assigned to certain ministries in 2018.

	Amount in 2015	Limit in 2018
Ministry of Internal Affairs	63.22*	73.2
Ministry of Defense	55.13	67.36
Ministry of Education, Science, and Technological Development	156.95	155.36

*In billions of dinars

If budgets for defense and internal affairs increase, why do budgets for other domains of our lives decrease?

For us as a feminist foundation it is important to change this kind of budgeting in future and to direct more money to development of the society and dignified life for citizens, instead of production of crises and fear of war!

Our friends from Women in Black say:

We are living in a country where war goes on by other means – peace is not the bare absence of war itself, but the absence of fear, hatred, poverty, injustice. Until the daily lives of so many citizens are imbued with fear, poverty and injustice... we cannot call it peace.²

2] All For Peace, Health and Knowledge – Nothing For Arms – Announcement for the occasion of the International Day of Women's Actions for Peace and Disarmament, available at http://zeneucnom.org/index.php?option=com_content@task=view&id=1163@lang=en

Therefore it is important for us to initiate discussions on the problems we live in. Recognition of importance of knowledge and financial literacy is part of the solution of major problems.

Publication before you opens possibility to understand each other better and understand why we started the educational campaign, but above all to inform us on the steps of some processes and decisions.

We are very grateful to people who took part and shared their knowledge and experience: Milena Vasić, Danilo Ćurčić, Boban Stojanović, Branka Ćurčić, Radmila Miković, Fahrudin Kladničanin, Mladen Jovanović, Mirjana Mirosavljević Bobić.

Working team the campaign could not be realized without: Mirjana Mirosavljević Bobić, Marija Jakovljević, Selena Simić, Saša Trbanos, Vladimir Jerić-Vlidi, Katarina Popović.

We are also very grateful to the **Mama Cash** foundation from Netherlands which financially supported the educational campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST!

Zoe Gudović
RWF PR manager

Context

AUSTERITY MEASURES VS. HUMAN RIGHTS

(On public money and human rights)

I AUSTERITY MEASURES AS A NEW REALITY

Global economic crisis, accompanied by austerity measures justified by reducing budget deficits and restarting cycle of economic growth, had a negative impact on a whole range of economic and social rights. These measures led to numerous redundancies in public sector, raised taxes and social benefits cuts. On the other hand, consequences of introduced austerity measures opened a new space of struggle which demands reactivation of tools we have at our disposal to influence the decisions made within the fields of economic policy, taxes, and distribution and spending of budget money. These tools are human rights, above all the ones within the domain of economic and social rights. These rights have unjustly been neglected and until recently considered non-justiciable, reduced to program objectives, mere political phrases and developmental goals. To make things worse, these rights are often refuted as human rights, and such criticism have even come from some human rights organizations.¹ But ever since the beginning of the world economic crisis, the dis-

1] For instance, Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch in some of his works underlined how impossible was it to deal with economic and social rights due to their incompatibility with the methodology of „right violation – violator – legal remedy“, while Aryeh Neier, cofounder of the organization and president of Open Society Institute denies that economic and social rights belong to the corps of human rights. See: K. Roth, ‘Defending Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: Practical Issues Faced by an International Human Rights Organization’ (2004) 26 Human Rights Quarterly 1, A Neier, Taking liberties: four decades in the struggle for rights (Public Affairs 2003), pp xxix – xxxi

course of economic and social rights has been evolving, opening new debates on the ways how economic policies are related to the obligations assumed by the states' ratifications of particular international agreements, above all the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights.²

II DOES DISCOURSE OF AUSTERITY MEASURES LEAVE ANY SPACE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS?

It is estimated that austerity measures would affect over six billion people from 2016 to 2020, i.e. almost eighty percent of the world population.³ Bearing that in mind, the real question is whether and how we might use the instruments of human rights to curb the austerity measures which transfer the burden of economic crisis from those who caused it by their financial speculations to citizens who are supposed to be able to realize their economic and social rights.⁴ Failure to utilize human rights as a corrective mechanism for all eco-

2] International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was adopted and opened for signing and ratification or accession by the UN General Assembly Resolution UN 2200 A(XXI) from December 16, 1966. Covenant entered into force on January 3, 1976, and the Republic of Serbia by succession became a contracting state of the Covenant. The document guarantees individual economic, social and cultural rights (such as the right to work, just and favorable conditions of work, social insurance, adequate standard of living, highest attainable standard of physical and mental, education, participation in cultural life and many other rights). Member states of the Covenant are obliged to ensure progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as mechanisms of monitoring how the abovementioned responsibilities are being implemented. For further information, see: Law on Ratification of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Official Gazette of SFRY 7/71). Besides, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights entered into force on May 5, 2013. The Protocol prescribes the mechanism of submission of individual complaints to the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in cases of violations of Covenant's provisions. The Republic of Serbia did not ratify this Optional Protocol.

3] I Ortiz, M Cummins, J Capaldo, K Karunanethy; International Labour Office, 'The Decade of Adjustment: A Review of Austerity Trends 2010-2020 in 187 Countries' (Extension of Social Security Series No. 53) (ILO 2015).

4] For example, after the crisis broke out in USA, 7.7 trillions of US dollars were spent for so called emergency loans to banks and financial institutions, while in the UK during the peak of the crisis 1,162 trillion pounds sterling was allocated for reaching financial stability. For further information, see: M Collins, The Big Bank Bailout, Forbes, July 14, 2015, online available at <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikecollins/2015/07/14/the-big-bank-bailout/#7fefa78c3723>> ; National Audit Office, HM Treasury, The Comptroller and Auditor General's Report on Accounts to the House of Commons, July 13, 2011, online available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/HMT_account_2010_2011.pdf>

conomic policies surely narrows the field of action for the struggle against these decisions. Furthermore, it also narrows the space for influencing these decisions so that they take into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable ones within the society. But in order to use the human rights mechanisms, it is necessary to first take a look on some of the misconceptions that contributed to the slow(ing down of) economic and social rights development, and eventually to the lack of understanding how decisions to cut down pensions or invest in buying new tanks or airplanes have a lot to do with human rights. Liberal point of view reduces the concept of human rights⁵ only to the civil and political (positive) rights, leaving no space for considerations on how would, for instance, raised taxes or cutting down the number of jobs in public sector influence those whose voices most often cannot be heard in the society, since such policies do not establish mechanisms efficient enough that would enable majority of citizens to take more active part in political and economic life. Liberal standpoint does not perceive economic decisions, including the decisions on austerity measures, as the ones that can be discussed from the human rights point of view. On the other hand, left-wing is hesitant when it comes to the concept of human rights and does not use the mechanisms at their disposal for opening yet another front for the struggle for more just society. In order to understand how wrong and outdated this differentiation between more and less important rights is, it is necessary to take a look back at the process of adopting crucial documents that guarantee human rights.

Universal Declaration on Human Rights, adopted just after the World War II with the intention to prevent the sufferings and horrors the human race went through during this war from ever happening again, proclaimed both civil and political and economic and social rights. The initial idea was to guarantee later all rights from the Declaration by a legally binding document that would encompass all of the rights. But after the beginning of the Cold War and division to blocs, things have changed. The initial idea, the best expressed in the words that “when deprived of economic, social and cultural rights, man does not represent the human person whom the Universal Declaration regards as the ideal of the free man”⁶ was abandoned and each of the two blocs in a way sponsored the adoption of legally binding documents focusing on the

5] Above all we think of the opinions that economic and market freedoms are enough to achieve social welfare, that understand provision of one's own wellbeing as solely individual responsibility. In reality they actually lead to withdrawal of the state from its social roles and abolishment of all social networks of solidarity and support.

6] 1950 UN *Unity Resolution*.

set of rights in accordance with their ideological viewpoints. Countries of the Western world promoted the adoption of the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**, while countries of the Eastern bloc worked on the adoption of the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**. After the adoption of the two documents, numerous other conventions were adopted, dealing from their specific points of view with the rights of certain social groups – women, children, persons with disabilities, persons facing racial discrimination etc. Like it was initially intended after the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, all rights are guaranteed with appropriate conventions with no differentiations between the two worlds – the one of economic, social and cultural rights on one side and civil and political rights on another. It is an additional reason to think of this division to two covenants guaranteeing civil and political and on the other hand economic, social and cultural right as of an incident in the development of human rights.

III AUSTERITY MEASURES IN SERBIA

A lot has changed since the beginning of the world economic crisis and initial insisting on the part of ministers and other political leaders in charge that the crisis presented a chance to grow and that large companies would move their production to Serbia due to lower prices, economic stability or favorable export arrangements. Still, the understanding of the way to fight budget deficit or slow growth of GDP has not changed. The fight is reduced to cuts of public spending, raising tax rates, announcing rationalization and systematization as well as cutting down social benefits. From 2012 on, austerity measures became a never-ending mantra that keeps being repeated in TV shows, newspapers, in the Parliament and wherever needed.

Several examples of austerity measures in Serbia should be especially underlined. First of all, the *Law on Temporary Regulation of the Manner of Pension Payments was adopted*. In this case, the Constitutional Court established that the reduction of pensions and acquired rights introduced by the Law was in compliance with the Constitution. Then, there are *raising VAT (value added tax) from 18 to 20 percent*, and *introduction of forced labor* for beneficiaries of financial social assistance who are able to work – so called *measures of social inclusion* that bring nothing more than unpaid work⁷ and discrimination

7] It is important to remember that social benefits are constitutionally guaranteed rights we are entitled to if we experience difficulties providing ourselves the existential minimum. Therefore, beneficiaries of financial social benefits do not receive

of the poorest. Then, there are *taxes on social housing, refugee housing* and many other measures intended to reduce the budget deficit. But there are several problems with these policies. They affect the poorest and the least powerful ones in the society, which may be illustrated by the anecdote that the one who does not pay the ticket in a city bus can face with the problem of not being able to have his or her passport or ID card issued, while the ones not paying taxes, benefits and wages to their employees consult the prime minister on economic recovery.⁸ Another, not quite anecdotal, situation is that children suffering from rare diseases are often getting treatment thanks to humanitarian aid raised via SMS, while at the same time the amount between 160 and 180 million Euros is invested into overhauling airplanes given to our state as presents, that the air forces will use to fly and „protect“ our sky from the bitter enemies. Instead of technocratic decisions on spending money for improvements of military resources, made behind closed doors, it is necessary to re-establish the priorities when it comes to spending public money on social services, especially when facing the general trend of cutting down social services of the state and introducing austerity measures.⁹

Obligations stemming from the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights should be operationalized in the laws and policies adopted by the Republic of Serbia. However, this is not the case, and introduced austerity measures are a clear signal of that. In accordance with the article 2 (1), each state party to the Covenant “undertakes to take steps... to the maximum of its available resources... to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means”, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures. Economic and social rights are being progressively realized, most often by adopting laws and other policies that enable citizens to realize these rights without discrimination and in accordance with the principles of international human right law. Conditioning financial social benefits with unpaid work, or additional taxation of social housing for citizens who got to rent social apartments exactly for the reason of being in the position of social or housing vulnerability, are absolutely contrary to the responsibilities undertaken.

money for this kind of work but only assure the possibility to keep receiving the social benefits they are anyway entitled to according to the law and the Constitution.

8] Newspaper Alo, *Businessmen Welcomed Vučić*, 5 of July 2014. Online at <http://arhiva.alo.rs/vesti/aktuelno/privrednici-ugostili-vucica/60236>

9] M Sepúlveda Carmona, *Alternatives to austerity: a human rights framework for economic recovery*, p. 47, in: A Nolan (ed.), *Economic, and Social Rights after the Global Financial Crisis*, Cambridge University Press (2014).

According to the Covenant provisions, one of the crucial responsibilities of the state is neither to impose nor implement retrogressive measures in the field of economic and social rights. It cannot introduce measures and policies that would lower the standards of attained rights, and adjustment measures that might affect realization of economic and social rights must be limited in duration. Besides, it is necessary for these measures to be proportional, which measures affecting mostly the most vulnerable citizens definitely are not. Further on, these measures must not be discriminatory, which would not be the case for some of the measures we are facing with.

Even if it was possible to justify austerity measures that very negatively affected the most vulnerable population, we would have to see how the saved money is being spent – what are the priorities in the field of realizing economic and social rights, and whether these resources are being deployed for financing services that are useful for all of us.

IV ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS AS MECHANISM OF STRUGGLE FOR MORE JUST ECONOMIC POLICIES

Mechanisms at disposal against above mentioned austerity measures and other decisions affecting realization of economic and social rights can be found in the documents that guarantee our economic and social rights, above all in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Each day we get new confirmations of the importance of this document and its strength when it comes to the protection of economic and social rights. For instance, the first decision of the UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights¹⁰ was about the eviction of the author of the communication from a flat she could not pay off the mortgage for, and PAH¹¹ recently started examining what this decision could mean for other citizens experiencing the same or similar

10] UN, Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, I. D. G. against Spain, complaint No 2/2014. In this case Committee concluded that Spain did violate the right to adequate housing of the submitter of the complaint by realizing the procedure of eviction without enabling her to be notified on procedural steps that would result from her inability to pay off monthly amount of the loan. Even though Committee in this case mostly dealt with procedural aspects of this eviction, the importance of its decision is, above all, in the fact that, according to estimates of activist groups, there were approximately 400,000 similar cases in Spain from 2008 to 2012.

11] A platform for persons affected by claims of the banks due to mortgages - *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*.

problems. One case solved in favor of the victim of the mortgage loan could bring changes in thousands of other cases and change lives of many households living at risk of forced evictions.

Decisions economists make on ways to stitch budgets and reduce deficits should not remain unrelated to the principle of respecting human rights. Each decision has to be made in a way that would not jeopardize not only the realization of economic and social rights, but also other interdependent rights. In order to make it possible, citizens should focus their attention both in their wallets and decision making procedures. Also, the focus should be on setting demands for transparency of decision making processes, participation and the monitoring established through clear ways for controlling if the money is spent in accordance with previously determined priorities that would provide protection for the most vulnerable ones and the ones whose voice is most often not being heard. In cases when these demands are not being heard or established through existing procedures, citizens should demand the radical change in these undemocratic structures in order to make the shift towards the more emancipatory practice and the policy based on their proclaimed rights. There are plenty of possibilities – protests, alternative models of information sharing, grass-root organizing, self-organization and many others. It is upon us to decide which possibility will bring the desired outcomes.

Money,
politics,
learning

GIMME MONEY

(On strategies of collecting and tracking money and politics behind it)

WHAT IS CIVIL SECTOR?

Conglomerate of hobbyist and associations based on interests, informal and formal groups gathered around specific aims, in forms of initiatives, organizations, cooperatives, foundations, networks, trade unions, movements and other different organizational forms, associations of citizens survived from the Socialist times, formed as grassroots responses to some problems or „imported“ within the process of accession to European Union – all that make civil sector. Popularly understood as corrective of government and public sector, more and more becomes its supplement, but not in the form of public-civil partnership¹, which is a rather unknown concept here, but as underdeveloped substitute of public sector devastated by austerity measures, privatizations and corruption. Sometimes it's understood as a „bridge“ between public and private sector, an effort toward reconciliation of structurally irreconcilable positions, above all because public sector is supposed to serve to fulfill the needs of society² based on nonmarket principles, while private sector is intended for making profits and thus fulfillment of needs of those who can pay for it by

1] It would mean institutionalization of collective decision making and joint managing through creation of new organizational structures including official body/bodies and civil sector actors; it cannot be reduced to the level of superficial/cosmetic public consultations, but demands the consensus and shared responsibility for managing among the ones taking part in what is going on.

2] Including the whole range of needs that should be fulfilled for a dignified life and creating a just society. Through social services, public infrastructure and public goods, public sector should guarantee each person in the state everything: from safe housing, health services, education, access to clean water, food, energy, transportation, to clean and safe natural environment, information, protection in crises (whether natural disasters or loss of job) etc.

market principles.³ All in all, civil sector is in no way homogenous: neither in regards to organizational methods and principles of work nor politics it intentionally or unconsciously promotes, neither when it comes to objectives nor values. Some parts of it are extended arms of the government which purpose is to serve to realization of aims of ruling structures on different fronts that are not already covered by government using institutional channels. Some hide small family businesses or partnerships behind their initiatives that do certain favours to governing structures and/or big companies and/or polish their reputation. There are also some truly gathered around efforts to solve burning issues in their communities, and their positions may be both progressive and retrograde, depending on the values and methods of gathering and activities they promote. Some act in the field – in the streets, neighbourhoods, factories, villages; some do theoretical work; some do advocacy and deal with public policies. Some are focused on specific clearly differentiated target groups (e.g. women survivors of violence), some on building broader coalitions (e.g. movement for social justice). Hence, there are all kinds of us.

One might say it's a plurality of opinions and actions, an embodiment of democracy. Or maybe it isn't? Various actors within civil sector are organized in different ways and decision making processes within them are quite different. Some are also marked by stubborn problematic hierarchies and relations of power correlating with claiming rights to different resources (information, positions, money, involvement in various structures and dynamics). The one in power also has a voice and different benefits, unlike the majority of "worker bees" who are lower in the hierarchy, even if it's an informal hierarchy.

Civil sector is fragmented and divided even when it comes to similar initiatives, values and politics. One of the major traps it slips into is isolation in separate niches and living in „bubbles“ which sometimes make actors of civil sector unaware of the existence of other actors relevant for their work. General cacophony of demands and hyper-production of contents targeting different actors (the state, broad public, some specific body...) are typical for this ghettoized and mostly uncoordinated civil sector.

In such internal and external-contextual chaos, burning and at the same time neglected questions are what we know about ourselves and the system we act

3] It's where the fourth sector or subsector within civil sector emerges – a sector of social entrepreneurship which is a whole different story we will not deal with here.

in, what resources we have at our disposal and what to do with them. For the purpose of contextualization and understanding the campaign HOW SISTERS COULD TO IT BEST, we will reduce these complex questions to the dimensions of learning and money, even though they are much more multidimensional.

WHERE CIVIL SECTOR GETS MONEY FROM?

Money is literally all around, and each natural and legal person can donate and support various initiatives of public importance. Can, but won't. Some would like to, but don't – due to complicated procedures, lack of trust in civil society organizations (CSOs) or some other reason. Since local resources at disposal are insufficient, it is rather logical that significant amounts come to the civil sector from abroad, which in combination with stigmatization of all those wishing to change something makes a fertile ground for narratives about „foreign mercenaries“. Different organizations have different funding sources. Rough sketch of the eco-system of donors would consist of various international funds (mostly EU funds), foundations (can be related to political parties of some European countries, private, corporative, ones grown out of communities/movements etc.), companies (mostly ones with CSR programmes⁴), states and individuals.

International and national foundations, companies, state and other political actors find in civil sector partners for realization of their agendas and policies. It's mostly about the top-down approach where CSOs are expected to fulfill certain needs, adjust themselves to certain dynamics and fit into the interests of those giving the money. Even if it does make sense in a way, it can easily slip into neglecting local context and imposing inadequate solutions, or setting unrealistic expectations from CSOs in terms of their efficiency, and then also serious invasion into the autonomy of these organizations. There are also donors who are very sensitized for the context, who understand the scope of work and reach of CSOs and try to offer the most appropriate possible support, but neither there is enough of such donors nor do they have big financial resources. Navigating through these challenges means assessing which money to turn to and in what way. Situation gets even more complicated by the fact that CSOs are not the only ones competing for funds, there are also state institutions that more and more turn to international funds, due to scarce budgets emp-

4] Corporate social responsibility programmes.

ties by sales of resources that used to provide budget money (resources such as state companies, infrastructure, natural resources etc.), as well as due to corruption, subventions for foreign investors and other neoliberal measures. Sometimes state institutions and civil society organizations jointly participate in a project, and such situations raise questions of relations of power when it comes to decisions on project activities, monitoring of money flows, distribution of work, taking responsibilities and credits etc.

CSOs also organize many humanitarian actions in which both individuals (local population and diaspora) and business sector participate in. Depending on how „attractive“ is certain subject at the moment and how visible is the issue, such actions can attract significant private funds (corporate or foundations), with a bit of fundraising knowledge and good contacts. According to the data of Catalyst Balkans for 2016 that monitors solely philanthropic⁵ donations, most actions got the support needed thanks to donations of great number of citizens – it makes 36,8% of all philanthropic actions, followed by business sector donating in 31,7% of actions, individuals in 17,7%, combined sources of funds making 8%, and private foundations that supported only 2.1% of actions within the field of philanthropy. Even though citizens are the most frequent donors, most money is raised, as expected, from the business sector – 45,4% of total amount of donations, while donations of citizens come second with 25,2%, and donations from mixed sources make 19,5%. Diaspora contributed with 2,7% and it is significantly smaller than in previous years when more money was raised from this source. Business sector donations, according to Catalyst data, in 41,7% of cases went to institutions, in 24,3% of cases were directed to families and individuals, and only in 18,5% of cases to CSOs. Causes business sector gave most money for were health issues (23, 2%), marginalized groups (22,7%) and education (16,1%). Numerous donations from citizens were mostly directed to families and individuals, in 45,3% of cases, and same percents of cases involved CSO and institutions as receivers of donations – each made 24,5%. Causes citizens supported through massive fundraising actions were health (40,3%), marginalized groups (28,5%), and poverty reduction (9,9%).⁶

5] This usually does not include the work of civil sector on raising awareness on certain issues, advocacy, providing certain services within the community, (self)education of activists etc. – these activities are financed in other ways.

6] More details at <http://www.catalystbalkans.org/DownloadFile.axd?strategy=contentitemdocument@fileName=902fbb65-b187-49a1-a5d6-a5a43ab2d000.pdf>

Since the mantra that **private sector** is an engine of economic development gained in popularity (the real question is who benefits from such development and at which price!), it is interesting to take a look at how private sector treats common good and how much money it allocates for actions of public interest. This is important in the light of demands of private companies, led by Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia, for tax benefits and generally reduced taxes for big economic actors – taxes that are supposed to be used for common good, public services and improvement of life standard of people. Money companies would allocate for civil society activities, with the benefits of reduced taxes, would in perspective become a disservice to civil sector that would be used by big companies to use their profits even more freely, the profits resulted from the exploitation of cheap local labour, state subventions and use of local resources at small prices. The result would be even less money in the state budget for financing solutions of growing social and economic problems. Money private sector would donate to civil sector would not even come close to tax money the society would be left without. Therefore, we are fast-forwarding toward the bottom, where they are trying to sell us further liberalization⁷ as an ideal solution for problems created or contributed to by those who wish such tax policies to be implemented.⁸

Apart from this political level, for organizations which decide to raise funds and establish partnerships with companies it's important to follow the trends: whom companies cooperate with, in which form, what their target groups are and which subjects they are focused on. The Responsible Business Forum that monitors annual investments of its companies-members reported that in 2015 total of 18 companies-members of the Forum supported 650 CSOs in different ways. CSOs were strategic partners in 59% of donating actions. Apart from financial donations of companies themselves, their employees also donated for different causes in organization of companies, as well as external stakeholders who responded to companies' appeals for donations. Also mentioned are in-kind donations, i.e. non-financial support through donating products, pro-bono services (92.5% of all in-kind donations, including volunteering of employees in various actions and programmes intended for certain groups),

7] Enabling market intrusion into all spheres of society, including managing of public goods and resources at market principles, with maximal reduction of taxes and minimal state interventions.

8] For example, Office for Cooperation with Civil Society at its website affirmatively reports on the international debate on mechanism of tax deductions due to donations for SCOs (even though it is not really a debate, but advocacy) – see more at <http://civilnodrustvo.gov.rs/vest/vest.37.html?newsId=759>

providing space (7% of in-kind donations) or donations of equipment (0.5% of in-kind donations). Causes companies supported in 2015 were education (100%), inclusion (78%), protection of environment (78%), humanitarian causes (72%), employability (72%), culture and art (61%), sports (53%), entrepreneurship (50%), human rights (33%), healthy life styles (33%), active ageing (11%) and other subjects closely related to the primary businesses of theirs (6%). Distribution of target groups supported was as follows: 100% youth, 83% children. 78% people with disabilities, 39% women, 33% elderly, 33% Roma, and 20% others.⁹

How much **the state** gives for civil society activities is especially worrisome, and raises the fundamental question of division of tasks between the state and civil sector and of possibilities for sensible joint work in the form of public-civil partnership. The problem is that civil sector more and more accepts the roles of the state, even though it has no capacities to provide fulfillment of needs of the whole population. Therefore, instead of being additional support to the state, and its corrective as well, in solving social issues, in many spheres it becomes a bad substitute of the state, receiving the minimal amount from that very state to do its work (contrary to what right wing media are persuading us into through sensationalist titles claiming that civil sector gets as much as science does, while science is one of the most neglected budget items). There are more and more rumours on founding phantom NGOs by people close to ruling structures which get most of the budget money at public calls – instead of organizations which really work in public interest.

Therefore, there are numerous problems, but also numerous possible temporary/partial solutions. Apart from examining sources of money, it is also important to see what strategies are at our disposal. There is a variety of possibilities to raise money: from proven old method of knocking on doors and face-to-face contact, organizing various events in the community for raising funds for different causes, to developing partnerships with companies for long term investments into some programmes, and more and more popular are campaigns using social networks and specialized donation platforms. Brochure *Alternative Sources of Funding – A Guide for Fundraising* (Smart kolektiv, 2015) offers a comparative overview of strategies for CSOs, analyzing what target groups like, dislike, how much time it takes to get each of these groups

9] More details at <https://odgovornoposlovanje.rs/nase-teme/merenje-i-izvestavanje/godisnji-upitnik>

involved, at what level they are important and how much they can contribute. Thus it estimates that **corporate partners** are fond of partnerships that are in accordance with their strategic goals, partnerships that contribute to the visibility of their brand and are of value for their clients, partners and employees. Still, it isn't easy to get money from companies because 1) not much is allocated for CSOs, i.e. activities for the community; 2) you need to be on the radar of persons organizing CSR programmes within companies or on their behalf and choosing partners from civil sector in accordance with their needs. The experience shows that individual appeals to companies mostly get ignored, especially if company doesn't already have established mechanisms of donating in such cases. **Local community** is often the most accessible source of funds, since it's closer to the problem and has no overly complicated donation procedures. If you get to know local structures, influential persons, and choose the right moment, while communicating the objectives in the right way, it will not be too hard to get funds for short-term projects. Yet, this is no long-term source of finances, since the public dislikes appeals for help to be too frequent, especially with no visible results. Alternative option is to set up a permanent order for donating, and that's what individuals decide to do after you successfully introduce yourself and thoroughly present what you do at a donors evening or some similar event. New technologies opened up a possibility for online fundraising through different crowdfunding platforms that pay special attention to persuasive stories and innovative approach. That's also a good option to raise visibility, but not a long-term funding solution.

WHAT CIVIL SECTOR NEEDS MONEY FOR?

Everybody asks for money. When authorities implement neoliberal policies and austerity measures, public sector falls apart and civil sector tries to take over its roles, but without having the necessary capacities to meet the needs of the whole population. Still, something has to be done and it requires money. To reconstruct a school, organize defense of a hospital from bailiffs, for someone's medical treatment, to fix a Roma house demolished by Nazis for entertainment, to raise initial capital to start a cooperative/social enterprise, to neuter abandoned animals and take care of them, for advocacy against neoliberal/sexist/racist policies and measures, for researching the consequences of privatization on workers, printing queer poetry and so on with no end. Such money is not easy to obtain.

On the other hand, not all topics are the same; some are easier to use to clean up the reputation of suspicious companies, businessmen and politicians. If you want to “reconstruct or build a church” whose leaders definitely have money, it’s far easier to get big money. Money attracts money. Sometimes you can even get such support for a good purpose, such as employing marginalized groups, but the only dilemma is whether to accept to be financed by those whose policies or interests resulted in marginalization of these very groups. It is especially popular and convenient to promote some retrograde antimodernist ideas, such as abolishment of right to abortion. You will find a “benefactor”, whether from the top or from the shadow, irrelevant, who will, behind the facade of preserving the nation and tradition, support such an idea. But that’s it when it comes to big and permanent money flow. For emancipatory education, creation or improvement of public spaces and other basic things you might get a short-term support or if you get long-term funding it will be in very small amounts.

WHAT WE DID (NOT) LEARN ABOUT MONEY?

It’s not an easy task to get money for progressive initiatives. If your work does not fit the list of popular topics or you do not want to lose autonomy of work under the pressures of donors, you will need a lot of creativity, connections and acquaintances – the ones with solidarity, to realize an initiative or set up an organization (lets not even mention sustainability, it’s a science fiction). Even the friendly donors, full of understanding for the context you function in and for your precarious situation, interested for issues you deal with, often aren’t able to support many important actions. So what to do about it? Even if activists embrace never-ending volunteering, there are things that have to be paid for in order to realize an action or project: you rarely get space for free, especially for long-term use, usually have to feed some people, print out materials, provide access to Internet and electricity, obtain different permissions, registrations, licenses needed for realization of certain activities etc.

The first thing is to clearly determine your policy: where you ask for money, which money is acceptable and which isn’t, how far are you ready to go in making compromises, how your mission and vision correspond to methods of fundraising and so on.

* * *

Apart from thinking where it comes from, how and under which conditions, we also need to get aware what this money is. This money we get in this or that way is not someone's benefaction, good will to donate. Nor is it someone's official duty. Money is a social relation that includes someone's work and value produced by this work. Some workers pay taxes to states that allocate part of this money for civil sector through foundations of its parties (like in Germany, for instance) or through open public calls in some fields (like some Ministries in Serbia that organize calls for CSOs). Money is also someone's profit resulted from workers' labour, that the owner for whatever reason decided to partly direct to some foundation for some purpose. Money we get for activities in civil sector is created by alienation from workers whom political power to decide on that money was taken away from, so instead of them (i.e. us!) it is decided on by the state, foundations and some individuals in positions of power. Money is power to determine which topics will be given space and under which conditions, power to marginalize some other topics, make them forgotten or stigmatized. Money is power to give space to progressive initiatives if political balance has to be restored towards centre, in situations that turn "too much" to the right, as well as to withdraw the support from the same initiatives when things turn "too much" to the left.

Money in hands of those presenting themselves as neutral / apolitical is the means to perpetuate the situation and maintain status quo. In hands of progressive ones and those who pretend to be progressive it is an eternal dilemma and weigh up between priorities, emergency responses and investing in long-term changes. In hands of retrograde ones it serves as a means for producing urgencies that draw attention of the public from greater economic-political processes that undermine society.

Money is a question of struggle, position, strategy and, in the end, about creativity, especially when big donors withdraw from a region or field of action. That's going on in Balkans, with certain variations. Donors' money is mostly being moved to less developed regions of the still colonized world, where conflicts are more explicit and they see the need for top-down democratization. We are left with the question of sustainability. Therefore, it is no surprise that, when some topics reemerge at donors' agendas for some reason closely related with their interests "at home", civil sector rushes to absorb it and seize the moment. But that's where the problem starts or persists – since civil sec-

tor should not be used for money flows, but should be a stable and responsible social actor, consistent and focused on gradual and sustainable growth, not a space of tectonic fluctuations when it comes to scope of work, engagement and funds. Some situations require massive urgent short-term responses and engagements, such as a massive wave of refugees to whom you should make life easier. But other situations can undermine the trust of users of services at that very moment when big money dries up, when less developed regions get forgotten and focus returns to metropolis, when newly employed staff gets fired due to lack of finances, or number of jobs gets reduced or newly introduced services stopped. Foreign donors' money cannot be the solution for social problems, but only a temporary support while looking for long-term systematic solution, if donors allow for it. Consequences can be unfavourable not only for users of services but also for the very organization if donors' policies are intruding and interfere into internal procedures of the organization, demanding complete control over its work, including aspects they do not finance. Losing autonomy of the organization means turning it into a tool for realization of the interests of others and, collaterally, into "small business".

Alternative or at least a way to bridge over situations of crisis and find solutions for situations that are not attractive for funders is grassroots fundraising or financing within a community. It surely is no solution for all the problems, but is an option for raising visibility locally and in overlapping circles, also for building solidarity networks, learning about ourselves and target audience of ours, as well as a way to react at micro level. That is why we entered educational-campaigning process HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST (HSCDIB). We also planned to make it a space for learning about macro processes, and for raising questions of common interest, with the hope to reach as much people possible with whom we could advocate together for systematic changes in future.

MIRRORED IN THE BUDGET

Budget is not only a set of numbers or calculations. Above all, budget is about values and principles; it is a concept behind functioning of a state, an organization or an individual.

→ **Why was it important for us to deal within the campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST, among other things, with the issue of the state budget and our rights to claim from the state what we are entitled to, to call it to responsibility of managing budget money in the manner that would meet the basic needs of all its citizens, whether tax payers or not?**

Because the structure of budget expenses represents economic, social and all other objectives, i.e. politics of a state. Just as Italian statesman Minghetti used to say: “Show me the budget, and I’ll tell you about political, economic and social structure of the state”. As already mentioned, the same can be applied to an organization, a family or budget of an individual.

So budget is a plan of how money is to be spent in a certain period of time. What we as individuals or group want to realize is inextricably intertwined with what we call budget, and if there are flaws in our ideas, almost surely they will be visible in the budget. Using the NGO sector jargon, we would say that narrative and budget part can’t do without each other. There is a set of questions that might help us test our idea, help us see, first of all, whether our objectives are clear to ourselves, and then to others too. Its structure is borrowed from the journalism – the famous 5Ws + H rules of writing complete and clear news:

WHO?

WHAT?

WHEN?

WHERE?

WHY?

HOW?

When we can clearly answer these questions, we should also be able to easily answer the question HOW MUCH/MANY? we need to realize what we have imagined – not only **money**, but also **time**, **people** etc.

These rules apply equally whether we plan to paint walls of our flat or change the world. A household budget will be affected differently depending on whether our kid plans to study in the town we live in or at the faculty two hundred kilometers away, whether the cost of studies will be covered by the state budget or him/herself, whether she/he will have a place in campus or not. How much experience we have in projecting and making budgets is not of vital importance. What should apply to all – same the ones doing it for the first time and those who have done it thousands of times – is the *rule of simplicity, clarity, and as much as possible, precision*. For instance, if we are projecting budget for a project but aren't clear of what we want to accomplish, there is no budgeting model that could help us do that. Similarly, there is no model so complex that would disable our clear idea from being expressed through precise numbers.

A person with, for example, years of experience in a foundation granting financial support to non-governmental organizations and groups, who has read many applications with different project ideas, could notice that possible inconsistencies or paradoxes which cannot be spotted in so called narrative part are often visible in suggested budgets – e.g. organizations with ecological principles of work with a budget planning to cover printing of huge amount of promotional materials; organizations wishing to point at the irresponsible work of state institutions in charge of combating violence against women which budget includes a fee for a social workers who does not do his/her job for the salary he/she regularly receives. It could open a possibility for dialogue, since we often need the reflection in order to see things from other perspectives, and realize that, maybe, the fee planned for a social worker could be better used for training members of the very organization applying for a grant. On the other hand, such things may trigger certain distrust, since when we are asked about the budget, we sometimes think that we are being checked, that the ones checking us suspect we are misusing the money, even if we are not asked about money but about the way of thinking (at least it's how it should be).

We are witnessing many malicious and unjust attacks against some non-governmental organizations (no miracle exactly those that *bother* the regime and sometimes the capitalist system itself). These attacks are mostly taking the form of attacks against their budget or, specifically, the part of the budget called income. It raises the question of whether those not getting a single penny from the state are obliged to render accounts to the same state. Or are they obliged to report only to tax payers of, for instance, USA, Great Britain or Germany, which budgets they might be getting the money from? The question is logical, and the answer should be simple – if the principle of our work is transparency¹, it should be applied universally, regardless of which budget the money comes from. It's even better to make it visible how much "foreign" money is being invested into the basic functioning of this country, i.e. how much money non-governmental organizations invest so that this state would function at all. Even though non-governmental organizations should not be services of the state and take over its roles, since the reality is as it is and the state is dysfunctional, then it's fair to let people know that. It's easy for the state to use tabloids, dirty campaigns and fake analysts to label certain organizations as foreign mercenaries, but it won't be easy to explain why it does not use the money of its citizens to take care of their basic needs and rights.²

Even if it's only about our own household budget (if there is enough money in it at all to be managed), it is important to plan it as a certain resistance to consumerist, capitalist system that pushes us towards accumulating surpluses, buying what we don't need, making unnecessary waste. Some global researches show that a third of produced food is being thrown away. If we haven't developed recycling systems, options of sharing food, have no animals to feed or gardens to fertilize, the food will end up wasted while many people are being hungry, and it is a crime.

Responsibility of both those who make and who approve budgets is indisputable (while being aware that responsibility of all social actors cannot be equal,

1] The Republic of Serbia has long used so called linear model of the budget, understandable only to small number of people, which gave considerable power to the executive authorities for possible manipulations (author's comment).

2] With the awareness that enormous resources have been extracted from the country through privatizations and various malversations and that the public sector tends to crash because of the austerity measures imposed by international financial institutions, it is important to point out that the spinning about "foreign mercenaries" in the civil sector shifts attention from the responsibility of those ruling the country who are introducing and maintaining devastating policies in line with global trends, with which progressive part of the civil sector deals and tries to mitigate.

since the consequences of their decisions aren't). Some people make so called internalized budgets, adjusted to what they think would suit the ones who approve it. It sometimes happens that those in charge of approving them make decisions in collision with common sense – imagine that you wish to create a data base at disposal to the broader public, and those whom you send your project to decide to cut out from your budget the expenses of software and website, which are crucial for the realization of your idea. Or imagine that they cut out all the fees, since paid work is totally depreciated nowadays – even though without the engagement of those people it would be impossible to realize the project. Some won't approve the costs of renting offices, while at the same time they pay high rents for their comfortable premises; some will interfere very much into your budget, but some will be totally indifferent. Therefore, there is no uniform model, structure or approach to budgets, and this text might end with the same conclusion it started with – that the budget is, first of all, the mirror of values and politics of work and life.

EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING THROUGH HSCDIB

*(Politics of learning and lessons
from the practice)*

Foundations work with money, raise it, make grants, but usually do not contribute to education about it.. For us as a political, feminist foundation, it is important to think about system, to understand social relations we function in and structures that limit or privilege us. It's also important for us to learn and evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies in different situations. Therefore we invited the interested ones to join us in the process of learning on politics and money, as well as possible strategies for raising, tracking and directing money. Here is who helped us on that journey - Danilo Ćurčić, Boban Stojnović, Milena Vasić, Fahrudin Kladničanin, Radmila Miković, Branka Ćurčić and Mladen Jovanović, who guided us through laws – especially human right laws, particularly the suppressed economic and social ones, through political institutions, public policies and mechanisms of monitoring and control over public money, as well as institutional and alternative mechanisms of including the public into processes of making decisions on money and other related issues. From theory to practice and back – we also dealt with sources and strategies for fundraising, specific knowledge from the field of budgeting actions, plus developing skills of performing in public and conquering space for us and topics of public importance.

IF WE DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING AGAINST, WE CAN EASILY BECOME PART OF THE PROBLEM

Question of public and private money is important whatever you do. Therefore, we entered the process of common learning with activists fighting against violence against women and human trafficking, activists who deal with human rights – especially LGBTQ, labour, students and rights of persons with disabilities, economic empowerment of women and social entrepreneurship, art, social theory, education, politics, preservation and reclaiming public spaces. It was clear to us that different experiences, interests, political positions and circles we meet each other in were challenges in this process of conveying knowledge, but at the same time gave us valuable space for intergenerational learning, exchange between those working within institutions and ones from formal and informal collectives within civil sector, ones with clear political positions and those who thought it was irrelevant. That's why we wanted to open discussion with basic theoretical inputs, but also to make relaxed and playful atmosphere.

Many people don't like theory, some don't like practice. You don't have to like either of it, but it is important to take them into account. You don't have to be expert for all, but it is important to have basic understanding of both, so that people focused on theory and those focused on practice could, in a coordinated manner, contribute to positive and long-term changes. Without it, we would do actions and theorize within our closed and self-indulgent bubbles, angry at others for misunderstanding / ignoring us, while not reflecting at all on our own position and approach. Therefore, we set up a theoretical framework that introduced us into the system of social, economic and political relations, history of human rights and their economic and political background, functional and dysfunctional mechanisms to control ruling structures and to demand accountability regarding public money. Then we shifted our focus to ourselves, our possibilities, reach of our efforts, hidden threats when looking for finances for our activities and possible strategies. We completed the circle by adding specific skills of making budgets and managing our own bodies and voices when communicating our attitudes, needs, aims, and appeal or ask for financial or any other support. This way we wanted to break out of vicious circles of "self-indulgent activism" and "detached theorizing" and go a step further from organizing reactions to some social problems, without understanding the broader context, our place within its structure, negative effects of our approach, general effects of our activities in short and long-term – whether are

we becoming a part of a worrisome / ostensibly apolitical narrative, do we contribute to the normalization of status quo, do we dilute the situation, blur it and draw attention away from the real causes of problems and so on. These things are to be further analyzed.

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO GIVE PEOPLE TOOLS FOR WORK

After the first meeting we initiated “Common Messy Base of Resources” at onlinedrive. It’s a base of ideas, materials, contacts and all the other resources that might be useful at some moment in our activist work and personal and collective education. Everyone could add up resources that could be of use for others to get familiar with a certain field – only important thing was to choose the ones understandable to everybody. Marking resources, events and contacts by fields would enable anyone to learn the basics of the field and find guidelines for further research. It was supposed to offer tools for personal and organizational learning and anyone could share it with collaborators. The base did not quite work out (yet). Several people went through the sheets with resources and the first round of uploaded materials, but there were no new inputs. It could lead us to assume few things. It’s possible that people aren’t used to use and maintain this kind of common resources. Common work on something and joint learning require to un-learn some previous habits and change the way we communicate with people and our modes of engagement. Due to the diversity of the group, it is also possible that people are unsure of whether some contents are too radical, too demanding, or just too simplified, and would such contents be interesting to others. Lack of information on interests of others in the group means having no hint on what of our knowledge and experience we might share with others and how would they understand that sharing of ours (as bragging, being pushy etc.). And the most important thing: the tools delivered from „above“, even when made with best intentions, serve nothing if we do not know what people in the group want, what they don’t want, if they have or lack time for, in which form and in what moment. Even though it is designed so that it can cover different subjects and activities people from the group deal with, which they mentioned themselves or shown interest in, it still does not mean it would serve its purpose – to step out of our little activist, mostly „single issue“ bubbles, and direct us towards related struggles, contents, possibilities and collaborators. Good thing is that it is an online base and if anyone would need it in any moment, she/he could easily access it. But if we want to be honest to ourselves, it is important to go further

than donor style reporting that underlines that in the process of education we launched the tool for learning and cooperation, which can be improved and grow further on. It does sound good, but means nothing. We need to take few things into consideration:

- Which **needs** the tool we are offering is supposed to meet and at which moment?
- What would **motivate** someone to invest into the common tool / venture?
- How to integrate not only ours but also the **perspective** of those our activities are intended for – how to make shift from “I do this because you need it” to “lets see how you see the situation, how I see it, what do we need and what is a reasonable thing to do in that sense”?
- Having in mind that people have different interests, habits and time at their disposal how to make the tool **purposeful** and motivate people to commit themselves to its further development?
- How to present the **usefulness** of new tools / methods of work?

These and other related questions are guidelines for our further work. Besides, it is important to understand the ways people learn, explore, exchange information, and make personal libraries and data bases. That understanding makes us realize that we can't expect everyone to learn, exchange information and contribute to learning process in the same manner.

HOW IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO WHAT WE DO

What content we offer to people and which knowledge we want to share or acquire is one thing. Another is the way we approach it – how we choose people from whom we expect to gain knowledge, how we communicate, what kind of space we choose and what we do with it, what we eat while working together, how we divide roles etc. Having all that in mind, we made sure that working spaces and accommodations were accessible for persons with disabilities, to support social enterprise Bagel Bejgel by ordering food from them, to provide enough space and time for discussions, critical reflection on gained information, as well as for sensitizing lecturers for critical feminist point of view (if they haven't already been sensitized), not to leave mess behind us, and to share remaining food instead of throwing it away. Safe, inclusive and creative

space, and taking care of ecological footprint¹ we make are important both during formal and informal part. It is not enough only to demand someone's responsibility if we ourselves do not treat others responsibly, just as it is not fair to expect others to support our aim if we are not open to hearing what other people advocate for and to recognizing our common struggles and spaces for cooperation.

Average grade the organization got was 5. People were thrilled with the way everything was organized, with the organizational team and choice of food. Almost everyone were also satisfied with the choice of space, as well as with the friendly atmosphere with the organizational team (Evaluation of the 1st seminar).

* * *

How we do something depends on what information we have on the subject, people we work with and context we work in, as well as readiness to critically rethink our work. It is not rare to see examples of responses to issues that neither provide temporary relief, nor target the cause of the problem. Organizations and people are prone to routine responding to problems that keep persisting. Therefore, the fact that someone does something for many years does not mean it's the right way to do it (even though it is not the only possible reason for lack of more significant results, especially when it comes to systematic and structural problems that cannot be solved by an isolated social actor). Additional factor is quickly changing context that imposes permanent need for acquiring new skills and knowledge to be incorporated in our work. Balance between "good old theory" and awareness of history of certain struggles on one hand, and openness to new approaches on the other hand seem like a sensible approach. But, depending on the domain, it is rather usual to deviate to or even get stuck at one side or the other. Therefore, we concluded there was no reason to expect neither participants nor educators to equally deal with both theoretical and practical knowledge, both traditional and "innovative" methods of work. That was the key for choosing educators and subjects: understanding the context, knowledge of the history, structures

1] Ecological footprint is a measure of human influence on natural environment that is compared to biocapacity of the planet. It takes into account spent resources and produced waste as the result of certain ways of production – distribution – use of goods / products and putting them away / recycling / destroying them.

and mechanisms, but also practical examples and skills. Additional dimension, apart from theory and tools we got to know and analyze, was bodily dimension, i.e. physical positioning within the context, taking a stand and becoming aware of the ways of communication. One of the messages we could underline is that it is especially important for activists who wish to draw the public attention to some issue, be visible, understandable and supported, to understand very well what they are facing with, but also to know how to convey that understanding to others who do not have such knowledge and sensitivity.

SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAMME / ACTIVITIES CAN NOT BE EVALUATED BASED JUST ON WHAT PARTICIPANTS TELL US

Written evaluations and formal and informal talks with participants of different programmes became routine methods of evaluation of work of organizers/initiators. If our only aim is not to fulfill the form, but also to really understand the information, we should ask ourselves:

- What are people telling us in evaluations? Are someone's praises expression of her/his lack of information on the subject, so he/she greets every new information with enthusiasm? Are someone's suggestions for improvements result of thorough thinking about her/his needs and possibilities to take part in the suggested activity or does he/she write suggestions just to fill in the form, without thinking whether the suggestions are feasible? Are scarcely filled in evaluation forms the result of his/her conciseness or laziness, lack of opinion and interest or need for some time to process the impressions before reaching conclusion?
- What influences their answers? Do they write only what we want to hear out of politeness, wish to maintain good relations with us, because it is just easier? Did someone offer constructive critique because she/he had enough time to process received information and impressions and out of wish to contribute to the programme? Are unduly critiques result of misunderstanding of the whole logistics of the programme, of importance of the subject and methodology, or some external factors distracted them from taking part / listening and gave them the wrong impression?
- What to do with the information obtained through evaluations? Use them only for reports for donors and other interested parties, or also

use them internally for learning and rethinking our work? Do we use them for developing new programmes? Do they give us guidelines for looking for different modalities of work and evaluations of their results?

When we analyzed success of HSCDIB, we considered several things:

- **Satisfaction** of participants: all answers expressed satisfaction of participants with the seminars;
- Whether they gained new **knowledge**: apart from hearing that many of them for the first time dealt with the subject of public and private money in these ways, we were particularly glad to hear that they developed skills and gained knowledge they may use further on to reach new information;
- Which all tell us that people are **interested in** the subject and ready to get engaged in tracking flows of public money, as well as in grass roots mobilizations of the community for financially supporting some causes of public interest.

We should also be fair and admit that positive feedback and proclaimed interest are no guarantees that programme would have a significant long-term impact. People are inclined to ask for more space for interaction, more dynamic methods of work, more practical examples, and when they get the chance to turn it all into practice, they don't get engaged (enough). There are many reasons: initial enthusiasm fades away, life circumstances may change so that a person, due to existential and other pressures, is no longer able to deal with the subject, lack of personal skills to apply what we advocate for in practice, as well as lack of self-reflection and, hence, lack of understanding that we ourselves are also responsible for something to happen.

NEITHER IT IS ENOUGH TO LIKE SOMETHING IN ORDER TO GET INVOLVED, NOR DO WE GET INVOLVED ONLY IF WE LIKE SOMETHING

People who apply for some programme are most likely **interested in** the subject or think it will be **useful** for them in a way. More often we apply for programmes which organizers we appreciate for some **reason**. It is also not unusual to see people applying in order to be on the radar of organizers or other participants. There are many reasons and we should bear them in mind when setting up and

realizing a programme, since they will determine the expectations of people: to learn something, meet people whom they can learn from further on, find potential partners for their activities, get familiar with the scene, get another reference and so on.

Another factor of whether someone will “fall for” the subject is **prior knowledge** and **speed of learning**. Some want to get an overview of general trends and to understand the context, others want focus on a specific problem. Ones would wish a lot of information and suggestions for further research, others to be guided step by step from basics to more complexity. If you have a diversified group and it is important for you to gather all those people around the subject, accept the fact that you won't be able to meet all the opposite needs. But it does not mean to ignore them. It means to create chances for each of them to feel welcome in the space and as that he/she isn't losing time there. When we understand that everyone can in some way contribute to the subject and common goal, then it is less important what we already know than what potential we might reach in joint work, in which domains we can make the subject more visible, whom else could we attract etc.

Everyone said they learned something new. Great majority stated that most useful was to learn they were entitled to ask for information from public importance. They also said that lecture on corruption, money and politics was very useful. Other subjects they listed were: political vs. social rights, budgeting process, public money, participation in local communities. (Seminar evaluation)

After the second workshop we shifted the focus onto practice, handing over the baton to participants. The first chance to raise the public interest was on Delicacy Monday in Cultural Centre Grad: HOW SISTERS COULD COOK IT BEST. Apart of raising visibility of the educational programme, we also used this space to present the activities of participants of the campaign: street activism, music, interviews on labour rights of women and projection of movies on experiences of persons with disabilities. Good vibrations were overture for further undertakings. Participants were divided in two groups supposed to plan and organize fundraising events. One group was to choose which common good they would raise money for, and the other fundraised for a RWF programme of choice. In addition to developing and testing skills, we wanted to point to different contexts and challenges when drawing attention to certain social needs. It turned out that familiarity with some subject is not crucial

when motivating people to get engaged. Different types of personalities, being tore apart to hundred sides and diversified interests expectedly lead to division to those who take charge of things and those following them or even slacking off, but if motivation and responsibility towards group are high, relations of cooperation and support easily get established and result in good ideas and rather smooth coordination. The opposite – uneven motivation and vague idea in combination with the lack of coordination easily make people leave a group, avoid responsibility for their part of work and create bad atmosphere. It turned out that each group, regardless of the experience of members, depends on a good coordinator who systematically approaches the organizational process, but also knows how to improvise when needed. Let's not fool ourselves, years of activism are no recommendation by itself – crucial things are way of work and relation towards collective. Another important lesson is that when reflecting on activities one needs to take into account unplanned results as well. The group raising money for Žarana Papić stipends made some great promotional materials we can distribute in different future contexts. The group made posters and stickers with pictures of feminists and national heroines from the region and brief notes about their lives, accompanied by messages addressing contemporary youth. Great design opens plenty of possibilities for future use of these materials that will live on after the fundraising action they were initially intended for. The other group made bridges towards communities of parents and animal lovers and “conquered” new spaces for some future activities. All these represent immense additional value that, besides the money raised and knowledge gained, confirm the purposefulness of such programmes and activities.

THERE IS NO SIMPLE SOLUTION, EVERYTHING IS EXPERIMENTING AND LEARNING

Apart from opening the question of money and funding socially useful undertakings, the idea of gathering such diversified group was also to contribute to linking organizations, groups and individuals. While the second aim is easier to accomplish, finding answers to all the questions we raised during the common learning is a much more difficult process. A single organization or group of people can't even improve financial and political literacy of civil sector, not to mention of broader population. These subjects, just as many other things, should be a part of formal education (yeah right!) and not left to civil sector. But that's how it is, and what we can do is keep running, working, thinking,

sharing and connecting with each other, so that good theoretical education of a part of civil sector and proper innovative approaches of the other part would serve its purpose and reach some visible results.

To be continued...

Experiences

*From the point of view of an
organizer-participant*

Why We All Need The Campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST

What is your role in HSCDIB?

Since I was a part of the working team during the campaign and at the same time an observer, I approach it from the subjective point of view of the person who has just started acquiring knowledge on work of the foundations, money and philanthropy. As an assistant, I dealt with logistics, finances and organizational learning through monitoring and evaluation. More specific, I cooperated with the colleague in charge of the budget, searched for appropriate locations for events, took care of reimbursing traveling expenses to participants, helped with the campaign on social networks, made lists and tables with necessary information, looked after the needs of participants and visiting lecturers, took care of space, so that it all works during the meetings, and also worked on evaluations after events. Hence, I tried to catch up with the different aspects of the organization, from preparations and realization to creating contents for further dissemination and use after the campaign.

What's your view of the campaign, did it bring you something new?

The campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST (HSCDIB), designed and organized by Reconstruction Women's Fund, consisted of three parts:

theoretical, workshopping and practical. It gathered participants from Belgrade, Smederevo, Niš, Zrenjanin, Šabac, Novi Sad and Pirot, with the aim to contribute to sensitizing people to donate and develop citizens' philanthropy.

All these information seem familiar, we know that there is some public money allocated by the institutions, and some private money we ourselves decide on, and that there are some people out there who deal with fundraising and donations. But during the educational part of the campaign I realized it is not that simple. The truth is that we, ordinary citizens, know very little about where public money goes to, and information on that is not directly accessible to us. If you type in into Google „tax money Serbia“ or „public money“ it is very likely you will find tons of insignificant information, since this is what you need to type in to get the information you want: „Law on Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2017“. To get the needed information, you would have to have the one preceding it, and that's exactly the kind of information given to participants of the HSCDIB campaign. And when you finally open this table, rather confusing for an ordinary citizen, you will see the information on the projected state budget. In the sea of sterile information you will find an interesting one concerning the money borrowed to the Republic of Turkey, which government and propaganda are currently rather problematic for the people fighting for human rights, against violence and discrimination. Recent troublesome events in Turkey included arresting journalists and shutting down media houses reporting on worrying moves of the regime, i.e. who were against the current Turkish authorities, as well as arresting civilians protesting because of suspected lack of legitimacy of parliamentary elections won by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, which brought him the absolute power in the state. We borrowed 16 million Euros to Turkey, which is quite awkward since we are a smaller and economically weaker state. The question is, of course, why it should be of our interest. The answer is simple – that's our money being borrowed. It is the money the state collects through taxes paid by citizens, and it should be spent in the interest of citizens, since tax money is the means of fulfilling the needs of citizens. But ruling elites persuade us, through media spinning, that this money should be used for attracting foreign investors, buying and building often irrelevant objects and for borrowings like the above mentioned one.

The main problem the campaign HSCDIB tried to raise awareness on was that apparent bipolarity: state – a citizen. Even though we are often opposing the state and being against it, i.e. against the ones leading it in the troublesome ways, the situation is that we are actually interdependent. The state collects our money and manages it later on, without giving us transparent information about it. Citizens unfortunately cannot decide on where will the money go, but it is very important that they are informed, so that through this information they could follow the flows of public money and get deeper into the public budget. Apart from the information on public money, in the educational part of the campaign participants gained knowledge on corruption, public spaces, participation of the public in decision making, human rights and right to information of public importance. The last listed right was something the majority of participants mentioned in their evaluations as the most interesting and valuable they have learned. Unfortunately, most of 23 of us had no knowledge whatsoever on the right guaranteed by the Constitution to ask the state for information concerning all of us. Through examples and joint analysis and discussions we saw that transparency is not something our state can be proud of and that citizens neither know of their right to information of public importance, nor are informed on the procedures of obtaining such information.

I personally liked the concept of the campaign very much, since after the theoretical part the participants had the practical/workshop part in which they learned how to act in public space when asking for money. The greatest obstacles for them were stage fright and public addressing, since we are raised not to stand out and not to rock the boat, and such attitude and bad nonverbal communication can get us rejected by potential donors. In the campaign we worked on changing our attitudes toward donors. Through discussions and lectures we went from stereotypical view of donors as persons / organizations standing tall above us, small ordinary people, who beg for money, to the view of us as the ones bringing in good activist ideas and asking from those having resources to realize the idea together.

What was your learning process like during HSCDIB?

During the work in RWF I got familiar with different working processes, learned about the importance of developing local philanthropy and that the money that would, for example, be invested into Žarana Papić stipends, doesn't always have to come from bigger foreign foundations. It's possible to use the good idea, such as RWF Yard Sale, so that all of us take part in raising that money. Idea of individuals and organizations donating clothes and things to be sold on this yard-sale-like event during BeFem Summer Feminist Games brought the results. Apart from raising awareness of donations as a way to express solidarity with those in worse situations than ours, we are also becoming aware of the fact that we can make non-financial donations that could be used for raising funds in actions such as Yard Sale. During Yard Sale I had great fun, but also realized that in the situations when you ask for money and take part in such actions, you should not feel embarrassed, but should use sort of acting tricks to get out of your comfort zone and play different roles with different people, since that's what was needed, at least to me, to overcome the stage fright. We explored these and other techniques during HSCDIB campaign. When we deal with things bigger than ourselves, we lose our private „selves“ and focus on success of the action. What was interesting to me was exactly how people felt more motivated to donate their money when they found out that it will be allocated for studying and professional development of women. Therefore I believe it is important to develop local philanthropy, since we only have each other when institutions lack sensibility for us.

Where did you find motivation to support RWF activities?

It's related to what I mentioned above and I will make a parallel with my experience with the project Rock Camp for Girls I took active part in as a mentor and one of the organizers. First and, at the time, the only donation for the Rock Camp came from the Superste call of Erste Bank. With such a good start, we thought we could get more money by applying to state institutions. But the Ministry of Culture of Serbia and Belgrade Secretariat for Culture did not share our opinion. The project I personally believe is very important because it motivates girls to do some, in stereotypical view, "less feminine" things, and because it educates youth, obviously wasn't good enough for these institutions. Reconstruction

Women's Fund felt the injustice and reacted by organizing the fundraising action SISTERS ARE DOING IT BEST 11. Even though the amount raised didn't even come close to amounts mentioned institutions could provide, something maybe even more valuable happened. Joined action of Reconstruction Women's Fund and Femix program for supporting female creativity around Rock Camp for Girls raised the project visibility. RWF used their contacts to broaden the scope of people reached by the news of the first Rock Camp for Girls in Serbia. Once again, the citizens donated their money and recognized the importance of something unrecognized by the very institutions supposed to support it. For me the contacts we got during the action SISTERS ARE DOING IT BEST 11 were maybe more important than the money itself. People who came to cafe Ljutić, where we held the event, told us about "which doors to knock on the next" in order to raise more funds. Besides that, they were actively spreading the word about the action, and many of them shared it on social networks and with their private contacts, to help us to raise funds but also to inform as many people as possible, and to reach more girls from different parts of Serbia. Thus Reconstruction Women's Fund showed that when state support fails there were still other ways, and once again demonstrated that as a local foundation it felt responsible to react to injustice in accordance with its current capabilities. Even though the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia and Secretariat for Culture of the City of Belgrade did not support our project, the support came from various other sides and Serbia got its first Rock Camp for Girls that was held in August 2017 in children resort "Šuplja Stena". During the seven days, eight mentors worked with 30 girls from different parts of Serbia, which resulted in a great concert of participants of Rock Camp and filled us with faith that people do have sensibility for such projects and actions.

We cannot function in a society as isolated individuals, since we meet other people every day, build our identities through relations with them and it is important that we feel the urge for solidarity and philanthropy. As feminists we learned that changes often won't come from the top, but that we have to initiate them from the bottom. Therefore, I consider campaigns such as HSCDIB important for all of us, since they give us tools to influence social changes ourselves.

Apart from the information and skills obtained through educational programme, what else participants could learn from the way the whole process was organized?

Participants of the campaign had a chance to see two ways of organizing the contents of the campaign. First part of the campaign was held in Cultural Centre Rex where the working team was in charge of most of the logistics needed for successful realization of the seminar and fulfilling the needs of participants. During this first part, the emphasis was on self-organizing and fully using the resources we already have. Beside the organization itself, it meant taking care of the space – its organization and hygiene, food and refreshments and, of course, making good atmosphere for everyone. Even if it wasn't part of the campaign programme, we could learn that using already existing resources of the working team and networking with local shops such as social enterprise Bagel / Bejgl can give added value to the planned event. Second part of the campaign was held in the hotel Park where the logistics was left to the hotel staff. Therefore, participants learned that, depending on the resources, it's possible and desirable to apply different methods of work and organization.

Also, during the second two day meeting participants were divided into two groups, with the idea to exercise in practice and apply the gained knowledge and skills of raising money for common good. Groups were given resources to organize their events – one had the task of raising money for one of the RWF programmes, and another for a group or organization of their choice that contributes to some common good. The primary goals are reached and participants, with the knowledge and skills they gained in the practical part of the campaign, keep promoting the value of donating and extending the scope of the campaign by their resources and contacts.

What did you get from the campaign that you carry on to others from your surrounding?

Philanthropy is the art of giving and responsibility to others. It also presents the very awareness of existence of persons who need our help. The state often does not help the vulnerable ones, although it supposed to, so we witness numerous examples of collecting money via SMS for

treating diseases and helping poor. We are responsible for creating the supporting network for helping or receiving help if needed, until we establish a state that would act responsibly toward its citizens. Reconstruction Women's Fund, as a feminist foundation, through its campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST showed responsibility for educating people on solidarity and philanthropy.

From the point of view of a participant

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE AND BACK: HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST

What are the advantages of informal education in comparison to formal? What are its scopes and limitations?

Informal education supplements the knowledge gained through formal education within the system of primary, secondary or higher education. I would not say it has advantages over formal or it's better, but surely has its purpose and positive sides. We have different educations and seminars now and people are free to attend them depending on the topics they are interested in. First of all, it's good to be able to learn something new or gain some practical knowledge and experience that, for instance, can't be gained at schools or faculties. The fact is that within the formal education system one can't learn everything that would be practical and useful for us in life or work we do. The reason is the fact that programmes of studies (especially at social science faculties) are often crammed with various subjects, both general and specific for a certain profession, leaving little space for any practical work. In such a situation, seminars are useful as supplements to knowledge we already have. When it comes to scope of informal education, apart from learning new things, it is also a good chance to connect with people interested in same things from different regions. That is a way to make a base for future cooperation and organization. Limitation is that such educations are mostly organized for a small number of people. Also they are often

held only in bigger cities, so they aren't so accessible for people from smaller towns and villages.

In the sea of educational content offered within civil sector, the campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST (HSCDIB) wanted to open space for lacking subjects and to contextualize the issues of money from civil sector perspective. Its political line isn't a very popular one and it linked political, organizational and communicational topics that are almost never dealt with together. How do you see this approach, what did you get out of it?

I think the campaign HOW SISTERS COULD DO IT BEST is very different from other seminars and educations I attended so far. Therefore I would emphasize few positive differences.

The most important difference is in the very **subjects** we worked on within the campaign. We could get a lot of information from different lecturers on some burning social issues, such as austerity measures, human rights, corruption, participation of public in making important social and political decisions, creating the budget etc. Not only that these subjects are important for all of us, since they affect all of us, but they are presented through a **critical rethinking of the current social models**, i.e. openly point at the real problems. I believe it's important that these subjects were worked on at different lectures, so that we got the information from various perspectives that can help us see the problems clearer, and therefore also find possible solutions easier. Despite the fact that the first gathering lasted only for two days, good organization made space for practical activities as well.

Therefore, we, participants, had a chance within the first part of the campaign to actively take part in discussions with lecturers, but also with each other. In these **constructive discussions** we could hear the opinions of all participants and thus learn from each other. Apart from the discussions, within some lectures on certain subjects we also had **practical exercises** so that we could understand them better, while in the second part of education we had a chance to organize **practical activities**. The result was the event named Sisters for Sisters, intended to support activist / academics to gain and exchange knowledge in fields

related to gender / women's issues; and then also the action Cat and Dot: Our Responsibility For Abandoned Animals intended to raise funds for abandoned animals, which is a topic of public importance for which the other group decided to raise funds.

Practical part of the campaign is rather important since it showed us how theory functions in reality, how to organize an action, how to create a budget and to organize people.

The experience we got within the campaign can be useful in different ways. First of all, I think it's good to see how the organization of such an education looks like. We can use some ideas if we decide to organize something similar in future. **Materials** and presentations we got can be helpful when carrying on what we have learned to other activists who were not present. For example, in student collective we often learned together by reading books and texts on certain subjects and then discussing them. We also attended some lectures that we later discussed. In order to include other interested people in the process of learning and obtaining information, we organized several educational panels. I think that our biggest problem in the learning process was the lack of cooperation with more experienced people. More specifically, with people who deal with student and trade union organizing. Someone whose experiences we might learn from. Exchange and spreading information is very important, and that's why I think it is useful at the end of seminars like this one to make some printed or video materials containing theoretical information discussed, so that it could be disseminated to others, shared via Internet etc.

Theoretical part began with the analysis of development of human rights and their link to current austerity measures. Then we learned about institutional mechanisms and strategies of organization in the field, specifically at the level of neighborhood, in order to provide protection of certain human rights. Understanding political and economic context and an overview of different strategies give us the base of political activism. In that sense, do you see the space to apply, in your theoretical development and activism, some things we talked about during the campaign?

The campaign covered various subjects. In the beginning we talked about human rights, their development, legal documents and state responsibilities concerning economic, social and cultural rights. We have made links with austerity measures, i.e. transparency in spending money and participation of citizens in the process of decision making when it comes to spending. It's a very important subject since all of us citizens are currently affected by the austerity measures. Workers are being laid off, wages and pensions are reduced, scholarships raised, workers in private sector have very poor working conditions etc. These are the issues we face on a daily basis, so it was important to discuss them. Theoretical frameworks we went through helped us in better understanding of some social processes that affect us.

One of the lectures that was also especially interesting and useful was "Right to Access Information of Public Importance" which, apart from the significance of this right and its content, also included detailed instructions on how to realize it in practice. Either as an individual or on behalf on an association I've often been in a situation to write and submit demands for access to information of public importance. And often I was unsure of how to write them, where to find the form, whom to address them to, how precise to describe the situation or whom to complain to afterwards. It was difficult for me to find answers to these questions because the instructions from the appropriate website were mostly unclear and insufficient. Therefore, I was thrilled that this lecture cleared it all up, and then we even had practical exercises of writing and addressing such demands with the help of the lecturer.

Another lecture I would like to mention is the one that taught us more about participation of the public in making important social and political decisions. This subject is very important for all of us since it is about the right that represents one of the fundamental principles of good democratic practice and good management, and is based on the right of citizens to take part in making decisions and defining policies that affect their lives. The lecture started with the discussion about the African saying "Only the one in these very shoes knows where they hurt his feet". Right away the discussion heated up and we concluded that things must not be reduced to essentialization. In the context of public participation, the saying means that the one directly affected by the problem should have the possibility to take part in making decisions that affect

him/her. Still, we underlined it that due to lack of information and explanatory framework, we can easily slip into wrong interpretations of the problem, its causes and consequences.

We learned a lot from this lecture, from definitions of basic concepts to legal framework of public participation and stages of the participation. In my previous work I met with this subject too, and each time concluded that this right does not function well in practice. Even though there are mechanisms for inclusion of certain social groups into decision making, they often remain dead letters. Specifically, many times within my activism in students' movement, together with colleagues I took part in public discussions concerning some issues in the field of education and each and every time our complaints and suggestions were dismissed because of different bureaucratic reasons.

In the cases of rejection of suggestions or complaints, we often as the next step organized protest activities and street actions. That always catches the media attention, and then quickly also the attention of institutions in charge and of the public. For example, our protest note because of the planned demolition of students canteen was dismissed when we sent it in writing after the public debate, but was taken into account and the decision was changed after we held the street protest because of it.

Some rights and mechanisms we already have, while for some others we yet need to fight for. Unfortunately, what we have sometimes does not function in practice that smoothly, but we should not give up the fight to realize those rights. I think that our fight should definitely also include the protests and street actions, but first of all we should work on education, organization and making connections between actors of all these actions.

What do you think are the main problems when it comes to financing organizations and distribution of state money?

Apart from the already mentioned problems, activists are also facing the problem of financing their organizations and different actions we want to make. In theory there are different ways to get funds. Various programmes, projects, calls and donations, but from my personal expe-

rience, it is very difficult in practice. Especially if you decide to deal with the subjects that are not so popular or profitable.

Within the student movement I worked as an editor of our magazine Student Zone which we wanted, beside other things, to use for promoting state financed education and for criticizing the currently ongoing commercialization of education. We distributed the magazine to students for free, but it was rather hard to obtain money for printing and design. A project like this could be financed by the faculty, for example. But the obstacle was the fact that we were not “the official students’ organization”, i.e. did not belong to student parliament or some other organization registered within the University. Belonging to such organizations or registration of a new one would mean dealing with subjects imposed from the faculty management, and it was hard to imagine they would approve our criticism of their activities. So in this specific example we faced with the lack of recognition of self-organizations and criticism (i.e. with the lack of recognition and marginalization of organizations which policies diverge from the policies of “official” organizations), despite the fact that the faculty statute provides the right to such organizations.

Then there is the problem of financing actions of such an organization having its own policies. It is supposed to be possible from different local or foreign sources and both ways carry certain difficulties in practical realization. According to the Law on Budget for 2016¹, for donations to NGOs from the budget of the Republic of Serbia there was allocated approximately 6.4 billion dinars. Corruption Research Center in its report on NGO financing from last year, emphasized the problem of lack of transparency of the distribution of budget money. As stated in the report, the majority of money goes to religious communities, then to sport clubs, political parties, and association of citizens get the least.² On the other hand, the impression the public gets is that all that money is given to NGOs, which is not true. NGOs are often told they can’t get the money because there was not enough of it, but this excuse just shows how absurd is the list of priorities in distribution of the state (our) money. How comes there is money for funding enormously expensive fountains or New Years decoration months before the New Year, and there is none

1] Available at <http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/documents/3204-15.pdf>

2] Available at <http://cik.co.rs/2016/07/22/linija-481-kome-sve-ide-novac-za-nvo/>

for financing some projects that would really be of interest for the whole community? Previously mentioned question of participation in decision making is also related to this problem, since citizens were not asked if they would approve funding the fountain or New Year's decorations. Citizens also aren't asked about financing some organizations they would deem useful for the society.

I have already mentioned that, beside the local sources of financing, there is a possibility to apply for different foreign donations – from foundations, embassies or companies, depending on what kind of project it's about. In case of our students' magazine we wanted to avoid this possibility so did not even try to apply. Our group has decided that the label of "foreign mercenaries" could be of more harm than use, since representatives of authorities often use it to discredit criticism. In the meantime, through our work, we learned that it wasn't the only means of discrediting, since the subjects we wrote about in our magazine, such as critics of capitalism, were often labeled as "non-students", and our protest actions as radical.

Regardless of it we, members of the editorial board, agreed to finance the printing and other costs ourselves, and then, depending on how much we could collect, we would decide how many texts we would write and print. That form of financing seemed at the moment the most transparent and appropriate for the public. Unfortunately it lasted only to cover two issues of the magazine that then had to be put on hold due to lack of money, which tells us that the reality of each similar project and organization is that it cannot survive long without some support. What we have learned from this example with the magazine is that we should not pay much attention to prejudice and criticisms which only goal is to discredit, since it will happen whatever we do and it's impossible to stop it, especially not if being defensive. I think it is the best in such situations to stick to the project you have planned, and then use arguments to defend its purpose.

The fact is that situation isn't simple and that is the reason of gathering progressive activists (not whole civil sector is like that) who aim to contextualize the problems, to alarm the public on negative practices and bad institutional procedures, mobilize people around public interest, change the rules and social norms to make more just living and working environments. Who do you think are the crucial actors of this scene? What opens spaces for cooperation, and what are the limitations?

No doubt the activists are faced with various systematic obstacles that make things harder. As main actors and carriers of positive social changes I see those progressive people ready to tackle all the problems we mentioned. Not necessarily people from some organizations, but also workers, trade unionists, students. All together. What we as activists should work on more is providing information to all of them and connecting with one another. We also discussed this within the campaign through giving overviews of the current situations in environments we work in or would like to work in.

A great challenge for us is the fact that people in our society are not informed enough, are disappointed in politics, not interested, do not know their own rights or ways to get engaged. These challenges we can overcome only through joint work and actions aiming to educate and strengthen solidarity.

Cooperation between different associations and organizations is also important so that we could together put pressure onto state institutions or local authorities to respect the rights of citizens and change certain policies. Different campaigns such as this one can be especially useful for this purpose – to make links between each other and educate each other.

Practicum

INFORMATION OF PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Right to information of public importance is one of the fundamental human rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Serbia. It is regulated by the **Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance**.¹

The Constitution of Serbia² prescribes:

Everyone shall have the right to be informed accurately, fully and timely about issues of public importance. The media shall have the obligation to respect this right.

Everyone shall have the right to access information kept by state bodies and organizations with delegated public powers, in accordance with the law.

What Does It Mean?

It means that each citizen has a right to ask authorities a question or seek information in possession of an organ of public authorities (a ministry, municipal office, public enterprise etc.) related to its work.

If required information is not an information of public importance, the organ a citizen addressed has to prove it, since it is assumed that each information related to work of an organ of public authorities is of public importance. Citizens have the right to be informed about the work of state institutions.

1] Available at http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_slobodnom_pristupu_informacijama_od_javnog_znacaja.html

2] Available at http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/ustav_republike_srbije.html

How Do I Ask A Question?

You can ask it in writing by formulating the request yourself or in the form you can download from the website of the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection.³

What If I Don't Get the Information I Asked For?

If an organ of authority with no appropriate reason denies to respond to the request for access to information of public importance, you can submit a complaint to the Commissioner for Information of Public Importance and Personal Data Protection.⁴ Form for submitting the complaint can also be downloaded from the Commissioner's website.

3] Available at <http://www.poverenik.rs/sr/formulari.html>

4] Visit <http://www.poverenik.rs/>

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – OBLIGATION OF INSTITUTIONS

Public participation is *one of the fundamental principles of good democratic practice* and good governance. Process of inclusion of public has its legal framework defined at the level of European Union (European Charter of Local Self-Government, European Charter of Active Citizenship, European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, The Lisbon Treaty, Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe etc.), but also at the level of the Republic of Serbia (Constitution of the Republic of Serbia, Law on Local Self-Governance, Law on Referendum and Civil Initiative, Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, statutes of towns and municipalities etc.)

Public participation is based on *the right of citizens to take part* in making decisions and policies that affect their lives. Above all it's about public policies and legal documents (such as local strategy, city statute etc.), plans and programmes (such as urbanistic plan, budget etc.) and projects (like building recycling centre and so on).

Public participation means *joint work of all interested parties at projecting sustainable development of local community*. It means that, apart from institutions and organizations working in public, business and non-profit sectors, citizens may join in since they have the right to be *informed, educated, consulted and to get report* on the subject or process they are taking part in. Tools used for that purposes should be *adjusted* not only to the subject but also to capacities of the public, in order to assure maximum interest and motivation.

It means that more traditional ways of public participation such as meetings, bulletins, information boards, public discussions, workshops, reports etc. should be planned and organized in interactive, creative and innovative ways, taking into account the growing accessibility of new informational and communicational technologies.

There are many **challenges to public participation** (such as lack of information on the part of citizens on their right to participate, change of local authorities that leads to annulment of all previously defined plans, disappointment and apathy of citizens towards political representatives and politics in general, bad previous experience with similar processes, lack of interest of citizens in the subject, bad relations and distrust among interest groups, lack of “culture of participation” in local environment etc.). Yet, there are far more **benefits from the process** of public participation since it enables all interested parties to realize fundamental civil rights, to understand decision makers better and vice versa, to have better access to information of public importance, to express their needs and opinions before a decision is made, instead of apathy and resignation, to advance the level of responsibility and identification with community etc.

DEMOCRATISATION STARTS FROM COMMUNITY COUNCILS - POSSIBILITIES AND POLITICS OF ORGANIZED PEOPLE

Mechanisms and instruments for **direct participation** of citizens in public and common processes of interest for local communities (and not just for them) are even prescribed by the Law on Local Self-Government that recognizes following forms of direct participation of citizens in such decision making processes: **referendum, citizens' initiative, citizens' assembly** and **self-contribution**. Some of these mechanisms are finding place in statutes of towns and local self-governments, as well as statutes of community councils. Local communities, i.e. community councils, as the lowest self-governance bodies could also have an important role in maintaining direct contact with authentic political and social needs of citizens, since their activities are supposed to be dedicated exactly to this purpose: *fulfilling the needs of direct common interest in local communities.*

But, in reality, Community councils are taken over by members of the political parties who prioritize interests of their parties above interests of people, and thus violate prescribed principles of acting, as well as legal provisions.

Examples of such negative practice range from denying citizens the possibility to use premises of local communities, violating decisions of citizens adopted using listed instruments intended for their participation in decision making on common and public interests, to rare participation of self-organized citizens in other bodies, such as committees for this or that, which work should open perspectives for the life of people in local communities.

Apart from these aggravating circumstances, revitalization of usually rarely used mechanism and instruments for direct participation of citizens in public and common processes of interest for local communities is very important, since it is a way to cultivate self-organized and permanently ongoing political participation of people, i.e. opening the space for permanent political engagement of citizens which is usually reduced to voting at elections.

PRESENTING THE ORGANIZATION - HOW TO COMMUNICATE OUR GOAL

Do people sometimes seem indifferent when you are trying to talk to them about your organization and activities? You feel you would need to share a lot more information with them in order to get *understood*, and you definitely don't have that much time? Neither that much patience?

And still you know it's important that they get involved too in solving problems your organization deals with.

At gatherings of civil society organizations (CSOs) *raising awareness* is often being mentioned as the main task, even precondition for solving the problems in Serbia. And it is true. In the end, in order for someone to make a financial donation to your organization, that person should:

- Be **aware** of the importance of the problem you deal with,
- Be **aware** he/she can take part in solving the problem and
- Be **aware** that your organization can really contribute to solving or reducing the problem.

Therefore, raising awareness is also very important in order to create environment for CSOs to successfully fundraise from citizens in their communities.

If *awareness* is so important, do we know what it is? And how this awareness is being build or developed?

Our awareness is mostly influenced by two strong factors – 1) information and attitudes from our surrounding, and 2) information, attitudes and ways of thinking stored in our knowledge / long-term memory.

CSOs make part of the surrounding of citizens (1). Citizens are under constant pressure of various information from their surrounding. Many other players are far more present in that surrounding than us – whether through media (politicians, entertainers, public figures) or personal contact (family members, colleagues at work, neighbours...) How to make our information stand out and contribute to *raising of awareness*?

It is a complex subject which surface we will only scratch here.

All the research shows that people memorize things that cause **emotional reactions**. Is our **message** cold, too *neutral* in comparison to other information citizens get from the surrounding? Let`s clear it up right away, we are not talking about *sad* and *dramatically negative messages*. Our message would have to create **hope**, faith that the problem must be solved and that we, the citizens, and our organizations, are an important part of solution to the problem. Do we know how to bring such hope to people? Do we ourselves hope it`s possible to change things? Those with no hope should think again whether they should be in civil sector. This sector needs brave people.

It is also easier for people to memorize things that are being *repeated often*. Thus it is important to have **understandable messages**. CSOs have no funds for commercials on national media that would compete with messages of other actors. But if our message is understandable and easy to be repeated for citizens (sort of “catchy”), then there is a chance that others would convey it for us. Just remember some of the messages we often repeat even though they can`t be heard in the media anymore – “It`s not difficult to be nice”, “Knowledge is power”, “If you are fine, then nothing”, “Global but ours” etc.

Our messages should rely on what our audience is already familiar with. Learning process is usually defined as the process of *combining information from surroundings and from one`s memory*. What citizens know about our subject? Which information they lack to make, together with us, the step further in

rethinking the issue we deal with. Awareness is something you build slowly, information by information. Do not go 10 steps ahead of others, people won't be able to catch up with you and will just stop following you. Success demands patience.

Finally, we don't want just any *awareness*. A healthy society needs **critical awareness**. And it can be built only through education. That's why Paolo Freire said: **"education is the practice of freedom"**. In order to reach success in fundraising and our work in general, the education process has to start from our own learning. It is true that it's not easy to talk about the concept of life-long learning in a society where one of the most frequently asked questions is "What education have you completed?". But activists who have "completed" their education should ask themselves are they truly practicing what they are "preaching". If we are building or developing awareness of a society, we as activists have to be the best examples of a desired change.

Education is probably the most important practice of freedom. The more I know and can do, the bigger is my real power. Educated society can't be easily manipulated, recognizes prejudices easier, clearly perceives negative social consequences of exclusion, is much more capable to empathize with similar but also different ones, and what's the most important – will have the strength to define and build its future.

