

## Introduction

# THE CULTURE OF THE CULTURE OF THE CULTURE OF NON-ALIGNMENT NON-ALIGNMENT NON-ALIGNMENT

## Confrontations of Dominant Cultural-Political Narratives

Turning history on its head opens up whole new worlds of possibility.  
Howard Zinn

13

In the last decades, the growing number of in-depth examinations of overlooked and deliberately marginalised topics seems to indicate almost a trend in contemporary research. For those of us who conduct research in the cultural sphere, especially in the field of art and design, these themes are something that often seems to be part of everyday reality. But it is exactly this status of the ordinary that is actually alarming. Being permanently marginalised, art and design researchers often accept with a too high degree of resignation the dismissive attitude of the academic research community towards everything the traditionally established scientific fields often struggle to even classify. This is simply a consequence of the fact that we, art and design researchers, are constantly challenged by the rest of the scientific community expressing doubt as to whether our work in the field of art and design even belongs in the field of research. Moreover, most of the time we experience the problem related to the evaluation of research results and recognition of their excellence, especially if they are partly the result of artistic research or a combination of artistic and scientific research. Why? Simply because they cannot be classified (or worse, pigeon-holed) according to the established parameters of scientific

excellence.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, as researchers, we remain unclassified and on the margins, but determined to drastically change this situation step by step, one element after another, and to constantly draw attention to the overlooked possibilities and potentialities through the practice of research in the field of art and design.

The research on *Models and Practices of Global Cultural Exchange and Non-Aligned Movement* (funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (ARRS J7-2606)) confirms these potentialities in a unique way. In fact, after only two years of research work and despite being only half-funded, the project was already recognised by the public Agency for its excellence and listed among the four best interdisciplinary and bilateral research projects financed by the Agency in 2022. Today, as the research project is coming to an end after three years, a group of eight Slovenian researchers are credited as authors of 21 presentations of results at national and international conferences, 20 scientific papers, one retrospective monographic exhibition, one scientific monograph and two proceedings with papers (the first with the interim results were published in 2022 in the collection *Vpogledi/Perspicacités*, while the second publication is now in front of you). In addition, we also organised eleven research conferences, methodological workshops and discussions.

14

The present proceedings are thus the final monograph of the project *Models and Practices of Global Cultural Exchange and Non-Aligned Movement: Research in the Spatio-Temporal Cultural Dynamics*, which combined research in the fields of history, art history, culture, economics and sociology in an interdisciplinary and bilateral manner (bringing together researchers from Slovenia and Croatia). The research was based on the hypothesis that the accelerated process of decolonisation in the 1960s, which defined the articulation of cultural needs and cultural policies in the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, created new institutional mechanisms and new models or practices of cultural exchange. As demonstrated through the examples selected in our three-year study, this

1 Exhibitions are an illustrative example of this. If several years of research result in an exhibition curated by the author, it has no scientific value according to the current evaluation framework. In the document *Typology of documents/works for bibliography management in the Cobiss system*, the exhibition is listed under point 3.12 and defined as follows: "Event organised by the author of the works exhibited or by the author of the installation." This clearly shows that the researcher's work which results in an exhibition as a form of public presentation is not even recognised, let alone properly evaluated. In comparison to other results of research work, the exhibition is awarded only 5 expert points. A similar problem arose during the preparation of the document *Evaluation Methodology of Research Programmes at the University of Ljubljana* as publishing houses that primarily publish research results from the field of art and design have been completely omitted from the list of Slovenian publishing houses.

led to effects at the level of the Non-Aligned Movement that manifested in the global cultural and artistic field. The research project aimed to define the notion of Non-Aligned Movement culture in terms of a diverse and overlapping temporality, rather than adopting the idea of chronological and linear trajectories of the dominant narratives of the period. During the course of the research, we were constantly aware that we are dealing with a world subject to constant change, upheaval and conflict, and that—as will be shown further ahead in the present proceedings—art and design (in their broader field of activity) can be identified and interpreted as areas that are often overlooked yet are extremely important for identifying the specificities of this period. These fields are, in fact, often evasive in nature, but this characteristic is, paradoxically, the very basis permitting them to confront existing and dominant cultural-political narratives.

The scope of the research project in terms of geography was limited to the political geography of the Non-Aligned Movement. This gave us an insight into the different artistic, political and social processes that significantly influenced the development of different dynamics on the global cultural scene. In the recent past, which is the focus of the research, the existing models and practices of cultural exchange as products of national and transnational cultural policies enabled the project research to describe, analyse and explain the conceptual, performative and organisational aspects of the USA and the Soviet Union, as well as the cultural policies of several key countries of the Non-Aligned Movement—Yugoslavia (SFRY), India, the Middle East, Africa and Cuba—which clearly demonstrates the political and cultural diversity of the Movement.

Despite the project being half-funded, the present monograph encompasses the main conclusions drawn on the basis of diverse methodology, which was further developed in the course of the project. The extensive body of existing literature on the topic that was the basis for research is included in the freely accessible publication *List of Archival Collections and Bibliography of Titles on the Political Economy, Social Situation and Cultural Exchange of the Non-Aligned Movement*.<sup>2</sup> Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key individuals who were active in the Non-Aligned Movement and state bodies and responsible for defining the national cultural policies of the SFRY or other non-aligned countries. To provide a starting point for the research and a common methodological framework, we conducted a series of methodological discussions and organised scholarly workshops with invited speakers

2 Slovene title: *Seznam arhivskih zbirk in bibliografija naslovov o politični ekonomiji, družbeni situaciji ter kulturni izmenjavi Gibanja neuvrščenih*.

and experts sharing in-depth insights into the Non-Aligned Movement. These workshops enabled us to strengthen connections and establish a common inter-research understanding between the researchers participating in the project and coming from different theoretical backgrounds and disciplines. The core of the research work was primarily centred on the study of materials deposited in the national archives of the republics of the former SFRY, particularly in the archives in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. In the case of design, the studied materials were also obtained from British archives, notably the Royal College of Art Special Collections and the University of Brighton Design Archives. In structuring and programming the archive module, archival standards (ISAD (G), EAD) and metadata standards were applied for the use of archival material as well as for the documentation of research data and its description. The newly developed archive module and the Can\_is programme were fundamental for carrying out analyses of social networks (networks of professionals, artists, architects, cultural and economic policy makers, cultural workers) as well as networks of cultural programmes, institutions and cultural/political concepts. Network and spatio-temporal analyses with data visualisation proved to be important analytical tools, which were central to the project and permitted to establish a data-driven, decentralised view of social, cultural and political phenomena through interpretative and quantitative analysis.

In terms of content, the monograph can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part consists of papers that provide an in-depth view of the period through the lens of economics, art and design. In the paper titled *The Non-Aligned Movement and the New International Economic and Information Orders: Yugoslavia, the Global South and the UN*, Paul Stubbs analyses the politics of non-alignment and the new international economic order. The paper reveals how, in the 1970s, socialist Yugoslavia and the countries of the Global South united in the Non-Aligned Movement, together with the G77 members, began to focus on economic issues in order to oppose neo-colonialism. One of the most important achievements was the New Economic Order (NIEO) adopted in the UN in 1974 and promoted by UN agencies—UNESCO and UNCTAD. Stubbs' paper aims to identify the seeds of a revolt against hegemony from which it might be possible to draw inspiration against the present global neoliberal order.

In the article *Eastern, Western or Non-Aligned Modernism? The Case of Yugoslavia*, Nadja Zgonik analyses the definition of non-aligned modernism from the perspective of art history. In this paper, the author explores the concept of non-aligned modernism

and argues that although the Non-Aligned Movement did not succeed in establishing a socialist globalism that would undermine the Western canon in art, it did form a set of fundamental elements that provide a good basis for understanding geopolitical relations in art today.

In the next paper, *Non-Alignment, Yugoslav Diplomacy and the Establishment of Cross-Cultural Links with Africa*, Jure Ramšak draws on material from federal and republican foreign affairs agencies in order to show how Yugoslav diplomats in each of the selected sub-Saharan countries acted in the role of cultural mediators, analysing their understanding of postcolonial cultural realities and identifying the cultural manifestations on both sides that they helped to organise.

The first part of the monograph concludes with a paper by Barbara Predan, in which she applies the historical method to explain how Yugoslav designers, building on the Yugoslav Non-Aligned Movement and workers' self-management, in the 1970s and 1980s brought the idea of decentralisation and the questioning of epistemic colonialism to the Global South and the Global North, underlining the role of participation and the importance of considering the voices from the so-called periphery of design.

The second part of the monograph presents a selection of different examples of cultural and technical exchanges. In the paper *The Culture of the Non-Aligned Countries on the Slovenian Cultural Horizon*, Aleš Gabrič provides examples illustrating Yugoslavia's position regarding scientific, technological and cultural cooperation between the members of the Non-Alignment Movement. The author demonstrates that Yugoslavia's ideas also had a significant influence on the formulation of common positions of the Non-Aligned Movement, promoted by its members in the context of international organisations. But, as Gabrič shows, due to the numerous difficulties faced by the non-aligned countries, different levels of development, geographical distance and the legacy of colonialism, only a small portion of the ideas were implemented (despite the common policy).

The paper *Images of Friendship: Analysis of Artworks, Ethnological and Applied Arts Gifts from Non-Aligned Countries to the President of SFRY, Josip Broz* by Mitja Velikonja presents the results of in-depth research focused on the gifts received by President Tito from the leaders and delegations of the non-aligned countries, which are kept in the Belgrade Museum of Yugoslavia repositories. In the paper, the author analyses both the visual language of artworks as gifts and their various cultural codes. The paper concludes with a comparative analysis of the visual language

of artworks presented as gifts and the group of ethnological and applied arts gifts.

The next two papers examine Yugoslavia's cultural and political exchanges with India and Egypt starting from the same basis—the Ljubljana International Biennial of Graphic Arts. In the paper *Cultural Cooperation Between India and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s: A case study of the International Biennial of Graphic Arts*, Petja Grafenauer explores the diversity of readings of artworks in different contexts. Examining the example of the International Graphic Biennial and the cultural-artistic links between India and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1960s and 1970s, the author focuses on the links connecting Indian artists to the Biennial and on the systemic arrangements for the exchange of other cultural events between the SFRY and India. In the paper, *Yugoslav–Egyptian Cultural Relations: A Case Study of Art Intersections in Ljubljana and Alexandria in the 1960s and 1970s*, Daša Tepina studies the influence of the Non-Aligned Movement on the cultural relations between the former Yugoslavia and Egypt in the 1960s and 1970s, analysing them and observing their effect on the reception of art of the non-aligned countries in the former Yugoslavia.

18 The monograph concludes with a paper by Petra Černe Oven on the importance and role of visualisations in science, entitled *The Challenges of Developing Methods of Visualisation in Digital Humanities Projects and What the Design Profession Can Contribute*. In the article, the author also discusses the digital project tool Can\_is and the importance of design in the development of digital humanities tools. The author furthermore highlights the possible introduction of visualisation methodologies as these can influence interdisciplinary research and its results. The paper also deals with the development of a methodological approach in the context of visualisation, i.e. the aspect which is necessary for the optimal presentation of the project results. At the same time, the paper also suggests the direction for possible future improvements.

Howard Zinn in the preface to the series *The New Press People's History* writes that only by looking away from the so-called historical truth can we begin to learn "about the masses of people who did the work that made society tick". Moreover, by looking away new insights can be gained only if a shift in perspective is accompanied by changing the lens through which we observe and interpret the world. The latter is crucial according to Zinn, because only this allows us to see that "as the lens shifts the basic narratives change as well". The results of the three-year research confirm this necessity and at the same time reinforce our conviction that the work needs

to be continued: both in the context of exploring the models and practices of cultural exchange of the Non-Aligned Movement and in the context of the current and continuing culture of non-alignment in the field of art and design research.

**Barbara Predan, Daša Tepina**

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