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### **Biopolitical Art as Art of Participation in Eastern Europe since 1989**

In my PhD research I discuss art practices dealing with participation, social issues and engaging community, in the context of Eastern Europe after 1989. Such art practices got different names, like Participatory art or Socially Engaged art. This research is important because it has not been done before in the field of art theory and history in relation to this geographical region in a wider context. I aim to answer the following questions: What changed in art and participation from the period of state-funded communism to the period of democratization? What is the Participatory art of central European countries like today and where are its roots?

There is a need to look carefully at this definition, themes of participation, art practices connected to this term as well as forms of participation. I suggest Biopolitical art as a new and more suitable term for this type of artistic practice. At the most basic level I adopt Boris Groys's argument that 'art becomes biopolitical, because it begins to use artistic means to produce and document life as a pure activity'<sup>1</sup>. Similarly Marina Gržnić claims: '...originary biopolitical characteristics of contemporary art are effectuated in the way these projects are realized, in the way they deal with life, formally, aesthetically and contextually'<sup>2</sup>. Biopolitical art, as I propose, is art created with the following three components – life/experience, documentation and the intention to provoke discourse. I adopt the connotation used by, two art theorists: Angela Dimitrakaki<sup>3</sup>, to describe work of a Serbian female artist, Tanja Ostojić, and Boris Groys in his text on Biopolitics and art documentation<sup>4</sup>. By communicating their own personal struggle, or pointing to the issues of each individual, these artists create, and aim to create politically engaged art. The meaning of this term is understood here in relation of Jindřich Chaloupecký's description of 'political' in a sense that it was communicative in nature, therefore I suggest that political

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<sup>1</sup> Groys.2008, Art Power, 54

<sup>2</sup> Gržnić. 'From Biopolitics to Necropolitics and the Institution of Contemporary Art', 35

<sup>3</sup> Dimitrakaki.2013, Politics in a Glass Case, 81

<sup>4</sup> Groys.2008, Art Power, 54

art aims to encourage public collaboration and discourse on social and political issues. This new perspective on socially engaged art brings me to taxonomy of the term Participation which needs to be redefined in relation to new artistic practices, politics and identities in the post-communist Eastern Europe.

My research is based on qualitative analysis and on interviewing particular artists from the region. I will look at work of these artists: an artist collective from Czech Republic, Ztohoven who in their project *Citizen K*, 2009-2010, intended to expose the control and surveillance components of ID Cards. A Czech artist Kateřina Šedá's project *From Morning till Night*, 2011, involved 80 people from the small village of Bedřichovice performing in London. A Polish artist living in London, Alicja Rogalska's project *Dreamed Revolution*, 2014, was a performance where local activists were invited to take part in an experimental workshop and, hypnotized collectively articulate possible scenarios for a society of the future. Alicja together with another Polish artist based in Krakow, Łukasz Surowiec did a project called *Tear Dealer*, 2014, which sprung public discussion on the issues of affective labour, and commercialization of emotions. Finally, I will look at participatory projects in which is a Slovak artist, Oto Hudec, involved. He is member of "Make Art with Purpose", an international platform for art that creates change.