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AUTONOMY AND GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY: THE WUK SOCIO-CULTURAL CENTRE

WUK's organisational structure comprises of three pillars: Cultural Productions, WUK Education and Counselling as well as the WUK Socio-Cultural Centre. The *Association for the Creation of Open Culture and Workshop Houses* constitutes the legal umbrella organisation for these three pillars. About 650 members elect an executive board of six every two years.

Around 150 groups, initiatives and individuals work in The WUK Socio-Cultural Centre in seven self-organised sectors. What they have in common are grassroots democratic decision-making structures and the management of sector-specific issues by way of a plenary assembly, which convenes once a month. The activities of this unique structure representing such a cultural diversity are augmented by two in-house media, *WUK Radio on Orange 94.0* and the newspaper *WUK Info Intern*.

SEVEN SELF-ORGANISED SECTORS: THE SELF-CONCEPTION

CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In the children and youth section, house groups are created which are dedicated to practical educational work with children and adolescents aged 1-18 years. The groups work independently but, in principle, pursue common educational goals. These include the greatest possible individual care, voluntary participation of minors in the activities, equivalence of guardians, educational staff and children and young people.

The groups are a living space for children and adults. Therefore, the parents are actively involved in group events and take part in activities such as



maintenance, cleaning, cooking, as well as helping to shape the educational concepts and the financing of the group operation.

One goal of the child and youth section is also, with other initiatives, to contribute through training, discussion and training events, the networking of educational work outward and thus to be inspiration for other institutions.

The child and youth section consists of three groups of children, two all-day schools (Primaria and Secundaria) and a nursery (school care for primary school children). All groups are administered by parents.



INTERCULTURAL INITIATIVES

Seven groups representing different nationalities share the common goal of standing up for equal rights and combating racism. The fields of their commitment range from support and lobbying for immigrants to the promotion of art and culture.

MUSIC

Beneath the WUK lies a colourful, yet dimly lit world. In its cellars music of all known, unknown and undefinable genres is perpetually created. This particular section is called *WUK Musik*.

128 members form around 40 bands but also work and perform in temporary projects or as solo artists. Some of us have felt at home here since the WUK was first occupied over 30 years ago, the newest members have just joined us this year. Some perform on international stages while others are the hot underground phenomena of Vienna.



The 17 rehearsal rooms are each autonomous in typical WUK fashion. Their constituents need to invite new musicians before they can join the section WUK Musik and the WUK itself. Each rehearsal room is tightly packed with musicians and their equipment. Its members not only schedule the times to use them but have also remodeled, equipped and fashioned the rooms themselves into acoustically sophisticated studios or comfortable living rooms-away-from-home.

Each month the members meet to welcome newcomers, talk about current affairs concerning the rooms or the WUK, and also to exchange performance dates and developments of the Austrian music scene.

After a regrettable pause of several years, 2015 saw regular concerts organized by the WUK Musik called *WUK Stock*, and the return of a smashing success. Four times a year we leave the cellars to show the fruit of our work to the WUK and the world on the stage above.

The self-developed-and-built open recording studio of the section provides top-notch capabilities for recording and production. It comprises 38 m² recording area and a 35 m² control room. Up to date equipment and dedicated technicians provide musicians with the opportunity to have their productions mixed and recorded in a professional yet affordable manner.

SOCIOPOLITICAL INITIATIVES

The self-organised sector sociopolitical initiatives is a joining together of groups who consider themselves as sociopolitically emancipatory. According to its bylaws, the WUK stands „for a socially and economically fairer, ecologically more sensitive and culturally richer society. Democratisation that goes beyond conventional forms of politics is of crucial importance for this society. For this the WUK creates social freedom and opportunities for experiments where a creative society shaping potential can develop and be tested in practice.“ The GPI considers itself as central for achieving these goals.

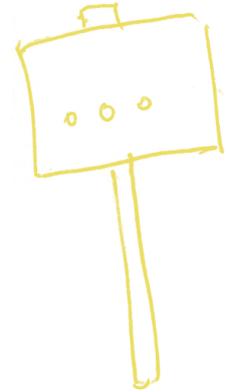
In a broader and stricter sense the self-organised sector bundles socially active initiatives with political ambitions/claims.

The great variety of groups united in the sociopolitical sector range from social services to seniors groups and environmental groups, from groups doing intercultural activities and the north-south divide to human rights initiatives and initiatives for refugee support and to groups presenting and examining racism, discrimination and violence, among other things, also by artistic methods. The critical reflection of dominant economic and monetary systems are just as much at home in the sector as scientific critique and research in the service of civil society. Groups devoting themselves to documentation and communication contribute to the internal cohesion and political ambition of the autonomous sector. In a nutshell the sector sociopolitical initiatives aims to live diversity, but with cohesion.

ttp (DANCE, THEATRE, PERFORMANCE)

The name *ttp* is composed by the words Tanz, Theater, Performance/ dance, theatre, performance. The ttp, Association for the Creation of Open Spaces in the Performing Arts, finds its purpose in the support, extension and mediation of different forms of performing arts and related art forms. Furthermore it creates open spaces for autonomous artistic activities and the exchange between various artistic disciplines.

This is being achieved by approximately 40 members, who together create an autonomous/self-organised infrastructure to enable artistic work and the realisation of projects in the ttp's rooms. In solo and group



arrangements the members create and realise dance, theatre and performance projects as well as jams, feedbacks, research, workshops, cultural and sociocultural activities. In this way the ttp forms a participative, inclusive social model, which supports the artist's activities and enables cultural projects.

As the rehearsing and working rooms are located in the building of the WUK, the ttp collaborates with the WUK and its different departments. Furthermore the ttp is also open to (international) cooperations with other art and culture institutions.

VISUAL ARTS

The artists of the visual arts sector work in a broad interdisciplinary and/or artistic spectrum in the fields of painting, drawing, photography, video, sculpture, installation, public art, performance, literature and music.

Visual artists were actively involved in the establishment of the WUK 35 years ago and tackled its renovation. Some section members founded the two showrooms in WUK: *Fotogalerie Wien*, then still a unique facility for contemporary photographic art, and the *Kunsthalle Exnergasse* as an open alternative to the traditional gallery scene. The : *Fotogalerie Wien* is still part of the autonomous section of visual arts and is self-administered by a dedicated collective.

Another initiative of the visual arts sector is Vienna's smallest art space, the *Kunstzelle* in the WUK courtyard, which is curated by, an artist of the sector. The *IntAkt*, a feminist artists network, in existence for 40 years, has found its place in the visual arts sector. The *IntAkt* space is used for regular meetings, organisational work and as a gallery. The Visual Arts section operates two guest studios. One studio is used as a short three-month project studio, is not curated and is allocated according to a waiting list. The second guest studio is publicly advertised. The allocation of it is done in accordance to common criteria by a jury.

Most of the artists share their studios permanently or temporarily. A monthly plenary is held where the section tasks are distributed and joint decisions are made. Together with the workshop sector, the visual arts sector biennially holds the *MAZE Labyrinth Art Production WUK*, a day of open studios and workshops with an extensive program. Regularly there arises the opportunity for cooperation and exchange with other areas in the house as well as with national and international artists, initiatives, institutions and networks.



WORKSHOPS

In the workshop section there are currently 21 groups and individual artists working. Interdisciplinarity plays a significant role in this section. Traditional crafts such as wood and leather processing or ceramics stand on equal footing with painting, sculpture, film, video and performance. The workshops are open to new ideas, concepts and guests and make their resources, such as equipment, expertise and facilities available on favorable terms. In the open workshops it is possible to, individually or under guidance, realise one's own project ideas. There are regular workshops for those interested. Low-threshold assistance or independent work and the preservation of ancient craft techniques are central concerns of this section.

In the 12 workshops, six ateliers and three guest studios a bicycle repair shop is just as at home as, among other things, a bindery, a metal workshop, an open pottery or a gravure printing workshop. The careful handling of resources is seen as crucial.

Four guest studios are publicly advertised and open to domestic and foreign artists.

A former factory building, the 250m² large project space of the workshop section, offers low-threshold opportunities for artistic projects, exhibitions or presentations.

In cooperation with the Kunsthalle Exnergasse an artists in residence program was formed in 2012 whereby the workshop section provides a studio at the artists disposal.

Annually, the workshop section organizes an experimental and non-profit art and design market event called Lights for young labels and designers. Together with the visual arts section, WUK holds the *MAZE Labyrinth Art Production* every two years. On this day, the studios and workshops are open and give interested visitors an insight into the creative work of WUK artists.

