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# Metelkova, Ljubljana: Cultural exception falls from grace

By The Klub Gromka collective & The AKC Metelkova mesto Forum

Slovenian State planning officials don't seem to recognise the benefits of culture-led regeneration in Ljubljana any more, or at least they want to put an end to the legal exception that 'Autonomous Cultural Zone' Metelkova has enjoyed for 13 years under the grace of the Slovenian Ministry of Culture. On Wednesday, an excavating machine arrived to tear down a series of buildings, beginning with Mala Åola, a building/public art work that guest artists Axt & Kelle from Germany had erected supposedly illegally (but with the co-funding of the Municipality!) in 2002. What follows is a series of press releases about the situation by Metelkova artists since April 2006 <http://www.metelkova.org>

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## 14 JUNE 2006: ALERT FOR METELKOVA

This Wednesday, June 14th 2006, at 6 in the morning the government Inspectorate for the Environment and Spatial Planning brought an excavating machine to the Autonomous Cultural Zone Metelkova mesto, Ljubljana, to tear down one of the buildings of the converted ancient army barracks which they consider to have been erected illegally. The cultural workers and supporters of Metelkova prevented the action. This attempt to destroy one of the liveliest cultural and intellectual locations in Ljubljana was the third one in the past few months. Various inspections have recently intensified their interventions during cultural events at Metelkova.

The government of Slovenia is acting in accordance with a recently passed law on catering industries. Under the cover of its strict provisions regulating commercial activities, which cannot be fulfilled by the non-profit associations and NGOs of Metelkova, the executive might as well put an end to the largest agglomeration of alternative cultures in the country.

Metelkova provides 40% of the non-commercial music events in the city. Its attendance can favourably be compared with that of the established Ljubljana Festival. It is the second largest provider of cultural events in Ljubljana. Metelkova is the only location in the city, and one of the few in the country, where youth cultures and alternative cultures are systematically produced and presented to a large and active audience. It is also a forum of impressive intellectual irradiation. During each academic year, it hosts the Workers' Punk University where the most urgent dilemmas of the contemporary world are discussed by competent international speakers. Metelkova recently hosted the annual meeting of Trans Europe Halles. During the 13 years of its existence, projects at the Autonomous Cultural Zone Metelkova mesto have been supported by the Ministry of Culture and by the City of Ljubljana, as well as by many international sponsors.

Producers from Metelkova have been participating in Documenta, Manifesta, Sao Paulo Biennial, Venice Biennale, Wiener Festwochen. Many international festivals held in Ljubljana hold part of their activities at Metelkova: The City of Women, The Other Music, Jazz Festival Ljubljana, Trnfest. Metelkova has been presented as an outstanding phenomenon by international media: ARD, Arte, BBC, Belarus' State TV, Die Zeit, Falter, Feral Tribune, Los Angeles Times, ORF, Russian State TV, Seattle Times, ZDF.

Metelkova is a squat initiated in 1993, when a group of alternative producers and activists occupied the ancient barracks of the army headquarters near the centre of Ljubljana in order to prevent its illegal destruction, which was launched by still unknown agents presumably led by speculative real-estate interest. Although it has never succeeded in achieving a proper legal status, the location was registered

as national cultural heritage in 2005.

ACZ Metelkova mesto is under attack. Its people are ready to defend it. They need support. Please circulate this information.

If you want to express your support, please write to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Slovenia (Janez.Jansa@gov.si) and to the Minister of Culture (vasko.simoniti@gov.si). Please, send a copy of your letter to info@metelkova.org

For supporters of Metelkova:

Wasim Alkhatib, Miha Blažič, Maja Breznik, Katarina Deskovič, Narcisa Deskovič, Sabina Aogič, Alžana Fabjan, Damjan Kocjančič, Nina Kozinc, Andrej Kurnik, Jadranka Ljubičič, Iztok Markoja, Jurij Markoja, Rastko Močnik, Marion Mourlam, Sabina Schwenner, Andrej Sešek, Darij Zadnikar

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## **APRIL 2006: DEMOLITION THREAT**

In the last three years AKC Metelkova is once again a subject of the government repression. This became obvious because of all the visits from the state inspection agents but at this moment the biggest threat is a notice for the demolition of Mala Ajola from the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning. After nearly thirteen years of fighting the windmills - no matter which political option propelled them - we are again where we have begun. The official information reads: on Friday, April 14th 2006 begins the demolition of AKC Metelkova Mesto. Mala Ajola is the first on the list, followed by demolition of Jalla Jalla and all jutting roofs in the south part of the Metelkova.

Obviously this threat is real.

The first notice of demolition of Mala Ajola came in May 2005 with the announced date of demolition on 1st of June 2005. The proceeding was stopped and the demolition never took place. Let us underline that the parties involved in the proceedings are the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning,

Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning, but we do not even have the right to receive a copy of the official notice on the demolition, despite the fact that we have filled in a claim to participate in the proceedings. To this day we have not received any answers.

On Monday 10th of April 2006, the Municipality of Ljubljana gave us an unofficial notice on the demolition taking place on Friday 14th of April, officially ordered by Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

We call out to all individuals and groups who support AKC Metelkova and who oppose the demolition of Mala Ajola to be a part of a cultural event and the defence of Mala Ajola which begins on Thursday 13th of April at 18.00 in Mala Ajola and Klub Gromka and ends on Tuesday morning. And we are inviting you (as many as possible!) to come on Friday 14th of April at 6.00. The Programme is still being put together, check on [www.metelkova.org](http://www.metelkova.org) or [www.metelkova.org/gromka](http://www.metelkova.org/gromka) for further details.

We kindly invite you to keep track of the events in the first of the incriminated buildings which are marked for demolition on Friday 14th of April 2006: Mala Ajola, AKC

Metelkova Mesto.

Metelkova will not fall!

Greetings,

The Klub Gromka collective and The AKC Metelkova mesto Forum

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## **DEMOLITION OF AKC METELKOVA MESTO - PRESS RELEASE**

After nearly thirteen years of fighting the windmills - no matter which political option propelled them - we are back where we started. The official information reads: on Friday, April 14th 2006 begins the demolition of AKC Metelkova Mesto.

Obviously this is for real.

First is Mala Åola, which demolition will be followed by Jalla Jalla's and all jutting roofs in the south part of the Metelkova.

Mala Åola is an auxiliary object / artwork / monument / urban art sculpture to the older building called Åola which was destroyed in 1997. The project was finished in the summer of 2002 by the international craftsman association "Axt & Kelle" from Germany. It was made with the help of the Faculty of Architecture students under the mentorship of dr. Marta Gruev and with the assistance of Peter Gabrijel BA in architecture, with the co-funding of the Municipality of Ljubljana, the Department for Culture and Research. The inner walls of the urban art sculpture Mala Åola were painted by painters Tina DrÄar and Bine Skrt as their graduation work at the Academy of Fine Arts in Ljubljana.

The first notice on the demolition of Mala Åola came in May 2005 with the announced date of demolition on June 1st 2005. The proceeding was stopped and demolition never took place. Teater Gromki - as a user of this object - had put in a claim to the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning for participation in the proceedings but hasn't received an answer to this day still. Let us accentuate that the participating parties in proceedings are the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, the Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning, while we haven't even got the right to receive an official notice on demolition.

On Monday 10th of April 2006, the Municipality of Ljubljana gave us an unofficial notice of demolition taking place on Friday 14th of April, officially ordered by Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

We cannot accentuate enough what significance AKC Metelkova Mesto has for the visibility of Ljubljana and Slovenia.

We do want to accentuate once again, that the original sin of the illegal status, which has been reproached to us by the authorities, lies within their illegal action of the demolition in September 1993 after which all Metelkova's options to acquire any kind of permissions required for the performing its everyday activities were taken away.

So we can say there has been an almost-thirteen-year state of emergency.

Despite this state of play and the fact that the buildings have been left to practically live on its own resources, its ingenuity and all the voluntary work, AKC Metelkova Mesto literally arose from the ruins.

An abundant production and the enormous number of home and international guests are both well documented and there for everyone to see. AKC Metelkova Mesto is a cultural-social phenomenon which is better known abroad than in the country where it is situated. Every day there are tourist guides in Metelkova, showing the epicenter of Ljubljana's creativity to the tourists, filling the city's till. The Celica Youth hostel received an award for the most innovative tourist project in Slovenia. The art production of AKC Metelkova Mesto represents Slovenia at some of the most eminent world exhibitions (such as The Biennial of contemporary art in Sao Paolo, Brazil). Artists who work in Metelkova raise state monuments (statue of Edvard Kocbek by academic sculptor BoÅ¡tjan Drinovec). In the past six years we have been presented in many foreign media programmes and documentaries (Die Zeit, Falter, BBC World Services, BBC TV, Los Angeles Times, Seattle Times, Washington Post, Tageszeitung, ARD, ZDF, Arte ...)

ACK Metelkova Mesto has a full study of it's own history, installation and meaning (Bratko BibiÄ, Metelkova Noise. Space and culture transitions in Ljubljana. Peace Institute, Ljubljana 2003).

And there is so much more...

All activities of AKC Metelkova Mesto have always been public, despite difficult conditions, which cannot be said for the work of public administration. Over the years their negotiation tactics have always been performed with tongue-in-cheek. "The Reasons" for the discreditation of AKC Metelkova Mesto were everchanging, but the purpose stayed the same - demolition and the sale of the terrain.

At the same time we strongly deny the statement of Mrs. ErÅ¾en, one of the initiators for gathering of signatures for closing of Rog, which was issued on Tuesday 11th April 2006 on Radio Å tudent, claiming that Metelkova does not pay water and electricity bills. Of course this is not true, we have been regularly paying all of the above stated expenses for many years, Mrs. ErÅ¾en can check with all the competent companies. Next statement of Mrs. ErÅ¾en was, that they do not want Rog to exist, because they do not want a second Metelkova on their doorstep. Let us clarify the basic difference between Rog and Metelkova: Rog sprung up because of the lack of production space, while Metelkova includes both production and entertainment spaces. Indeed, Metelkova does support Rog.

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For details you can turn to:

1. Inspectorate of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Head of the Inspectorate Branch Office Ljubljana, Tomaz MiklavÄiÄ, tel: 01/ 420-4400, e-mail: irsop.oelj@gov.si
2. MOL - Municipality of Ljubljana, Municipal Authorities, Marko Prijatelj, tel: 01/ 306-1333, e-mail: marko.prijatelj@ljubljanasi
3. MOL - Municipality of Ljubljana, Mayor's Office, tel: 01/ 306-1010, e-mail: danica.simsic@ljubljanasi
4. AKC Metelkova mesto, Renata VidiÄ, gsm: 041/ 960-153, e-mail: renata.vidic@email.si
5. AKC Metelkova mesto, Jasna BabiÄ, gsm: 040/ 994-809, e-mail: jasna.babic@gmail.com

We kindly invite you to keep track of the events in the first of incriminated buildings which are marked for demolition on Friday 14th of April 2006: Mala Åola, AKC

Metelkova Mesto.

Metelkova will not fall!

Greetings,

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