Learning from Clubture

A conversation between Davor Miskovic, Drugo more/ Clubture (HR) and Ruth Catlow, Furtherfield (UK) with Max Dovey for the 4th DAOWO lab, Artist Organise (on the blockchain).

What lessons can be learned from the radical, decentralized, participatory organising principles developed by Clubture, for collaboration between networks of cultural players?

The Clubture network of not-for-profit cultural organisations and art groups has successfully distributed 130K Euros of national cultural funding to 48 projects just in the last 4 years, between a network of peers in Croatia since 2002. Through annual events and a few simple rules (that operate a bit like the Eurovision Song Contest - only less overtly partisan) Clubture has funded a range of contemporary arts and radical social change projects, 80% of which take place outside of the capital, Zagreb, and in so doing has created solidarity between a diverse network of actors.

The Clubture assembly meets once a year to decide which projects should be funded on an open, one member one vote system. The rules are:
- Any not-for-profit organisation or initiative can apply for funding
- Once an organisation has successfully delivered a Clubture funded project it is eligible for membership and can join the assembly to vote on future projects (membership expires after 3 years of inactivity)
- To qualify for funding the project must take place in at least 3 different places in Croatia
- Members have 15 points to distribute to projects across 3 criteria:
  - Quality of concept/ Cultural impact
  - Value for money
  - Feasibility and production quality

Members report that while personal and strategic alliances between members do influence voting, the transparency of the voting system is widely perceived as having achieved fairness in its distribution of funds, and has been successful at bringing in new people and maintaining a good balance of support for emerging and established players. It has also built solidarity in the network - members will take political action, signing petitions and advocating for issues on behalf of each other. The main weakness of the system is that projects are judged disproportionately on the quality of their presentation at assembly.

Members nominate and elect an advisory board which oversees a central body that manages Clubture operations with an average overhead cost of 20-30%. In conversations we concluded that blockchains could be used to facilitate member voting (through a mobile dapp), and to distribute funding, leading to more transparency, fewer mistakes and potentially a reduction in management costs. Because of its simple rules, and established networks Clubture could provide a good exemplar for a prototype for blockchain based artists' organisational infrastructure.