

Visible Solutions LLC is an artwork - enterprise co-owned by three artists. By situating itself into the borderzone of economical and artistic fields the company creates an independent platform for investigating the neoliberal utopia and it's effects on both fields.

The company was established on 2010 in Tallinn, Estonia. 2010 was a year of economic depression, on the beginning of 2011 our minister of finance was nominated the best of europe by the The Banker magazine.

Below you can find the artist statement of Visible Solutions in the form of an interview

Visible Solutions LLC interview for Latvian Art magazine
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Follow the Invisible Hand

Interviewed by Anneli Porri

Visible Solutions LLC is a young and innovative enterprise of creative industry with international ambition, initiated by three young artists and entrepreneurs Karel Koplimes, Taaniel Raudsepp and Sigrid Viir. We were inspired by the state cultural policy that favors enterprising by creative individuals in order not to fight with such policy we decided to play along and create Visible Solutions that invents, produces and markets successful culture products with business perspective and enormous export potential, says the official web site of the Visible Solutions LLC (visiblesolutions.eu). Can you recognise the speech of a slicked and well trained salesman painstakingly corresponding to the right wing cultural and economical policy, success fantasies, desire for achievements and material welfare?

This institutional body is a great deal of an exercise of perception, what do we see – a group of artist doing a contemporary art piece or a business corporation. They produce well designed and

well crafted objects of contemporary art, but at the same time they characterise those as commodities, ready to quench the thirst for some practical or ideological needs for status building. And that's what all successful Nordic designers do, right? Except they are finishing their Master studies at the Photography department in Estonian Academy of Arts.

Artist's job, precariat, employment, and labor unions are the latest critical topics in discussions and the works of Estonian artist from younger generation. Artist duo Johnson&Johnson were the ones, who entered from the artistic field into economical field and signed them up as a NGO in order to hire a employee to decrease the employment deficiency for one month. Until the Visible Solutions LLC opened their office in the Hobusepea Gallery in this April.

Since this is a quite complex institution we must dig into the philosophical background of the corporation. Visible Solutions is a real limited liability company co-owned by Karel, Taaniel and Sigrid, so when they are talking about the company the audience should keep in mind that they are listening to an interested party who probably has some sort of an agenda. But this is the case with almost every speaker who speaks about her business. Visible Solutions LLC is a business company in a capitalist environment and therefore must follow the rules of the market. Young artists as individuals do not always agree with the market driven logic yet the company may follow it.

They speak/write in the name of Visible Solutions LLC. These texts are written in collaboration, there is no single author. Visible Solutions LLC is the sum of three of them in the specific context. The texts produced by Visible Solutions LLC fall into two categories - texts about the company and product overviews. The latter are integral parts of the products and should not be viewed separately.

1. Please describe your everyday practice as an employer/employee of the Visible Solutions LLC.

Right now our time is spent mainly on product development and marketing activities. When it comes to product development this process is continuous we are constantly employing our methods to generate ideas for possible new products. Running the company takes a big part of our time - we are working almost constantly.

To name a few of our activities: building the actual physical prototypes at workshops, loading and unloading the trucks transporting our office inventory and products, documenting the offices we have created, meeting and discussing the future products, collaborative text production, finding finances and

investors to keep the company running, explaining our agenda and methods to interested parties, book keeping, solving the technical questions and so on. In short it's a tough job.

Our roles within the company are dynamic - there are no fixed job descriptions.

2. You have dealt with the topic of creative industries in Estonia, especially the politics of the Ministry of Culture during your studies. What did you find out?

The investigation into the activities of the Ministry of Culture actually triggered the process that led to the founding of Visible Solutions LLC. The reason was quite simple; we wanted to see what is this institution actually doing. What are the priorities of the ministry and where and how does visual culture fit in. Also in the background was our curiosity about the reasons of the non-position of artists in our society.

We read the publicly available documents and did some statistical analysis. The result of the analysis was published as a longer article <http://artishok.blogspot.com/2009/04/analuisiv-sissevaade.html/>

In short we found out that visual culture and visual arts are a non-priority. But the ministry was really active in pushing forward something called Creative Industries. It seems that they are willing to put huge amounts of resources into developing this concept and not only Ministry of culture. Also Ministry of finance and Ministry of Economics are involved in promoting this. After looking into the nature of Creative industries it became clear that this is a quite global phenomenon. And it makes perfect sense when you look at the current economic politics at large, not only in Estonia.

The estimated ideal growth rate of the capitalist economic system is about 2.5 to 3.5 percent per annum. The continuous demand for growth within the capitalist economic system stipulates the need for continuous creation of new markets and sectors. One of the currently nurtured sectors is Creative industries. Big part of the sector is focused on producing immaterial goods and services. A good example of this is content production for all kinds of devices: desktop computers, laptops, palmtops, iPad's, gaming consoles, DVD players, e-book readers and so forth.

So it is completely logical that in the currently prevailing discourse of neoliberal ideology the politicians are actively seeking ways to commercialize the sphere of culture even further and thus are promoting the concept of cultural industries, as there is a significant potential for economic growth. This in turn means that the cultural production is more and more subjected to the rules of the "free" market and the structures supporting the

cultural productions outside the market logic are in threat of being gradually torn down or replaced by a system that is even more intertwined with the market. Also a new class is forming as a result of this process – creative class or creatariat.

It is important to note that we see the raise of creative industries as a symptom in the capitalist system. It is part of the process where market logic is systematically embedded into the fabric of our lives as new markets are created that commercialize the social relations, creative activities and our intimate moments. So in this context we decided to create the Visible Solutions LLC.

3. You have stated that Visible Solutions LLC is an art project of a piece of art/enterprise and it takes its actions in the border zone of the artistic field and economical field, examines both of those fields as ideological spaces and languages. Settling in to this border area, it gives an opportunity to translate elements and terms from one dialect to another. What do you mean by that?

Visible Solutions LLC is an artwork enterprise that tries to preserve autonomy and create a platform for artistic analysis and production by placing itself into the border zone mentioned. So our approach is to be in between and examine the contradictions and similarities of the fields in question by trying to engage actively in both logics of conduct simultaneously. We do think that this position creates some unique possibilities for artistic analysis and production. It is also important to realize the intertwining of those fields - at some points they become indistinguishable. They are interwoven like strings in a fabric or even like two different electromagnetic fields occupying the same space.

We look at these fields as ideologized spaces and languages. On both fields there is a set of ways for describing the reality, say - a set of languages or dialects. All of these languages or dialects have specific vocabulary that means that they are finite - there is a finite amount of things that can be said or thought about the world in each of these. And each of the dialects tends to concentrate on describing some aspects of the reality that are of interest. This is also the basis of value systems on these fields - what is indescribable or unthinkable does not exist nor it does have any real value in the context of a certain dialect. So what we have is a set of languages and value systems - a set of ideologies. Roughly generalising: in most cases the dialects in one field have more common terms and values with each other than with the dialects of the other field.

We translate economic language to artistic dialect and vice versa, especially paying attention to the information that is lost or

added through the translation. This is one process we use to develop our products and company which is the ultimate product of Visible Solutions LLC.

4. Then you continue The conceptual artifacts/products will come into being as a consequence of analysis. Those new hybrid products will reveal the 'error-spots' of interwoven artistic and economical fields. Please describe those 'error-spots'.

Error spot occurs when there is a hidden but strong contradiction in the fields we operate. A kind of schizophrenic situation when a superficial examination seems to indicate a single entity (term, agent,...) occupying both fields but a closer look reveals a strong contradiction within this entity. The process of translation helps to reveal the situations when there is contradictory logic behind a single term that is used on both fields. A good example for this kind of situation is the different interpretations of the term freedom. Error spots are important because when examined the contradictions can reveal a great deal about the reality we operate in.

At this point we think, it is important to note that the owners of Visible Solutions LLC do have an ideological agenda and they are by no means just neutral observers but actively engaged manipulators. We use the error spots for our production and within the ramifications of the products we do take a stand.

5. What makes Visible Solutions LLC different from other artists as an entrepreneurs who produces their expensive pieces with their unique signature and unique selling proposition? Or should I ask what makes any of an artistic production different from a commercial product?

Attempt to differentiate art and commercial production on a theoretical level seems to be quite impossible and also a futile task in today's situation. Some attempts have been made also quite recently, there is an interesting discussion between John Molyneux and Chris Nineham that can be found in the issues 80 and 82 of the "International Socialism" in form of two articles "The legitimacy of modern art" by Molyneux and "Art and alienation: a reply to John Molyneux" by Nineham. They tackle the question from the point of view of Marxist economic theory using the Marxist terminological apparatus.

To make a short oversimplification: Molyneux argues that art can be described as unalienated labor and Nineham reply's that due to the unavoidable commodification of art the labor will be still alienated. We tend to agree with Nineham. There are of course several possible strategies for avoiding such commodification.

Visible Solutions LLC is taking another approach. In our mode of

production we are quite clear about the fact that we are creating products for the "free" (art) market. In a sense the commodification of our artworks - product is an integral part of the products themselves. By recognizing and using this fact we hope actually to retain more control. Also this positioning of the artwork - products are essential in the context of artwork-enterprise where the main method of production is artistic analysis of economic and artistic fields. So we are actually focusing on the structures and logics of our fields instead of just following these logics. At the same time we are trying to feed the results of our artistic analysis back to the fields as artwork-products, so we are following the logic.

6. Nicolas Bourriaud describes such an action where artists come together to constitute a company-like body as a one form of post-production, a form how art reprograms the world. Artists use some 'real world' schema as a screenplay and act according to that. What can be the result of this reprogramming?

Yes, Bourriaud's statement: "Contemporary art thus presents itself as an alternative editing table that shakes up social forms, reorganizes them, and inserts them into original scenarios. The artist deprograms in order to reprogram, suggesting that there are other possible uses for the techniques and tools at our disposal." describes the method and approach of Visible Solutions LLC on a very general level quite well. Also the concepts of postproduction and deejaying (or even veejaying) proposed by Bourriaud could be applied to our modes of operation.

In essence we could say that Visible Solutions is mixing narratives or screenplays. The goal of this is the knowledge and possibilities that emerge from this mix of ideological and contradictory narratives and also the information that is revealed when the screenplays clash.

7. You use few extremely strong notions as your starting platform – schizophrenia, independence/liberty, neoliberal economy. I think all of those will need your definition as your idiosyncratic language.

These are indeed the central terms in our vocabulary. By Schizophrenia we are simply referring to a situation where one single term, concept or some other entity contains several contradictory logics. This is the case for example with the concept of Creative Industries and the term Freedom. Difference of interpretations of the term Freedom on artistic-creative and economic fields is a good and an important example of such situation. The term freedom is of central importance on

both fields. We are talking about the free market, economic freedom, artistic freedom, freedom of speech, individual freedoms and so on. Freedom is an highly regarded value almost on all fields of human activity. But we think it is of greatest importance to examine what is actually meant by the term is used in a specific dialect or theory.

The Schizophrenic nature of 'Freedom' is quite obvious. On the economic field the term is referring mainly to ones ability to act as a free agent on a free market. The radicalist belief (which by the way is the prevailing one) is that essentially all other freedoms are based on or uphold by the freedom of the market. This view essentially constrains the possibilities of all human development on both individual and social levels with the rules of the "free" market. If we look at the interpretations of the term on artistic-creative field then we see something quite different, firstly there is a much bigger multitude of interpretations but if we try to generalize once again, we could say that freedom is mainly considered as the possibility to construct ones identity (in a very broad sense of the word), there are of course many constrains. So if we do not agree with this hierarchical view of freedom currently prevalent on the field of economics and look at the two interpretations as a two equally important ones then the possible logic of behaviour stemming from the interpretations are not only different but in many very important cases contradictory. So what we have is a schizophrenic situation. Interestingly such schizophrenic situations or error spots are often exploited by the capitalist system. When we look at the produce of the creative industries than we could say that not only is the concept itself schizophrenic but also that creative industries is the sector where the continuous exploitation of this schizophrenic situation is of central importance. It is well beyond the scope of this interview to make an full argument here but if we take one step further and agree with the fact that big part of the creative industries produce can be viewed as modern alternative to propaganda then we could also say that this exploitation of error spots is of central importance to the whole of capitalist society.

To understand the context where Visible Solutions LLC is operating we must also have a quick excursion into the ideology called neoliberalism. A good definition of neoliberalism can be found in David Harvey's book "A brief History of Neoliberalism" where he describes it as follows:

"Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and

skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. The state has to guarantee, for example, the quality and integrity of money. It must also set up those military, defence, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets. Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created, by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state should not venture."

But this is just a dry description along the lines that what neoliberalism proclaims itself to be. We all recognize this rhetoric as it is used by so many policy makers today, with the difference that they tend also describe the wonderful benefits that implementation of this ideology will bring. This dry description of the basic ideological viewpoints of the neoliberal ideology does not say much about the effects of the implementation of such a programme nor does it shed any light to the motivations behind the implementation of the ideology.

Bourdieu proposes some answers in form of questions in he's essay "The Essence Of Neoliberalism": "What if, in reality, this economic order were no more than the implementation of a utopia — the utopia of neoliberalism — thus converted into a political problem? One that, with the aid of the economic theory that it proclaims, succeeds in conceiving of itself as the scientific description of reality?"

The agenda of this implementation of utopia is nicely summed up by David Harvey in the before mentioned book: "We can, therefore, interpret neoliberalization either as a utopian project to realize a theoretical design for the reorganization of international capitalism or as a political project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites."

The effects of implementation of this ideology are widespread one of the most important and drastic being the increasing dominance of market logic in all spheres of human activity.

8. You participated at the open call of Estonian entry in Venice Biennale. We don't know the results who will represent Estonia in Palazzo Malipiero yet, but could you open up your critical vision and research about the Biennale of Venice?

Our goal in Venice is not to represent the Republic of Estonia but to represent our company - Visible Solutions LLC. So we are simply trying to use the open call for gaining access to the context of

the biennale. We would be willing to go there with the help of some institution or nation as long as we could hold on to our own agenda.

The Venice Biennale is an event where the concentration of artistic and economic fields is extraordinarily high - there is a huge amount of symbolic and economic capital at one place. This is the ideal context for the operations of artwork-enterprise. We do think that the issues we are dealing with and the questions we are asking are very relevant in this environment.

Also the current nation based structure of the biennale once designed to reflect the distribution of power in the world is more and more out of touch with the reality where 51 of the largest economies are corporations and the institution of artist is becoming increasingly nation independent. So the structure of biennale is not really accurately reflecting the distribution of neither symbolic nor monetary capital. With our presence as Visible Solutions LLC we would also like to address this issue.

9. Please open up your visual imagery a bit. You use the image of an invisible hand as your trademark.

The invisible hand is probably one of the most vital metaphors within the economic theory. Some authors even claim that Smith's metaphor of the invisible hand is the most important concept in modern social thought. The metaphor originates from Adam Smith's "An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" that was first published in 1776. The text laid the foundation of what is today known as science of economics.

So in this comprehensive theoretical text that is some 800 pages long there is a paragraph that states the following:

"By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was not part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it."

There are several essays detailing the use and interpretations of this metaphor. And different opinions about what Smith actually meant when he was talking about the invisible hand and what were the constraints surrounding and limiting the effects of the

invisible hand.

But for sure we can claim that it has become an extremely important rhetorical device. When "free" market ideologists and neoliberal politicians need to justify further deregulation of markets they are usually using the crude interpretation of Smith's logic and claiming that deregulation will benefit us all and through the workings of the free market (the invisible hand) more value is generated and also somehow justly distributed within the society.

So the Invisible Hand can also be viewed as mythological creature of extraordinary strength. By placing it to the national flags at our office locations we are simply giving it its rightful position. We think that in case of the invisible hand it is important to ask the simple questions what is it, who is feeding it and who is fed by it?

10. You also use clear hints to images depicting or symbolizing revolutionary movement. Hoisting a banner is a ritual that inaugurate every new office of yours?

Yes in each new country our office comes into being through the ritualistic act of hoisting the banner. We are using the visual language of propagandistic revolutionary images for several reasons. One of them being the fact that a lot of what is generated by the creative industries can be viewed as modern alternative to propaganda. A continuous flow of affirmative culture that is supporting the capitalist consumer society and neoliberal utopia. So we are taking a step back in time and performing our ritualistic acts using somewhat more obvious visual language. Also each new office opening in each new country is a small victory and a conquest for the Visible Solutions LLC.