

Articles published in a special bilingual supplement (Romanian/English) of 22 Magazine in Romania, July 2000

In the framework of a PFC action project

Enough politics. It's time for culture!

By: CORINA ŞUTEU

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In the quite tense South-Eastern European context, the launching of a process that brings together the politicians of culture, its practitioners and legislators, should firstly be understood as an act of maturity, as the consequence of a successful development.

In Romania, the fall of the communist regime immediately triggered the rapid and wild development of „cultural consumerism“, to the detriment of local cultural production. When I say „consumerism“, I am especially referring to the cinema and audiovisual industry, to the music and book industry.

In the first years after 1989 the traditional arts, theatre, opera and ballet, which have been dependent on extremely centralised institutional structures, did not manage to find their place at national level, to regain or retain their audience, or simply to re-launch a real production of their own.

Contemporary art, contemporary dance and the modern music bands hardly began to educate the taste of a public that had been guided, for the past few decades, towards dead, classical, „ideologically correct“ forms of art. Moreover, the appearance, shy at the beginning, of the „neighbourhood“ cultures, so much encouraged in the West in the 1990s, caused much dispute and controversy, as it confronted an audience that had been force-fed with „Cantarea Romaniei“.

At the beginning of the '90s, some gestures of support, which later became emblematic, marked a real change in tone. First of all one remembers Andrei Serban's arrival at the Bucharest National Theatre and the unprecedented success of his trilogy — the first remarkable tour of the Romanian theatre in Europe and in the world, after a long period of almost complete isolation.

Then one remembers the decisive action of the Soros Foundation, of the network of contemporary art centres - an initiative that came from abroad and offered, with great generosity, young artists in search of spaces to express themselves, the resources to create according to advanced and innovative methods. The mobility grants offered by Soros remain for that period the key-instrument of openness to other spaces, to a universe in

which the free circulation of artistic forms is accessible and where each artistic form has the right to violate the norm.

At the same time, the creators' unions took on a new role, well-known artists established foundations and associations to better establish their reputation, as did young artists in order to be able to enter independently a space tenaciously controlled and kept by the acknowledged ones.

In towns the first alternative spaces appeared — „clubs“ for music, performances, animation — addressed a young audience, and the newspapers and televisions discovered the profitable advantages of showbiz.

But, in this quite dynamic and explosive landscape, these initiatives, good or bad, were disordered, the priorities were not clear, the roles were confused.

If in 1990 the responsibility of the free cultural act, cleared of ideology, belongs to Serban or to the Soros Foundation or to Gabriel Liiceanu's editorial initiative in the field of books, or to „Enache's Diary“ jazz club, then how do things work in the actual cultural world, who decides and what for, to the detriment or to the advantage of whose vision and from the perspective of whose criteria?

Having got used, for more than ten years, to seeing politicians without any serious political expertise and without diplomatic rigour, taking crucial decisions for the fate of Romania and having been many times resigned before the daily randomness (a serious post-revolutionary syndrome) in which it is considered that every valuable artist should know how to manage an important artistic institution properly and that, by and large, the role of the Ministry of Culture is to solve irrevocably and immediately all the infrastructural and human problems of the sector it deals with, even if the ministers and the officials sometimes change at ridiculously short intervals and the budget for culture does not seem to be the priority of any transition government in Eastern Europe, the above question might seem to be useless.

Nevertheless, this is the question that the „Policies for culture“ process is trying to tackle, involving representatives of culture in Parliament, in the Ministry of Culture and in the independent sector, in a substantial dialogue.

Today in Romania, responsibilities in the artistic and cultural field must be taken back by those who are really entitled to them or should be so. But the understanding of this responsibility is not always obvious and this is especially because, on the whole, the knowledge and the distribution of responsibility domains are deficient.

Ask any manager of a cultural association to what extent he understands the long intricate and ridiculous process of a legislative initiative regarding culture, or whether he considers this to concern him in a way.

Ask a legislator to what extent he knows that, lacking simple juridical instruments, cultural initiatives which require effort, creativity and excellence cannot be correctly deployed. It is only through the multiplication of these initiatives that the cultural life of a country can build and develop a profile, a specific dynamics.

Finally, if there is one point of consensus between the cultural actors from different levels of decision-making, it is that the Ministry of Culture does not function properly.)

This is a very comfortable and superficial conclusion. It permits the univocal transfer of the space of responsibility, which should in fact be shared by the Ministry, the cultural actors and the legislators. However, this situation needs the imposition of some rules of the game which have to be taken seriously.

But I think that it is high time that we become serious, all the more so since the process of European integration, as member countries of the Union understand it, is first and foremost a project for society. And if Romania can hardly meet the conditions of acceptance as far as the economic sector is concerned, the cultural sector, if put into a politically intelligent perspective, should turn out to be „the“ priority factor for social development, the, so far neglected, key-element for locating Romania in Europe. Now at least, we could thus answer differently the rhetorical question of Caragiale’s Nastratin: „*Are we, as a nation, in childhood, in our youth, in manhood, or are we getting old without getting wiser?!...*“

(Translated by Dragos Ivana)

A competitive field, run according to the rigours of the arts’ market

By: ION CARAMITRU

Ion Caramitru is the founder and president of the Romanian Theatre Union — UNITER. He was Minister of Culture between 1996-2000. Member of the Executive Board of the National Salvation Front Council between 1989—1990. In 1997 he became member of the PNTCD (the Peasants’ Christian-Democratic National Party) of which he is vice-president, as of this year

Firstly a rhetorical question: does the state have to support culture?

This is compulsory. Nowhere in the world can cultural institutions or even individual artistic initiatives cover all the cost involved. The state has the obligation to support a field which is conceived both for the education and spiritual quality of the people and for the cultural heritage handed down from one generation to another.

However, it is also true that this should be a competitive field. It is only in this manner that art and culture can be kept out of censorship, away from political command and, just like with sport — if the comparison is not too far-fetched — the „purity“ of the creative process would be preserved. There is a need for training, for keeping the thoughts and deeds fresh and also for sifting the best from the best or dividing the good from the mediocre, in a hierarchy established according to the needs and rigours of the artistic market.

How did you tackle this during your mandate?

When a mandate is taken over, the most important problem is to impose priorities and equilibrium between the absolute priorities. The absolute priority of my mandate was to restore the national cultural heritage, especially the monuments which suffered most. In 1997, when the first budget of the coalition government was planned, I received special financial support for this field — a programme specified in the budget of the Ministry of

Culture called the National Restoration Programme which naturally receives a certain amount of money and which is still operational.

The legislative field was another important issue which I found almost completely unexamined after seven years of the Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR) rule. On the initiative of the Ministry of Culture there had only appeared an ordinance and a collaboration regarding the Sponsorship Law and, in 1996, because of the pressure of civil society, the Law on copyright and neighboring rights. I managed to initiate and to lay down in Parliament all the necessary regulations that I had promised when I took over the mandate: the Property Law of the National Movable Heritage, the Monuments Protection Law, the Libraries Law, the Museums and Collections Law. I modified the Sponsorship Law; I created a new cinema law. Unfortunately, the Parliament did not discuss all of them by the end of my mandate.

Before you became minister you had been an active representative of civil society. How did you come to cross to the other side?

I was especially appointed to this post by the National Alliance of the Creators' Unions and, implicitly, by the whole Romanian cultural and artistic movement. This Alliance was founded in 1995 when the six unions decided to join forces in order to speak one stronger voice in the dangerous processes of reintroducing censorship — administrative and economic, in a first phase. I am talking about the governmental decree no. 442 from '95, which compelled all the cultural institutions and administrative bodies (municipalities, counties) to give up the administration of the cultural institutions (theatres, museums, libraries) to the Ministry of Culture. It had become the repository of all the cultural institutions in the country, something that had never happened before in the cultural history of Romania. Then we joined forces — I was then president of UNITER — and we managed to speak with one stronger voice. When I came to the Ministry I followed with much accuracy the decentralisation of this act, entitled by the governmental decree no. 6, which I immediately promulgated. 190 institutions were naturally given back to the local administration. Subsequently, by a governmental decree on the functioning of the Ministry of Culture, I changed the way of assessing the existence of this Ministry. The previous decrees stated that the Ministry of Culture was the institution of State public administration, which put into practice the cultural policy of the government, as if the government as a whole could promote its own cultural policy. It was nonsense.

Why nonsense?

The government in itself is a cabinet — that is a corpus of ministers, in charge with a specific field of public life which they coordinate. The government as such can have an economic policy, but it cannot have a certain cultural policy except for the one that the Ministry on its own can put into practice at the suggestion of and in relation with the civil society. Coming back to the modifications I made concerning the way in which the Ministry of Culture operates, they had the following motto: „it is not the Ministry of Culture that makes culture, but the cultural operators“.

What then is the role of the Ministry of Culture?

The Ministry has the role of administering the cultural act and of rightly assessing its proper value. In so far culture is concerned, what seems important to me is that we should prepare a smooth way to wait for the masterpiece; we cannot decide when it appears, but the conditions of its appearance must be solved.

What about the Minister of Culture?

The role of the Minister is to be stubborn, to follow the established priorities, to be flexible with dissatisfactions on both sides, to have first knowledge on specific problems. I am now referring to those that felt frustrated during my mandate, especially the actors' guild or at least a part of it which thought that, once an actor, their colleague, would come to the Ministry, theatre would be on the winning side. As if it would be precisely for this purpose that you become Minister — namely to help the field you are coming from! Besides, many problems of theatre were solved (the artists' tax deductions, the professional assessment and the salary budget, the legislation specific to the orientation — in the future — towards an open market, the participation in many festivals both in our country and abroad etc), but one has to take responsibility for the whole field. Otherwise everything is damaged.

Why has no reform been made in this field so far?

A reform in the field of the performing arts institutions can only mean a change of the state paternalist system and of a subsidy of about 97—98% from the total expenses of each institution in a Western-like system, which presupposes a free artistic and performance market, private performances based on contracts, managers and agencies of the kind representing their interests, the elimination of permanent theatre groups and the maintenance of the institutions as flexible centres etc. This cannot be done in Romania as long as the price of theatre, concert, opera and ballet tickets is so low.

And when can this be done?

The very moment the economic development of Romania leads to a honourable living standard of the population which will be able to go to the theatre and pay the real price of a performance. This would allow the institution to subsidize itself by the sale of the cultural product. Until we have a real market economy which will implicitly raise living standards, theatres must wait, because the premature dissolution of these institutions may be equal to an earthquake.

What do you think about the budget for culture, which, in real terms, is now half of that in 2000?

Even until 1996 culture was of no concern for the PDSR. In the 1996 budget, about 12 thousand million lei were spent for the Monuments' Restoration Programme whereas in 1997 the National Restoration Programme received 261 thousand million lei. The budget assigned to the Ministry of Culture and Cults in 2001 is sad, even tragic. The most important budget line, the one of subsidies, is 60% lower than the one of the last year. The sum assigned to monuments is ridiculous and will lead to the closing of more than a half of the 351 open restoration sites. On the whole, the 2001 budget is the lowest for the last eleven years. I let you estimate the repercussions of this fact by yourself.

(Interview by Oana Radu. Translated by Dragos Ivana)

The role of civil society in the policy making process

By: VESNA ČOPIČ

Vesna Copic is Head of Culture Policy Department in the Slovenian Ministry of Culture and lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Ljubljana.

Adopting decisions in the public sector requires the cooperation of three major interest groups, i.e., politicians, officials and producers of public goods. Politicians obtain their mandates directly from voters at elections and as such also represent users. Officials represent the professional administration, which, according to Max Weber, is a neutral and rational machinery. Providers of cultural events and services are organised into cultural institutions and associations, and together with critical reflection in the media, constitute a kind of professional public. The ratio of power between them depends on two factors in particular: authority and how well people are informed. However, while politicians have authority, i.e. power to take decisions, the power of the other two groups lies elsewhere — in knowing concrete situations and in having specialised professional knowledge. The problem of asymmetric information, when decisions are made by those who have less information than those affected by their decisions, is the major obstacle in the implementation of any changes. I agree that knowledge is power as I agree that the authority is power but under one condition: that the process of decision-making is synergetic and not entropic. Ignoring one or the other may lead to mutual obstructions and non-productive situations. Power then turns into impotence.

So we can say that the participation of different actors in the process of reaching cultural and political decisions may primarily be considered not a value issue but a functional matter related to the efficiency and effectiveness of actual policies. In order to meet their own interests, that of achieving the desired outcome, politicians in power must organise their decision making process in such a way that the interested parties or stakeholders are involved, and in this way stand a reasonable chance of success.

The difference between legal and legitimate

Decisions taken by those authorised to do so are by no doubts legal but are they legitimate? While democracy is ensured by elections, testing the quality of this democracy is another and more complicated issue. It is linked to the existence of public institutions and structures that are capable of a more comprehensive reflection and synthesis, meaning the transformation of individual interests into a general interest. In countries in transition, establishing an environment capable of actualising democracy as a new quality can be recognised as an act that truly signifies progress in civilisation. We should therefore identify the elements in society that already constitute the required institutional environment or those that can become this with the understanding and support of public authorities. In this case, the word institution means more than a state or

public sector. It encompasses conventions/norms and mechanisms for their implementation. Formal rules and formal mechanisms represent only a part of it, the rest is within the scope of civil society, morals and ethics.

Civil society or the professional public should be involved in cultural policy decision making in at least three ways:

- through experts and professional committees as ministerial advisory bodies;
- through the establishment of para-governmental organisations to which public authorities transfer some of their powers (arts councils, foundations, agencies, etc.);
- through neo-corporativistic forms of interest representation, organised in professional associations, syndicates, and similar.

Even though a system in which politicians have the final say prevails, simply because they have been so empowered by their voters at elections, their accountability and transparency of operation is considerably different if civil society has the right to be informed on all crucial cultural policy decisions (legislation, organisation of cultural service provision, distribution of public resources) and has an opportunity to give its opinion on them. The common denominator of the involvement of professional circles in cultural policy decision-making is therefore the right of the profession to tackle policymaking.

The decision-making process

All of the above mentioned postulates could be accomplished within the cognitive structure of decision making, within which the following four phases are crucial: definition of a policy issue, search for alternative solutions to it, selection of an alternative and the implementation of a decision. The fourth phase is most critically related to the quality of the decision and is actually the outcome of the three previous phases. If, the decision making model envisages involvement in the first three phases of all groups who can influence the acceptance and feasibility of a decision, then it can realistically be expected that resistance to change can be overcome, since this resistance is the element that generally blocks implementation of a decision. A special role in this process is performed by coalitions formed to represent the majority, and through it „democratic coercion“. This is of paramount importance in the first and third phase of the cognitive model of decision-making. While those in power should participate in these two phases, it is experts who need to have a crucial role in the other two.

The cultural policy decision making model in West European countries was formed over several decades following World War II, and was particularly marked by the peak of the social welfare state period in the seventies. Countries in transition certainly do not have so much time to establish their own models, but they will certainly have to address the following questions at least:

- Who are the actors that need to participate in the cultural policy model?;
- What roles do they play?;
- Which mechanisms should generate the process of cultural policy making?;
- What rules need to be adopted to regulate this process?.

Resources available to countries in transition, whether competent human resources, or material, energy, time and information, are limited which requires a model of decision-making that allows their optimisation. Are you able to reach decisions which are the product of social acceptability and functional feasibility?

Lethal indifference

By: AURA CORBEANU

Aura Corbeanu is executive director of UNITER — the Union of Theatre People, Romania — and director of the ECUMEST Association.

I would like only to launch three questions, hardly rhetorical, the answer to which could define to a certain extent the current situation of Romanian culture, in which civil society has a major responsibility, namely:

Is there a crisis of culture in Romania?

If so, is this crisis connected exclusively with the economic transition?

Which are the effects of today's crisis on tomorrow's culture?

If we take into consideration the fact that the term „crisis” has its origins in the Greek „Krisis“ which in neo-Greek means „decision“, „judgement“, then we can assert that any change that allows for the formation of a new judgment determines a state of crisis. Even in etymological terms we are, then, in a situation of cultural crisis. Almost everything that took place in the last eleven years in Romania has intellectually shaken us all, forcing us to intelligence.

The economic situation of culture is a precarious one. But it is not a feature that singles it out in the current social landscape, the entire Romanian society being confronted with similar problems. Culture finds itself in a deadlock, originating in the very idea of development. However, what we must particularly take into consideration is the fact that the difficulties facing Romanian culture nowadays are caused by a series of errors in a certain way of seeing and understanding it. I believe that what threatens today the mechanism of Romanian culture is not the crisis, but particularly the indifference towards the cultural phenomenon, and particularly towards the creative act.

The fundamental role of artists, of creators, of culture professionals, is or should be that of creating a real support for the development of a new mentality, of proposing alternatives, of launching currents of opinion, of making people care about what is happening around them.

The priority of the cultural sector should therefore be to counteract this lethal indifference. A difficult endeavour, which requires the launching of a debate at a national level; an endeavour for which the only successful way is through dialogue and partnership between the public bodies aimed at „supporting“ or „defending“ culture and the cultural sector. One more essential element – the cultural sector required is a organized one, whose representatives have come to understand that they must come together in order to protect their interests. Theirs and that of the Romanian culture.

(Translated by Oana Radu)

Cultural policies in Eastern and Central Europe

By: MILENA DRAGICEVIC - ŠEŠIĆ

Milena Dragicevic-Šešić, Ph.D, is rector of the Belgrade Arts University, and expert in cultural policies.

Historically, the interest of the Central European States for the Arts has been extremely important. The relationship between the States and the Arts was created during the time of national resurrection, when the arts contributed towards the establishment of the nation-states (Poland, Hungary, Serbia...). On the other hand, it was the socialist period that helped the links between state and art to be closely defined, whereby the arts were misused as a medium for and instrument of ideology. Sovietisation of culture contributed to the destruction of national cultures, languages (Ukrainian, Belarussian), architectural heritage, visual codes... Local artistic traditions and cultural values were not only neglected, but often thrown out of museums or art history books (such as religious art or „reactionary art“).

But, although in their rhetoric of propagating internationalism, the cultural policies of the socialist states have in fact contributed toward the complete isolation of the arts from world trends in both an artistic and managerial sense (the non existence of the art market, and management techniques in the operating of cultural institutions, e.g).

Since the changes, at the beginning of the transition period, cultural policies in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been facing two opposing demands:

- a) identity questioning (return to national cultural values, local tradition — emphasising national cultural identity; exploring the past: to prove that the country has always been a part of Europe, or to explore the „glorious“ past in order to claim certain rights);
- b) need of global integration, fighting for modernisation (breaking through the isolation, entering the world market for contemporary arts; introducing cultural democracy — civil society values as European values).

Although opposite, these two demands both lie within the cultural policy rhetoric, as well as within cultural policy actions and strategies.

On the basis of the Council of Europe's demands, cultural policy is in itself facing the challenge of entering the European context of mutual evaluation and comparison, and for that it has to be transparent, democratic, open, reinforcing the professionalism of its own administrators. At the same time intellectuals and the public opinion of art's world demand that cultural policy should become „nation specific“, to fight against the deficiency of market-driven world, against the negative effects of commercialisation of

culture. This is usually achieved by centralized „governing“, directly from the Ministry of Culture and by influencing the programming and the content decision-making process. Policy actions and strategies also face this duality: on the one hand the decision-making process is completely obscure and routine budgetary lines maintain the „national“ cultural institutions such as: National Theatre, National Museum, Opera, National Library, National Academy of Art and Sciences, National Film Archive... etc., without considering the quality and quantity of their programmes.

On the other hand: the commercialisation of the arts is considered to be part of the future of Central Europe - privatisation, marketing, efficiency in management... Cultural policy demands more and more performance indicators and technocratic achievements — business viability from the institutions in the art sector.

In analysing the problems of the transitional societies, the crucial question is: Who is now shaping the values, social discourse, cultural debates — reinforcing cultural identity and giving visions and horizons for development? Are governmental cultural policies the ones who initiate new debate? Or are the cultural institutions, artists and cultural reviews still in charge? Or, has the media become more important already globalised and owned by international media companies?

And cultural policy now in Eastern Europe is it: art and artists' needs driven, tradition driven (by a system of cultural institutions), ideologically driven or is it just a bureaucratic answer to the inherited institutional system?

Within the past eleven years we can already define certain periods the cultural policy has passed through:

I phase — period of reinforcing national heritage forbidden under Communism — reinterpretation of cultural values;

II phase — entering the process of European integration and networking — quick privatisation;

III phase — completed transition process — balanced cultural policy, which equally stresses support to heritage and national culture and creativity and contemporary arts oriented toward communication within Europe and the world.

At the beginning of the process of transition Ralf Dahrendorf said that political change can be achieved in six months, economic in six years and cultural change in sixty years. Today, when eleven years have passed, we can see that change is happening in different directions, according to the pre-existing values and to current foreign support, and that Central and Eastern European countries cannot be considered as a homogeneous macro-region.

But a basic distinction can be found within the system of values and visions which dominate the cultural discourse.

„An overall view of the Eastern European societies reveals a picture of two different groups of values that compose, to a higher or lesser degree, the dominant cultural values of the population living in this part of the world. The first group is related to those ideas and values that have their origin in the particular histories of each region and society

under review, including fifty or more years of state socialism. The second group has to do with the impact of new modernizing values that have their origin in the West or are the result of contemporary trends of globalisation, unification, new information age, and so on. The influence of these two groups is something that is common to all post-communist societies, while its extent differs for each individual case“ (S. Malešević, 1997).

„Still we can say that in both regions, two groups of values are still active“ (S. Malešević, 1997), „but in Central Europe the accent lies on the second, and in Eastern Europe the accent lies on the First group of values. The reason is that in many Eastern European countries, the national objectives (such as expressed already in the XIX century), remained unaccomplished (Belarus, Serbia, Croatia, Ukraine and Russia), and while the public feels national frustration, intellectuals will be the inspired leaders of national movements and politicians will transform those ideas into more or less clear political programs“ (M. Keren, 1990).

Today, however, many of those who were pillars of national movements throughout Eastern Europe are aware of falling into a trap used by the old authorities to survive, creating new icons for the development of art and culture and the institutionalisation of truly democratic relations in culture.

Cultural decentralization in a south-east European context

By: SANJIN DRAGOJEVIC

Sanjin Dragojević is lecturer at the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Zagreb
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How to undertake, at the same time, wide measures for decentralization in decision-making, financing, infrastructure and the overall social and cultural life and activities remains an unsolved problem for most countries of the region. Such a task is particularly difficult to undertake in the circumstances when strategic thinking and planning are widely neglected, when the lack of a model of cultural development is considered an acceptable condition of operating, and when the decision-making process is still not transparent and depends heavily upon the actual political situation in a particular country.

However, it is known that success in these four types of decentralization depends greatly upon four pre-conditions.

The first one is the sustainability of decentralization measures. This presupposes a scenario, which will simultaneously increase the efficiency of the entire social or cultural system without causing a drop in the level of social and cultural life or productivity and creativity.

The second precondition is related to the constant coordination of activities, which aim functionally to interconnect all levels of operation within a country (central, regional, local).

The third is the precondition of the inter-sectoral approach, which will gather all the necessary community resources required for its overall development or the development of a particular activity.

The fourth precondition is the stimulation of cooperation between the public, private and non-profit sectors. Because of the complexity of decentralization measures, the process itself is very slow and inefficient, causing constant tensions between the political, social, cultural and economic levels and actors operating in the South-East European countries.

The real and in-depth process of decentralization, made in a widely socially acceptable way, is undoubtedly a crucial requirement facing the whole region. Whether that process will be made in a chaotic and socially unproductive way, or whether we will witness the emergence of the first successful examples in the near future remains an open question.

Culture is part of the national strategy of integration into the EU

By: MIHAI MALAIMARE

Mihai Malaimare is actor and director of Masca Theatre, one of the first independent theatre companies in Romania. In autumn 2000 he became member of the Chamber of Deputies, the Lower House of the Romanian Parliament, and chair of the Committee on culture, arts and mass-media. He is also Vice-President of the Social Democracy Party of Romania (PDSR).

What is your opinion on the current laws on culture in Romania — both from your perspective as a cultural actor and your position as a Member of Parliament and chair of the Committee on culture, arts and mass media of the Chamber of Deputies?

Culture, fortunately, is governed by an extremely powerful unwritten code. Every artist has a mentor who taught him or her how to live, how to create and how to die, and these are codes that no structure created by parliaments can compete with. Unfortunately, these codes do not apply to the cultural institutions which need a legislative framework relating to artistic production, how artists develop their activities, how they live and the ways in which they can be useful for the community, and so on. An artist can be more useful to the community than a police officer, and in the last ten to eleven years, the role of the artist has become more and more important in Romanian society.

Is the community aware of this role?

This role was defined during the recurrent crisis that Romanian culture has been through since the 1990s. For example, audiences stopped going to the theatre, until recently when they started to go again. No one has ever tried to measure or clearly define this phenomenon. If you want to lead a country, a ministry or an institution, you need to make use of feasibility studies or market research. But I think that Romanian theatre has never used such facilities.

You compared the artist to a police officer. Why does the Ministry of Culture receive less funds than, let's say, the Ministry of Domestic Affairs?

The current government has taken responsibility for leading Romania during an extremely difficult period and the budget reflects its clear and obvious priorities. These priorities meant granting minimal funds to the Ministry of Culture, in the hope that the Ministry would be stirred into finding funds outside the budget. Yet it is obvious that there is a great need for responsible managers in the cultural institutions. There is also need for cultural laws that promote efficient management.

Is it true that efficient management is hampered by legislation?

Absolutely, yes. A director of a theatre, for example, has no power over his or her employees.

So what laws do we need?

As examples: the Law for Performing Arts Institutions, the Library Law, the Laws for Museums. We should also act efficiently in a sector that allows cultural organizations to acquire funds outside the budget. I refer here to the law for arts grants. For example, the local administrative institutions, the town halls, could sponsor young artists if they had such a law. I am thinking a lot about changing the law for sponsorship, because it is incredible how much money is invested in football, in sports, in general.

Are these suggestions for legislation part of a vision or long-term strategy of the committee you chair?

We are not a committee that suggests strategy for legislation. We receive proposals for laws and try to bring them into line with European laws and adjust them to the real needs of contemporary Romanian society. The strategies in this sector are dealt with by the ministry and, within the political parties, by the departments for cultural programmes. Sadly, the problems related to administration and sorting out the organizational structure of the Ministry of Culture have delayed proposals for laws that we were looking forward to.

What is the cultural strategy of the party you belong to?

We think that culture is still part of the national strategy for integration into the European Union, even if the funds that have been granted for it are extremely low. The moment we succeed, in the near or distant future, in becoming a member of the European Union, our

first point of identification will be cultural. We are very rich culturally speaking and I can afford to believe that we are too generous with our richness.

However, do you not see culture as an investment, even in the harsh circumstances nowadays?

I agree. Moreover, I think that what we are losing in culture at the moment will be extremely difficult to make up for in the future. We are currently looking at unique type of industry that works very well on the European and global levels and we have no right to stop it or slow it down.

How can you support this idea and how can you promote culture to both the community and its leaders, as chair of the Committee for Culture?

Firstly, by not trying to promote any kind of political criteria in the work of the committee. I will not block any legislative proposals that come from an opposition party or from any other structure I do not belong to. Secondly, I try to stimulate acceleration in the legislative process. And then, I try to set my own examples. I am still the president of a theatre that has a clearly stated social mission, and I still perform on the streets.

How can the cultural sector influence the Committee for culture and, generally, the Parliament, in the legislative process?

Lobbying the Committee for culture is almost pointless, because my office is always open and people do not need appointments in order to see me. On the other hand, I have to admit that what a cultural practitioner has to say to the Parliament is important and, equally, every intervention by people from the cultural sector to one Minister or another is undoubtedly important. When discussing the law on access to public information, not only did I allow access by civil society, but I also listened to what they said. I accepted their requests and I turned them into amendments to the law, which were then passed.

(Interview by Oana Radu. Translated by Monica Patrutiu)

Legislation as a work of art

By: VIRGIL STEFAN NIȚULESCU

Virgil Stefan Nițulescu is parliamentary expert to the Committee on Culture, Arts and Mass-Media of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and editor-in-chief of the Museums Magazine
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Like the officials who, having been promoted to the highest levels of the Ministry of Culture, imagine that they will have the opportunity to create culture, some members of Parliament believe that their role is to realize works of art in their field of action. They soon understand that they have a lot more boring obligations to fulfil. But the role of these members of the Parliament is huge, because the degree to which culture will

flourish or not ultimately depends on their imagination, knowledge, experience and lucidity. Cultural legislation needs to be integrated into the Romanian legislative system and it needs internal coherence. The lack of the latter seems to be the most difficult problem. When cultural legislation is not perceived as a system, MPs seem to roam in the jungle of imported provisions from various cultural models or survivors of the norms of multilateral socialism. In Parliament they confront opinions - sometimes opposite - and the debates on legislation in the cultural sector cannot be an exception to this rule. What is lacking is a framework that sets these debates within a legislative, and implicitly in a cultural, model which should be consensually established as far as possible. There is no reason why there cannot be a strategy for cultural development which is approved by all parties. Parliament could then achieve the harmonic „cultural” work of art which we expect from it.

Unfortunately, Romania does not yet have such a strategy. Governments come and go, each trying to save national culture through a laboriously assumed model. Whenever the Government fails to send its projects to the Parliament quickly enough, the MPs lose patience and promote their own ideas instead, fuelled by despair in the face of impotence or disaster. All would be fine if these projects, irrespective of where they come from, were approved through the integration filter that I have mentioned above, but it doesn't work that way. Cultural legislation in Romania resembles the reality of the contrasts we live in; as we see marble palaces rising high from among huts built from mud bricks, so we see our laws lining up, some as exemplary and shiny as a Rubik cube, others shapeless, tortured and torturing.

A clear example could come from the laws on cultural institutions. A fact which financial people, in particular, seem to be incapable of understanding is that these institutions cannot function either according to rules applicable to autonomous state-controlled companies, or to those for hospitals, schools or military units. Be they theatres or museums, archives or libraries, they all need a specific frame of functioning. This could be realized through a law establishing separate viable models for each type of institution, leaving to managers an as wide as possible space for manoeuvre, and giving the administration (central or local, depending on the case) the right to control and intervene. But in the absence of a strategy and vision for integration, each professional field of activity requires its own law. We currently have a law on archives (without taking into account what happens in the audio-visual arena). Very soon we will be „provided“ with a law on libraries and another one on museums, with a law on performing arts institutions, as well as one for cultural centres.

Another example: since we live in a country where communities crave to be considered as „underprivileged“, the areas legally protected for their cultural importance have a tendency to outnumber the areas protected for their extreme poverty. Hence, instead of having a single law for the protection of historical monuments, we can nowadays count one law for the protected areas, two laws on national interest areas, two laws approving governmental decisions on declared areas of national interest, one for the protection of monuments included on the world heritage list, one for protecting archaeological sites as areas of national interest, an enforced governmental decision about protecting one area of

national interest and another one suspended sine die and, of course, a legislative proposal on the protection of historical monuments, all of which emerged from the ruins of other — innumerable — abrogated laws and governmental decisions, or aborted projects. One should not be surprised, therefore, by the fact that historical monuments crumble to dust under our very eyes, because, as Gore Vidal said, „a state with too many laws becomes de facto a state without laws, without spirit, without heart“.

(Translated by Amana Oisteanu)

There are no political parties in culture

By: RAZVAN THEODORESCU, Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs

PhD in historical sciences and member of the Romanian Academy, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres of the French Government, Razvan Theodorescu is, since November 2000, Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs of Romania.

I would like to start very openly by asking you to tell us how you see the role of the state in culture.

I think that the role of the state in culture is essential. It is impossible to imagine a national culture without the support of the state it belongs to, because culture is the superior form of identity everywhere in the world. The identity of a nation is represented, first of all, by its language and by its cultural values and, consequently, the nation must preserve, by whatever means, this identity. Culture cannot be left entirely to the market or to private enterprise; it must be supported by the only force that is impartial and representative of the whole nation - the state. A private investor can help a lot. As you know, I am one of the first ministers of Culture who launched the need for cooperation with private investors in their programmes. But it does not mean that the state is exempt from the obligation to support culture.

Is the support and promotion of national cultural identity the only reason why the state should prop up culture?

There is another reason, which is economic. Culture cannot support itself. Neither books nor performances nor historical monuments can yield those sums of money that could help to preserve other monuments, to organize other performances, or to publish other books. Ever since the beginning of modern Europe, starting with France under the rule of Louis XIV or with the Italian republics, governments have been and still are implicitly morally compelled to support culture. Certainly, the question arises whether the state — which can be a political leader or a political party — can take advantage of the culture it supports. It has happened many times that culture has been used as a means of propaganda for a particular regime. It is important that democracy in a country is sufficiently developed to allow the manifestation of different voices. This is what we are

trying to do, starting with the idea that we have repeatedly emphasized, that there are no political parties in culture.

Is Romania democratic enough to „allow the manifestation of different voices“?

Definitely not. I say it very openly: not yet. There is a general tendency for those temporarily in charge to use political power in order to use such things for their own benefit.

Do those currently in power have such a tendency?

I cannot tell whether such a tendency is obvious or not in the case of the people currently in charge, because we have learnt from the experience of our previous mandate and we were wise enough to draw some conclusions. Nowadays we can bring a variety of arguments to justify our cultural projects, but it often happens that these are convergent with the previous projects. For example, the cultural programmes carried out with funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Phare Programme are now being continued, in a new version, within the Culture 2000 Programme. I want to mention that often those people who were involved in the previous projects are continuing to manage the new ones. The general project for the restoration of, for instance, historical monuments is basically the same as the previous one, but our ways of putting it into practice are different.

You mean...?

We think that a lot of money was spent before and this money went towards illegally benefiting a series of companies that failed in their duty to renovate historical monuments. For this reason, I have spent a lot of time in the Senate, trying to defend the new proposal for the Law for the Protection of Historical Monuments, which is evidently different from the proposal of the previous government in terms of details and structures, but alike in its guidelines.

As you brought this up in the discussion, I would like to ask you about your relationship with the Parliament and and your strategy for legislation.

Our strategy in the legislative area is to propose laws for all fields of culture that are not yet covered, which means most of them. I worked on the Library Law, and then on the Law for Performing Arts Institutions, which will be something new, I think, as some different structures and temporary or permanent employment contracts have been created. It very often happens that the members of the Parliament initiate such proposals. There are other, less frequent, situations when a member of the Parliament is also a member of the Government. This is the case for me, as I am a Senator and a Minister of Culture at the same time. I intend to use my right to have legislative initiative in promoting certain laws, since the process of drafting legislative proposals in the Government is often complicated — it has to be signed by several peer ministers etc. I will use this right for at least one law - the law on collections and museums. There are also situations when the strategy is as follows: so as not to delay the Parliament's passing of a law we, the Ministry, were working on, when I heard there is a parliamentary initiative, I gave up all my privileges, I even gave up my status as law initiator and I reached agreement with the other initiators in the Parliament that they would join our efforts in order to come up with

a defined law. This is what we will do with the Law for Cinema drafted by Senator Sergiu Nicolaescu, the Law for Romanian Language drafted by Senator George Pruteanu and the Library Law promoted by a member of the Lower House.

What is the overall strategy of the Ministry of Culture and Cults for the next four years, if there is one?

We currently have a strategy for the biggest priorities: monuments, performing arts, and minorities. I do not intend to go too much into detail, because these depend very much on the changes in the budget. I know what my strategy is for 2001 and, to be more specific, I know what the strategy is until the discussion on the budget, and then, after that, in August and September. Obviously, everything is part of a greater overall strategy for the next eight years, as I sometimes refer to it hopefully, which will coincide with the next two terms of government.

How will this strategy be enforced? What are the instruments that will be used by the Ministry in order to secure the reign of democracy that you referred to and the distribution of funds on grounds related to quality?

For example, the distribution of funds will be done in total transparency in the case of monuments, books, and performing arts. The press has already been informed about the funds that have been secured. The selection will be based on open competition of projects submitted.

Will it be open exclusively to public institutions, or also to non-governmental cultural organizations?

No, it will not, only to the public institutions within our system. The Culture 2000 programme of the EU is open to everybody.

There are still few projects that will be financed, in a situation of fierce competition.

We trust Romanians' intelligence. Should they fail, this will be a piece of evidence that we talk a lot and work little. They will succeed, which will be a good beginning, I think. You have to admit that transparency is total.

Is this the only chance the NGOs have to get public funds for their projects?

At the moment it is. As long as the NGOs associate with some institutions under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Cults — and there are such cases in the fields of libraries and performing arts — we can help them with our meagre resources. As a political programme, we aim to involve private capital in cinemas, national theatre etc. on the one hand and involve civil society, on the other.

What is the situation of the National Cultural Fund that secures, at least theoretically, equality of opportunities for NGOs and public institutions?

It is functional, but it has at its disposal very little money, because we have serious difficulties to collect different earmarked funds. For now, we have available a symbolic amount of several billion lei, but I hope it will increase by the end of the year.

What mission has the Minister of Culture in making cultural policies and, also, in attracting financial support for culture?

The role of the Minister is to find good managers. I hope that I have managed to do so with some of my state secretaries and general secretaries. The Minister may or may not be a manager. What is important is for him to be assisted by them.

Are you?

Some say I would have some abilities as a manager, according to what they saw in me when I ran the National Radio and Television some time ago. But, to be honest, I do not think so. I think that, apart from being an academic, a man of culture, a member of the Romanian Academy, I also have the ability to administer some situations, especially in a crisis. The Minister also has another role: as he represents a party or a political platform, he should not show his affiliation when he deals with cultural politics. His only politics is the politics of culture.

(Interview by Oana Radu. Translated by Monica Patrutiu)

Cultural policy in Bulgaria — finding the way

By: LIDIA VARBANOVA

Professor Doctor in Economics, Lidia Varbanova is currently Director of the Arts and Culture Network Programme of the Open Society Institute (Budapest), as well as Head of the Department of Social and Cultural Management, University of National and World Economy (Sofia).

How did it start?

Ten years ago the term „cultural policy“ was not in use in Bulgaria. Political and economic changes towards a new open society based on market principles, found the whole cultural sector was not ready to fit into the new conditions and requirements. Rapid and constant changes on the political stage made the creation of a longer-term cultural strategy quite difficult. Cultural organizations and artists were left to survive without a structural vision for the future and without clear instruments for management and financing. The whole legislative framework was unable to accommodate the new cultural realities.

Since the political changes in 1989 a new cultural policy model has been gradually and casually adopted in Bulgaria, putting emphasis on:

- the liberalization of artistic creativity and less state control over general cultural life;
- decentralization — the increasing role of municipalities as decision-makers;
- the growing diversity of cultural organizations of all types;
- the development of the third sector and private artistic initiatives;
- support for traditional Bulgarian culture;

— equal participation of minority groups in cultural life.

Two reports on Bulgarian cultural policy, initiated by the Culture Committee of the Council of Europe, followed by the National Debate in 1998, helped enormously to analyse and clarify the objectives and goals of national cultural policy. The important Law for the Preservation and Development of Culture was adopted in 1999, followed by the Law for Juridical Persons with Non-profit Aims — 2001, as well as several other laws.

State support for the arts and the decentralization process

Financial decentralization in the country provides opportunities to implement the basic principle of „fiscal equality“, which is a better way to more effectively distribute resources. State spending on culture is divided into two major levels: the central level (around 70% of overall state spending) and the municipal level (around 30%). There are currently two main pillars of direct state support for cultural organizations:

- Budget subsidy, given to specific national, regional and local cultural organizations on a regular annual basis, without a specific link to creative results.
- Project subsidy, given on a competitive basis to all types of cultural organizations who have good projects and concrete practical results.

The state’s main partners in cultural policy implementation nowadays are the municipal departments of culture and the commissions on culture at the municipal councils. They develop their own programmes; approve and follow up their own cultural budgets for supporting municipal cultural institutions.

Other sources of support

Alternative funding sources in Bulgaria are still very limited, mainly coming from sponsors, foundations and individuals. This is the reason why the new cultural policy is oriented towards creating a bigger space for other financial instruments for the arts and culture.

Corporate philanthropy is still linked only to sponsorship; there are no officially registered corporate foundations in the country. Sponsorship is spontaneous, occasional and ad-hoc, based on personal contacts, rather than on a long-term strategy. There is no strong tradition of relations between the cultural and business sectors. Bulgarian legislation mixes the terms „sponsorship“ and „donation“, and is not sufficiently favourable towards the whole sponsorship process.

The majority of existing national and regional foundations for culture are still very weak. Many of them are officially registered, but they don’t operate, or they close down after a certain period of existence. The main supporter of artistic and cultural initiatives, especially innovative and contemporary ones, is still the Open Society Foundation through its spin-off organization, the Centre for Contemporary Arts.

Individual giving to culture is not supported at all by the current legislation, even though it has a long history of existence in Bulgaria. Individual charitable contributions are not

tax-deductible and their percentage in the overall sources of incomes for culture is very low. The main reasons are insufficient individual incomes, the absence of a strong middle class in the country, lack of trust and security in society.

Loans for cultural NGOs are a new direction of funding, provided by the NGO Resource Centre in Bulgaria. The main concept is to assist promising cultural and artistic organizations in developing and realizing business plans and ultimately becoming self-sustaining.

The third sector

At the beginning of 1990 the non-profit sector began to flourish rapidly. Step by step, civil society found its place, taking part in the whole legislative process and influencing social and economic changes in the country. The latest statistics (provided by the Union of Bulgarian Foundations and Associations) shows that there are around 5,500 officially registered associations, foundations, networks and grass-roots organizations. Many of them concentrate on social policy and social cohesion, human rights and citizens' participation, education and health care. Around 30 per cent of the non-profits are in the field of cultural heritage and the arts.

Supporting amateur arts — the Bulgarian „Chitalistas“

The well-spread system of cultural and community centres, called „chitalistas“, dates back to the 19th century as an important way to revive the Bulgarian culture, language and spirit. At the beginning of 1990 there were around 4,000 chitalistas in the country, many of them with their own libraries, amateur artistic groups and educational courses. The Law of Chitalista of 1996 defines their major roles, general structure, management and ownership. These typically Bulgarian forms could be one direction for the new cultural policy of the country. Their transformation into multipurpose educational and artistic centres with innovative programmes could contribute to local and rural cultural development.

To conclude

Much still has to be further developed — improving the fiscal legislation for broader and bigger alternative funding sources for culture, improving the status of artists in society, arts management training and education, stimulating cultural entrepreneurship, breaking down barriers to European and international cultural cooperation. The first steps in finding the way towards a new cultural policy in Bulgaria have already been made. Enormous efforts still need to be invested by politicians and decision-makers, cultural administrators and managers, audiences and individuals so that the unique cultural heritage and artistic achievements of Bulgaria develop and flourish for the sake of future generations.

We must finance programmes, not institutions

By: EUGEN VASILIU

Eugen Vasiliu, legal adviser, is currently Deputy General Director of the Romanian Copyright Office. Deputy State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture between 1991-1992, in 1999-2000 he was Senator for the National Liberal Party and President of the Committee on Culture, Arts and Mass-Media of the Romanian Senate.

Do you think the state should necessarily involve itself in culture? If so, how?

I am positive about this. But the state should not fund culture carelessly, even though many in the cultural sector who regard the state as a kind of sponsor of the arts would like this to happen. I think that the state should be involved in culture chiefly by establishing strategies and policies for culture. Firstly by having a clear perspective of the priorities and, obviously, by granting financial aid, on the basis of these strategies. In my opinion, such a change in perspective has begun to take place. People are beginning to understand that we should not spend money chaotically merely to keep institutions alive, but that we should financially support programmes conducted by those institutions or by associations and networks in the cultural sector.

Do you think that some people might consider your vision too liberal?

No, I don't. My vision is simply realistic, because I take into consideration what is happening in this sector around the world. For a long time now, in Europe at least, states have been financing not institutions but programmes. This does not mean that we should try to destroy our cultural institutions. There are four or five institutions that should be preserved: the National Theatre, the National Opera etc. But even these should be financed on the basis of some well-planned programmes and the manager's obligation to put them into practice.

You said that the state should establish a long-term strategy, generally speaking. What does „state“ refer to when we talk about culture?

The „state“ refers to the Government, and, in terms of culture, the Government is represented by the Ministry of Culture, obviously.

What then is the role of the Parliament?

Fortunately, the Parliament does not work on internal ignition, but on internal combustion. The spark comes from outside. It means that, generally speaking, laws containing strategies and policies are drafted outside the Parliament which then discusses and consequently adopts, improves or rejects them. Members of Parliament seldom come up with their own projects for submission and discussion. I say „fortunately“ because governmental institutions have the advantage of being informed about the culture field and its needs. Moreover, outside the so-called governmental and congressional institutions, civil society, through its networks and organizations, has excellent knowledge of the problems specific to the cultural sector.

Did the committee for culture, of which you were president, have its own strategy?

It did not. Instead, we very carefully monitored the policy undertaken by the Ministry of Culture. From the beginning, as soon as the Parliament approves the budget for a

Ministry, the Government is asked to produce strategy: general strategy for the Government and the strategy for each Ministry. It was in this context that the committee became involved, because the Parliament needed to have a perspective, too. But the committee on culture did not have its own strategies because the Parliament is a mixed group of different political forces that can hardly agree on which direction to take and the majority naturally pursues the fulfilment of its own strategies, which are reflected in the Government's programmes.

Do you think that there is need for specific regulations for culture?

There is a need for specific regulations even for culture. Not always in the direction desired by the cultural sector, as there are different perspectives. For example, editors and writers habitually say that there is need for a publishing law. If you talk to them, you realize that what they want is not one law, but a series of minor regulations that would amend the law on public financing, the tax law etc. It is certainly possible but equally useless to bring together all these regulations and give them a lofty name, like the Book Law. There is no need for a Book Law, but there is need for strategy for supporting the book market. There are different situations and disagreements: the book market is open, based on competition, while the theatres have not yet undergone reform. I think that there should be a law for the performing arts institutions in Romania. In such a context, I think that there is sometimes a need for specific regulations.

Is then the law just an instrument for achieving the aims of the strategy?

This is undeniably true. Moreover, all the intentions - economic, cultural or whatever — of the Government must eventually be turned into laws.

Do you think that there was such an overall strategy in your mandate?

Despite some notorious opponents, I think that there was such a strategy, as the concern for establishing a strategy was one of the strengths of the Ministry. There was a discussion whether the strategy was correct and whether it was put into practice, and the subject is still open for discussion.

What is the current framework for culture in Romania?

The legislative background has improved continuously under several governments. Projects left over from the previous governments are still being discussed now in the Parliament. For example, one of them is the Law for national monuments. In terms of culture, laws that are needed have gradually been accepted or amended. Currently, there is a legislative framework for culture which is, of course, subject to improvement.

How can civil society influence the laws under discussion these days?

In the beginning, the influence of civil society was very weak, because civil society itself was weak. Over time, it has adapted to all sorts of situations, but in terms of culture, civil society has become more active, more than in other areas. It is not surprising since civil society, at least from a cultural standpoint, it is made up of the cultural elite of the country. The great discovery that civil society has made is that unless it is well organized, it cannot exist. And even though some people have been reluctant to accept this, we have managed to encourage it. For example, when it came to the copyright law, I had to

campaign actively to make people understand why they need to associate outside the creators' unions, which have a largely symbolic function, and instead participate in more democratic organizations that will defend their rights. Once they had a better understanding of the situation, they started to organize and, as they achieved results, things started to work efficiently. Naturally, they received feedback; in other words, the civil society started to better understand how the law should be like in the current context. Since then other proposals for laws have been made and I am confident for the future.

(Interview by Oana Radu. Translated by Monica Patrutiu)

An overview of cultural policies in Europe

By: RAYMOND WEBER

Raymond Weber is Director of Culture and Cultural Heritage at the Council of Europe. The present article represents a fragment of a presentation held at the conference Culture and Conflict, which took place on 29-31 March 2001 in Dubrovnik, Croatia.

I would like to start from the definition of culture as formulated by UNESCO in 1982, in Mexico, on the occasion of the *World Conference on Cultural Policies*:

„By culture today we understand the ensemble of the distinctive features, material and spiritual, intellectual and emotional, that characterizes a society or a social group. Besides art and literature, it incorporates life-styles, fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs“.

And the Mexico declaration continues further on: *„Culture offers man the capacity to reflect on himself. It is what makes us human beings, rational and ethically committed. Through it we discern values and operate choices. Through it man expresses himself, becomes aware of himself, recognises himself as an unfinished project, doubts his own achievements, tirelessly seeks new meanings and creates works that transcend him“.*

This definition of culture, which the Council of Europe resumed two years later in its *European Declaration on Cultural Objectives* (Berlin 1984), constitutes, in a way, the reverberation of a profound reflection on the fundamental concepts of cultural policies and action that characterized the '70s. This was the time when concepts were born, such as: cultural democracy, cultural finalities of development, culture for all (Hilmar Hoffman), culture as a human right (Herman Glasser), community development, social-cultural animation, „*Soziokultur*“ etc. One of the most significant and „prophetic“ texts of this period remains the *Declaration of Arc-et-Senans* (1972), underlining that *„the issue is to grant man the right of being author of significant life-styles and social practices. Consequently, it is necessary to protect creative conditions, wherever they are,*

to admit cultural diversity by granting the existence and development of the poorest environments“.

The '80s were more pragmatic: the economic crisis on the one hand, the increased professionalisation of the cultural sector on the other hand, forced decision makers and cultural actors to approach in a more profound way the „how's“ of cultural policies. It is the beginning of cultural economics, of cultural management and marketing, of urban renaissance through culture (Glasgow), of training cultural administrators, managers and „engineers“, of the increasingly systematic recourse to funding sources other than those of public authorities (private and corporate funding).

As for the '90s, they were marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the disappearance of the Iron Curtain and the implosion of the communist system. Confronted on the one hand with globalisation, on the other with the European construction (through the Maastricht Treaty, in 1992, the European Community, which until then had functioned on an essentially economic basis, became the European Union — a more political construction, offering a legal basis for Brussels to act in the cultural field), the problems of cultural identity and the identity of the minorities, national or otherwise, have come back with a vengeance, as we can see in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in Kosovo and, nowadays, in Macedonia. As a consequence of enlarging its horizon and breaking free from its former limitations from other fields (décloisonnement), culture risks more and more to become instrumentalised, especially by political, economic and social factors. Finally, while the '80s were marked by the relationship between culture and economics, the '90s bear the imprint of the relationship between culture and social cohesion. The essential explanations of this transformation are globalisation, the crisis of the Welfare State, the growth of structural unemployment and the metamorphosis of work, the crisis of modern urbanism and the transformation of the value systems and representational systems of society.

So, where are we today?

On one hand, numerous basic concepts of culture and cultural politics have changed their meaning at least, if not their expression as well. I shall quote a few examples: the democratisation of culture gave in to cultural democracy; „Soziokultur“ and social-cultural animation increasingly gave in to cultural development; where there was talk of „monuments“ and „sites“, today we discuss cultural heritage or cultural landscape.

Cultural life has profoundly changed: new artistic expressions have appeared; new cultural practices have been developed. Culture has liberated itself; the project and the small neighbourhood association often surpass heavy equipment. „Margins“ are given more and more importance: industrial fields, metis boroughs, innovative suburbs, where new cultural expressions and different kinds of solidarities are simultaneously discovered and consumed as some sort of „biodegradable“.

The „reconciliation“ of Europe with itself remains, at least insofar as culture is concerned, largely unaccomplished. Obviously, ideological frontiers were brought down; not the same can be said about our mental frontiers. Andrei Pleșu, former Minister of

Culture and then of Foreign Affairs, characterized the situation very well when, in the '90s, he was talking of a „veil of misunderstanding“ that would replace the Iron Curtain and when, in September 1999, he warned us of the danger of seeing how the cultural diversity of Central and Eastern Europe disappears in the homogenized pattern of „communitary acquis“

The ways of functioning and the working methods of culture have profoundly changed: it seems that projects are given priority over institutions, processes/routes are given priority over products, co-operation over exchange, confrontation and dialogue over soft consensus, connectedness over exclusivity; „bottom up“, flexible network methods are given priority over rigid, hierarchical-bureaucratic „top down“ methods; finally, cultural policies and their structures are subjected to permanent restructuring; there where homogeneity enjoyed privileges, today is emphasized cultural diversity; where communitarian logic prevailed, there is talk of safeguarding the public space. Where everything was regulated among public authorities, today there are allowed the market rules on the one hand, civil society, the economic and social worlds on the other. In an increasingly multi-polarised cultural world, the concept of „partnership“ imposes itself. Finally, where the national prevailed, it is now common procedure to integrate cultural policies in the domains of the international and trans-frontier.

The concepts that seem to dominate today are: decentralization, des-etatisation, de-institutionalisation, and privatisation.

All these problems incite us to approach cultural politics not only from the perspective of the „how“, but also of the „why?“.

(Translated by Ilinca Anghelescu)