

**Mapping Cultural Cooperation in SEE, by Milena Dragicevic-Sesic and Corina Suteu**

**MAPPING CULTURAL COOPERATION IN SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE: THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF CULTURAL POLICIES<sup>1</sup>**

*“Everything is simple  
So simple that it becomes incomprehensible...” (Nichita Stanescu, ‘Eleventh elegy’)*

**PART ONE**

**Context for cultural cooperation in South Eastern Europe**

The cultural cooperation logic marking the last 14 years in South Eastern Europe has to be regarded from a broad perspective as driven not only by the consequences of the collapse of the communist institutional order, but also as a result of the general transformations taking place at a European and international level: the challenges resulting from the liberalization of markets, globalisation processes and technological revolution (new technologies, information support for knowledge, deepening inequality north/south, the redefinition of the role of culture and the growing tendency towards transversal governance, replacing the pyramidal paradigm of authority).

In the beginning of the 1990’s the discussion about the need for radical restructuring of the heavy institutional cultural legacy began, primarily in central and eastern Europe. What was ignored however, was how unprepared western Europe was institutionally and politically for the new geopolitical order and how culturally ill-equipped it was to cope with the isolated nations that the fall of the Berlin wall broke free upon the world.

In order to discuss the above, we have first to consider the following:

First, it is hard to realise and therefore comprehend the exact process that, more or less, influenced the last 14 years of cultural policy in SE Europe. Some of the factors are internal and inherent to the region’s history and geography, some are purely administrative legacies of a former regime. Others are related to the logic of change i.e. too many cultural ministries were relayed in; Romania had 10 Ministers of culture, Bulgaria 8 and Albania 11, between 1990 and 2003. The cultural administration could

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<sup>1</sup> This exercise is exclusively aimed at pointing out a certain number of important issues and basic statements that influenced the design of cultural cooperation policy in the region in the previous decade; it is far from an exhaustive analysis; its aim is to challenge and explain the importance of Western European and SE European cultural policies approach to one another by what the French Euro deputy Olivier Duhamel called in his speech about the European convention : “Trying to give up the protective illusions cradled by our certitudes and launch ourselves in the courage of consensus” (French original, European convention debate, 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2003)

not immediately be replaced, therefore culture was - shortly after 1990 - put in a secondary position on all governmental agendas, economic and social priorities took precedence over cultural ones that were too closely associated with ideology.

Also, the notion of 'state' was in crisis and the degree of it being representative and recognized as a legitimate authority took years to recover in the eyes of the community. It is still considered today in the region, that the Ministries of culture alone are 'the guilty ones' for all that is lacking in the cultural sector, from legislation to salaries, institutional disorder to the degree of funding. Very few cultural operators consider the finance ministry or the social affairs ministry responsible for the lack of civil initiatives, or the incompetence of the cultural commissions in parliament, or even the administrative chaos resulting from the collapse of a highly stiff regime.

Second, we have to consider that the effort made by South Eastern European cultural communities at a political and civil level was immense, in spite of shortage of time and various difficulties. The wish for recuperation, rebuilding, rejoining democratic values was highly important. From this perspective, Western Europe often failed to give the correct long term response and prove its understanding of the real significance of this effort. It would have surely been more appropriate, instead of employing a humanitarian aid approach (thus reinforcing the 'assisted' mentality of the 'newly liberated societies') to develop a tutoring, accompanying kind of attitude, which would surely have had more success in bringing a sense of autonomy sooner to the region.

The idea of a 'Marshall plan' would have probably worked well, although its successful implementation would have been essential to empower the local communities on a long-term basis as opposed to reinforcing their sense of inferiority - but a new 'Marshall plan did not exist'!

Nevertheless, on a short term basis, the power and importance of the Council of Europe, Unesco, French agencies such as AFAA and in Britain the Arts Council and British Council and Goethe Institute was never in doubt, at least, the cultural public policy levels (administration) in the region. UNESCO's actions were directed towards the heritage rebuilding, the Council of Europe programme of evaluation of cultural policies, the Mosaic programme was dedicated to training, cultural diversity and relations with the civil sector, the mobility bursaries for cultural managers, but also the bilateral programs run by French institutes. The British Council and Goethe Institute were of great "tutoring" importance in the revival of a sense of common values and mobility opportunities. For the civil sector, the Soros Foundation and the cultural networks played an accompanying role and played it successfully in as much as the artistic exchange, mobility and modernization of taste or emergence of contemporary forms go.

Last, but not least, in an interesting interview about the notion of post communist 'third Europe', American Scholar Tony Judt observes that after the fall of the Berlin wall, the notion of central Europe might become, at its turn, an isolationistic one (Romanians would not accept Bessarabia as a part of central Europe and Croats would not accept

Serbia in the same circle)<sup>1</sup>. Of course, this lecture is rather radical, but we have to admit that the South Eastern European geographical and cultural borders are not one and the same, according to the criteria one applies in 'reading' this territory. This is the reason why, in the following, we draw out an artificial classification, separating those eastern European countries according to the only criteria (exterior and technocratic one) of that part of the continent that will not yet enter the EU accession process before 2007.

### *Typologies*

This being said, we will nevertheless risk ourselves to consider further an empirical split between three categories of countries in SE Europe:

**a**/Romania and Bulgaria,

**b**/Yugoslavia-Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina

**c**/ Albania.

While the countries in **group a** went through a very hard form of communist domination (Romania even totalitarian and Bulgaria conservative, strongly dominated by Soviet influence), despite the traditional relation they formerly had with the western Europe, Yugoslavia, **group b**, was formed of countries who had lived together since World War I, long before communism, sharing similar languages, life styles and habits, thus sharing a 'sense of belonging' to the Europe of 19th century and first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century and even, we might say, starting with Tito's times, a sense of participation in the 60's and the 70's to the main world trends (in the sense of having a say at international level, in intercultural communications etc.).

Finally, Albania, (**group c**) was isolated within the eastern European block, separated from all other neighbours, victim of a totalitarian communist policy even more radical than that of Causcescu's. Historically, the Albanian population was not mobile (contrary to Greeks, Armenians, even Serbs). They had not moved throughout the Balkans, neither had they accepted larger groups of immigrants – thus the number of intercultural contacts, throughout history was relatively limited. While Serbs, Romanians, Croats, Bulgarians left already in 19th century to study abroad – mostly in Germany, Austria, France, engaging in both commercial and intellectual exchange - for Albanians it was the exception.

While neighbouring governments since the 19th century, have tried to attract foreign "investment" and the educated "human resource" – so that a number of artisan, people with different skills (like printers, publishers, doctors, musicians etc.) arrived from the Austro-Hungarian empire, throughout the Balkans, Albania is still not entering this process.

This largely explains the chronic isolation the country is still a victim of today, after the end of communism, as well as its genuine lack of capacity to recover a sense of European openness and enter, as Romania, Bulgaria and former Yugoslav countries did, cultural cooperation as a natural process.

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<sup>1</sup> Judt, Tony, Europa iluziilor, ed Polirom, Iasi 2000, pg. 44,

## PART TWO

### Internationalism and cultural cooperation in the Balkans

#### *The 'artistic' versus the 'bureaucratic' time*

Ralph Darendorf says that while political change of post communist countries can be achieved in six months, economical change in six years, cultural change <sup>1</sup> needs 60 years to be achieved. This is because cultural change implies change in the scale of values. Along the same line, the director of the alternative space *La belle de mai* in France speaks about the “time of artists” as compared to the “bureaucratic time” and Milan Kundera ponders in his “Intimate journal” that the only thing that will remain from Europe will not be its “repetitive factual history”, which has no value in itself, but the history of its arts”, because art is not the “Orpheum, accompanying History’s March” but art creates its own history, at its own pace, and this is the only history that counts. <sup>1</sup>

These largely shared opinions stress the extent the time factor has to be taken into account in the impressive mutation taking place culturally during the post communist period. The measure of a successful transformation being not so much the political reforms and their bureaucratic shape, but the genuine reinvention of artistic forms. In other words, the reconstruction of cultural identities of post communist societies has to be identified in the rhythm of artistic resurrection.

Recapitulating the aims of cultural cooperation, Raymond Weber, former director general of the directorate of culture and cultural heritage in the Council of Europe, identifies five: “reconciliation, reciprocal recognition, creation of a common discourse, imagining common solutions, awareness awaking of multicultural challenges”. He is underlining that “while in Western Europe these values had the time to develop and install during half a century, the western community is waiting from central and eastern Europe to acquire them in only some years”.<sup>2</sup>

It seems, indeed, that the above quoted aims of cultural cooperation (valid for post world war II western Europe) are still not valid today for the Balkans. The process of *reconciliation* had been started from the top-down and is, therefore, not achieved. Albanians from Kosovo and Serbs are supposed to get together because of international pressure more than because of grass rooted intercultural incentive exchange. The three nations of Bosnia compromised, but that society did not find reconciliation with post-war (1993) trauma. Neither was *reciprocal recognition* achieved truly between Macedonians and Greeks. The ‘common discourse’ is not created, like in Western Europe, through partnership, debate and public dialogue. *Common discourse* is imposed from above -

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<sup>1</sup> Dragicevic, 1997, cultural policies in Central and eastern Europe

<sup>1</sup> Kundera, Milan, Intimate Journal, Le monde, July 1999

<sup>2</sup> Weber raymond, key note speech, interministerial conference about the SEEurope and the mediteranian region, Vienna, 2000

vocabulary such as interculturalism, multicultural society, cultural diversity, truth and reconciliation, capacity building, sustainability, re-training of cultural administrators, policy issues etc. came “from the top” and were imposed as key words on cultural actors in the region. Those who wanted to enter “the game” had to learn and to adopt this vocabulary, without having the time to independently discover, integrate and assimilate it internally and organically.

Hence, it might be interesting to describe the phases of cultural cooperation in the region in a rather different manner than what one might expect, starting from before the fall of communism. They are:

**1945 –1948** – participation in the building world’s communist utopia

**1948 – 1965** – walls in between Balkan countries (even with pursuing of minorities – Serbian in Romania, Montenegrin and even Albanian orthodox in Albania, Macedonian in Greece)

**1965 – 1989** – officially implemented limited number of contacts (bilateral ones); minority policies now stimulates cooperation (Serbs in Romania and Romanians in Serbia actively participate in bridging one culture to another)

**1989 –1995** – concentrated on itself – looking for cooperation out of the former communist block (independent cultural operators start to cooperate on ad-hoc basis, the official cooperation between ministries collapses and needs time to rebuild)

**1995 – 2002** – a freshly born new agenda of international cooperation is imposed to SE European governments by the Council of Europe, western European cultural cooperation agencies, UNESCO, EU –regional NGOs emerge and start developing authentic Balkan networks (the civil sector is largely supported by Art and Culture network OSI program in Budapest).

**2002... onwards** –reshaping of the cooperation logic according to mainly EU reshaping priorities and the enlargement process (accession countries and the others)

After 1989, we can, however notice that there are two key contradictory demands in cultural policies that had both specific and not always positive influences on the cultural cooperation measures within the region.

The first one – **identity questioning** could seem as the one leading to greater mutual regional cooperation, but in fact, this one constituted itself in a barrier and was more of a constraint, because identity in the region is built on traditionally accepted differences, not on strong characteristics. On the other hand, each nation wanted to rediscover the ‘old roots of common identity’ with Western Europe or other regions outside the Balkans representing strong historical reference. Those links between e.g. Romania and France, Croatia and Germany; Serbia & Russia, even Byelorussia, Armenia, Bosnia and Austria, Montenegro and Italy were all out of the SE European territory.

Links and historical roots which are important among Albania and Serbia, Greece and Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia, etc. for mainly political reasons, had been expelled not only from school programs and history books, but also from museum exhibition projects, festivals etc.

In opposition to this quest for a lost national identity, the second characteristic, the **need of integration in the world**, was also “destimulative” for Balkan cultural cooperation. To become present in Paris, London and New York, became a crucial demand and guaranteed the feeling of being acknowledged as part of the world, of global culture, of the values that count, i.e. values recognized abroad.

These two aspects explain why, during a first phase of post communist transition (1989-1995), the number of regional exchanges, touring, translations and book publishing, had extremely diminished, while the number of books translated from English had risen by up to ten times. For some cultures that were isolated for a long period, e.g. Romania, it was also a necessity. They had already quite a lot of translations from the neighbouring countries, but that was linked to the 60's and 70's. The new generation of artists and art activities ceased to communicate, because bilateral cultural conventions expired and new ones had not been created in the region. Therefore, the transition focus of public policy was toward the west: entering the francophone space, exploring possibilities of British Council/Visiting Arts, Goethe Institutes etc. Neighbouring countries did not have their cultural centres or agencies to stimulate regional cooperation and the situation of cultural policies was still unstable up to the end of the 90's in all South Eastern European countries.

A new phase started only after the Dayton treaty (1995), when the Stability Pact imposed on the Balkans regional cooperation as a precondition for financing. It was again a top-down measure aimed to re-launch regional cultural cooperation.

### ***Strategies for South Eastern European cultural regional<sup>1</sup> and international cooperation***

At the level of South Eastern European cultural governments, the regional cooperation issues do not represent a priority line between 1989 and 2003 and international cooperation programs are much more strategically oriented to joining western partnership and intergovernmental organisations programmes, or to be acceptable for the ‘EU’ requirements, than to engage in artistic collaboration with neighbours.

The important artistic public institutions are suffering deeply from a lack of resources and the economic transition and restructuring of social and economical mechanisms does not encourage a quick restoration of the social and economic function of these public institutions. Again, a helping hand is required from Western Europe or other wealthy foreign partners (USA, Japan).

SE European ministries meet often, e.g. in 2000 because the Council of Europe took the initiative and the Austrian government offered the money, or recently, because the Slovenian Minister of Culture gathered the Slavonic SE European countries, creating a new relationship between Slavonic and non Slavonic SE Europe or, closer to central Europe, because the Hungarian Ministry of Culture supported the Budapest observatory meeting and included Romania and Bulgaria among its guests (in a meeting about

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<sup>1</sup> In our context, « regional » means SE European, « balkanic »

accession countries) etc. But all these initiatives have an ad-hoc aspect and their result remains patchy for the region's cultural development.

To support this, the cultural policy evaluation program of the council of Europe brings important data.

We can thus find in the Romanian, Croat and Serb one, the following quotes: “Due to the breaking of all international contact in previous years one of the most important tasks of the Ministry of Culture was re-establishing the broken links with all international institutions and organizations” (Serb national report), the past history legitimises Croatia to see itself as a future Western European country and defines the present transition as a “coming back to Europe” (...) ”the frequent partners of Cultural cooperation are : Italy, France, Germany, UK, Austria, followed by Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Netherlands and Slovakia” (Croat national report, 1998), Coe Doc, pg 39, French version) ; or :”special efforts are made to prepare and organize the Ministry and cultural institutions for pre-accession process of entering the WTO and EU” or that “the Ministry is also very active in initiating and designing new models of bilateral agreements of cultural co-operation. A special attention has been paid to stimulate institutions to enter regional and international co-operation projects or networking (information distribution), but there are no special mobility funds or funding for network fees or international projects”(Serbia) or “ set up of a think tank to define a new image of Romania abroad and the role that culture can play in this regard “ (Romania, international experts report, CoE, English version, 2000, pg.30)

Albania limited itself to founding an “International cultural center”, cautioning it with a cultural cooperation action line.

Interestingly enough, Bulgaria is the only country in the region that explicitly affirms that the priorities in cultural cooperation are both with western Europe and the Balkan region: “bilateral cultural relations with Balkan countries have a particular significance for the republic of Bulgaria”, stressing however that the “foreign policy aim of Bulgaria today is to be a stabilizing factor in turbulent Balkans and insisting upon the fact that it is developing relations with Greece, Turkey, Romania, and particularly actively with Albania”, links which are only “threatened by the big financial challenges we face” (Bulgarian national report, English version, CoE, 1997, pg 224)<sup>1</sup>

One can observe that even the methodology of the evaluation of cultural policies in itself marginalizes the importance of international cultural cooperation (only 4.2 out of 55 themes approximately treated!)<sup>2</sup>. Also, too much attention is placed on WTO and the EU and to use UNESCO, CEI, Stability pact as donors, instead of trying to develop coherent cultural relations with neighbouring countries. We will also note a strong tendency to restore the bilateral cooperation instead of multilateral schemes.

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<sup>1</sup> In her well known book ‘Imagining the Balkans’, Maria Todorova considers that Bulgarians are the only people in the region to have a positive idea about the notion of ‘balkans’ and about a regional identity

<sup>2</sup> Compendium of cultural policies [www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net)

This may all be considered natural, after such a long period of ideological contamination and cultural isolation, *if* the region still didn't have to solve a huge 'memory black hole' that the communist period succeeded in creating and didn't urgently need the restoration of internal bridges before the building of external ones. This delicate point is one of the keys to prospective thinking in the programming of future cultural cooperation policies in the South Eastern European region. Stability and accepted diversity, a democratic policy towards minorities, the sustainable economic and social development of the region and its positioning in a stronger and 'broader' Europe, but also in a redesigned global landscape, will all depend on the capacity to develop interregional grass-root cultural cooperation successfully. This has to complete the legislative, administrative and financial regulations that the EU accession top-down action already achieved. "A strong state and a strong civil society" is the model that Slovene policy maker Vesna Copic is putting forward as a guarantee for inner reconstruction of South Eastern European countries.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Cultural cooperation and the partnership between Ministries and the civil society***

Related to what was previously said, the idea of partnership between the public and the civil cultural sector was introduced via the Council of Europe policy guidelines and gained a place at the end of the 90's in the emerging South Eastern European democracies. This lapse of time was also necessary in order to develop the national cultural NGO's in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Macedonia.

The Council of Europe also imposed participation of the civil sector in the process of writing (not only debating) cultural legislation – especially in the field of media, which the international community considers crucial for the development of democratic institutions.

Still, governments finally used to offer the Parliament their versions of a law, and sometimes even ignored the proposals of the civil cultural sector. A good example of this is in Serbia and Romania, where the specialized unions (Romanian Uniter and Serb Union of theatre people) were not listened to in the process of the drafting of the theatre law. Bulgaria diplomatically avoided the problem by proposing the "law for the protection and development of culture" (2001/2002-source *PFC*), too general to create sectoral civil sector frustrations.

One of the most successful examples of regional cultural cooperation projects, including the partnership between the public sector at national and local level, the civil society and the legislators, remains, since year 2000, ***Policies for culture*** ([www.policiesforculture.org](http://www.policiesforculture.org)). Jointly initiated by the European Cultural Foundation, Amsterdam and the Ecumest association (operating from Amsterdam and Bucharest in all SE regions), *Policies for culture* combines a public policy approach towards the sensitivities of civil society to the legislative problems related to culture, to the public authority responsibilities but also to the civil sector empowerment instruments in the design of Cultural policies.

Today, PFC has a great platform of representation, contacts and antennas, gathering ministry representatives, independent cultural organizations and legislators, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Copic, Vesna, CEI meeting, Policies for culture, May, Romania, 2003



experts from South Eastern Europe. It gained recognition from the Central European Initiative, it is frequently quoted, but its key success is the idea to bring together both ends (the top-down and the bottom-up approach) and make it for the entire region, not for any artificial split between Slavonic, Orthodox, Balkan east or west etc.

Together with the Mosaic program for the Council of Europe and the Soros long term initiatives - like the cultural policy component of Art and Culture program, (and, of course, inspired and catalysed by them), *PFC* is the only one genuinely created by an east/west equal cooperation and by two politically independent 'European' entities.

### ***The impact of international operators and programs on cultural cooperation policies***

Complementing previous observations, we can now return and see the extent to which cultural cooperation dynamics in south east Europe have mostly been initiated in the last 14 years by "outside actors" – European institutions such as the Council of Europe, European Parliament and the European states (especially through the Stability Pact), but also independently through bodies such as KulturKontakt (Austria), French Cultural centres and the Goethe institute, or Pro Helvetia. These bodies have launched programs not only of bilateral, but of regional character. Examples are numerous. Among them, the seminar for managers of music festivals from the region, organized by the Goethe Institute created an approach which stimulated cooperation; sometimes they suggested a "regional touring" component to the applicants, paying, specifically, the costs of the project, the British council's "seeding a network" project and NOROC French "la dance en voyage" and the French/Romanian theatre, Austrian KulturKontakt programs for cultural management training and visual arts etc.

It is an important feature that these kind of programs were mostly used by the independent cultural organizations, capable of dealing with the grant forms and to adapt to the managerial requirements better than the decaying, undersubsidised and over-staffed public cultural institutions.

The efforts of independent international foundations and of European networks had been important and very effective.

Foundations and associations such as the European cultural foundation (Amsterdam), Soros network (Open Society Institutes), Felix Meritis foundation, Transeuropéennes, etc. developed specific projects for South Eastern Europe or had this region as a priority area in their project which covered central and eastern Europe. Many of them gathered together in matching funds to reinforce the impact in the region, such as Gulliver connect programme, which was realized between 1998/2003 through joint efforts of OSI Budapest (Soros), KulturKontakt (Austria) and Felix Meritis (Amsterdam), or programs like Art for Social Change and Kultura Nova (capacity building for NGOs) which were developed by ECF and the national Soros offices in Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia.

The European networks, created during the mid 80's, in the beginning had few members from South Eastern Europe (mostly from Yugoslavia – in IETM, pre-ENCATC phase,

etc.). However from 1989 onwards, they approached this area quite actively (IETM, ELIA). Some organizations even created specific networks or subdivisions within themselves or during their general assemblies (ENCATC Balkan platform, Banlieues d'Europe). Romanian antenna for SE European region, IETM and Relais CULTURE Europe 'Balkan express' in cooperation with PAC multimedia in Macedonia, Trans Europe Halles (TEH) integrating new SE European members, CIRCLE asking eastern European members to join the executive committee, The Forum of cultural European networks dedicating three specific platforms between 1998 and 2001 to the Balkan region, EFAH integrating more and more the accompanying solutions for future EU accession countries). Specific networks for South Eastern Europe were created (Appolonia, SEECAN, etc.). Some networks have developed specific fundraising activities to secure and enable participation of the members from CEE in network projects (Thomassen Fund in ENCATC).

As a result of this cross-fertilization, many autonomous Balkan networks and independent organizations were created: BAP (Balkan association of publishers) and BAN (Balkan art network), two networks created after the Sarajevo conference.<sup>1</sup>

A special mention has to be made about the Sarajevo conference formerly quoted, "Reconstructing cultural productivity in the Balkans", initiated by Ericarts and other local and international organizations, as a proof of the catalytic effect this kind of event, well timed and well placed can have on the acceleration of constructive processes.

The ICAN, network of ex/SCCAs is also an example of an outside initiated network. Those networks started their work together, mostly trying to achieve greater European presence. BAP's main activity is their presence at the Frankfurt book fair, while BAN organized exhibitions in Brussels "Balkan art generator" in 2000 (for the Cultural capital). Now, this network is mostly concentrating its efforts on bringing artists from the Balkans to Harald Szeeman, for his exhibitions of contemporary Balkan art - Blood and Honey. (The name of Szeemann was needed to raise visibility and marketing impact of the project, because a Balkan art generator with a Balkan curator had passed completely unnoticed in Brussels!).

The spirit of "networking" had provoked many other NGOs in the region to create their own authentic entities, such as Balkankult in Belgrade, Ecumest in Bucharest, Project DCM, centres like the 'Red house' in Sofia, 'Mama' in Zagreb, PAC multimedia in Macedonia, 'Rex' in Belgrade, MAD and UNITER in Bucharest, acting as informal hosts of other networks or other numerous programs and projects of European and regional scale. This process is, however, recent and strongly installed in the year 2000. Of course, for many among them who had their own program production, it was also the way to raise more publicity, to facilitate fundraising, but in essence, it was evident that they had developed, through networking, many projects which had no official support. Despite this, the NGO's found ways to go on.

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<sup>1</sup> conference organized in Sarajevo in 1999 by ERICarts, FINN Ekvit, Blue dragon, Culturelink and supported by UNESCO, the Finnish ministry of education and Culture, in the context of the Finnish Presidency of EU, Kulturkontakt, Austrian Federal chancellery, the German Ministry of Foreign affairs

Needless to say that for all these programmes and projects, the existence of SOROS and the ARTS and Culture network programme with its initiatives ‘culture link’ and ‘looking inside’ (two mobility programs), was of extreme importance.

Media networks had also been of crucial effectiveness, not only for bringing democracy and promoting human rights (ANEM), but also by stimulating a greater sense of involvement by the younger generation, like ‘Cross radio’, which is mainly focussed on stimulating cultural cooperation and promoting urban cultures.

Many of these media networks had an impact on the interest shown in Europe for the region (as a region of conflicts and isolation), and developed specific “communication projects”. Many reviews had been created like Balkanmedia (Sofia), Balkan umbrella (Remont, Belgrade), BalKanis (Ljubljana Slovenia), Sarajevske, Biljeznice/Sveske/cahiers etc.

Many Balkan festivals, such as Skomrahi in Skopje (festival of Drama schools from the region), Thesaloniki manifestations, visual art exhibitions, concentrate mostly on presentations and basic communication, while on the other hand workshops and summer schools communicate directly with art and work with the youth of the Balkans (summer school of the University of Arts in Belgrade, summer schools for art students in Bulgaria, Buntovna proza – UNESCO Bosnia project, Bucharest dance east/west project, Sibiu International theater festival (Romania), Eurobulgarian Center Film Festival etc.).

These initiatives generate new networks and new projects, such as Counter-rhythm Arts Summer school in Subotica in 2002 – which regroups students from different schools from the region, participating in self-created follow-up projects.

The importance of festivals like Skomrahi or Belef, is apparent in that for the first time, and long before the politicians, artists and arts organizations from the region could be presented and seen together (first appearance of Sarajevo artists in Belgrade had been during Belef festival - Ambrosia; the first links with Albanian artists through Balkankult conferences or during summer schools, etc.) or festivals like Urban festival in Zagreb organized by “Local base for refreshing culture (BLOK)” regrouped new and fresh initiatives from the region, contributing to present in this way each other’s work in areas usually not very popular for policy makers. Some manifestations focus on the region itself, helping in areas such as knowledge transfer and creating a new synergy. They are often focussed on politically engaged art and artists whose projects are relevant for the region only. Others are more “open” and address thematic issues, but focus on methods – experiments, laboratory works etc.

This rich capital is now present and growing.

Western expertise and influence had positive outcomes at the level of cultural administration and legislation.

The lottery model, inspired by the UK and the Netherlands to the Hungarians and Romanians, drew respective governments to try innovative models for the funding of culture. French laws on heritage and taxation or copyright were used, sometimes

successfully, by many eastern European countries. The law on cinema in Serbia was drafted with French expertise and the creation recently of a National Serb Cinema Centre is entirely due to this influence.

The problem of foreign expertise appeared when missing links became apparent. When the necessary time was not taken for a process to mature and all its components to become accomplished. We have numerous examples of using foreign expertise for completely un-adapted situations, but also of potentially good expertise that had to be implemented in too short a time or with missing data. This created in the long run a sense of distrust in SE European Ministries of culture and among cultural operators about the reliability of the 'western models'. It is clear that both immediate post communist euphoria regarding these models and post-wakening rejection of them are both wrong and superficial. Inspiration for cultural policy and legislation can be reliable, but has to take the necessary time and allow reciprocal understanding and questioning. For the time being this was more of an approach for cultural operators, but not for the cultural policy levels (nationally and internationally).

Of course, EU, Council of Europe and UNESCO initiatives in cultural institutional strengthening and their impact on the cultural cooperation logic cannot be ignored. The Phare (EU) and Mosaic programs (Council of Europe), the ICOM network and ICOMOS publication acting in the heritage sector resulted in:

- ⇒ Bulgaria in the creation of the Euro-Bulgarian Centre, in Romania in the formulation of a first complete 10 years strategy for the Ministry of culture and in the performing of a comprehensive training for cultural administrators in five Romanian regions as well as in support for independent cultural projects focused on cooperation and diversity (PHARE Bulgaria and Romania)
- ⇒ important legislative and administrative measures and fundraising realised for Museums, heritage restoration and new managerial organisation for the museum sector (the Romanian Brancusi triptych was restored also via UNESCO support; UNESCO positions stopped dangerous initiatives of destruction of national and regional heritage (Rosia Montana, Dracula Parc (Romania), Sarajevo, Vukovar, Kosovo), and engaged international responsibility in the rebuilding of Yugoslav regions touched by war.
- ⇒ Council of Europe Mosaic project and the program of evaluation of Cultural policies provided, between 1996/2002 the ground for important advancement in the awareness about the needs and key weaknesses of the transition period and its impact on cultural policies, thus preserving the cultural subject on the South Eastern European agendas and training the national public authorities in the region to an open, democratic and developed approach to the complex issues of the enlarged Europe.

The only general reproach that can be put forward about these programs would be that they were too short sighted (between 1 to 3 years) and that their indirect impact was more important than their visibility in the large socio economic SE European audiences (public and independent), thus their follow ups were weak and their direct action was limited to those who had direct contact with them (the already discussed top-down syndrome). Partnership with civil society operators was in all cases more formal, rhetoric, than real

and effective. And this prevented these initiatives becoming as important as their initial potential led us to believe.

Last, but not least, European training courses in cultural administration and management allowed the participation of SE European students and educated and empowered some of the leading cultural young figures, by giving them the instruments for the necessary institutional transformation and by facilitating them with the international contacts in order to render an open perspective in the South Eastern European region: the Marcel Hicter Certificate in Belgium, the Masters degree in Dijon (ECUMEST program), the Formation Internationale Culture in Paris, ARSEC in Lyon, AMSU in Amsterdam, ICCA in Salzburg (with Kulturkontakt support), the Warwick university in UK being only a few examples. Others are organizations like the Interarts Observatory where many South Eastern European students found an ideal in-learning place to develop vision and skills in cultural cooperation logic and in understanding the importance of the correct reading of a global context to inform local action.

Special mention must be made of the Belgrade University of Arts, which was the first in SE Europe to include a cultural cooperation perspective in the syllabus of its MA in cultural management, already in 1991.

To complete the picture of the importance of the foreign impact and its sometimes ambiguous consequences on the cultural institutional balance between the public and the civil sector, we will use the following example. During the 90's we saw that a number of exchanges between SE Europe and western Europe and joint projects had been developed. Still, we observe too often that the differences & inequalities in the region had been reinforced. New divisions entered the game, resulting from the momentous "popularity" of a certain country.

Bosnia is a cruel example of such a policy. During the siege of Sarajevo the whole world had taken Sarajevo as a symbol, many artists and intellectuals went there to see and to be seen as giving support, and many foundations entered directly after Dayton in 1995. Of course, they invested in the development of the NGO sector – leaving the public sector in their political divisions and administrative confusion and lack of know how. This created the most particular artificially created situation where a country has a highly developed civil sector, with salaries 10 times greater than the public, creating the final exodus of the remaining artists and intellectuals from the public sector to NGOs, weakening further the stability & quality of work in the public sector. Five years after Dayton, nearly all the foundations agencies left Sarajevo, leaving behind an unaccomplished system of public institutions, an unsustainable NGO system with very qualified staff, but active in the context where services and activities of NGO cannot be financed neither from public nor from the underdeveloped private sector. At the end of this year the UNESCO office will be closed and the majority of the foundations passed in 2000 in Serbia, when the 5th October "revolution" made Serbia very "trendy" all of a sudden.

Many donors (in fact, their representatives in the region), had been aware of the mistakes committed in Bosnia, but had no authority or possibility to persuade decision-making bodies of their foundations or agencies, that its policy had to be reshaped as well as the operating methods. Of course the popularity of investing in the civil sector cannot be

compared with the feeble 'attractiveness' of giving money to the public sector, but without good public museums, libraries, art education etc., we will not have a high quality art scene, only at the NGO level, or it will be for a very limited and short period of time.

This brings us back to the 'Strong state and strong civil society balance desiderata' Copic is speaking about.

### **PART THREE**

#### **A challenging synthesis: what are the missing links / A prospective conclusion**

The descriptive overview provided brings about the formulation of what we consider today as the most important topics that the cultural cooperation policies have to urgently address, from both a prospective and a pragmatic perspective, in order to include South Eastern Europe organically in the enlarged European process and avoid the repetition of past errors with long term consequences.

⇒ As formerly demonstrated, one of the crucial problems of cultural cooperation in the region can be considered as 'ethical'. Misbalance and unequal treatment can be felt at different levels and translates in various ways. If and when the cooperation project is launched by a western European organization, the eastern European local partners can usually assume that they are chosen mainly because they are facilitating easy fundraising for the western partner. In the cooperation process the dominating western logic has to take the lead in terms of main choices, orientation or profile of the project and the weak financial resource that usually the eastern partner has at his disposal reinforces the strong/weak opposition of the so called institutional partnership. In most cases of the training sessions organized with local and international expertise, local experts are usually paid much less than the western ones, at the same time, it is often the case that the western experts are not as knowledgeable of the specifics of the region (how could a good British marketing expert teach this in his UK lecture to a Kosovar and Bosnian or Bulgarian and Romanian manager, when in the SE European countries, all economic mechanisms are still in transition from a purely centralized infrastructure, the system inherited is a mix of post Austro-Hungarian and Russian legacy and the liberal market NEVER existed really.)

⇒ a second crucial aspect would be the danger of the normalisation of this top-down approach and mentality of the western model of cooperation (rhetorical encouragement of cultural diversity and annihilation, for understandable pragmatic reasons, of the complex problems emerging in cooperation with the Balkans). It is significant the extent to which the rhetoric and model of cooperation of western agencies are the same throughout the world. Western governments are not real partners for dialogue, but exporters of national models in the cultural field and by now, South Eastern European Countries understood that the French cultural administration is very different from the British and German one, the Dutch, Italians and Spanish, not to mention the Belgian and Swiss! But Western European countries had become used to ignoring other western cultural models apart from their own,

therefore their praise of 'openness' and consensus at times seem doubtful and contradictory to the SE European eye. Today, the South Eastern Europeans know to what extent, for example, the liberal British model of cultural management is adaptable to their centralized institutional legacy, but also how to avoid replacing the former communist bureaucratic cultural administration with the heavy Italian or French one.

- ⇒ a third point is that it is worrying to see, at high political EU levels, the strong link between cultural cooperation and the rebinding of social ties, inter-culturally and placing culture centre stage in the support of social reconstruction in the Balkans is IGNORED. The multicultural and multiethnic societies in the Balkans are an ideal laboratory for finding challenging reconciliation formulas, but also a vision of an enlarged Balkan region, not limited to Yugoslavia and some of its neighbours, but including Greece and Turkey (not as developed, already 'European' countries, but as cultural partners and historically binding communities). Greece should stop excluding Macedonia from artistic cooperation, for example, and European and Balkan reconciliation would gain an important step forward. Instead of perpetrating an image of conflict and tension around the Balkans, the encouragement of a perception of the region as a 'laboratory' for the future and as a 'potential world', as compared to the western 'saturated world' (Liiceanu) would be desirable.
- ⇒ cultural cooperation policies should be engaged with broader time and space limits: long term sustainable programs and cooperation with countries beyond Europe would be desirable. South Eastern European countries don't know much about southern Europe or about for example African, Asian, Arab cultures. Perhaps their different socio-economic and cultural behaviour from western Europe would revitalise and inspire the regeneration process of the SE European region, presenting a new, unexpected and unexplored perspective, issues that are up until today exclusively regarded from a east/west confrontational point of view. This would also help demystify the western model (still so present in eastern Europe) and deepen the understanding of global mechanisms that drive the world cultural and economic dynamic. At the same time, cultural cooperation of the region beyond Europe might facilitate the dissolution of nationalism and bring a conscience about European roots of the Balkan people as compared to Arab, Asian, African ones.

### **What we would need :**

- ◆ Mobility schemes, providing not only scholars and students, but also cultural professionals with the possibility to study and understand foreign culture inside and outside the region, inside and outside Europe.
- ◆ That European instances and national governments in the region, together with the most representative NGO's (today easy to identify) to gather regularly and formulate a long term agenda for cultural cooperation, reshaping and redistributing responsibilities and re-balancing the outdated idea of the ignorance of the region facing the international challenge.
- ◆ Understand and apply strategies to encourage efficiency and support the 'human capital' in the SE European region, thus preventing it's disappearance; it is a very

positive step to see this issue underlined by parliamentarian Doris Pack, president of the delegation of EU parliament for SE Europe in her speech to the EU parliament<sup>1</sup>; because supporting the human capital means supporting the diversity of the cultural and spiritual asset of the Balkan region.

It is obvious that cultural cooperation is today dependent more on the global factors engendered by the technological advancement, material resource providing, access to information and rapidity than by conventional accords and complicated bureaucratic programs; this aspect has to be taken into account if we want SE Europe to share and acquire the European democratic values and not orient itself to other more tempting overseas 'ready to help' partners. It is by developing a culturally and economically rich South Eastern Europe that it will begin to have responsibility.

Last, but not least, despite our conscience that the Balkans are an extremely complex region, our task is to end the stereotypes and prejudices and to recreate collective memory beyond political division, wars, unachieved compromise, etc.

Yes, the Balkans is a bridge and a crossroads at the same time.

It is therefore *our* task to build our bridges, because only we will know the best emplacement for them; we cannot wait for people from the outside to come and build these bridges for us, they may be very nice bridges, but far away from our customary paths of communication.

The danger is that we will only use them on rare occasions, for nice promenades, not for our daily, operational, *real* cultural existence.

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<sup>1</sup> source : Serb daily Danas, 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 2003