The empowerment of civil society agents in new democracies
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Democracy, between confrontation and trust building
The notion of civil society and the emergence of an effectively democratic civil sector in post communist countries is in the centre of the present argument.
New cultural policies should be , in former communist countries, designed according first and foremost to the axiomatic lack of democratic behaviour that these societies are showing still now and focus very strongly on the civic empowerment of the individuals that are independent opinion leaders .

Cultural policies have a crucial role to play therefore in the accompanying process of democracy building, but in order to do so, they should be articulated around some of the important notions derived from the respect of cultural rights.
In the first place, cultural policies are supposed to be instruments for the rebuilding of trust, the rebuilding of links. We have to consider the fact that the communist state was a state where each institution was a material symbol of the ideological order, thus the employees were instruments of this order and nothing more. 'Beauty was chased away by communisms' says Kundera , meaning by this that all individual choice and intimate emotion were chased away. And together with them, the individual self disappeared, the direct link with 'otherness 'disappeared and was replaced with the irreducible link to 'Big Brother'. And when 'BB ' was no longer there, all reference to otherness was lost.

As much a paradox as this might seem, bringing back the trust (the individual inter-link) needs , in preparation, also bringing back the capacity to confront the other , debate with the other and accept his difference. The relationship with 'Big Brother' was a relationship of submission and total acceptance, the relationship within a democratic order has to be a relationship of confrontation , before becoming a relation of trust.

Where are the spaces of encounter in post communist societies?

1. the economical space; the free market booming ultra liberal approaches present in former communist countries are the key boosters of common collaboration (based on confrontation and builders of mutual trust)
2. the virtual space of communication, the new media; for young individual in freshly born democracies the virtual space is one of the main instruments of getting into contact with the world and with each other
3. the audiovisual media; the space of rebuilt communication, shaper of new behaviours and values
4. the predetermined so-called 'public spaces', generally encouraged and stimulated by foreign input, where the meeting takes place because provoked.

What is common to these four 'spaces of link ' is the need to have a third as facilitator(money, virtual media, audiovisual media, foreign catalyser)
All direct confrontation is still absent, this meaning that the mutual building of common spaces is not yet under way. In order to encourage more individually direct spaces of debate and trust building, a certain number of seriously blocking legacies have to be countered.

First, the centrality of former communist society, going against all possibility to build a sense of individual responsibility and of competitiveness.

Second, the fact that the bureaucratic rebuilding inside these societies is more rapid than the social rebuilding; we define today emergent democracies as progressing more according to the existing laws than to existing behaviours.

Third, the important legacies of the ideological culture are not evacuated really, they still persist in the 'cultural ' behaviours and slow down the genuine , but frail, democratic individual endeavours.

Cultural policy based on participation and interactive decision making
This brings about a need to set up long term cultural policy programs around the two pillars that can reshape mentalities: participation and decision making. The concept of participative policy making is therefore crucial to new democratic environments, because issued from the methodological approach of the 'learning enterprise'; it ensures shared responsibilities, equal stakeholders and long term impact on the closer social and economical context. It also ensures the emergence of civic behaviour, because responsible behaviour.

However, in order to engage in a participative policy making process, the lack of indicators and 'knowledge based'(Mercer, Colin, 2002) cultural planning is an extremely important obstacle .

Also, the participation in decision making processes, which is made too much on ad-hoc, non-systematic bases; hence, the degree of responsibilities of different stakeholders remains ambiguous, sometimes even confused.

Last, but not least, the issue of 'common European values' is a matter to debate, never the former eastern bloc is questioned about the reality of emergence of these values in today's societies , never is it really clear what are the mainstream 'ideas' that are today supposed to gradually replace former ideologies?

Can we , then, speak about the existence of a real civil society in former communist countries and to what degree this civil society behaves in a democratic civic way? We could, if cultural policies in these countries would get out from an outdated pattern of exclusively providing normative frames for arts and heritage protection and promotion and would emancipate themselves towards more integrated dimensions of human development , turning the cultural institution into a 'civic learning space' (Orr, David, 1999)