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

Context for cultural cooperation in Southeastern Europe

The cultural cooperation logic marking the last 14 years in Southeastern Europe (SEE) 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, globalization 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 1990s 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 set free upon the world. In order to discuss the above, we have to consider the following:

First, it is hard to realize and therefore comprehend the exact process that, more or less, influenced the last 14 years of cultural policy in SEE. 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 brought in; Romania had ten ministers of culture, Bulgaria eight and Albania eleven, between 1990 and 2003. The cultural administration could 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.

¹ 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 fifteen years; 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” (from French original, European Convention debate, 15 May 2003).

Also, the notion of “state” was in crisis and the nature of it as a 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 to be responsible for the lack of support to civil initiatives. The incompetence of the cultural commissions in parliament remains unnoticed, as well the administrative chaos resulting from the collapse of a highly rigid regime.

Second, we have to admit that the effort made by Southeastern 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 and 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 tutoring or humanitarian aid approach (thus reinforcing the “assisted” (passive) mentality of the “newly liberated societies”) to develop a coaching, accompanying kind of attitude, which would surely have had more success in bringing a sense of autonomy sooner to the region.

In this context the idea of a “Marshall plan” would have probably worked well.² 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, in Britain the Arts Council and British Council, as well as the Goethe Institute in Germany, was never in doubt, at least at the cultural public policy levels (administration) in the region. UNESCO’s actions were directed towards the heritage protection, the Council of Europe program of evaluation of cultural policies to the empowering of policy-makers, while the Mosaic program was dedicated to training, cultural diversity and relations with the civil sector, also using the mobility bursaries for cultural managers. Numerous were 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 opportunities for mobility. For the civil sector, the Soros Foundation and the cultural networks played an accompanying role and played it successfully in as much as concerns the artistic exchange, mobility and modernization of taste or emergence of contemporary forms.

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, in 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) (Judt, 2000). Of course, this statement is rather radical, but we have to admit that the Southeastern 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) of that part of the continent that will not yet enter the EU accession process before 2007.

² It is interesting that after finishing this study we found out that the Belgium Walloon government had created a “Marshall” plan - Plan of priority actions for the Walloon future. The cultural analysts made an ironic comment - “as it was war in Wallonie” (see Ruwet, 2005: 3).

Typologies

This being said, we will nevertheless risk considering further an empirical split between three categories of countries in SEE (taking now as a main criteria the socio-political differences during the post-World War II period):

- 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 Western Europe, Yugoslavia, in **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 the 20th century and even, we might say, starting with Tito's time, a sense of participation in the 1960s and the 1970s in the main world trends (in the sense of having a say at international level, in intercultural communications, participating in "consumer culture" of the Western World, etc.).

Finally, Albania (**group c**) was isolated within the Eastern European block, separated from all other neighbors, victim of a totalitarian communist policy even more radical than that of Ceausescu's. Historically, the Albanian population was not mobile (contrary to the 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 and Bulgarians had left already in the 19th century to study abroad - mostly in Germany, Austria, France, engaging in both commercial and intellectual exchange - for Albanians it was the exception.

While neighboring governments since the 19th century have tried to attract foreign "investment" and the educated "human resource", so that a number of artisans, 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 partially a victim of, 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, into cultural cooperation as a natural process.

Internationalism and cultural cooperation in the Balkans

The "artistic" versus the "bureaucratic" time

Ralph Dahrendorf says that while political change of post-communist countries can be achieved in six months, economical change in six years, cultural change (Dragičević Šešić, 1997) needs 60 years to be achieved. This is because cultural change implies change in the scale of values. Along the same lines, 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 (Kundera, 1999).

These largely shared opinions stress the extent to which 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 developmental phases of cultural cooperation in the post-World War II Europe, Raymond Weber (2000), 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".

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, even better to say, from outside, and has, therefore, not been 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" has not been created, like in Western Europe, through partnership, debate and public dialogue. *Common discourse* is imposed from outside - 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", from pro-European political elites, and were *imposed* as key words on cultural actors in the region, while no one really introduced them as values in primary education and within general public space, with adequate policy measures in all fields of social life. 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 the rise of communism.

I. Socialist period

1945-1948 - participation in building the world's communist utopia

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

1965-1989 - officially a limited number of contacts (bilateral ones) were implemented; minority policies now stimulate cooperation (Serbs in Romania and Romanians in Serbia actively participate in bridging one culture to another).

II. Transition period

1989-1995 - concentration on itself - looking for cooperation out of the former communist block (independent cultural operators start to cooperate on an 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 on SE European governments by the Council of Europe, Western European cultural cooperation agencies, UNESCO and the EU - regional NGOs emerge and start developing authentic Balkan networks (the civil sector is largely supported by the art and culture network, the OSI program, in Budapest)

2002-2005³ - reshaping of the cooperation logic according to mainly EU reshaping priorities and the enlargement process (new division: accession countries and the others, often non-eligible for majority of EU programs and schemes).

Still, we have to explain more here the phases within the transition period, as their outcomes have impact and relevance still today. 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 to be 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 Romania and France, Croatia and Germany, Serbia and Russia, even Belarus, 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 diminished severely, 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 already had quite a lot of translations from neighboring countries, but that was linked to the 1960s and 1970s. 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. Neighboring countries did not have their cultural centers or agencies to stimulate regional cooperation and the situation of cultural policies was still unstable up to the end of the 1990s in all Southeastern European countries.

A new phase started only after the Dayton treaty (1995), when the Stability Pact imposed regional cooperation on the Balkans as a precondition for financing. It was again a top-down measure aimed to re-launch regional cooperation, but, unfortunately, culture did not have its “table” within it - so the projects were analyzed through “educational”, “youth” or “civil society” lenses.

³ In 2005, the major shift in the European Union happened: ten new countries joined the Union, but the Constitution was rejected in the referendums in France and the Netherlands, and the decision postponed in Great Britain. This shows in fact the change in public opinion, which now fears future enlargement, and is especially divided on the issue of Turkey. So, this year will definitely mark the turn around in cultural cooperation of Europe with its “neighbours”.

Strategies for Southeastern European cultural regional⁴ and international cooperation

At the level of Southeastern 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 organizations' programs, or to be acceptable for the "EU" requirements, than to engage in artistic collaboration with neighbors.

The important artistic public institutions are suffering deeply from a lack of resources and the economic transition and restructuring of social and economic 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 (US, 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 SEE 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 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 ones, 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). Past history legitimizes 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, Council of Europe, p. 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, Council of Europe, English version, 2000, p. 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, Council of Europe, English version, 1997, p. 224).⁵

⁴ In our context, "regional" means SE European, "Balkan".

⁵ 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.

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!) (Council of Europe and ERICarts, 2000-2005). Also, too much attention is placed on the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the EU and to use UNESCO, the Central European Initiative (CEI), and the Stability Pact as donors, instead of trying to develop coherent cultural relations with neighboring countries. We will also note a strong tendency to restore the bilateral cooperation instead of multilateral schemes.

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 Southeastern 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 inter-regional grass-root cultural cooperation successfully. This has to complete the legislative, administrative and financial regulations that the EU accession top-down action has already achieved. "A strong state and a strong civil society" is the model that Slovene policy-maker Vesna Copic (2003) is putting forward as a guarantee for inner reconstruction of Southeastern European countries.

Cultural cooperation and the partnership between ministries and 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 1990s in the emerging Southeastern European democracies. This lapse of time was also necessary in order to develop the national cultural NGOs 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 Union and Serb Union of Theater People) were not listened to in the process of the drafting of the theater law. Bulgaria diplomatically avoided the problem by proposing the "law for the protection and development of culture" (2001/2002 source - Policies for Culture (PFC)- www.policiesforculture.org), 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, civil society and the legislators, remains, since the year 2000, PFC. Jointly initiated by the European Cultural Foundation, Amsterdam and the Ecumest association (operating from Amsterdam and Bucharest in all SEE regions), Policies for Culture combines a public policy approach towards the sensitivities of civil society to the legislative problems related to culture, with the public authority responsibilities but also with 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 experts from Southeastern 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 to do it for the entire region, with no artificial split between Slavonic, Orthodox, Balkan east or west etc.

Together with the Mosaic program of the Council of Europe and the Soros long-term initiatives – such as the cultural policy component of the Art and Culture program, (and, of course, inspired and catalyzed 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 SEE have mostly been initiated in the last 14 years by “outside actors” – European institutions such as the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the European states (especially through the Stability Pact), but also independently through bodies such as KulturKontakt (Austria), French cultural centers and the Goethe Institute, or Pro Helvetia. These bodies have launched programs not only of bilateral, but also 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; French NOROC “la danse en voyage”; the French/Romanian theatre; and the Austrian KulturKontakt programs for cultural management training and visual arts, etc.

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

The efforts of independent international foundations and of European networks have been important and very effective. Foundations and associations such as the European Cultural Foundation (ECF - Amsterdam), the Soros Network (Open Society Institutes - OSIs), the Felix Meritis Foundation, Transeuropéennes, etc., developed specific projects for SEE 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 the Gulliver Connect Program, which was realized between 1998 and 2003 through joint efforts of the 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.

In the beginning, the European networks created during the mid-1980s had few members from SEE (mostly from Yugoslavia - in the Informal European Theatre Meetings (IETM), pre-European network of Cultural Administration Training Centres (ENCATC) phase, etc.). However from 1989 onwards, they approached this area quite actively (IETM, the European League of Institutes of Arts (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 the 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, Cultural Information and Research Centres in Europe (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, the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage (EFAH) integrating more and more the accompanying solutions for future EU accession countries. Specific networks for SEE were created (Apollonia, the South East European Contemporary Art Network (SEECAN), etc.). Some networks have developed specific fundraising activities to secure and enable participation of the members from Central and Eastern Europe 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.⁶

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 International Contemporary Art Network (ICAN), a network of ex/SCCAs (Soros Centers for Contemporary Arts Network) 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 - the "Balkan art generator" in 2000 (for the Cultural Capital). This network was mostly concentrating its efforts on bringing artists from the Balkans to Harald Szeemann, for his exhibitions of contemporary Balkan art - "Blood and Honey".⁷ (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 2000!).

The spirit of "networking" has provoked many other NGOs in the region to create their own authentic entities, such as Balkankult in Belgrade, Ecumest in Bucharest, Project DCM, centers 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 was only 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 NGOs found ways to proceed to further implementation of these projects.

Needless to say that for all these programs and projects, the existence of Soros and the Arts and Culture network program with its initiatives "Culture link" and "Looking inside" (two mobility programs), was of extreme importance.

Media networks have also been of crucial effectiveness, not only for bringing democracy and promoting human rights (Association of Independent Electronic Media - ANEM), but also by stimulating a greater sense of involvement by the younger generation, like "Cross Radio", which is mainly focused 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 were created, such as *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), Thessalonica manifestations, visual art exhibitions, concentrate mostly on

⁶ 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 the EU, Kulturkontakt, the Austrian Federal Chancellery and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁷ Blood and Honey, an exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann, was held in Klosterneuburg near Vienna in the Essl Collection, from 16 May to 28 September 2003, engaging 73 artists from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia and Turkey.

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 (Rebellious prose) - UNESCO Bosnia project, Bucharest Dance East/West project, Sibiu International Theater Festival (Romania), Euro-Bulgarian Center Film Festival, etc.).

These initiatives generated new networks and new projects, such as the Counter-rhythm Arts Summer School in Subotica in 2002, which regrouped students from different schools in 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 in Belgrade of Sarajevo artists had been during the Belef festival - Ambrosia; the first links with Albanian artists through Balkankult conferences or during summer schools, etc.). Festivals like the Urban festival in Zagreb, organized by the "Local base for refreshing culture (BLOK)", regrouped new and fresh initiatives from the region, contributing in this way to presenting each other's work in areas usually not very popular for policy-makers. Some manifestations focused on the region itself, helping in areas such as knowledge transfer and creating a new synergy. They were often focused 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 recent (2004) creation of a National Serb Cinema Center 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 unadapted 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 immediate post-communist euphoria regarding these models and post-awakening 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 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 International Council of Museums (ICOM) network and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) publication acting in the heritage sector resulted in:

- the creation of the Euro-Bulgarian Center (Bulgaria), the formulation of a first complete 10-year strategy for the Ministry of Culture in Romania and in the performing of 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 realized for museums, heritage restoration and new managerial organization for the museum sector (the Romanian Brancusi triptych was restored also with 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;
- the Council of Europe Mosaic project and the program of evaluation of cultural policies provided, between 1996 and 2002, the ground for important advancement in awareness about the needs and key weaknesses of the transition period and its impact on cultural policies, thus preserving the cultural subject on Southeastern European agendas and training the national public authorities in the region in 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-up was 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, rhetorical, 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 young cultural figures, by giving them the instruments for the necessary institutional transformation and by facilitating them with international contacts in order to create an open perspective in the Southeastern European region: the Marcel Hicter Diploma in Cultural Project Management 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), Warwick University in the UK, being only a few examples. Others are organizations like the Interarts Observatory where many Southeastern 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 Belgrade University of Arts, which was the first in SE Europe, already in 1991, to include a cultural cooperation perspective in the syllabus of its MA in cultural management, and is a really regional program with professors coming from the majority of the Balkan countries since 2002.⁸

To complete the picture of the importance of 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 1990s we saw that a number of exchanges between SE Europe and Western Europe and joint projects had been developed. However, we have observed that too often the differences and inequalities in the region have 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

⁸ The MA in Cultural Policy and Cultural Management obtained the title of UNESCO Chair in Interculturalism and Mediation in the Balkans in 2004.

course they invested in the development of the NGO sector - leaving the public sector to their political divisions, administrative confusion and lack of know-how. This created a very particular artificially-created situation, where a country has a highly developed civil sector, with salaries ten times greater than the public sector, encouraging the final exodus of the remaining artists and intellectuals from the public sector to NGOs, further weakening the stability and quality of work in the public sector. Five years after Dayton, nearly all the foundation agencies left Sarajevo, leaving behind an unfinished system of public institutions, an unsustainable NGO system with highly-qualified staff, but active in the context where services and activities of NGOs cannot be financed either from the public or from the underdeveloped private sector. At the end of this year the UNESCO office will be closed and also the majority of the foundations set up in 2000 in Serbia, when the 5th October "revolution" made Serbia very "trendy" all of a sudden.

Many donors (their representatives in the region), had been aware of the mistakes committed in Bosnia, but had no authority or possibility of persuading the decision-making bodies of their foundations or agencies, that their policy had to be reshaped as well as their 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" that Copic speaks about.

A challenging synthesis: what are the missing links/a possible conclusion?

This overview sets out what we consider today to be the most important topics that cultural cooperation policies have to address urgently, from both a prospective and a pragmatic perspective, in order to include SEE organically in the enlarged European process and avoid a 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 this so-called institutional partnership. In most cases, in the training sessions organized with local and international expertise, local experts are usually paid much less than Western ones, and, at the same time, it is often the case that the Western experts are not as knowledgeable about the specifics of the region (how could a good British marketing expert teach this in his/her UK lecture to a Kosovan, Bosnian, Bulgarian or Romanian manager, when in the SE European countries, all economic mechanisms are still in transition from a purely centralized infrastructure, where the system inherited is a mix of post-Austro-Hungarian and Russian legacy and the liberal market NEVER really existed.)

A second crucial aspect would be the danger of the normalization of this top-down approach and the mentality of the Western model of cooperation (rhetorical encouragement for 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, Southeastern

European countries have understood that the French cultural administration is very different from the British and German ones, the Dutch, Italians and Spanish, not to mention the Belgian and Swiss! But Western European countries have become used to ignoring other Western cultural models apart from their own, therefore their praise of "openness" and consensus at times seems doubtful and contradictory to the SE European eye. Today, the Southeastern 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 interculturally, and placing culture center stage in 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 neighbors, but including Greece and Turkey (not so developed, but 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. Southeastern European countries do not know much about Southern Europe or, for example, about African, Asian, Arab cultures. Perhaps their different socio-economic and cultural behavior from Western Europe would revitalize and inspire the regeneration process of the SE European region, presenting a new, unexpected and unexplored perspective, issues that are up till today exclusively regarded from an 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's cultural and economic dynamic. At the same time, cultural cooperation in the region beyond Europe might facilitate the dissolution of nationalism and bring a conscience about the European roots of the Balkan people as compared to Arab, Asian, African ones.

But, these policies should rely on broader values, such as freedom of communication, freedom of expression, minority (subcultural) rights. As Joost Smiers underlines: "Communication freedom is an essential value for society, so governments should not only refrain from interventions in cultural and artistic processes, they also have the duty to create the conditions in which citizens can communicate with each other freely, including through the arts" (Smiers, 2003: 199).

Not visible in Europe, and even less in the Balkans, are cultural debates about the conservative and retrograde tendencies of setting up cultural "clusters of values" considered to belong to Western (Anglo-American) society. Huntington's theories (2004) have been widely known and criticized among political scientists, but his statement about "core values" of Western (American) civilization remained ignored among cultural scientists and policy-makers (the Christian religion, Protestant values, work ethics, the English language, British traditions of law and justice, the legacy of European art and culture, liberty, equality, individualism, representative government (limited power), private property, etc.). Seeing that these core values are important for their unifying effects, national security and national power, he adds: "erosion of any clusters of collective ideals, leads to weakness and vulnerability". At the same time he emphasizes as the threats:

bilingualism, affirmative action, cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum), pluralism (Walzer), multiculturalism, new immigrants and the transnational businessman (“Multiculturalism is in its essence anti-European civilization, an anti-Western ideology”). These statements are not naïve theoretical thinking. If we remember his highly influential and important book, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order*, concerning Balkan politics and the war situation, the new book might, in a few years, influence relations in international cultural cooperation, having a specific impact among right wing political elites in Southeast Europe. That is the reason why debate and critical analysis is even more urgent and important in Southeast Europe, as a base for future policy-making in the cultural sphere, and more specifically in the field of international relations and cultural communication.

Possible concrete demands to national and international cultural policy-makers

- 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;
- platforms for debate and meetings of researchers and analysts in cultural studies and cultural policies (introduction of cultural research in national sciences agendas);
- that European organizations and national governments in the region, together with the most representative NGOs (easy to identify today), should 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 in facing the international challenge;
- understand and apply strategies to encourage efficiency and support the “human capital” in the SE European region, thus preventing its disappearance; it is a very positive step to see this issue underlined by parliamentarian Doris Paak, president of the delegation of the EU Parliament for SE Europe in her speech to the EU parliament,⁹ 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 technological advancement, provision of material resources, access to information and its rapidity, than through conventional accords and complicated bureaucratic programs; this aspect has to be taken into account if we want SE Europe to share and acquire 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 Southeast Europe that it will begin to have responsibility.

Now we have to face the new reality of a “new” divided Europe – the Europe of the EU and its accession countries (Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia with Turkey), the Europe of inclined “outsiders” (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania ...) and the non-Europe within Europe (Belarus, the Russian Federation, Moldova and even Ukraine, three Caucasus countries). So, the Europe of the Council of Europe has several important internal borders. But at the same time, for Southeast European countries that stayed outside, it is clear that there are no developmental opportunities outside the EU. However, two main questions remain to be answered:

- how to engage with new standards in cultural policy-making in Europe (issues like cultural diversity, territory...);
- how to engage with the world market economy (WTO standards) threatening the cultural industries of small countries.

⁹ Source: Serbian daily *Danas*, 19 May 2003.

It will take some time before cultural policies in Southeast Europe abandon the concept of ethnically- (imagined national community-) driven cultural policy, and start to be preoccupied with a "territorial" technical concept which brings more "justice" in cultural practices to all citizens of one state.

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 are 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 place 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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