

MAJA BREZNIK

CULTURAL  
REVISIONISM

CULTURE BETWEEN NEO-LIBERALISM  
AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



**Peace Institute**

Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies





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PRINT: STANE PEKLAJ

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THE PUBLISHING OF THIS BOOK WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE



BOOK SERIES POLITIKE



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PUBLISHER: PEACE INSTITUTE  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my thanks to the Peace Institute whose six-month grant enabled me to carry out this study. I owe special thanks to the *Politike* series editor Aldo Milohnič for his considerate assistance during the preparation of the material for this publication. Dr. Lev Kreft contributed valuable critical remarks and encouraged me in conducting this study. My search for literature would be much less effective without generous help from Vesna Čopič of the Ministry of Culture. Finally, this publication would not be possible without valuable contributions from the translator, Olga Vuković, and language editors Marija Močnik and Michelle Gadpaille. This year we mark the tenth anniversary of the death of my father Maks Breznik, who died one year after the factory accident that occurred during the first wave of privatization in Slovenia. I dedicate this book to him. I also wrote this book for all those who will probably never read it because of the processes it describes.



## FOREWORD

The six-month project proposed by the Peace Institute of which this study is a result was entitled *Cultural Policies of Slovenia and the European Union - A Comparison of Legislations, Strategic Documents and Recommendations*. The title of this paper, however, points to the most important findings of the study. Readers will no doubt notice that I have, to some extent, departed from the original topic, but this decision was largely due to the excellent quality of the material about European cultural policies used in this study. These reports on national cultural policies were commissioned by the COE, or, to be more precise, the Council for Cultural Cooperation, and the earliest ones were written towards the end of the 1980s. They provide an excellent basis for the comparative approach. Each national report consisted of two parts: a text by the local expert and commentaries on this text written by European commissions. Eventually, I even had to conclude that the material was over-abundant, so in this paper I will concentrate on the local reports and will leave the comments by the European commissions for another occasion. While they illuminate the COE viewpoints on cultural policy issues, the national reports are more pertinent to the purpose of this study.

When in July 2002 I began to study European cultural policies, I expected that the final result would be a synchronous analysis of the goals set by individual countries and a description of different approaches to the realization of these goals. The first surprising conclusion was that, although the goals of various countries were indeed similar - one expression that is popular across the board is »democratization« - the terms the authors used to describe them differed from country to country. For example, the French national report uses the term democratization in the sense of »broadening participation in culture,« while Austrians use the same term to describe primarily the equal treatment of contemporary and traditional arts, and then the liberalization of culture as well.

It would be possible to argue that the term »democratization« is a typical political buzzword devoid of content and characterized by either referential hollowness or abundance. But since individual national reports were written at different points over a longer period of time, and since they described issues that were undergoing rapid changes in the process, the meaning of specific terms had to be approached diachronically and historically. Viewed from such a perspective, the term democratization points to two different horizons of two cultural policy models, and it has a different meaning in each. The first cultural policy model, one that has been gradually losing its significance in the past decade, is a social-democratic model that stresses the »accessibility« of culture. The second is the neo-liberal model that began to gain ground as the first model began to retreat. This is the model which introduced into the field of culture the spirit of enterprise (»enterprise culture«). Taking this historical point of reference as a criterion, it is possible to say that national reports produced between 1986 and 1995<sup>1</sup> clearly reveal a shift in »common sense,« or a change in the ideological horizon underlying all representations and decisions concerning cultural policies. The ideology that prevailed in the reports with later dates suggests that a »cultural policy based on enterprise« can better meet the needs of consumers than the state regulation of »access« to culture. It is believed that by restricting or reducing its subsidies to culture, the state does a favor to the consumers of culture – smaller subsidies presumably compel cultural institutions to adopt market approaches and seek the best methods to reach new audiences. In fact, the reality is probably a bit different: cultural institutions are compelled to seek avenues to the »representative public,« meaning social groups with the economic and political power, because only these groups can provide them with the direct and indirect material resources needed for survival. I will return to these transformations in the ideological horizons later in the text.

In this paper I will try to explain that the cultural policy issue by no means relates only to the interests of extravagant artists, but it is in the first place the issue of the social distribution of *cultural goods*. I

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<sup>1</sup> The French report is the earliest one, originating in 1988. It uses data from the first half of the 1980s so it is very likely that it had been written several years before publication. The Italian report is the most recent and was written in 1995.

will show that European cultural policies failed with regard to this issue at their first encounter with the economic crisis: they actually tried to protect primarily the institutions of »representative national art,« while other cultural areas and cultural issues were left to be governed by market forces such as the »cultural industry.« It is known that the international economic organizations, particularly the World Trade Organization, insist that culture, and particularly the cultural industry, should be left to the liberalized international market, and that they condemn state intervention in the cultural industry, labeling it protectionism and a violation of the principles of free trade. Consequently, the European countries with their current conceptions of cultural policies probably face an imminent risk of being compelled to yield to the pressures of the WTO, considerably reduce the scope of interventions in culture and restrict cultural policies to few activities only. Also, knowing that the European Commission conceptualized its support for national cultural policies as a defense of cultural peculiarities for the sake of »cultural diversity,« we can hypothesize, indeed somewhat maliciously, that in the future European countries will retain the right to subsidize only that part of their cultural production that reflects the ethnological characteristics of their environment.

However, if we choose to understand culture in the wider sense of the word, by which we mean wider than usually implied by cultural policies, that is to say, together with the educational system which has already witnessed the privatization of education, the introduction of fees for public high schools and the reduction of grant funds for socially threatened population, than the ultimate effects of the new trends appear more and more menacing. Culture, sports, science and similar fields increasingly serve the function of social stratification rather than of general emancipation, which is the idea originally embedded in the systems of social redistribution. My paper is a contribution to the efforts aimed at preventing these apprehensions from becoming a reality.

LJUBLJANA, JANUARY 2003



## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

There are some general facts that have to be pointed out in this introductory section. Although well-known and rather boring, these facts are cause for dismay among adamant researchers. Bernard Gournay,<sup>2</sup> the author of the French national report on cultural policy, describes the first reason for this predicament as a technical problem. According to Gournay, the fundamental problem is that it is not possible to give a definition of the domain of cultural policy. There are several reasons for this: cultural policy cannot be determined on the basis of who administers it, since it can be administered by various national offices or institutions; nor can it be determined on the basis of what the field of cultural policy comprises (the areas of theater, music, ballet, literature etc. are shaped freely and »randomly,« while new areas emerge primarily under the pressure of the new media); nor can it be done on the basis of how interventions are carried out, because interventions are of many kinds (preservation of cultural heritage, encouragement of creativity, education, international cooperation, research work etc.; this already comprehensive list would be even longer if we added new support programs and approaches invented by administrative reforms); nor can determination be made on the basis of organization, because funding cannot be restricted only to public institutions, since the renunciation of private institutions, societies, associations, foundations, funds and so on would rob cultural offer of diversity and liveliness.

Yet this technical cause of the problem would be easily removed were it not accompanied by another substantial cause of the predicament – the fact that it is not possible to find clear definitions of the goals of (governmental) interventions in the cultural sector. Moreover, even if we establish that we have finally come up with an

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Gournay, »Rapport national«, published in: *La Politique culturelle de la France*, La Documentation française, Paris, 1988.

acceptable definition of the goal, it may turn out to be either erroneous or misleading. Interventions that are seen as targeted at the clearly defined goals may trigger effects that are exactly the opposite of what has been put down or planned. This causes much disbelief, because the purpose of cultural administration is to manage the field of culture, formulate cultural policies and, last but not least, present and defend the standpoints adopted by the cultural authority. Why do we, then, allow »cultural administrations« to fail in fulfilling their mission?

The answer is simple: because they cannot fulfill it. A »cultural administration« has to pretend to be fulfilling the tasks that were accorded to it by »general consensus,« whatever that means, but in reality it does not enjoy the protection of any such »general consensus,« not even a temporary one. Expert groups, various councils and chambers are the institutions that provide alibis for the »expert public,« but people who sit on these boards are the representatives of the consumers of state grants, so they cannot stand for the »general consensus.« It is possible that these groups reflect the conflicting interests of the privileged and marginalized artists, or of those protecting private interests and those guarding the public welfare, so in this sense they can make valuable contributions when important decisions have to be taken. However, in order to be able to speak of the »general consensus,« they would need to attract the silent majority consisting of the actual and not only potential consumers of cultural events or services.

In the European countries such »general consensus« is only exceptionally achieved by parliaments, and that usually happens on the occasion of approving the budget. For example, if a parliament has to protect cultural heritage, it may decide to protect a linguistic minority. Apart from that, there have been examples when parliaments have adopted resolutions that defined general cultural policy goals, as in the case of the French and Swedish parliaments. The Netherlands was the first country to attempt to remove this deficiency through the 1993 Act on Specific Cultural Policy, which requires its cultural authority to regularly draw four-year »cultural plans« that include assessment of past work and effects of specific interventions, and proposals for new ones. This requirement is not just an annoying obligation towards parliament, because it can se-

cure for the cultural administration greater sovereignty and freedom of cultural management.<sup>3</sup> Foucault's name for administrative emancipation is *gouvernementalité*, and it is achieved with the domination of the technical skill of knowledge, when administration takes over the political decision-making and transfers it to scientific expertise, administrative procedures<sup>4</sup> and expert groups.

For these reasons, the »cultural plan« approved by parliament cannot resolve the problem of the »general consensus« or of the exclusion of taxpayers (actual and potential consumers) from the decision making process. Until now this niche was readily occupied by political parties that liked to pretend to be the representatives of the unheeded majority and proclaimed their cultural programs as »universal.«<sup>5</sup> But in parliamentary democracies cultural policy is formulated by political parties, among others, and the conceptualization of

<sup>3</sup> The four-year plan highly appealed to the Slovenian cultural authority so it included it among its obligations as set by the 2002 law on culture and named it the National Program for Culture. In addition to having the advantages mentioned above, it will undoubtedly cut the Gordian knot related to the issue of the Slovenian National Cultural Program (see footnote 5) that the cultural authority has been announcing for almost a decade now. While we were waiting for this program it actually turned out that the administration could not prepare it because it was not capable of embarking on the plans for governmental measures using the aesthetic paradigms on which the national cultural program was based.

<sup>4</sup> The article by Jelka Šutej Adamič entitled »S površnimi umetniki neusmiljeno /No Mercy for Superficial Artists/« (*Delo*, October 12, 2002) clearly shows that national institutions reward the administrative skills of applicants rather than their artistic value. In processing applications for the Venice biennial, the commission with the Ministry of Culture excluded 9 of 11 applicants altogether, because their documentation was incomplete. Among them was the Museum of Modern Art because it failed to submit a copy of the court registry record that must not be older than 90 days, although the ministry itself was the founder of this institution. Such behavior of the national administration has at least two detrimental effects: it expands bureaucratization to all segments of culture and arts as well as administrative restrictions on access to public tenders.

<sup>5</sup> One such example is a proposal for the Slovenian National Cultural Program (*Nova revija*, Ljubljana, 2000), which is the only complete text of this kind so far. The authors of the proposal clearly wanted to sidestep the problem of the »general consensus« and shaped this program from inside the political party (the improvised »working group« or »civil society group« set up by the minister which worked together with experts, advisers and the two secretaries from the Ministry of Culture). It is true that its subtitle said »a proposal« and that it was offered to the public (the nation) as an optional reading. Nevertheless, it was received with many reservations primarily because of its dubious originator which was presented as some general, universal entity (the implied originator of the program was »civil society«) rather than partial (affiliated with a political party). For more on the history of this proposal, see Blaž Lukan, »Politieni interes in zdrava nečimrnost /The Political Interest and Healthy Vanity/«, *Delo*, March 14, 2002, p. 5.

policy is influenced by the party's general worldview.<sup>6</sup> It is precisely this trait that comes to light through national cultural reports, when the authors claim that there is not just one national cultural policy, but ostensible national policy conceals either the struggle between conflicting parties' interests or parallel practices not based on the common paradigm and even being exclusive in some instances. Usually, the authors of the cultural reports refer to this situation as a »cultural debate« with at least two participants, one representing the left and the other the right end of the political spectrum. For example, the post-war cultural policy of France is delineated as a »game of alternations« of at least two completely opposing policies. Other report writers arrived at similar conclusions. For Gournay, the cultural policy concept of the left represents a paternalistic treatment of culture with the purpose of ensuring access to cultural events and services to all citizens (during the terms of the cultural ministers Malraux and Lang), while the right-wing concept promotes the liberalistic worldview that tends to leave culture and arts to market forces. This view is based on the assumption that liberalization would enable culture to cast off the yoke of state control, and private initiative would then develop of its own accord.

Given all this, a researcher cannot but view cultural policy as a live creature that is (re)shaped on a daily basis under pressure from political and cultural conflicts, since cultural policy, as we have so far seen, is primarily the field of ideological struggle. Cultural policy may also be viewed from the »historical« perspective, that is to say, as a series of public measures in the areas of culture and arts, but such a dia-

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<sup>6</sup> The official document of the Ministry of Culture candidly admits the influence of the political party on the shaping of cultural policy: »The public interest reflects the current political power relations in the country, i.e. the consequences of the mandates won at the elections which give them rights to represent the public, articulate its interests and administer them using governmental instruments« (Cf. *Delovno gradivo za pripravo predloga zakona o uresničevanju javnega interesa za kulturo*/Explanatory Material for the Introduction of the Law on Exercising of Public Interest in Culture, prepared by the Ministry of Culture, January 21, 2002, p. 3.) This statement reveals that the cultural authority always sides with the winner of the elections, and that it unconditionally bows to it regardless of what kind of cultural policy it advocates. While we may have become used to this strange behavior, we cannot but notice the grotesque position of the public administration employee: lacking clearly defined goals, the public employee has to step into the shoes of the winning party after each election and defend and carry out its program, then repeat the same procedure after four years when the new party comes into power regardless of whether its goals are completely different.

chronic historical narration would be unintelligible if we leave out the synchronous ideological aspects of cultural-political conflicts.



## IS THERE A EUROPEAN CULTURAL POLICY?

The purpose of this study is to compare Slovenian cultural policy with the achievements of and measures taken by other west European policies. Given many general hesitations described above, this task is not easy. Our conclusions so far indicate that even deciding which document can be taken as delineating a specific national cultural policy is not a routine procedure. Neither can »scientific« evaluations of cultural policies be considered reliable, since such studies are usually commissioned or written by the cultural authorities themselves when they need written material to justify the measures they plan to take. Therefore, »scientific« evaluations do not much differ from program manifestoes, particularly those evaluations that overlook the ideological dimensions of cultural policy.

For the Finnish authors of national cultural policy, the evaluation of cultural policy is a description of »long-term political and ideological orientations«; the French reporter Gournay sees it as a description of the »human and social changes« [*changements humaines et sociaux*] that can be effected by a cultural administration knowingly or not. Scientific studies are believed to differ from documents produced by cultural authorities in that the former are capable of identifying subconscious practices among other things. Since scientific studies of cultural policies are rare, we took the national reports for the European project of cultural policies evaluations as the basis of our comparison. The sponsor of the European project is the Council for Cultural Cooperation, and the program was launched in 1986. One feature of this project particularly important for the purpose of our research is that the commissioner succeeded, if only in part, in imposing a common methodological basis and content. Perhaps the data in some reports have become a bit outdated by now,<sup>7</sup> but even

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<sup>7</sup> An even greater problem than the obsolescence of information was the time difference between individual reports. The earliest reports, for example, do not contain information on reactions to events in the 1990s, particularly recession, neoliberalization and globalization processes. These issues are treated in the Dutch and Finnish report, but not in the French report.

so these reports provided a good basis for a comparative study of European cultural policies. Of course, the quality of the material could not eliminate all of the difficulties. As a matter of fact, the »national reports« cannot be equated with national cultural policies, since they undoubtedly reflect the influence of both commissioners: the central cultural authority of a country and the European coordinator i.e. the Council for Cultural Cooperation. The political bias of individual cultural authorities definitely affected the manner of presenting national cultural policies, and it is very likely that the European bureaucracy contributed its share of influence as well.

As the reports show, the commissioners of the reports laid down the general methodological guidelines for writing reports. These included:

- the definitions of cultural policy goals,
- the definitions of the means employed by cultural policy, and
- the definition of the effects produced by cultural policy.

The structure of the reports shows that content proposals were supplied as well. Most of the reports include the following subject areas:

- encouragement of creativity,
- decentralization of cultural activities and decision making, and
- broadening of cultural participation.

However, what was problematic in this approach was the merging of methodological guidelines and content proposal, because by supplying content proposal the commissioner in part enforced specific answers to the basic general questions. To put it differently, this created a false impression that there exists a uniform cultural policy in Europe. On reading these reports, one may obtain the impression that the main goal of cultural policies in the whole of Western Europe, in the past as well as at present, has been to enable free access to cultural offer for all citizens regardless of their income, education, location and similar factors. Accordingly, in many reports we find conclusions similar to the following one taken from the French report: »In France, as in all other countries, the main goal of governmental interventions in the fields of arts and culture is to provide access to quality activities and entertainment for all citizens, or at

least the largest possible number of citizens,«<sup>8</sup> or the one from the Italian report: »Certainly, it has undertaken the aim common to all democracies, i.e. to make culture available to the masses, in the belief that civil and cultural growth of the country would not be possible without a thorough understanding of national historic and artistic traditions.«<sup>9</sup> Although similar statements are found in all reports studied here, in some countries this goal was set only in the 1970s, in others it never became a dominant paradigm, and still others began to abandon it precisely at the time of the report writing. The writers of reports readily took this goal as the point of departure of all cultural policies, so their writing was subordinated to the issues of decentralization and democratization presumably serving as instruments for achieving this goal. Yet even a cursory look will show that the writers of national reports differently understood each of these two terms. In the next section we will examine the different meanings of these terms, the means employed by individual countries to realize these goals, and finally, the effects that were achieved.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Gournay, *ibid.*, p. 337.

<sup>9</sup> CENSIS, *Cultural Policy in Italy*, Culture Committee, Strasbourg, 1995, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Since this paper is the result of a short, six-month study and since the material concerning this subject is extensive, I decided to omit the reports by East European countries, as their inclusion would entail the treatment of several additional aspects and issues.



## DECENTRALIZATION

### FRANCE

The first to raise the issue of decentralization in France was Andre Malraux, the cultural minister from 1959 to 1969. This was the period of the foundation of *Maisons de la Culture* in French provinces [*départements*] aimed at providing access to universal artistic values for every French person, regardless of his/her education or social environment.<sup>11</sup> The tasks of the art centers were to reduce differences between geographical regions and to enable the largest possible number of people, living both in urban and rural areas, to access elite cultural products. The funds were provided by the government and local administrations. This was a policy of balance between a privileged Paris with its periphery and other regions, but it was subsequently jeopardized by the ambitious plans of presidents who erected monuments to themselves in the country's capital. Among these were Pompidou's *Centre George Pompidou* and Mitterand's *Bibliothèque nationale de France*. These projects were a heavy burden for the national budget and not only because of the initial investments but because of the costs of maintenance as well.

Considering that the purpose of the first decentralization measures was to enable access to cultural content and events to the largest possible number of people, the evaluation of audiences brought new disappointments. Cultural events and services did not become more accessible to the economically most deprived population segment »excluded from culture.« As a result, the viewpoint that prevailed was that the traditional cultural offer as had been established through history did not work well with all population segments, and particularly not with the most vulnerable one, so the range of cultural content on offer had to be broadened to cover not only wider geograph-

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<sup>11</sup> Gournay, *ibid.*, p. 357.

ical regions but more social strata as well. Accordingly, between 1969 and 1970 the »Commission for Cultural Affairs« formulated recommendations that cultural events and services should be easily accessible at *the sites of everyday life* of specific target groups. This led to the establishment of the *Fonds d'intervention culturelle*, which began to execute such projects in the 1970s, with a renewed initiative provided by the minister Jack Lang after 1981. The target groups were as follows:

- young people for whom cultural activities were organized both in schools and outside of them (e.g. training spaces for rock groups);
- workers, trade unions or companies signed contracts aimed at increasing financial sources for libraries, organization of cultural events, acquisition of artistic works, staging of exhibitions (e.g. the history of the working class);
- rural population;
- inhabitants of neglected urban areas (suburbs);
- inmates in health, mental and similar institutions, people with special needs;
- military servicemen;
- prisoners; in this case the program included organization of cultural events, setting up of ateliers, classes in reading and use of audiovisual material, subsidies for the prisoner's newspaper *Pas-serelles* etc.;
- minorities, immigrants and linguistic communities.

The author of the report on French cultural policy assessed these programs as average, but he also admitted that no official appraisal had ever been made because the programs simply died out after the end of Lang's term in office. Neither can we make an assessment of these programs, but what we can say with confidence is that they represented an exceptional experiment unlike anything seen elsewhere in Europe. The goal of these programs was not only cultural or educational in character – they were also aimed at broadening the mechanisms of social cohesion to include the most affected and most vulnerable population segments. Since for these segments even the opportunity to have contact with the outer world is highly valuable and encouraging, the effects were probably positive, but we

cannot say whether the method of intervention was chosen appropriately.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to these programs, Lang's administration continued Malraux's decentralization program through a so-called »contractual policy«: the state assumed the contractual obligation to co-finance projects for a period of several years if the province submitted a well-grounded proposal for the project. The result was the opening of more than a dozen central provincial libraries, fine arts centers, and cultural halls.

Another method employed by the French to restrain the power of centralized politics and enhance the relationship between the Paris-based ministry and the provinces was the establishment of branch offices. However, the report writer observed that this measure was quite ineffectual since partners always attempted to circumvent branch offices and establish contacts directly with the Paris-based administration that actually made all the decisions.

#### SWEDEN

The issue of decentralization was included in Swedish policy in 1974 through the resolution on cultural policy. It envisaged two methods of decentralization:

- decentralization of decision making, and
- promotion of geographically more evenly dispersed cultural activities.

As in most other European countries, the main responsibility of the Swedish provincial communities involves public libraries and musical schools, but provincial cultural boards in Sweden are also authorized to make decisions on many other matters, and they receive grants for these other activities. The system of decentralized decision making does actually operate in practice, with the local authorities being authorized to make decisions and execute them. With respect to the number of grants available to local communities

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<sup>12</sup>New cultural policies by no means resolved these questions or overcame them. Knowing that recession has exacerbated social conflict between privileged and less lucky social groups across the whole of Europe, cultural policies will sooner or later have to tackle these issues. Similar to societies at large, cultural policies will also have to cope with the rise of new forms of poverty and various mechanisms of social inequality.

for activities of their own choice, Sweden is a rare exception among European countries. The reviewers of Swedish cultural policy also observed that local policies varied widely among themselves, but they did not make further analyses.

In addition to regional funds, local and regional cultural institutions from the fields of music, theater and museums receive support from the government, and they are assisted by the government-run national organizations that are responsible for the promotion of cultural events across the country. Particularly successful are the Swedish Concert Institute, the Swedish Nationwide Theater, which brings together theater associations from all over the country, and last but not least, the Swedish Traveling Exhibitions, a group that is responsible for the presentation and movement of exhibitions. Furthermore, the state supports the local library systems with three loan centers that supplement local libraries' stocks; and it subsidizes bookstores in smaller towns where the bookstore business would not otherwise be sufficiently profitable. Sweden is thus one of those rare countries that recognize a cultural role for the book trade. In addition, the state encourages the distribution of quality movies at the local level, particularly children's and youth movies, as well as spaces for the cultural and voluntary activities of various associations.

Voluntary activities in Sweden are as widespread as they used to be in Slovenia before 1990. The report writer mentions around 30,000 cultural groups, of which the majority are musical groups. Since leisure time activities are very popular with Swedes, Swedish authors use the term »cultural activity« when referring to the field of culture and arts in Sweden. Consequently, they view cultural activities as being of low intensity if they involve just passive attendance at cultural or artistic events, and of high intensity if participation is active.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Side note: the reviewers of European cultural policies do not use a uniform term when referring to the »subject« of cultural policy. The Swedes use the term »cultural activity,« because active participation of citizens in artistic and cultural events is a widespread form of leisure time activity. The French author uses the term »cultural service« [*les services culturelles*], perhaps attributable to the paternalistic attitude of the government towards the cultural policy's addressees, so the term stresses this attitude, in which the state is seen as offering cultural products to the citizens. The Austrian (and Finnish) report make use of the term »art promotion,« because arts and culture in Austria have primarily a representative function and are, therefore, related primarily to the tourism industry.

One task that represents an essential feature of Swedish cultural policy is the reinforcement of national identity. Support for Swedish identity in the era of globalization is among the crucial goals of the 1989 cultural policy.<sup>14</sup> However, there are two exceptions to this identity protection orientation: the first concerns the Sami minority, which was accorded minority rights in 1977, and the second the rights of immigrants, who constitute one-eighth of the Swedish population. For example, Sweden set up library departments with books in immigrants' native languages and, according to the authors of the report, these departments boast a high visit rate. Sweden also allocates special aid to certain population groups, e.g. people with special needs, in which case the aid comes in the form of support for the publication of audio and Braille books. Finally, the state supports special programs for children and young people. Among these is the incentive to establish departments for children's literature in libraries, organization of children's shows and advertising initiatives such as »Visual language in schools« and »Culture in schools.« I conclude this overview with the somewhat ironic observation that Swedish cultural policy must protect minority groups, such as Samis or immigrant communities from its own »Swedish identity protection« policy.

#### THE NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands has a traditionally decentralized system of cultural production and decision making introduced before the establishment of the national cultural authority. In assessing Dutch cultural policy in the 1990s, the authors of the report established that, in the area of culture and arts, the ratio of national to local funding was 60:30 in favor of local funding.<sup>15</sup> Another interesting piece of information relates to support for creative activities: here the national ministry is way ahead of local institutions, and the ratio is 72:25 in favor of the government.<sup>16</sup> One possible conclusion is that the local

<sup>14</sup> Other issues of the 1988 cultural policy include flexible strategy, encouragement of new groups to participate in cultural activities and support for the role of arts in local development.

<sup>15</sup> *Cultural Policy in the Netherlands*, Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs, 1994, p. 57.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

authorities rely primarily on obsolete and norm-ridden institutions that require costly maintenance and leave less room for imaginative approaches to cultural policy. The authors further conclude that, although the division of roles between the national and local institutions is clear, it is not sufficiently clear (for example, the ministry is responsible for the production of visual arts, while local authorities attend to distribution of the works of art through the network of contemporary art museums and galleries, and in so doing they use the service of »art libraries« that buy and collect works of art).

In the Netherlands, the success of decentralization should be attributed to ethical motives, according to the authors. Fearing the adverse effects of mass culture, the Christian governments that were in power after World War II supported »high-brow art« and attributed almost therapeutic qualities to the contact of the largest possible number of people with »high-brow art«. <sup>17</sup> For these reasons, the Christian governments of the 1950s endeavored to reduce differences between the urban centers and the countryside by establishing new institutions in provincial towns.

After 1966 the concept of Dutch cultural policy shifted away from ethical principles towards principles of social policy. The aim was to maximally increase options for all, so they encouraged a balanced distribution of power, knowledge, income, and responsibility. <sup>18</sup> This was the period in which the mainstays of Dutch cultural policy were formulated. These are a) the quality of works of art (the criterion of distinction); b) the right to free expression; c) the rule of diversity, and d) the rule of restraint observed by public sector employees when making aesthetic or moral judgments about funding proposals. The ministry thus formed expert groups who, instead of public sector employees, make decisions about the originality and quality of works proposed for funding and assess the programs of artistic institutions. These expert groups also advise parliament at its request or on their own initiative.

Governmental grants to cultural and artistic projects in the Netherlands are decided on the basis of two criteria. The first, the criterion of *representation*, takes into account the size of readership, viewership or other audiences of a cultural institution. The second criteri-

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 187.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 165.

on is the *distinction* of a work of art. But in order for an institution, an artist or an artistic project to obtain a subsidy, it does not have to satisfy both criteria; one such example is opera, which has high financial requirements but one of the smallest audiences.

The authors of the Dutch report state that in the 1980s there occurred an important turn in this socially aware cultural policy, after evaluation studies showed that state aid to cultural and artistic institutions brought advantages primarily to sectors of the population in high income brackets, but was far less beneficial for those lower on the social scale. In 1983 the then minister stated that the hope that art could be accessible to the »largest population segments« had turned out to be a utopian dream.<sup>19</sup> As a result, Dutch cultural policy has returned to the criteria of »distinction« and »diversity.« In order to discourage institutions that cultivate »true art without audience« from state support, the Netherlands adopted a measure according to which the state provides only 85% of these institutions' total funds, while the institutions themselves take care of the remaining part. In this way institutions are expected to be less dependent on the state and more on their audiences.<sup>20</sup> In other words, cultural institutions should secure their funds by employing more economical business strategies and more effective methods of attracting their audiences.

The reporters also mention »functional decentralization,« whereby the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Cultural Affairs delegates the care of and responsibility for the allocation of governmental funds to various specialized foundations for literature, painting, film, theater etc. or to local authorities. Functional decentralization is expected to enable the ministry to avoid daily conflicts over the allocation of governmental funds and to cooperate more »intimately« with cultural institutions in the preparation of cultural policy measures such as the planning of tax incentives (e.g. lower VAT on books), correction of the effects of the »cultural industry«<sup>21</sup> (fixed prices for books,

<sup>19</sup>Ibid, p. 187.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid, p. 161.

<sup>21</sup>This expression is misleading because it gives the false impression that this industry produces products or services that belong in the field of cultural production. A much more appropriate term is »entertainment industry« because what is actually implied is leisure time activities and entertainment. Therefore, by using quotation marks when referring to this term, I want to point out that it is a quotation, but the term actually denotes the entertainment industry.

the right to public borrowing, the right of reproduction, support for the distribution of more demanding films etc.), various legal obligations (e.g. 2% of the total investment in public construction has to be set aside for the artistic decoration of the building), and, of course, direct institutional and individual support.

#### FINLAND

The Finnish authors trace the beginning of the Finnish cultural policy back to 1967, the year when the law on the promotion of arts came into force. With this law, the state introduced an active policy of management in the fields of culture and arts. The law was aimed at supporting artistic creativity, ensuring equal access to cultural events and services to all citizens and ensuring equal rights of participation in creative activities. Among its goals was also the encouragement of international cultural cooperation.<sup>22</sup> The law instituted nine councils for arts including music, theater, architecture, dance, literature, photography, design, visual arts and film. Another related law – a law on the promotion of cultural activities in local communities – introduced local boards and secretaries for culture. This law additionally supported decentralized cultural development (56% of the total national funds for culture is allocated to local programs) through a network of libraries and centers for the cultural education of adults and through a network of local theaters and orchestras. The report authors concluded that the decentralized cultural development strategy was very successful and that re-delegation of decision-making to the local authorities even increased in 1993 when the regional budgets for cultural matters were increased.

In referring to »long-term political and ideological orientations,« the authors of the Finnish report speak of two periods: the period of the welfare state in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and the period of the post-welfare state following the year 1991, when the state had to curtail public expenditure owing to the economic recession. Between 1991 and 1993, the GDP plunged and the unemployment rate rose to an unimaginable 10 percent. Yet, despite economic crisis, the answer of the Finnish cultural administration was different from that of the

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<sup>22</sup>*Cultural Policy in Finland. National Report*, The Arts Council of Finland, Research and Information Unit, Helsinki, 1995, p. 56.

Dutch administration, which had responded by privatizing culture. In 1992 the Finnish Ministry of Education prepared guidelines for the cultural policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in which it stated that, »it was hardly possible to further expand the existing framework of cultural offer and it was also necessary to be aware of the dangers of privatization.«<sup>23</sup>

Faced with the economic crisis, the Finnish cultural authority drafted a new law on theaters and orchestras in an attempt to protect certain institutions at the time of crisis by legally prescribing financial aid for them. This measure was justified with the explanation that only the institutional network, which at that time included 85 music schools, 102 museums, 53 theaters and 24 orchestras, could guarantee the balanced development and democratization of culture.<sup>24</sup> Despite this legal protection, the amount of aid actually received by the institutions decreased, because local authorities reduced their contributions when state subsidies went up. The final effects were higher centralization of financing and a smaller overall amount of subsidies.

This overall reduction in subsidies led cultural institutions to concentrate on more profitable management; they now strove more to attract new audiences by offering commercial programs and by increasing revenues from sponsorship. Although the main national institutions were still predominantly financed from public funds, the authors of the Finnish report observed that they nevertheless began to introduce boards of directors of the kind found in commercial companies. Some among them increasingly more loudly opposed the »petrified« system of financing culture, seeing it as an obstacle to more self-sufficient and managerially oriented culture and arts.<sup>25</sup> We can thus conclude that the response of the Finnish cultural administration to the hardships caused by the economic crisis was opposite to the strategy adopted by the Netherlands. The Finns resisted the managerial-style approach that steers cultural institutions towards privatization, elitism and commercialization and strove to preserve during the crisis period the achievements of previous gen-

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 237.

erations and the rights of citizens. In contrast, The Netherlands resorted to legislation that pushed cultural institutions into privatization and commercialization, explaining that in that way citizens would more easily exercise their cultural rights.

#### AUSTRIA

As in Sweden, the issue of decentralization in Austria was placed on the agenda in the 1970s, when it was established that the Austrian cultural offer was not sufficiently broad and that citizens' cultural awareness was correspondingly low. The new goal of the cultural policy introduced at that time was the elimination of this deficiency, particularly through the reduction of differences between urban centers and the countryside, i.e. decentralization. One conclusion that can be drawn from the report on Austrian cultural policy is that there were at least two approaches to the solution of this problem. The first advocated the old monarchist concept of »representative culture,« whose main function is to »show off,« and according to which the highest achievements of this culture are *Staatsoper*, *Burghtheater* and *Volksoper*. One reason why this concept survived after 1945 was that it tallied with the goals of the tourist industry. This is also indicated by the expression »promotion of the arts« used by the authors of the report, although what they have in mind is not so much the promotion of arts as it is the promotion of tourism by way of arts. This function of cultural events continues to be of paramount importance, because it contributes to the development of the tourist industry in the capital as well as the provinces, for example, Salzburg, Linz, and Graz, to mention only some of the most renowned places. Another expression that gained currency in addition to »representative culture« is »democratization,« but Austrian authors use it in a sense completely different from that implied by other European authors of national cultural reports. While in France, Sweden, The Netherlands and Finland »democratization« in connection with culture is used to denote a broadening of citizens' participation and access to culture, and an increase in the number of consumers of cultural services (library users, readership, audience for cultural television shows), the Austrian authors use »democratization« to refer to a process aimed at striking a balance between tra-

ditional and modern arts. This process was aided by the 1988 law that stipulates that the promotion of arts should place stress primarily on modern arts, intellectual shifts in arts, and artistic diversity.<sup>26</sup> The conflicting relationship between the advocates of the two approaches is reflected in the financing system, which is split between the national, provincial and local levels. There is no division of work between the national government and federal provinces, and frequently the federal provinces even oppose the decisions taken by the national administration if, for example, the latter supports a cultural event within their territory which they find objectionable. One such example was the *Ars Electronica* festival in Linz, mainly financed by the national administration. The province opposed it, arguing that such content was not suitable for the region and demanded that the national administration stop interfering with its »internal« affairs. According to the authors, conflicts of such a kind seriously undermined some citizens' trust in the process of regionalization.

These conflicts also affected the support programs which, compared to policies employed by some other European countries, are quite extraordinary. In addition to the well established forms of support (an efficiently organized system for the purchasing of paintings, support for music, theater (there are 130 subsidized theaters in Austria), photography, film, literature and the publishing trade, international cooperation, and a department for coordination with the Council of Europe) there are other programs dedicated to the process of »democratization« in particular. One such program is »Cultural Initiative« that was launched in 1990. Its goals include support for »multicultural and interdisciplinary projects« and avant-garde projects in provinces, the driving out of the provincial spirit and encouragement of interest in modern arts in local regions. Another similar program is entitled »Curators for Visual Art« and is dedicated to the financing of two curator projects. The entire grant may be freely used by selected curators for programs of their own design. The purpose of this project is primarily to stress and develop the political and social dimensions (responsibility) of modern arts; a

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<sup>26</sup>*Cultural Policies. Cultural Administration in Austria*, Federal Chancellery - Art Department, Vienna, 1998.

similar program with similar goals has been in place for musical curators. As part of its international cooperation, Austria established the *KulturKontakt Austria* center whose responsibilities include cultural and educational cooperation with Central European countries.

The major part of funds in the federal provinces of Burgenland, Graz, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Styria, Tyrol, Upper Austria, Vienna and Vorarlberg is intended for the preservation of cultural heritage, support for music schools and other types of schools, museums, local theaters, and folk arts. In addition, every federal province takes painstaking care to cultivate a local musical or theater festival promoted in their tourist brochures. Similar to what happened in France and Sweden, the process of decentralization brought the greatest advantages to the provincial capitals, which earned for themselves a representative image similar to that enjoyed by Vienna, but did not even touch upon the issues plaguing rural regions. In assessing cultural cooperation with the neighboring countries that have national minorities in Austria, the authors praise the lively contacts with Hungary, but in their view the attitude of Slovenia towards its minority living in Austrian Carinthia is reserved. They are of the opinion that Slovenia, ever since it began to work towards joining the EU, has been communicating exclusively with Vienna, while underestimating Klagenfurt and the issue of the Slovenian minority.

#### ITALY

To speak about decentralization in Italy, in the sense in which it is understood in other European countries, would be ridiculous for historical reasons. The system of political units in the form of city-states dating from the time of early modern Europe and the late emergence of a unified Italian state prevented any developmental imbalance between the capital and the countryside, such as is characteristic of other European countries that evolved from absolute monarchies. The network of cultural institutions in Italy is inherently decentralized. Italy has no museum of the proportions of the *Louvre*, or libraries comparable to the *British Library*. Therefore, Italian cultural policy differs from other European policies in its essential principles.

Another significant difference is of a more general nature but no less important for that. The authors of the national report maintain that Italy's avoidance of engagement in active cultural management is due to an uneasiness that has its roots in history and the time when the Fascist dictatorship instrumentalized cultural policy to achieve political goals.

Owing to the vast number of cultural monuments across the whole of Italy with great importance for the tourist industry, Italian cultural policy, legislation and governmental grants are mainly concerned with cultural heritage. As the name of the department responsible for these matters, The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Environment,<sup>27</sup> indicates, the priority task and the lion's share of evenly balanced national and local budgets (their ratio is 50:50) is dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage.<sup>28</sup> The reviewers of the national report, however, point out that the policy for the restoration, maintenance and exploitation of cultural heritage is not always effective because of bureaucratic setbacks, and the causes for such failures are described as »corruption.« Ineffectiveness is believed to be further increased by deficient cooperation among the national, regional and town administrations.

To sum up, unlike other European countries, Italy was spared the post-war process of decentralization and from the setting up of a system of regional decision taking. But the numbers quoted in the Italian report unequivocally point to a problem of centralization in distributing governmental funds. The authors state that in the north of the country the proportion of subsidies for Italian theaters amounts to 58% of the total funds; in the central part this percentage is 25%, and in the south and on the islands it is 17%. Other comparisons yield similar percentages, e.g. if we compare the number of theaters per citizen, or the height of the average subsidy per theater

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<sup>27</sup>We should point out that this ministry carries out only certain tasks of cultural policy. In Italy, as in Austria, the administrative departments and offices concerned with the area of cultural policy are dispersed across several ministries and governmental services. Italy and Austria do not have an institution concerned exclusively with cultural policy.

<sup>28</sup>The shares of governmental funds allocated to different arts in Italy are traditional: 48% of funds go to opera, 17% to theater, 15% to music, 19% to the film industry (grants to individual films must not exceed 30% of the total funds) and the rest is divided between circuses and performances abroad.

show. In the north the average subsidy was 1.777 billion lire and in the south 0.802 billion lire. The sparse commentary includes the surprising conclusion that the interest in theater in the south of the country was obviously lower than that in the north, and even that quality shows were produced only in the north.<sup>29</sup>

The comparison of subsidies for music and opera gives a similar picture. 50.6% of the total funds went to the north part of the country, 27.8% to central regions and 21.6% to the south, with Lombardia and Lazio provinces alone spending as much as one third of the total funds. Family expenditures for culture in different regions do not depart from this trend and given the average of 1.65% (or 0.86% of GDP), it is not surprising that this figure is the lowest in the southern provinces of Campania, Molise, Calabria, and Sicily. These differences in cultural consumption are, in the opinion of the authors, proportional to the differences in social and economic development (the so-called »problem of the south«), thus in the south the satisfaction of material needs has priority over cultural needs. For similar reasons the proportion of readership is the highest in the north (32.5%) and the lowest in the south (17.9%). These differences are partly due to the distribution system and the library network which are concentrated in bigger cities.

Regional administrations are constitutionally under an obligation to care for museums and libraries, and they use as much as 46% of their budget for cultural heritage. They thus have only limited authorities and given that their work methods are comparable to those of the national administration in terms of rigidity, they are assessed as less effective than one would expect.

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<sup>29</sup>CENSIS, *Cultural Policy in Italy*, Culture Committee, Strasbourg, 1995, p. 146.

## DEMOCRATIZATION

This cursory examination of national cultural policies shows that all the authors take the »democratization of culture and arts« to be one of the most important cultural policy goals. But we have also noted that the understanding of »democratization« varies from country to country. In France, Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden, democratization implies the broadening of participation, and this goal is achieved through decentralization and projects targeted at underprivileged groups (children and adolescents, minorities, immigrants etc.) in an attempt to attract them to become both producers and consumers of culture.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from this overview is that the majority of the countries initiated the decentralization process sooner or later after World War II: France and The Netherlands in the 1950s, Finland in the 1960s, and Austria and Sweden in the 1970s. The early stages of decentralization were characterized by an enthusiastic setting up of cultural institutions in provincial towns, with the aim of satisfying the needs of local populations; among these institutions were theaters, libraries, museums, galleries and so on, typically located in the capital. The general effect of decentralization was that provincial towns began to acquire the images of the capitals with all traditional institutions. So, our conclusion is that cultural administrations embarked on the process of »participation broadening« by distributing evenly across provinces traditional artistic production and methods of culture consumption. Many national reports reveal that the effects of these projects fell short of expectations.

The author of the French report observed that the audiences at theater shows, concerts and painting exhibitions, and even the users of libraries, still predominantly consisted of educated and affluent individuals, or in other words, the elite audience. Decentralization in France did indeed broaden the accessibility of culture in the geo-

graphical sense of the word, but this brought advantages only to the elite, specialist audiences and students, while it failed to attract those segments that traditionally avoid culture or are even hostile to it. The author excludes from this conclusion the film industry which succeeded in stemming the general tide of audience shrinkage: while television and video decimated cinema audiences across Europe, in France, it decreased by only 51.3% in the 1959–1985 period. This success should be attributed to subsidies for the construction and renovation of cinema halls, acquisition of mobile cinemas for regions without cinema halls, distribution of quality films, as well as to various restrictions imposed on television programs and video rentals. Direct grants for French film producers and financing of the French film industry successfully protected domestic film despite the unfavorable climate dominated by the American film industry. It is interesting that the cinema audience also changed in the process – it now consisted of more affluent and more educated individuals. The same cannot be said of museum visitors, who became less differentiated, but their numbers increased thanks to the influx of tourists.

The data in the Swedish report are (quantitatively) similar. The audience for musical shows increased in the 1980s, as did the number of museum visitors; the loan figures for public libraries fell slightly, but were still relatively high. In contrast, the number of theatergoers fell by 20%, as did the average number of spectators per show. Nevertheless, the conclusions of the Swedish report are optimistic, since the study showed that differences between younger audiences with regard to income and education have been fading away, and that the number of people who are antagonistic to culture also decreased. A better balance between the bigger cities and regional centers was achieved, but the residents of smaller countryside towns were still condemned to commercial culture.

The creators of Dutch cultural policy were disappointed because of inferior effects of the measures aimed at the »broadening of participation« (according to estimates, only 4% of the population attended opera and other musical shows, and 3% theater shows; the figures for museums were a bit more encouraging, but that should be attributed to tourist visits and organized school excursions). As a result, the Dutch cultural policy made a radical turn towards the classical conception of cultural policy, predominantly relying on the criteria

of *distinction* and *diversity*. Despite this, the goal of »participation broadening« was not completely abandoned. Since, according to the authors of the report, the cultural administration excessively emphasizes passive visits to cultural institutions while neglecting active cultural production, the authors consider that the number of active participants has to be highlighted as the bright side of the coin. Six million citizens create or participate in amateur creative and educational projects, and these mainly come from the social classes with lower income or from the less densely populated regions.

The Finnish authors seem to be content when comparing their cultural policy with that of The Netherlands although in Finland too the audience for opera, dance and theater shows, and cinemas shrunk between 1981 and 1991, while the number of musical shows, museums and galleries increased. The authors also observed that the competition between institutions vying for limited public funds prevented their interlinking, although this could have enriched the cultural program of these institutions during the economic crisis.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, such interlinking was present within the entertainment industry, mainly in order to attain monopolistic market positions.

The Austrian report does not mention the issue of »participation broadening,« and it seems that this subject is of no importance for the Austrian cultural administration. Austrians also understand the syntagm »the policy of democratization of culture and arts« differently than do France or Sweden: for them, it primarily denotes the encouragement of a diverse artistic offer, particularly of modern and non-traditional arts, and not only on the national level but in the provinces as well, meaning regions that are most antagonistic towards the modern arts. Second, democratization is understood as the liberalization of culture and arts through attracting private sources of funds that should help cultural institutions to wrench free from national politics and governmental grants.

The Italian report includes the evaluation of cultural audiences and cultural service consumers. The overall conclusion is that the

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<sup>30</sup>The principle of competition was also overlooked in the field of artistic education, which is excessively »target oriented« in the image of professional schools. The stress placed on participation devalues the goals advocated by the »participation broadening« programs, e.g. children's free expression of creative talent, »generally respected arts«, and »cultivation of human interest in arts« (*Cultural Policy in Finland*, *ibid*, p. 206.)

disproportionate funding of the northern, central and southern parts of Italy matched the disproportions in the size of audiences and number of consumers in these regions. These findings show that the traditionally decentralized development cannot cope with the consequences of the modern policy of centralized financing that allocates the most sizeable funds to the northern parts of Italy. The authors are dissatisfied with the general size of audiences at cultural shows, because these have not increased despite the greater number of cultural shows. In their view, the reason is that the process of democratization, in the sense of cultural liberalization and management modernization, has not yet gained ground. The Italian authors thus use the term democratization in a sense similar to that of the Austrian authors, but not in the sense implied by other authors.

## ENFORCED REGIONALIZATION

The reports treated above show that unfavorable or hesitant evaluations of the European decentralization, democratization and »participation broadening« programs gave rise to two approaches to these issues.

The first approach assumes that decentralization can become fully fledged only if decision mechanisms are transferred from the state to the local levels since, presumably, local decision makers are more familiar with their own environment and can thus better meet the needs of people.<sup>31</sup> This idea powerfully appealed to the EU administration as well<sup>32</sup> for similar reasons. But »functional decentralization« on the local levels was truly effective only in Finland and The Netherlands. In countries such as Sweden and Austria, where regional administrations are authorized to take decisions and receive funds for the realization of their initiatives, the state administration nevertheless retained control over regional policies. This control is manifested as occasional interventions, or in other words, the state steps in when it deems that the regional administration is treating culture inadequately or neglecting specific cultural needs. Those countries which in the past did not grant much autonomy to regional authorities joined the process of »functional decentralization« in the 1980s. For example, France transferred to the local authorities part of the responsibility for the implementation of cultural programs, but this applied only to institutions that had already been firmly established by that time. The institutions that were handed over to regional administrations were typically easy to manage,

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<sup>31</sup>The Finnish authors arrived at a completely different conclusion, claiming that the local decision-making strategy is mainly unsuitable because decisions on cultural issues are usually taken by boards that make decisions on many other matters (education, sports etc.), so their knowledge of the issues of culture and arts is insufficient compared to the responsibility they have to undertake.

<sup>32</sup>See Mario D'Angelo and Paul Vespérini, *Cultural Policies in Europe: Regions and Cultural Decentralisation*, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 2000.

and in some cases their management was even regulated by law, meaning that local authorities had little influence on it. Yet, since local authorities would have found it difficult to argue that regional control over institutions such as libraries, music schools, archives, museums and the like had no advantages for the local community, they had to accept the financial burden and responsibility imposed on them through such institutions, although they were not free to manage them independently. One type of cultural activity completely under the control of local authorities is the category of amateur activities somewhat underrated by the national administration. The process of decentralization is therefore farcical to some extent: under pretense of decentralization, the national administration seemingly relinquishes part of its »power« and hands it over to the »people« to decide freely about their own needs and financing, but what the national administration actually shifts to the local authorities is the financial burden and not the right to take decisions. It is not, therefore, surprising that the relations of local authorities and national administrations in European countries are generally antagonistic. On the surface, it seems as if the government wants to give the local communities various rights, but the local communities go out of their way to fend these off.<sup>33</sup>

Knowing all this, it is not surprising that local communities have a cruel-hearted attitude towards these regional institutions. They curtail and withdraw their funds, while the centralized cultural administrations act like watchdogs on the lookout for trespassers and force local communities to fulfill their obligations, but quite frequently they have to intervene and protect local institutions through direct financial aid. These conclusions also suggest that the »decentralization processes« predominantly consist of bureaucratic rituals, since the relocation of financial resources from one place to another can only be in the service of bureaucracy. Thus, in most cases the name of the game is the transfer of tasks from one state institution to another. Even in countries with a high level of »functional decentralization,« it is possible to say that local authorities are mainly

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<sup>33</sup>The European administration also interfered in a similar way with its explicit support for regionalism. It is definitely not disinterested in these matters: the processes of regionalization, as the European administration calls »decentralization,« are perhaps utilized by the European Council to evade the annoying sovereignty of member countries and to strengthen its presence in the territory.

responsible for institutions that do not require imaginative management such as music schools, museums, adult education and the like.

Obviously, we can justifiably raise the question of whether decentralization is a process that can automatically trigger democratization as well. According to the Austrian and Swedish reports, it is not: the authors point out the lasting necessity of governmental interventions in order to protect people's needs. For example, the *Ars Electronica* festival in Linz could have developed only with the financial help provided by the federal government. It eventually gained a worldwide reputation, despite the fact that the Upper Austria local administration went out of its way to obstruct it. In addition to drawing attention to the ideological conflicts between rather traditional regional authorities and more progressive centers, the authors also point out that some needs are beyond the capacities of individual local communities and thus necessarily require the help of the federal government.

Power splitting in order to include smaller administrative units cannot bring about any essential change on its own. However, this ineffectiveness has other causes too: local cultural institutions are shaped in the image of the national »package« of representative culture usually consisting of the theater, opera, orchestra, library, museum, gallery and archive. Sometimes the whole package is squeezed into a single »cultural center,« as in the case of Ljubljana's Cankarjev dom. For European cultural policies, the decentralization process seems to imply a gift package of artistic production presented to provincial towns. In other words, they try to enhance the ineffective general systems that have already proved dysfunctional in the biggest cities through the ramification of that same system.

As regards »decentralization,« the funding system is usually conceptualized in such a way that only the institutions situated in the capital and typically safeguarded by the »national significance« of their mission enjoy greater financial security (larger subsidies and firmer guarantees of a regular supply). Institutions in remote provinces barely survive with their future constantly hanging in the balance (even in countries where cultural institutions are geographically evenly distributed across the country). The tasks faced by provincial institutions are more difficult, because their audience is more »hostile« to culture than the urban audience and because they are

financially dependent on modest regional budgets. These systemic flaws are usually handled on a case-by-case basis, while the interest of the country in resolving individual problems depends on external pressures. With the onset of recession in the 1990s, decentralization and democratization projects in the majority of countries failed at this first test of endurance. The first measures taken by national administrations (i.e. cultural policies) were to protect the institutions of »national significance« or, to put it differently, when first put to a test, the most powerful paradigm proved to be »national culture.« In line with this, two of the countries analyzed in this report, The Netherlands and Finland, initiated the construction of new opera houses in the midst of recession and general campaigns for the reduction of spending, wasting vast sums of money on one of the most expensive cultural institutions that serves the needs of only a small, elite audience. At a time of restrictions on budget expenditures, these countries were willing to accept the high costs of the infrastructure and maintenance of opera which, viewed from the viewpoint of cultural »democratization,« has the lowest priority.

Not long after institutional relationships became embittered, the model of the national representative culture, aided by the practical effects of cultural-ideological hegemony, ousted other models of cultural policy that catered to more specific needs (e.g. the spreading of functional literacy, development of reading habits, tolerance, removal of cultural differences, prevention of social exclusion and so on).

## MARKETING IN THE SERVICE OF »PARTICIPATION BROADENING«

However, not all European countries understand »decentralization« and »democratization« as solely »regionalization.« The Austrian and Italian authors use the term democratization in the sense of the »liberalization« of culture and arts. The logic behind this viewpoint is that culture and arts would better serve the needs of people if the state abandoned the paternalistic approach that put cultural institutions to sleep.<sup>34</sup> For example, the Italian authors blame public financing for turning culture into a victim and quote the words of the Italian prime minister from 1985: »Modernization means that we take culture as an industrial structure in which the factor of productivity guarantees the development and economic stability.«<sup>35</sup> The French author, whose report describes the situation in the early 1980s and bears an earlier date than many other reports, presented the »liberalization« issue as a program of the political right whose »cultural policy« was based on rivalry with Mitterand's socialists.<sup>36</sup> The Swedish report, with slightly later date, does not mention liberalization at all, while Italian, Austrian and Dutch authors describe liberalization as a measure towards making cultural institutions less dependent on the state and more self-reliant; in other words, liberalization should make cultural institutions capable of attracting greater audiences through programs accessible to more people and of securing money through ticket sales or by attracting sponsors. It is surprising that this approach coincided with the period of recession when audience growth was very unlikely, and it was unrealistic to expect that the economy would support the arts more than during times of »economic boom.«

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<sup>34</sup>*Cultural Policy in Italy*, *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>36</sup>*La politique culturelle de la France*, *ibid.*, p. 311.

But these conclusions should not be left at that. The cases of Italy and Austria, as well as those of some »countries in transition« (e.g. Slovenia), show that liberalization – meaning a »more liberal« cultural policy and »modernization« of cultural institutions that should transpose culture to a more »economic platform« – is usually advocated by artists who defend modern arts against traditional art. This means that the conflict between modern arts and traditional institutions is also manifested as a conflict between more flexible modern institutions and traditional national institutions. Therefore, the cultural and ideological struggle between modern arts and traditional national institutions highlighted the question of the streamlining of cultural institutions' operation, with modern arts backing the »liberal cultural policy« model. To put it differently, in one part of Europe »liberalization« is an issue concerning the political right, and in another the artistic »avant-garde«.

Although the national reports differ in their approaches to liberalization of culture, we can draw the conclusion that the process pervaded all European countries. Neither could countries in transition, among them Slovenia, evade it. Moreover, in the transition countries it gained momentum comparable to that of Thatcher's neo-liberalism in Britain in the 1980s, as described by McGuigan in *Culture and the Public Sphere*.<sup>37</sup> The Slovenian program of liberalization has been presented by Vesna Čopič in the material used in the presentation of a new law on culture dating from 2002. »This process<sup>38</sup> in the field of culture took the form of autonomization or, rather, 'privatization' and is manifested as a transition from the public sectors to the private sector of unprofitable character. The quotes are used because privatization applies only to the carrying out of activities, while the state continues to be the main supplier of funds.«<sup>39</sup> This quotation indicates certain hesitations regarding the »privatization« of culture. The authors do not entertain high hopes that the modernization of organization (marketing, sponsorship etc.) can make

<sup>37</sup> Jim McGuigan, *Culture and the Public Sphere*, Routledge, London – New York, 1996, see especially the chapter »From State to Market«, pp. 51–73.

<sup>38</sup> The author refers to the »European process, « whatever this is supposed to mean.

<sup>39</sup> *Delovno gradivo za pripravo predloga zakona o uresničevanju javnega interesa za kulturo/ Explanatory Material for the Introduction of the Law on Exercising of Public Interest in Culture/*, p. 14.

cultural institutions more capable of attracting serious private investment. Perhaps this view has been influenced by past experience clearly demonstrating that such drastic approaches in the areas of culture and arts are detrimental because they make culture and arts completely dependent on the demands of the market and, if they survive, they become instruments of commercial advertising.

Thus, according to the Slovenian law on culture dating from 1994, the goal of liberalization is a »private« institution that will take care of the realization of the »public interest« and will be partly financed by the state, through public tenders, and in part through voluntary work, sponsorship, donations, contributions from foundations etc. But if such an institution wishes to mobilize all available financial means, it must be able to operate as an »economic enterprise« and learn to apply economic skills. This means that part of its staff has to be re-directed to economic activities: management, public relations, and particularly marketing activities. According to the Italian authors, the introduction of marketing into cultural institutions should make it easier for these institutions to adapt to the needs of people. What is implied is that the introduction of modern marketing methods could help these institutions to attract new audiences including those individuals who are currently only potential cultural consumers or are »hostile« to culture. According to this understanding, »marketing« should take the place of state measures aimed at broadening participation in culture. The transition from state paternalism over artistic production and consumption to the neo-liberal model, in which the relationship of artistic producer and consumer is seen as a market relation, is expected to eliminate primarily the problem of who will decide what the people will watch, read or hear. The neo-liberal conception deregulates state control over cultural production and consumption shifting the decision-making responsibility to consumers, presumably in order to enable them to decide freely what they want to watch, hear or read. The cultural institutions, on the other hand, will be obliged to adjust their programs to the consumers' wishes and preferences, while struggling for survival in the face of reduced state aid. Obviously, the understanding that prevailed was a kind of silent political conclusion that by withdrawing its financial aid to cultural institutions the state better serves the needs of »consumers,« who can better satisfy their needs

in the capitalist market environment. This viewpoint, as we can see, is based on the »consumer's choice« assumption. But this is illusory, because consumers' decisions are largely limited by the range of products offered by monopolistic producers and distributors of entertainment industry products. Can we choose to watch a non-American movie if movies and video libraries do not offer non-American movies? Can we choose to read African literature if not a single book from this continent has been translated into Slovene recently? Can we choose to watch public service television that does not continually sell its viewers to commercial advertisers? And so on. Such a cultural policy does not pave the way for the consumer's freedom of choice but for the profit-driven entertainment industry, which thus gets the green light to freely decide what the general taste of the public is and to create conditions that enable consumers to realize their supposedly free choice. Unfortunately, the idea of what the general taste is seems to be unaware of the lowest-permissible-quality level, so the general taste has been going from bad to worse with the tabloid press, soap operas, pulp fiction and Hollywood movies following suite.

What are the implications of such a conception of producer-consumer relations for traditional cultural institutions? To my knowledge, so far no study has been concerned with the economic consequences of the reorganization of cultural institutions. If it were, it would probably show that the costs of reorganization would be higher than the gains. The Finnish report has some sarcastic words for the prestigious cultural institutions that are predominantly funded from public sources and only outwardly maintain the image of enterprise culture by employing boards of directors, managers, marketing specialists and the like. The Finish authors, therefore, wonder whether the costs of these new employees are not higher than the income expected from new marketing and management methods. As Jim McGuigan<sup>40</sup> explains, experience enables us to derive the rule that applies to European countries, according to which the share of the sponsors' contributions usually does not exceed 10 percent. While it is true that the state can save a trifling amount by withdrawing full subsidies in the name of the »liberalization« of culture,

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<sup>40</sup>McGuigan, *ibid.*, p. 72.

this amount is still disproportionately low compared to the effects these measures have on artistic production and consumption. A good example of the adverse consequences of such policies is the publishing industry. In the race for high profits, it accorded to the managerial cadre excessive freedoms/responsibilities and decimated the ranks of editors, copy editors and proof-readers, who allegedly »read too much and work much less.« The sacking of these employees led to the collapse of the publishing business, because, after all, it is the editors who create the value that is the subject of trade in the publishing industry.<sup>41</sup> Knowing that such a policy has largely destroyed the publishing business, we have many reasons to avoid it in other cultural fields. The authors of the Finnish report have observed that institutions practicing »enterprise culture« experience effects that are exactly the opposite to what is expected. When these institutions attempted to attract greater audiences, they ruthlessly commercialized their program, but audiences eventually shrunk regardless, and the income remained negligible. The end effect was that these institutions continued to be predominantly financed by the state, but they fell short of fulfilling the mission for which they were founded. Obviously, liberalization has many implications beyond economic effects: the pressure to rely more on their own resourcefulness compels cultural institutions to surround themselves with social elites that have political and economic influence and can help them raise funds to successfully bid for public tenders. But, then, these institutions also have to accept the code of behavior praised by elite society. For example, they have to put restraints on creative freedom to prevent it from trespassing the threshold of »acceptability«; they have to devote attention to »sociability,« which in this code is a component that is no less important than artistic content; they have to increase the price of tickets to keep away »unsuitable« elements in the audience, and so on. These measures inevitably lead to elitism in culture and arts and push cultural institutions towards the point at which they are only capable of attracting the public that identifies with the »elite society,« while instigating a »hostile« attitude in all other types of audiences.

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<sup>41</sup> André Schiffrin, *The Business of Book*, Verso, London - New York, 2000.

This leads us to the general conclusion that the effects expected from liberalization of culture are exactly the opposite of what is expected from decentralization and democratization. While decentralization and democratization are aimed at making culture more accessible to those who most stubbornly reject it, liberalization actually diverts this same population from culture. As national cultural reports show, European cultural policies foster two crucial goals that produce conflicting effects: through state interventions in the name of »democratization« they want to broaden access to cultural events and services, but through liberalization, once again in the name of »democratization,« they destroy the effects of the democratization measures and impose limits on the »right« of access to culture.

The paradigms of state deregulation and liberal deregulation are dependent on the special understanding of artistic production. The former arises from the understanding that artistic production is »non-productive« and, as such, is excepted from the production of the economic value, but state paternalists praise culture because it produces special social effects, and many of these are related to »national identity.« »Enterprise culture,« on the other hand, turns around this perception and considers artistic production »productive;« and, since cultural production creates value the same as any other industry or service, its »natural state of existence« is the »cultural industry.« Therefore, the point of departure of liberal cultural policy is the »cultural industry,« as recommended by the European expert commission headed by Michael Wimmer in February 1997: »Within a market economy, the cultural industries necessarily form the backbone of cultural operations. It is mainly up to them to produce cultural goods and to supply them to the consumers. It is the task of the state, on the other hand to intervene when the market – for whatever reason – does not function properly. [...] But acting outside the market or trying to negate its logic cannot make sense for a comprehensive cultural policy.«<sup>42</sup> Liberal deregulation of culture, therefore, limits the instruments available to cultural policy to intervene in the area that is otherwise governed by the »cultural indus-

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<sup>42</sup>*Cultural Policy in Slovenia. Part B: Report by a European panel of examiners.* Prepared by Michael Wimmer, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, 1998, p. 345.

try.« These interventions may be systematic and directed at a specific goal; such examples are the French film production funding and distribution systems or the quota-based regulation of television programs and support for cinematography aimed at defying the hegemony of the American entertainment industry. But interventions may also be negligible and simple, for example, tax relief for British publishers. Cultural authorities usually justify these interventions by stating arguments similar to those found in the Swedish report: »For cultural life to be vital, there must be diversity that cannot be secured by market mechanisms. The purpose of public interventions into the cultural industry field is the maintenance of diversity in the areas of literature, film, recording and cultural publications.«<sup>43</sup>

By and large, the interpretations of the effects of »cultural industry« are contradictory. They range from negative assessments that criticize passive consumerism and the subjection of cultural production and services to market relations, to positive ones praising the cultural industry for its role in the democratization of cultural consumption. In between is the interpretation claiming that the »cultural industry« is a »semi-industry,« because its production methods are those of a craftsman and the distribution methods those of an industry. However, these interpretations are only ostensibly contradictory, because they describe the same structural effects produced by the »cultural industry.«

In order to become an »industry,« the »cultural industry« should, first of all, resolve certain industry-specific predicaments, for example, the predicament of a bookseller when the consumer asks for a specific book by a specific author and the seller is not in a position to offer a replacement product. To put it differently, the »cultural product« must first acquire the nature of the industrial product and become substitutable with another product. After all, even works of literature can become industrial products; such are, for example, romances where the reader barely notices the difference between two titles, reference books relating to the care of indoor plants or pets and so on. Therefore, on the one hand, the »cultural industry« inevitably strives to achieve the highest possible level of homogen-

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<sup>43</sup>Swedish State Cultural Policy, *ibid.*, p. 15.

ization of cultural products including books, film, television programs and music, but on the other, it reduces the quality of these products, because one feature that is associated with the industrial product is its »wear out« time.<sup>44</sup>

It follows that the goal of cultural industry is by no means the democratization of access to culture, but the differentiation of audiences: it is the »cultural industry« that puts up an insurmountable barrier separating »high« from »mass« culture. Its goal is a massive community of consumers sharing the cultural preference for soap operas, tabloids, Hollywood movies and pop music. To this imaginary consumer community the »cultural industry« then attributes common »taste« and fills the bookstores, cinemas, television programs, newspapers and journals with products adjusted to this presumed taste - and that's what the »consumer's choice« eventually boils down to.

We can thus conclude that the two goals of cultural policies - first, the elimination of the »hostile« attitude towards culture through a policy of »democratization,« and second, the liberalization of culture by means of the »cultural industry« that is supposed to be the »backbone of all cultural events« - are hypocritical at best because they work towards producing conflicting effects.

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<sup>44</sup>Cf. Maja Breznik, »Obrtno založništvo nasproti industrijskemu /The Publishing Trade vs. The Publishing Industry/«, *Večer*, April 8, 2002, p. 10; »Če knjiga postane industrijski izdelek /Book as an Industrial Product/«, *Večer*, April 22, 2002, p. 10.

## BETWEEN THE »NATIONAL« AND »ENTERPRISE« CULTURE

So far we have examined the basic »European« models of the cultural policy conception. These could be summarized as follows.

*The first model* is one advocated by Malraux and Lang, or by socialist countries. It emphasizes the social responsibilities of cultural policy towards the populations lacking »cultural capital.« In line with this, one of its main functions is to establish social equality. This goal is attained by transplanting the »cultural package« typical of capital cities (theaters, orchestras, exhibition spaces, museums, archives etc.) to provincial centers, which is a process referred to as »decentralization«. The cultural production of European capitals whose historical course of development coincided with that of the European monarchies is now being re-located, on a smaller scale, to the countryside, where the spirit of civilization and culture is expected to convert country people into Castiglione's courtiers. Contemporary cultural goals are intertwined with conservative cultural policy and, perhaps precisely for that reason, the effects are modest, as our analysis above has shown. By all means, this model is highly flourishing in cases where cultural policy is completely subjected to the national ideology. Within such a framework, the institutions of culture and political emancipation inevitably become the institutions of cultural, political and ideological hegemony in the name of »one culture for one nation«; the small class of cultural producers – intellectuals and artists – has the right to decide what kind of culture the nation needs and to impose it on others using the institutional levers of power. All national reports mention »national identity« as the primary goal of their cultural policy, which is another word for »the right to cultural dominion.« But contrary to their general assessment, all of these »democratic« countries also had to compile lists of exceptions consisting of minorities, immigrants, refugees, women,

children etc. The lists and criteria vary from one country to another and change over time – new rights emerge and some old ones fade away, owing to political priorities. But what these lists of underprivileged groups tell us is that cultural policies are only capable of perceiving difference as an exception; after all, in order to protect difference from their own adverse effects, these same cultural policies have to grant it a special legal status. *The real problem of this type of cultural policy is that its conception excludes »human rights« to which it appeals in its general principles.*<sup>45</sup>

*The second model* of cultural policy is the »liberal« model which found a good alibi to justify its opposition to national cultural policy and to the ideological paternalism of the state over culture and arts.<sup>46</sup> The liberal model advocates the view that the harmful paternalism of the state would come to an end if cultural institutions relied on their own resources and became economically emancipated, i.e. if they behaved like the »cultural industry,« while the state would become the commissioner of their products within the areas in which it has an interest. But this position is naïve, because it too gullibly transposes certain principles of the formation of the free market from the science of economy to the area of culture and arts. The underlying explanation is that liberalization alone would provide a basis for the pluralization of cultural offer and for better adjustment of cultural products to the actual needs of the people. However, this approach can give a boost only to the entertainment industry, which is not constrained by scruples when it comes to gain-

<sup>45</sup>Similar contradictions are found in the *Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act* adopted in 2002. Two of the goals cited in this law are »Slovenian cultural identity« and »cultural diversity,« (*Uradni list*, No. 96, November 14, 2002, p. 10519), although these are exclusive: the promotion of »identity« dissolves »diversity,« and the promotion of »diversity« eliminates »identity«. Another interesting formulation in this law (ibid. p. 10.525) states that the Ministry of Culture also finances programs and projects aimed at »cultural integration of minority communities and immigrants, if their cultural programs or project exceed local significance.« In our understanding, to »exceed local significance« means to renounce the specific characteristics of the minority.

<sup>46</sup>Even Jim McGuigan, otherwise a sharp critic of the »political common sense« that promoted »enterprise culture« and the slogans »consumer's choice« and »value for money,« was duped by this opposition. »Although the market has many questionable features, including the exploitation, objectification and commodification of labour power, it is also a profoundly efficient means of communication, registering popular tastes and aspirations much more effectively than state-planned arrangements.« Ibid., p. 84.

ing a monopoly. On the contrary, it is quite capable of recuperating different kinds of culture (alternative, folk, critical culture etc.) in order to retain its monopolistic position. Neither »folk culture,« nor »popular culture,« nor »subculture,« belong to this hegemonic category from the very beginning. They can be recuperated by industrial culture only if they can be industrially exploited, but then they lose whatever makes them specific and become themselves »industrial culture.« As Carlo Ginzburg, the Italian historian says, we should by no means confuse culture that stems *from* the people with culture that was fabricated *for* the people.<sup>47</sup> The goal of industrial culture is to make dependent on itself, and subordinate to itself, the largest possible number of »cultural expressions« originally belonging to other traditions. In other words, the goal of the cultural industry is anti-intellectualism, since intellectualism threatens the voluntary subordination of the masses to industrial entertainment. Furthermore, the cultural industry also demonstrates the traits of anti-elitism and anti-traditionalism, because its audience is a community of »ordinary and simple people« who feel an aversion to the townsfolk, politics, intellectuals and other enemies of »ordinary people.«

And *the third point*: the European cultural policies leave the impression that they are perhaps restrained slightly more than is necessary but loyal to their proclaimed goal – to make cultural events accessible to as many population groups as possible. But the reality is just the opposite: since European cultural policies increasingly buckle under the pressure of the liberal model, which produces effects that are opposite to those described above, a much more plausible conclusion is that they have already forsaken one of its important goals – the »widening of participation« in culture.

A comparison of the two models of cultural policies based on the criterion of »economic rationality« advocated by the liberal model shows that by using the liberal model the state reduces costs by approximately 10 percent. This modest saving was sufficient reason for the liberal cultural policy makers to subordinate cultural institutions to the domination of »enterprise culture.« It was pressures of this kind that led the manager of the Slovenian National Theater, for

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<sup>47</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Il formaggio e i vermi*, Giulio Einaudi, Torino, 1976.

example, to introduce a »businessman's season ticket.« By paying a higher price for the ticket, businessmen buy the right to attend banquets and spend some time in the company of actors for whom socializing with businessmen has become part of their work duties. The theater company promotes this special service as an enterprise venture, but in fact the money comes from the public sources from which these theaters are funded, and actors are paid for joining the business club.<sup>48</sup> The deregulation of funds dedicated to cultural production, or in other words, the reduction of public funds in order to persuade cultural institutions to replenish their budget from their own resources, also introduces uncertainty that undermines the creativity of cultural institutions. Since economizing is introduced into the domain of culture in general, but without clearly defined cultural policy priorities, it is carried out at the expense of cultural workers, who struggle for survival by self-exploiting themselves, and particularly at the expense of actual and potential consumers of culture whose rights are essentially curtailed in this way.

However, if the country continues to provide the bulk of the funds for cultural institutions even in the liberal cultural policy model, then the only question that remains is purely ideological: for whom does the state maintain and support these institutions? Is it for those who can afford to pay somewhat higher prices for tickets that open the door to the elite classes and cultural consumption? Or will cultural institutions keep their doors open for all and try to dispel social differences? The same amount of social wealth can be used for the social exclusion of the classes lacking cultural capital or for the achievement of social cohesion. The decision is certainly not related to »economic logic.«

The current exacerbation of class issues has been very instructive in the sense that it pointed to the unwillingness of cultural policies to fulfill those social functions that go beyond sheer support for cultural creativity. When first faced with pressures, they simply caved in and fell short of fulfilling their general tasks, for example, striving to

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<sup>48</sup>The following is how Janez Pipan, the theater manager, exhorts businessmen to come to the theater: »A speciality of our season-ticket are socializing events following the shows. While we take care of the atmosphere and food, you will have the opportunity to meet new partners for conversation and possibly new business contacts.« (letter dated September 15, 2003).

improve general attitude towards culture, to enable more equitable access to culture, to eliminate »cultural poverty« among the most vulnerable population segments and prevent their »social exclusion« (e.g. older people, people with special needs, children and adolescents, delinquents, the unemployed and poor people etc), introduction of cultural artistic activities into schools and school-related areas and so on. These efforts are so much more important because some studies have shown that »there are more links between culture and democracy than between the stage of development and democracy.«<sup>49</sup> The mechanisms of social redistribution in the area of culture will thus probably present the greatest challenge for future cultural policies.

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<sup>49</sup>*Poročilo o človekovem razvoju /The Report on Human Development/*, Matjaž Hanžek (ed.), Urad Republike Slovenije za makroekonomske analize in razvoj, Ljubljana, 1998.



## SLOVENIAN CULTURAL POLICY?

In the early stages of this study we expected that the ultimate result of our comparison of various cultural policies in Europe would be a synchronous analysis of cultural policy goals and of the methods for their realization. But the result of the comparison was a diachronous historical picture showing the replacement of one model of cultural policy, i.e. the »state regulated« model, with another one, i.e. the »enterprise culture« model. Although European cultural policies endeavor to find a compromise that would link the two models, the reports reveal that they gradually, but unstoppably, yield to the liberal model. If we add to this the negotiations within the World Trade Organization about the liberalization and privatization of services (a category also including cultural activities) – and the EU is one of the initiators of this process – then we can assert that the liberal model of cultural policy has already ousted the old, social-democratic model.

Although the European debate on cultural policies presented in this study may be less well known to the Slovenian citizens, Slovenia, as an EU candidate and associate member, has been participating in these debates, publicly or less publicly, for at least a decade. Therefore, Slovenia too shares the responsibility for its outcome. We will now try to establish the Slovenian standpoint regarding the issues presented earlier in the text. Given that Slovenia will soon join the EU, it will have to adopt a viewpoint regarding these and related issues that have transpired through the debates within the WTO. Both will undoubtedly influence domestic cultural policy, particularly so the negotiations within the WTO that envisage the privatization of cultural activity, seen as part of the service category. This was already on the agenda of the Uruguay Round of talks in 1986. France made an effort to enforce the exemption of culture [*exception culturelle*] in an attempt to exclude the area of culture from the free flow of goods and services. This would mean that individual states

could, first, retain their quotas for television programs (e.g. the prescribed proportion of domestic and European programs and films), and second, retain their systems of subsidies for domestic and European film production and distribution, the publishing trade etc. Unfortunately, the European countries have no common view on this issue. In an attempt to resolve differences, the European Commission adopted in 1999 a substitute expression, »cultural diversity,« but France denies it legal pertinence objecting that inappropriate rhetorical figures are exploited to defend the historical achievements of the welfare state.<sup>50</sup> The *Monde diplomatique* monthly writes that, should the temporary compromise solution reached within the WTO come into force, one may expect that Steven Spielberg will soon appear among the domestic (French) applicants for state subsidies. This solution actually allows states to publish public invitations for subsidies financed from public sources, but on condition that these programs are open to domestic and foreign citizens (candidates) and companies alike, if they produce »similar products.« This means that Slovenian subsidy programs too will be open to Spielbergs and the like, and our commissions will have to treat them using criteria similar to those applying to domestic film directors. Some national reports (e.g. Finnish and Dutch) openly doubt that in the future it will be possible to retain the right of intervention in »cultural industries« (quotas, subsidies for film, video, publishing or musical production).

The Slovenian cultural authority has no (public) stance on the negotiations within the WTO, and even less so on the OECD<sup>51</sup> sponsored negotiations about free investment, despite the fact that negotiations within the WTO undoubtedly spell out the contours of future

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<sup>50</sup>Cf. Serge Regourd, *L'exception culturelle*, PUF, Paris, 2002. All pillars of the welfare country are at stake in the WTO negotiations, i.e. culture, the medical system, the educational system, the social care system, public transport, water supply, electrical energy etc. Serge Regourd says that the only objection to the concept of »cultural exception« is that it stands up for culture only and not all aspects of the welfare state, since culture will definitely not be able to find a resolution on its own, but only in unison with other fields, or in other words, if these remain intangible general values.

<sup>51</sup>In 1995, OECD members tried to sidestep »excessively slow« WTO negotiations and extorted, through discreet diplomatic moves, that foreign investors in the OECD member states have the same rights as domestic investors. This information was made public only in 1997, causing sharp resistance, first among French film makers. The public protest forestalled the continuation of these negotiations.

cultural policy in Slovenia. This could lead to the conclusion that the concealed part of the Slovenian cultural policy is more important than the public part. But still, let us briefly examine the most important document on Slovenian cultural policy, which includes several interesting reactions to European cultural dilemmas.

In this study we will not attempt at a comparison of the current Slovenian cultural policy with that from the period preceding 1991, although the results would be interesting. For example, decentralization of cultural activities was resolved before 1991 together with decentralized decision-making processes, while active cultural participation in amateur cultural activities was definitely greater than it is today. We will leave these historical studies for some other occasion and will limit ourselves to Slovenian cultural policy in recent years, i.e. Exercising of the Public Interest in the Field of Culture Act<sup>52</sup> from 1994 and the law bearing almost identical name dating from 2002 (Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act).<sup>53</sup>

Both acts devote attention to the definition of the »public interest.« The 1994 law resorts to the »technical« definition based on the then division of work within the Ministry of Culture (the exception is the first general provision that defends the so-called decentralization).

»In the area of culture, the public interest comprises primarily the following:

- creation of opportunities for the harmonious cultural development of Slovenia;
- the securing of conditions for the creation, transmission and accessibility of cultural values;
- the protection of cultural and natural heritage;
- promotion of the Slovenian culture at home and abroad;
- cultural education in schools and education for culture-related professions;
- cultural researches.« (Article 2).

The 2002 law, however, no longer includes any such awkward list of tasks supposedly related to the »public interest in the domain of culture,« but defines the public interest as the »state interest«:

<sup>52</sup>Published in *Uradni list RS*, No. 75-2680/94, December 2, 1994.

<sup>53</sup>Published in *Uradni list RS*, No. 96, November 14, 2002.

»[P]ublic interest in the field of culture is interest in the creation, communication and protection of cultural assets at the national and local levels which shall be exercised by providing the conditions for them« (Article 2, paragraph 2).

To paraphrase this definition, the cultural interest is a »public« interest if it is secured by the state (either on local or on other levels, since, after all, the local level is no less national than the local administration is).

The other milestone that points to a fundamental change in the understanding of the public interest is revealed by the fact that the definition of the »public interest« no longer includes »accessibility of cultural values« found in the 1994 law. Since accessibility of culture is characteristic of the European social model of cultural policy, the omission of this part of the definition is a telling sign that in the period 1994–2002 Slovenian cultural policy made an essential shift towards the neo-liberal model.

»Accessibility of culture« is nevertheless mentioned twice in the 2002 law: in Article 8, which lays down the methods and means of realizing the public interest in the area of culture,<sup>54</sup> and in Article 25, which stipulates that the state and local communities ensure, in the public interest, the conditions »for the creation, communication and protection of cultural assets which are not provided on the market to a sufficient extent or to sufficient quality, or in order to enable access to the widest circle of users.« The ensuring of accessibility is thus equated with corrective intervention by the state in the operation of the capitalist economy (market), while market mechanisms are taken to be a »natural mode« of existence (creation, transmission and protection) of cultural goods (and, presumably, services as well). The national care for the accessibility of cultural goods is thus realized against a backdrop of »natural« or »normal« cultural logic, which is presumed to be the »logic of the market.« This, too, indicates how strongly the neo-liberal concept has pervaded this field.

The law further defines the persons who are the »carriers« of the public interest, or in other words, the persons that decide, in one way

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<sup>54</sup>»The public interest in culture shall be exercised above all by ensuring conditions for: cultural creativity; accessibility of cultural assets; cultural diversity; Slovene cultural identity; a common Slovene cultural space.«

or another, what should be regarded as the »public interest in culture«:

»[R]epresentatives of public interest are the competent bodies (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, Government of the Republic of Slovenia, ministries, local government bodies) and entities of public law (public funds, public agencies) to which the exercise of specific functions is transferred by means of a public authorisation.« (Article 2, paragraph 3).

It is interesting that the definition does not say, for example, that the »representative« of the public interest would be the »people of Slovenia« (or its citizens). Such a definition would be a good point of departure for a definition of the role of the representative bodies (e.g. the National Assembly) and executive bodies (the government). Yet the law does not make any such derivation but lists state bodies of various kinds and at different levels. As one can conclude from the provision in Article 2, the law carried out a kind of administrative *coup d'état*, since it evaded a more precise, or at least clearer, definition of the »public interest in culture,« but it accorded to the National Assembly, the government, the ministries and local authorities the right to decide – not in the name of people, but instead of people – what the »public interest in the area of culture« is, as well as to change it and restrict or expand the rights of producers and consumers.<sup>55</sup> If the national institutions have thus appropriated the right to decide independently about the interest of all citizens, why, then, do they need the institution of »civil society« introduced later in Article 2:

»[R]epresentatives of public interest shall exercise their functions in cooperation with civil society, which shall be represented by the National Council for Culture and local government councils, the Chamber of Culture of Slovenia and the expert commissions of the Minister or competent local government body.« (Article 2, paragraph 3).

<sup>55</sup>Rights similar to those appropriated by the state belong to the directors of public institutions who are appointed by the government and to whom the government accords autocratic rule within those institutions. The law, on the other hand, stipulates quite unfavorable employment relations for artists whose job contracts are time limited (up to five years). In such circumstances, the employees are excessively dependent on directors and have less freedom to express their aesthetic viewpoints.

Civil society is defined as an »independent body,« but that is only on paper given that the members of the institutions listed as its representatives are appointed either by the government, or the National Assembly, or the minister. »Civil society,« as described in this law, occupies a position that is only apparently antagonistic to that of the national institutions over which »civil society« is supposed to exert control, to which it should give advice or even propose members of the cultural institution councils. The only exception among these institutions of »civil society« is the Chamber of Culture. This is an organization of cultural associations that can be easily exploited by the state thanks to its guild-like structure (after the model of the Chamber of Commerce or Chamber of Crafts).

Only in Article 8 does the law mention anything resembling cultural policy goals:

»The public interest in culture shall be exercised above all by ensuring conditions for:

- cultural creativity
- accessibility of cultural assets
- cultural diversity
- Slovene cultural identity
- a common Slovene cultural area.« (Article 8, paragraph 2).

What immediately attracts our attention is the mutual exclusivity of individual goals (e.g. cultural diversity and cultural identity), but the most important feature is that these goals are not conceptualized as the basis for formulating the law on culture, but they are added somewhere along the way. They are represented as vague guidelines for the National Program for Culture in which the »representatives of the public interest« should, with the help of the »civil society« mechanisms, define the goals of cultural policy, meaning that this happens away from the eyes of the mythical »democratic public« and »public debates.«

»The national programme for culture is a strategic document of the developmental planning of cultural policy which proceeds from the historically achieved position of culture and through which the role of culture in the development of Slovenia and the Slovene nation and the public interest in it is ascertained, the field of culture is de-

defined, cultural assets are provided as public assets, investments in public cultural infrastructure are planned, the goals and priorities of cultural policy are set, and the period in which they are to be realised and the indicators by which their achievement is to be measured are specified.« (Article 10, paragraph 1).

The 1994 law already delegated the responsibility to define the cultural policy goals to the National Cultural Program,<sup>56</sup> the 2002 law similarly delegates this responsibility to the National Program for Culture that will have to determine the technocratic priorities within the public management of culture.

Although the law does not include an explicit definition of the Slovenian cultural policy, it does define »public cultural assets«:

»The State and local communities shall in the public interest provide conditions for the creation, communication and protection of cultural assets which are not provided on the market to a sufficient extent or to sufficient quality, or in order to enable access to the widest circle of users.« (Article 25, paragraph 1).

The definition above presupposes that the natural state of existence of artistic and cultural production is production for the »market.« It is possible to assume that what is implied by »market production« is the entertainment industry that should automatically secure the basic supply of cultural goods through market mechanisms. On the other hand, the state would intervene in this industry and its market only when the »market logic« swerves off the track followed by the modest political interests of the state i.e. when the supply of cultural goods runs short, or is of low quality, or when cultural goods are inaccessible to the widest possible segment of consumers. Therefore, the 2002 law defines Slovenian cultural policy as an interventional policy aimed at correcting free market relations. If we accept the definition of cultural goods as market goods or services, as found in the 2002 law, then by intervening in the cultural industry Slovenian cultural policy violates the principle of the free market, because these interventions would represent protective measures.

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<sup>56</sup>»The National Cultural Program sets down the foundation of cultural policy and determines the scope of activities in the field of culture that are financed or co-financed from the budget and other public and private sources« (Article 7, paragraph 1).

Given such a conception of cultural policy, Slovenia will soon have to enter into negotiations with foreign economic institutions, e.g. the WTO, concerning issues such as whether it is still entitled to subsidize culture. Since the law defines culture as a market product, we could say that Slovenian cultural policy voluntarily yields itself to the international economic institutions that may as well decide to eliminate it. In other words, Slovenian cultural policy heads towards its own elimination in an almost suicidal manner.

Among the expressions defined in this law we find the »public cultural program.« Its definition is somewhat narrower than one would expect.

»[A] public cultural programme is a cultural activity by providers which are not public institutions but which the State or local community provides/funds in a comparable way to public institutions.« (Article 2, paragraph 5).

»The public cultural program,« therefore, stands for all those forms of (private, civil) organization that are not public institutions, meaning that the law explicitly distinguishes the activity of public institutions from the public cultural program. Therefore, there are two »public cultural programs.« One is part of the public sector, i.e. public institutions to which this law does not ascribe the need to have their own »program.« The other is the »public cultural program« that is shaped every year anew through public invitations. It includes tasks that are not fulfilled by the state through public institutions, but are co-financed through cultural programs and projects that are taken over by the »private sector,« private institutions and »civil society.« It is precisely this area that cannot be considered a »program« by virtue of its character, because it is defined as being formed »spontaneously,« or on the fly. However, although the law treats this area recklessly, it comprises complex activities such as books and music publishing, films etc.

But why does the law make a distinction between the tasks undertaken by public institutions and those undertaken by the private sector? What do the public institutions produce apart from cultural programs? How is it possible at all to distinguish the cultural programs on the basis of whether they are produced by the public or private sectors? How should we explain the need for this distinction? After some consideration, we can see that this distinction is import-

ant only with regard to funding: while the Ministry of Culture and local communities provide all the funds for the operation of public institutions, they only partly subsidize the other, private institutions. These institutions are entitled only to partial subsidies because they are considered as being primarily commercial, meaning that their primary target is the market while cultural tasks are taken to be their side activities for which they receive compensation from the state.

The ultimate effect is that in order to survive competition with public institutions, private institutions have to acquiesce to a greater internal exploitation of human resources, or in other words, perform the same work for less money and endure the risk of social insecurity. With their most important customer being the state, they are under the incessant ideological control of the ruling parties and the cultural authority. However, since the state defines their work as a production for the market, it actually renounces them in advance, from the moment that intervention in the cultural industry will begin to be considered protectionism and a violation of the free market principles. This will make the life of the co-financed areas of book publishing, music and film production uncertain, and it is very likely that these areas will be fully left to the mercy of the entertainment industry if the neo-liberal approach tightens its loop.

Perhaps the indifference of the cultural administration towards the threat of neo-liberalism should be attributed to the fact that it has already set apart the areas that will remain under its protection from those that it is ready to sacrifice. It has already taken under its protection »representative art« produced by public institutions, and left the private sector to take the risks.

I will conclude this study with the ironic observation that Slovenian cultural policy is increasingly European in character, or increasingly neo-liberal. Under internal economic pressures and the pressures of the neo-liberal administration, it chose to concentrate on public institutions. The approach chosen by Finland and the Netherlands was similar: both countries set to building new opera houses during the »economic recession,« meaning that their approach was contrary to »economic rationality.« In the name of this same »economic rationality,« cultural administrators are ready to give way when the interest of the entertainment industry is involved. Under the guise of

»efficiency,« the entertainment industry may unscrupulously destroy the cultural environment, so that the press becomes even more yellow, the television programs less public, books contain more grammatical mistakes, libraries offer fewer books, and cinemas offer films of lower quality. This »efficiency« may increase profits on the one hand, but on the other, it is destructive for the emancipation of citizens.

The greatest victim of the Slovenian cultural policy is the consumer of culture. The latest cultural legislation practically does not mention consumers apart from a cursory mention in a vague definition of the »accessibility of cultural goods.« The rights of the cultural consumer to access cultural goods to which he/she is eligible by way of the distribution of public funds has been replaced by vague goals. The phrases found in popular European and domestic ideologies (cultural creativity, accessibility of culture, cultural diversity, Slovenian cultural identity, common Slovenian cultural space) cannot conceal the fact that Slovenian cultural policy has been abandoning the principle of the public redistribution of financial means that should fulfill the function of reducing differences between various population segments, i.e. mitigate the consequences of the »cultural and social exclusion« phenomenon. This general principle of public redistribution has been replaced with a policy that places public funds, meaning the financial burden shouldered by all citizens, into the hands of a narrow circle of privileged citizens. The inevitable effect of the present conception of the Slovenian cultural policy is the impoverishment of the poor and the enrichment of the rich.

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