

Reflections on the International Conference “Perspectives of National Cultural Policies Development in the EU Context: Critical Dialogues” Zagreb, 17th — 19th May 2017

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The current political situation and challenges facing today's Europe have a strong impact on cultural policy domain and on the conditions under which cultural sector operates today. Although the European Union has not been involved in formulating an explicit common cultural policy, it has been indirectly contributing to the creation of common cultural policy frameworks through its soft cultural policy instruments and mechanisms (e.g. Open Method of Coordination — OMC, the Creative Europe programme, the European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) and others). The question is whether such an approach is still adequate for today's cultural and social challenges, and whether national level cultural policies can tackle complex global problems, especially in the context where many other public policies are increasingly influencing the field of culture.

These issues motivated researchers from the Department for Culture and Communication of the Institute for Development and International Relations (IRMO) to organize the international conference “Perspectives of national cultural policies development in the EU context: critical dialogues”, which was held in Zagreb from 17th to 19th May 2017. The conference was organized as a part of a two-year

Jean Monnet project entitled 'EU Competences and National Cultural Policies: Critical Dialogues' (CULPOL), co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, and it gathered prominent cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, cultural civil society representatives, policymakers, and young professionals in arts and culture from Europe and Croatia. The main aim of the conference was to foster the dialogue between different cultural-policy stakeholders, putting into the spotlight the issue of the need for sustainability of culture, as well as the fact that there is no sustainable development without culture.

As an introduction to the main conference programme that took place on 18th and 19th May 2017, on 17th May, two pre-conference activities were organized: the workshop "CAE Croatian Hub – reflection exercise on the future of Europe", co-organized with the European network Culture Action Europe, and a pre-conference lecture "The missing links between cultural administration and the functioning of cultural systems today – study case of a one year's mandate as Minister of Culture in Romania" by Ms Corina Şuteu, cultural consultant, president of FilmETC and former Minister of Culture of Romania, organized in cooperation with the Academy of Dramatic Art. The main programme of the conference consisted of two keynote lectures and four working sessions, focused on the following themes:

- Cultural policies and the crisis in/of the European Union – how to achieve sustainable cultural development?;
- Strategies and tendencies of local cultural development in Europe: the role and impact of the European Capital of Culture project;
- What kind of European comparative cultural policy research is needed today?;
- National cultural policies in need of vision, innovation and leadership.

The main programme of the conference started with the interesting keynote lecture ***Making cultural policy matter in the EU agenda: key topics and perspectives*** by Professor Pier Luigi Sacco from the IULM University in Milan, on the changes culture is undergoing in the context of convergence, from Culture 1.0 to Culture 3.0, and the issues cultural policies are facing in trying to catch up with the related changes. What characterizes the current culture 3.0 scenario we are living in is, according to Professor Sacco, "a blurred distinction between producers and users of cultural and creative contents (accelerated with

the expansion of digital platforms where communities of practice self-organize around the production and sharing of certain types of contents) and active cultural participation". Professor Sacco highlighted that culture may and should be a key policy in the future EU agenda due to the capacity of culture to establish powerful synergies with basically all of the other policy fields.

The first panel discussion – ***The crisis in/of European Union and cultural policies – how to achieve sustainable cultural development?*** was moderated by Dr Aleksandar Brkić, from the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship, Goldsmiths, University of London. This panel discussion gathered some prominent experts in culture: Dr Marcin Poprawski, Deputy Dean for International Relations, Faculty of Social Sciences; Adam Mickiewicz, University in Poznan; Ms Catherine Cullen, Special Advisor on Culture in Sustainable Cities, Committee on Culture, UCLG; Dr Ole Marius Hylland, Senior Researcher, TRI – Telemark Research Institute; Mr Teodor Celakoski, cultural worker and activist, Right to the City/Pravo na grad; and Mr Robert Manchin, former president of Culture Action Europe. Speakers focused on finding the answers and approaches, as well as innovative cultural policy models, that would be adequate for today's cultural and social challenges and sustainable cultural development. Furthermore, the session focused on the limits of the European subsidiarity principle for culture and whether the current approach of implicit cultural policies on the European level can bring adequate positive changes through soft policy mechanisms. The discussion that followed highlighted the importance of building new policy models that are based on active citizens' participation and collaboration between public, private and civil society actors.

The second working session – Round Table discussion I – ***Strategies and tendencies of local cultural development in Europe: the role and impact of the European Capital of Culture project***, moderated by Ana Žuvela, IRMO, aimed to discuss culture as a driving force for transformation of the city and to see to what extent does the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) scheme enable the space for a bottom-up response to essentially top-down project provisions. In this line, some of the main experts that are involved in the ECOC process, such as Dr Herman Bashiron Mendolicchio, Researcher, University of Barcelona, Valletta 2018; Mr Chris Torch, Intercult CEO, Timișoara 2021 – European Capital of Culture, Artistic Director; and Ms Emina

Višnić, Rijeka 2020, CEO, were invited to talk about the new approaches to cultural governance on local levels, on new models of synergies between the local and international cultural actors and the levels of sustainability and accountability in cultural planning. Panellists stressed the importance of better cooperation between policymakers, cultural workers and citizens, and expressed their disappointment with the fact that ECoC — such a large and all-inclusive European project in culture — has not contributed to the changes of the cultural policies at the national levels.

The second day of the conference started with the keynote lecture entitled *Croatian cultural policy: purviews of the key strategic documents and a view of the future* by Professor Vjeran Katunarić from the University of Zadar and Dr Biserka Cvjetičanin, a Scientific Advisor Emerita at the Department for Culture and Communication, IRMO. Speakers reflected on two, still important and relevant, Croatian cultural policy documents from the end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000: “Cultural policy in Croatia — the national report” and “Croatia in the 21st century: strategy of cultural development”. Professor Katunarić pointed out that both documents have addressed the issues that are still relevant today for both Croatia and the EU — the processes of democratization, digitalization and decentralization, among others. Referring to significant policy documents in the field of culture, Dr Cvjetičanin stressed the importance of strengthening dialogue between citizens and EU institutions, the importance of participation and access to culture for all, the need for stronger cross-sectoral links (with education, science, technology), the important role of culture in international cooperation and global partnership in achieving developmental goals, as well as its role and strong influence in the promotion of open, inclusive and pluralist societies and intercultural dialogue.

The following working session – Round Table discussion II — *Cultural policies are being transformed across the world: what kind of European comparative cultural policy research is needed?*, moderated by Dr Jaka Primorac, IRMO, focused on the evident ‘missing link’ between the cultural policy research and cultural policy decision-making at a local, national and European level. By gathering cultural policy experts, university lecturers in cultural policy, members of foundations and cultural networks executing cultural policy research, as well as independent cultural experts, this session tried to answer what kind of research approach to cultural policy is necessary

in contemporary changing environments in Europe. The contributors of this session were: Dr Nada Švob-Đokić, IRMO; Mr Davor Mišković, Director of the non-profit organization Drugo More; Dr Tsveta Andreeva, Researcher and person responsible for research activities of the European Cultural Foundation (ECF); Dr Bjarki Valtýsson, Associate Professor in Modern Culture, Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen; and Dr Kate Oakley, Professor of Cultural Policy at the School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds. The discussion showed that in a new changing cultural landscape, what is important is to return to critical policy research and to ask new questions on the role of culture in creating and diminishing inequalities, on the change of the monopolies of soft power, and on the role of algorithmic power and control of social media platforms that influence the changing cultural dynamics.

The last panel discussion was Panel discussion II — ***National cultural policies in need of vision, innovation and leadership***. The moderator of the panel discussion, Robert Manchin, discussed pressing issues with two current and one former minister of culture that attended the conference: Dr Nina Obuljen Koržinek, Minister of Culture of the Republic of Croatia; Mr Janko Ljumović, Prof, MSc, Minister of Culture of Montenegro; and Ms Corina Șuteu, cultural consultant and president of FilmETC, former Minister of Culture of Romania. This was an opportunity to hear speakers' experiences and to discuss challenges they encounter(ed) in their work both as researchers advocating 'evidence-based policymaking' and as policymakers in need of swift decision-making. Numerous problems were detected, such as the marginal position of cultural policy on government agendas, the weak legitimacy of the cultural administrators, the volatility of culture ministers and the design of administration that does not allow capitalization of acquired knowledge from one administration to another etc.

In conclusion, it can be said that, by bringing into dialogue past experiences with present and future challenges, the conference opened interesting discussions among cultural policy researchers, cultural professionals, cultural civil society representatives, policymakers, and young professionals in arts and culture from Europe and Croatia. It provided critical insights of concepts such as soft power, sustainability and subsidiarity, discussed the issue of the ECOC and showed the need for new directions in cultural policy research and leadership. In recent years, the role of culture in sustainable

development has been discussed, highlighting the importance of culture and its contribution to the local, national and global development. At the same time, today, more than ever, culture finds itself under increasing commercial and economic pressures. As the entire cultural and creative industries (CCIs) have shifted culture towards neoliberal economic models, the fact is that, every attempt to make culture a priority in public policy domain actually means its instrumentalization. Today, CCIs are increasingly being used as drivers of urban development, stimulating cultural entrepreneurship, urban regeneration, city branding, tourism etc. Furthermore, former underground cultural practices have now become a major part of commercial popular culture in the newly imagined “creative city”, which searches for distinctive cultural practices and alternative tourism experiences. Is this sustainable and what kind of sustainable approach do we need? The answer to this question, stressed several times during the conference, is that we have to apply critical analysis and evaluation to issues in cultural policy (soft cultural policy instruments and mechanisms), the restructuring of public funding for culture, and to critically examine social, political, economic and digital transformations and their implications for a sustainable culture of the future.