Comparative cultural policy issues related to cultural diversity in South East Europe. Mapping the approaches and practices

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Introducing the concept(s) of cultural diversity

Any attempt to map cultural policies related to cultural diversity has to take into account the existence of multiple definitions of cultural diversity.

The lack of definition, or rather the variety of definitions, represents the major obstacle in trying to identify policy instruments aiming at the achievement, promotion or protection of cultural diversity. Because of this variety of definitions, the emphasis should be put on cultural diversity as a <u>principle</u> with all its diverse goals, achievements, limitations or obstacles.

There are numerous terms that are used to describe different aspects of what we understand when referring to cultural diversity, such as multiculturalism, cultural pluralism, inter-culturalism, cultural fusion etc. Cultural diversity reflected in cultural policies of Southeast Europe should focus on two aspects of cultural diversity:

a) The first aspect is the one that is usually referred to as <u>"multiculturalism"</u>. Different policies and instruments were developed in the last few decades aiming to promote <u>cultural diversity "within"</u> a society. This approach focuses on <u>basic human rights</u>, <u>equal participation of all minorities</u> (ethnic, gender, etc.) in cultural life and <u>formal legal and institutional provisions</u> related to the issue. In order to assess and map cultural policies with respect to multiculturalism, it is necessary to include also the analysis of other policies such as educational policies, minority policies, as well as provisions of constitutional and international law.

b) The second dimension of cultural diversity, particularly related to <u>inter-culturalism,</u> and widely debated especially in the past several years, is the issue of <u>cultural diversity "between"</u> states, societies and/or cultures. In this respect, cultural diversity is primarily regarded as a political concept representing the need for balanced

exchange between cultures and states, including all cultural goods and services. This approach is characterized by the development of links between culture and trade or culture and economy in general. It requires the analysis of cultural policies with respect to legal, financial and other instruments that are used to "intervene" in cultural markets and promote a different type of exchange that will not be dominated by several major world exporters and cultural conglomerates. Although not necessarily articulated as instruments in favour of cultural diversity, many traditional instruments of cultural policy (such as subsidies, limitations of ownership, network of public institutions or quota requirements) are in fact aimed at the promotion of cultural diversity.

Mapping cultural policies with regard to multiculturalism (cultural diversity "within") introduces parallel mapping with regard to links among culture in different states and societies that increasingly access each other through cultural products and trade of cultural goods (cultural diversity "between"). The assessment of cultural diversity "within" requires analysis of the national split of relations among cultures, analysis of state public policies, their scope and distribution, different instruments that are being applied as well as the level of respect of basic standards agreed at international level.

The assessment of cultural diversity "between" requires different types of analysis. Although widely debated in many international forums, the assessment of cultural diversity "between" cultures and states is still limited to research in specific fields (i.e. audio-visual, publishing, cultural services etc.). While it is possible to make an inventory of measures and instruments on a national level, policy-analysis needs to expand beyond borders of particular states in order to compare different instruments and policies that are being used to respond to some global trends.

Any effort to develop methodology for assessing cultural diversity and to identify existing approaches of cultural policies has to register differences in the choice of scope from one country to another. This type of choice concerns among others, the decision where the line shall be drawn between public responsibility and the responsibility of particular groups (non-governmental organizations) or private sector. Also, depending on the level of development and different traditions, governments decide to use different instruments, structures and tools.

For all these reasons, we propose to start the analysis by looking at the cultural diversity "within" (national cultural policies) and develop it further to the level of "between" or "among".

Cultural Policies in South East Europe

1. <u>New Experience.</u> Cultural policies have been developed in the late 1970's and 1980's, within the frameworks of ideological hegemony that particularly stressed equality of nations and national minorities, by denying differences as much as possible, and by promoting specificities as the key element of authenticity. Such approach helped the dominance of the large cultures and nations over the smaller ones. It was also the base for cultural integration that was harmonized with processes of systemic integration and based on the standardized common values.
2. <u>Constructivist Tendency.</u> The aim of the socialist cultural policies was cultural change and the creation of "a new (integrative) culture" and "a new (harmonic) man".

Variants of this approach still exist in the present-day cultural policies that are largely concentrated on identity issues (particularly the affirmation of ethnic and national cultural values) and on the deconstruction of the integrative socialist approaches. The basic de-constructivist approaches concentrate on the revival of the past and historical cultural values, on the self-assertiveness, limited communication with other cultures, and intolerance of other values. All this is going on under the intense political and economic pressure of transition.

3. Conceptual disintegration still marks the period of transition. Cultural policies are fully oriented to identity issues and change of identities and they face the issue of cultural diversification as a dominant challenge. However, the concentration on the identity issues leads to the interpretation of cultural diversity as an important achievement of a particular culture, and much less as willingness to tolerate the same diversity in other cultures.

4. Lack of common concepts and of cultural knowledge. Although some cultural processes and trends in the Southeast European countries in transition may be similar, they are difficult to compare due to the lack of a general intellectual concept and cultural knowledge that would enable better understanding of these processes and eventual acceptance of common standards.

5. Split interests. It may even be said that the ex-socialist cultures of the Southeast European countries, which used to be in close contact until recently, have almost lost interest in each other. Their interest is concentrated on local levels of diversification (ethnic, national, but also gender, class, etc.) on one side, and integration in the mainstream European cultural trends, on the other. In this process the traditional original cultural values are easily forgotten or traded in order to secure access to the western cultural life and global cultural communication.

6. Marginalisation of standards. The observance of some western cultural standards, like tolerance and respect for minority cultures, or willingness to introduce market elements in arts exchange and evaluation, is often marginalized or avoided. Mythical originality of the national and ethnic values resurges again whenever the observance of the western type standards endangers cultural monopoles functioning on local levels.

7. Extrapolation of cultural policies. Although the elaboration of cultural policies stems from the traditions established in the early 1980's, most of the contemporary cultural policies of the Southeast European countries have been extrapolated within the European Program of National Cultural Policy Reviews, launched by the Council of Europe. The methodologies have been designed and harmonized as part of this program. When applied, they displayed different approaches of particular countries to their cultural life and development. Treatment of cultural diversity has also been de-standardized and in many cases a-typical, which complicates analysis.

8. Local values versus global standards. Cultural policies tend to be ever more localized, and thus less standardized. The responses of cultural policies to cultural diversity are therefore diverse themselves.

Approaches and Practices: Methodological Assessment

Most (small) countries in Southeast Europe are internally dominated by one national culture. (Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, represents an exception.) Such culture rarely finds incentives to pay serious attention to the cultures that are also part of a country. Mapping

diversity is therefore a new experience and a new process for most of Southeast European countries.

The existing experiences are linked to population censuses and the socialist policies of equality of individuals and cultures that resulted in quantity evaluations and practical domination of "large" nations' cultures and their values. Transition process has openly addressed the issues of identity and modernity, and thus put cultural development in Southeast European countries in relation to other European cultures. Thus a deconstruction of the quantity dominance was introduced through influences of the modernized European cultures. Processes of deconstruction contributed to the acceptance of pro-European orientations and efforts to accept cultural diversity as a key to a more dynamic, democratic and functional cultural development and cultural relations.

In this respect some practical approaches and actions may be recommended by and in-built into cultural policies:

a) <u>Population censuses and statistics.</u> Ethnical distinctions provide the basis for mapping culturally diverse communities in Southeast Europe. All the states in the region are multicultural. However, the political impact of such identification is rather strong and the state pressures may influence ethnic and national identification. This is most visible in the fluid and de-standardized identification of Yugoslavs: it has largely varied over time, and still remains non-transparent, mainly for political reasons. Cultural policies should promote objectivity in mapping different ethnic and national communities by insisting on the inclusion of cultural and language indicators and on the tolerant treatment of culturally distinctive communities.

b) <u>Coordination with education, language, and media policies</u> is important in this respect. Teaching basic history, introducing the second language to schools where children belong to ethnically different groups or providing for special media entries regarding cultural diversity and intercultural relationships is important in building consciousness on cultural diversity in the general public.

c) <u>Democratic / political issues.</u> Political democracy introduces cultural diversity as an issue of human rights. This involves state politics, as well as activities of non-governmental organizations, particularly minority organizations. The umbrella of such activities is an interpretation of cultural diversity as a basic human right.

d) <u>Minority policies and minority activities.</u> Minority policies are defined as state policies. They are expressed through legal instruments and budget financing of minority activities and minority organizations. The minority activities in the field of culture usually encompass the following: the use of language and script (linked to education and curricula); activities of cultural societies (the most frequent form of organization of cultural life for and by ethnic and national minorities); publishing and libraries, and museums and ethnographic collections.

Southeast European region is explicitly multinational and multicultural. Its multinational character is expressed in a very diverse type of ethnic and national identifications, which have been subject to dynamic and diverse changes. The main sources of such changes are historical and political developments in the region, as well as constitutional and legal changes within its states. Multiculturalism in the region can be defined primarily in traditional terms: different peoples and their cultures have co-existed in this area, within the different state entities, for a considerable period of time. Labour migrations, typical of the more recent industrialization

times, have not substantially influenced the general multicultural map of the region, except for the big urban conglomerates such as the cities of Ljubljana, Belgrade, Zagreb, Rijeka etc. However, the legal position of minorities has been constantly changing under the influence of border changes, formation of different national states and the general process of political and democratic modernization of the region.

Traditional long-term co-existence of different ethnic and national groups has enabled a kind of cultural interaction that has a twofold result: providing for a common heritage background, but also for a clear tendency to preserve differences among peoples and cultures, which prevented the merging of distinctive groups into one entity. Therefore a common trait of the Southeast European cultures appears to be preservation of specificities and differences.

Intercultural communication, based on <u>cultural knowledge</u> of each other, has been restricted by the conviction that the cultures know each other well and that they share basic common trends. In reality, most people living in the region do not know enough about each other; there is no curiosity and willingness to learn more, which sustains a lot of prejudices.

Attempts to design new minority policies are influenced by foreign standards (particularly those of the EU) and by the efforts of new national states to protect their minorities in the neighbouring countries.

The four basic approaches can be traced in diversity mapping and elaboration of minority policies and their inclusion in cultural policies in the region:

a. <u>Marginalization of the problem</u> (e.g. Albania, Serbia and Monte Negro): there are no specific language, educational or media policies that would provide for particular efforts to approach minorities through cultural policies.

b. <u>Split model: different treatment of different minorities</u> (e.g., Slovenia). In Slovenia, minorities enjoying the status of traditional minorities (e.g., Italians, Hungarians) enjoy the legal, educational, media, cultural and all other specific minority treatment. However, the «new» minorities (Croats, Bosnians, Serbs, etc.) are not recognized as minorities. Those meeting the legal state provisions may apply for Slovenian citizenship and become full citizens of Slovenia.

c. <u>Model in the making</u> (e.g. Croatia). In Croatia, the number of minorities has radically decreased due to the state intervention and the war. Croatia has not yet fully regulated the status of minority groups, although two laws have already been passed, amended and publicly discussed in the last 12 years. The process is under strong influence of the EU.

d. <u>Formal acceptance of the EU standards and non-transparent practices</u> (e.g. Romania, Bulgaria, Greece). This approach openly demonstrates willingness to accept the proclaimed EU standards and follow the policies of forgetting the minority issues and problems.

The four approaches mentioned above display internal differences and reflect the general novelty of new approaches to minority problems in the region. The general tendency is that it develops from the formal demographic mapping of different groups (registering multicultural situation) in an effort to incite friendly and civilized interaction among them (interculturalism) and finally accept cultural diversity as a background for the democratic and equal treatment of all the citizens notwithstanding their racial, ethnic or other differences (human rights approach).

The developments described as <u>registered multiculturalism-interculturalism-human rights observance</u> should be related to the aforementioned concepts of cultural diversity as either referring to <u>"within" a country approach, or "between/among" countries approach.</u>

In this way acknowledgement of cultural differences is viewed as a dynamic concept extrapolated in the two perspectives: "within": towards the citizens of the same state, and "between/among": towards the citizens of different states in the same region. Both localization and internationalization (globalization) of the process of cultural diversity acknowledgement should promote better cultural policies and an equal mutual treatment of individuals, minority and majority groups.   ●

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