



Center for Contemporary Art Prishtina

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“Cultural Policies as Crisis Management?”
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Project summary

International Workshop “Cultural Policies as Crisis Management?” is an initiative, part of the ongoing work of the Stacion CCA, focused in establishing stronger art and cultural initiatives and challenging present cultural policies as **an additional process** to the political negotiations for the future political status of Kosova.

This project will act as a platform for intellectuals, artists and culture producers for engaging in the ongoing political process, and promoting contemporary cultural policies as models for strengthened cooperation in West Balkan countries and Europe, with special focus on the necessity for re-creation of normal communication between culture producers and culture institutions from Kosova and Serbia that could serve as a possible positive catalyst for the mainstream society in both countries.

In this political process the relevance of the investment in arts and culture has been excluded so far from the visible political agenda in the initiatives by the European Union and the United Nations. This is despite the fact that cultural processes and interventions can strengthen and stabilise social, economic and political development where complex political tensions may exist. The ongoing political process in Kosova has only used culture (heritage) as a tool for extreme political solutions that seem only to damage the future relationships in the region.

Context

Following a study about European cultural policies, which was published by IASPIS (Stockholm) and eicpc (Vienna) in 2005, where authors of different regions in Europe drew the possible development of European cultural policies until 2015, a series of discursive events concerning this topic was planned. The first discursive event was organized in Stockholm in November 2005, followed by the proposed conference and workshop in Prishtina and by discursive events in Helsinki (in summer/autumn 2006) and Vienna (end of 2006). The proposal by Stacion CCA to host a workshop in Prishtina coincided with series of events organised by Stacion CCA and its partner institution aiming to engage the arts scene and culture producers closely to the socio-political process.

In mid 2006, when the process started to take momentum, it seemed that European gazes would be directed to Kosova during the status talks. EU commissioner Olli Rehn and EU HR Javier Solana have stated that the political process in Kosova is the European challenge for the year 2006. At the same time, relevant EU officials including Former - UN Special Representative Sören Jensen-Petersen had indicated that creating positive momentum in Kosova was lacking. Today this situation is even more complicated. The recent visit of the President of Serbia and the inflammatory nationalist language used again by this official during a visit to Kosova just increased growing ethnic tensions in Kosova. This event only strengthened the position of the organisations that are today calling for boycott of Serbian goods and individuals with extreme solutions for present problems between or two countries.

The ongoing political process has positioned the local art scene in Kosova, thinkers and culture workers outside the process and with no relevant position related to it. At the same time, the contemporary arts scene, together with other similar structures has not clearly shown the will to be part of this process in any possible way; the position of the majority of the contemporary art scene is seen by the society as completely irrelevant to this process. To go stress more this statement, I would say that the majority of the contemporary art scene in Kosova are more or less afraid of the word POLITICS and POLICY.

Stacion CCA, with this project, will work in adding cultural content and an additional discourse to the political process, acknowledging that this political process of negotiations presents the greatest challenge for the Kosovar society since the end of the war. Stacion CCA will also function as a driver for developing infrastructure and the capacity to sustain cultural processes and interventions. The ongoing Kosovar status talks are crucial for the future development of a common Europe.

International Workshop “ Cultural Policies as Crisis Management?” will promote the recognition of cultural variety/diversity as a starting point for a true political process consisting of dialogue and negotiation. In the sphere of arts, and culture as more widely defined, people easily meet on a basis more equal than politics and economics. All the initiatives, which are directed to increase communication and dialog in the society and give meaning for the political process, are needed to create room for political process to happen in the civil society.

Finally, this project and other initiatives of Stacion CCA, are also an attempt to prevent hijacking of the social space by the conservative political agendas promoted during the process of the political negotiations.

Issues and thesis that we find relevant and that the speakers will present during the Workshop include:

“Is there a notion of culture which is possible without a national(istic)-cultural frame - could it be something like cultural translation? What could be the political preconditions and the possible political context for a cultural exchange?” – lecture by Boris Buden.

“Can the subaltern kiss? From ethnicity to ethics. In many contexts a politics of recognition has proved to be a dead end. Which other approaches are there to get beyond the model of victim and perpetrator?” – lecture by Hito Steyerl.

“The role of culture (associations of writers, intellectuals etc.), in West Balkan countries, is often seen as negative and inflammatory. Past years and past wars in this region have seen intellectuals in the role of distributors of the language of hate and nationalism. This happened, as the dominant culture in these societies was nationalistic and xenophobic. Even today there are doubts if culture could play a different role in this region. Are nationalist elites still the dominant forces in culture? Or, can one now witness their historic failure? Has the time come to support other cultural groups, non-nationalist that even before have had normal relations with the others, even with the ‘enemy’?” – lecture by Shkelzen Maliqi.

“...One will have to eliminate the thought and the danger that it is enough to resource ad hoc events and creative projects. Better that we say that a good foundation and framework for a “healthy”, viable Kosovan cultural sector is ensured by investing in the creation of an institutionally based [i.e. Stacion CCA, EXIT) apparatus/mechanism which can in turn iteratively develop and interrogate artistic and cultural production and processes.” – lecture by Aladin Alkhemi.

“...This approach would establish a model for distributing positive initiatives (Nordic Cooperation) and supporting the emancipatory dialogue within the region.” – lecture by Marita Muukkonen

Impact at policy level

The approach that the project seeks to promote, would establish a model for distributing positive initiatives (i.e. Nordic Cooperation) and supporting the emancipatory dialogue within the region. This initiative would also help to develop artistic and cultural interaction in the whole West-Balkan region, since developing art and cultural policy in Kosova is closely related to policy practice in Serbia-Montenegro and Macedonia and Albania. The cultural distinctions in the West-Balkan region are the very fact, which needs to be acknowledged and cultural dimension on an equal base needs be strengthened. In the past, initiatives that aimed at creating cultural networks in the West-Balkan region failed to substantially include the Kosovar cultural scene and the Kosovar environment as a unique case relevant for the regional cultural strategy.

Kosovar reality acknowledges two levels of policy making: local and international. The double decision making structures and shared (or no ones') responsibility policy has created a unique study case problem. We think that this is another reason why the advocacy on Cultural Policies should be made in these two levels, too. Substantial European involvement is required - parallel to the Kosovar status talks - in order to develop Kosovar arts and cultural policy, to support arts and cultural production and practice and thus to substantially contribute to the construction of civil society

The contemporary art scene in Kosova is facing an adopted “Cultural Strategy 2006 – 2008” of the Ministry of Culture of Kosova, a document that has completely erased the existence of this scene and independent contemporary art initiatives in Kosova. In 2006, populist conservative projects, suspicious nepotistic initiatives and business oriented initiatives were the biggest spenders of the public funds, which are managed by the Ministry of Culture, which together with other governmental institutions are constantly accused for mismanagement, nepotism and corruption.

One of main aims of the project is to advocate for the establishment of a contemporary cultural policies in Kosova as a tool for and promoting a cultural dialogue in the region. The larger gathering of intellectuals and cultural practitioners could build the necessary momentum for this process. Strongly and articulated advocacy of cultural initiatives can be a base and a catalyst for other structures of the society.