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WHAT IF ... ON THE LIMITS OF TODAY'S CONCEPT OF CULTURAL POLICY

How to understand the crisis we are supposed to manage in Kosovo and its political surroundings? Usual answer to this question holds on to the concept of so-called transition to democracy: crisis is a sort of temporary regression into the state of nature, caused by the collapse of communist system; it involves various effects like economic break-down, ethnical conflict or civil war and is expected to last until democratization process is accomplished i.e. until economically sustainable and politically stable society, in a sovereign nation state, is established. As one of its major aims this process implicates development of democratic tolerance towards all sorts of internal and external differences, which is believed to be the major precondition for peaceful resolution of conflicts on both national and international level.

It is within this teleological framework that culture – imagined as a separated sphere of society – should provide assistance to politics. It should speed up and soften the process of transition including, if necessary, a nation building.

But what if the crisis is much deeper than we believe? What if it has an epochal dimension and jeopardizes a much larger space than the region of Kosovo and Serbia, former Yugoslavia or the Balkans? What if it is global and concerns the very base of the existing, more than three hundred years old, international order – the so-called Westphalian order? Moreover, what if this crisis puts in question not only the political role of culture but the idea of culture as a separate sphere of social life as well as the very boundary between culture and politics? What then if looking from this perspective the very concept of transition with all of its normative principles has become as illusory as a cultural policy designed to serve its normative goals?

There are probably no instant answers to these questions but there is for sure no way to avoid them either.