

## MANAGING CULTURAL TRANSITIONS IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

### The Impact of creative Industries. Report on the expert meeting and postgraduate course

Institute for International Relations (Zagreb)

Institute for International Relations  
(IMO), Ul. Lj. F. Vukotinovića 2,  
P.O.Box 303, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia;  
Tel.: + 385 / 1 / 4877471;  
Fax: + 385 / 1 / 4828361;  
E-Mail: [jaka@irmo.hr](mailto:jaka@irmo.hr)  
Homepage: <http://www.imo.hr>

The expert meeting and postgraduate course on cultural transitions and contemporary cultural cooperation in Southeastern Europe was held from May 9-15, 2005 at the Inter-University Center (IUC) in Dubrovnik, under the title *Managing Cultural Transitions in Southeastern Europe: The Impact of Creative Industries*. The organizers of this meeting were the *Department for Culture and Communication of the Institute for International Relations (IMO)*, Zagreb, in association with the *UNESCO Chair Program at the University of Arts in Belgrade* and the *Department for Cultural Studies, Faculty of Philosophy* in Rijeka. The event was organized with the help of *The East East Program: Partnership Beyond Borders, Open Society Institute & Soros Foundations Network* and the *Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Croatia*.

This year's expert meeting and postgraduate course evolved from previous post-graduate courses that started under the common title *Redefining Cultural Identities*. This year the postgraduate course has been innovated by the introduction of the expert meeting in the conference form with the topic »Cultural Cooperation in Southeastern Europe«. This innovation followed a very active participation of the 2004 student class, and their proposal to open up more space to student's participation and involvement in discussion on the issues of their interest.

In the previous years the courses were concentrated on the following topics: the first course in the year 2000 was devoted to the *Multicultural Contexts of Central European and Mediterranean Regions*, and it was followed in the next year by the course that dealt with the *Redefinition of Cultural Identities in Southeastern Europe*. The impact of the third course entitled *Cultural Industries and Technological Convergence* concentrated on cultural industries, technological convergence, cultural consumption and on cultural identities in Southeastern European and Central European countries. In 2004 the focus switched to *Managing Cultural Transitions: Southeastern Europe*.



This year the intention of the expert meeting and postgraduate course was to provide a direct discussion on regional cultural development among expert speakers and interested young professionals coming from the regional cultural sector. The objectives of this year's event were: to provide an analytical insight into theoretical and conceptual issues of cultural transitions and cultural cooperation in Southeastern Europe; to examine cultural policies in the context of cultural transitions and EU integration; and to analyze cultural cooperation and cultural communication in the area of SEE. This meeting was planned as a platform for organizing a future network of experts, that will substantially influence cultural bureaucracies and ministries of culture in the region, and in this way have an impact on inter-state cooperation. Also, it aimed to investigate the European approaches and understanding of multiculturalism and interculturalism as to adapt them to the local and regional settings. The event gathered twenty-two experts and postgraduate students from SEE countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, and Serbia and Montenegro) and EU countries (Czech Republic, France, Italy and Slovenia).

The work started with the introduction to the postgraduate course and expert meeting that were given by the course directors Nada Švob-Djokić and Jiřina Šmejkalova. Firstly they gave a brief introduction to the background of this year's event, and secondly they presented their views on the approach to cultural transitions in Southeastern Europe. The introductory lecture by Nada Švob-Djokić entitled *Cultural Transitions: From Theories to the cultural transitional changes in Southeastern Europe* was organized around three main points: cultural transformations and transitions in Southeastern Europe, reassessment and redefinition of cultural identities in the processes of transition, and cultural links and cooperation established on the basis of development of cultural industries and new technologies used in the processes of cultural communication. Southeastern Europe underwent major and substantial changes in its 20<sup>th</sup> century history. Liberated from the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires in the first quarter of the century, the established states went through the formation of kingdoms, through socialist federation and reemergence of the national states by the end of the century. The dynamism of changes was particularly reflected in redefinition of cultural identities that have been developing from the premodern

ethnic into modern, territorial, state-structured, national and corporate identities, and to the post-modern, trans-territorial and market-structured and new technologies. Such fast and dynamic developments have enabled the parallel existence of very different types of identities, and of the resurgence of these different identity types at the same time. The spiritual geography of the whole region therefore reflects a horizontal presence of structurally and historically diverse types of cultures and cultural identities. Influences of global information societies are now introducing respect and understanding for the plurality of social and cultural models and for a new kind of multicultural diversity. Although not fully and well established, these appear as new frameworks defining cultural transitions. The specific regional and disciplinary differences produce a specific expression of cultural transitions in Southeastern Europe. All countries of the region are undergoing or have undergone major systemic transitions, and their cultures are re-interpreted now in the frameworks of globalism, Europeanism and information technologies. The spiritual geography of the region has moved from the ethnic myths, heroic epics and destruction of cultural influences of other Southeast European cultures to the rationalization of myths and histories and better understanding of the global integration challenges.



Jiřina Šmejkalova gave an outline of the methodological approach to cultural transitions in the post-socialist countries. She said that ›transitology‹ has been established as a discipline through Latin American studies. In the European post-socialist states it establishes itself very slowly. Rare works have developed different types of approaches: horizontal (comparative), vertical (going deep in one situation), and such that grasps a number of combined approaches through the focussing on the phenomenology of approaches. Nevertheless, the gap in production of knowledge on transition remains very wide: western theoreticians dominate. Would it be possible to develop an own approach on cultural transition? The context for this might be offered in cultural studies. It would be important to find the most appropriate apparatus for research of the changes that occurred in the last fifteen years. The researchers from the ›region‹ need to map the existing situations, and not to wait for the mapping from outside. Jiřina Šmejkalova gave examples of the ›revolutionary‹ rhetoric coming from the Anglo-Saxon theoretical fields (e.g. Anthony Giddens defining the events of 1989 as ›revolutions‹). On the contrary, the research done in the region suggests that transitional processes are more about continuity, rather than discontinuity. In conclusion, she advocated for the redefinition of cultural studies in the region and for active communication between experts in the region, in order to decipher the position of cultural transition by local research efforts rather than wait for input from outside. The workshop entitled *National Perspectives on Cultural Transitions: Cultural Identities Redefined* was facilitated by Jiřina Šmejkalova, and focused on two closely inter-related issues: ›culture‹ as an object of production of knowledge and ›culture‹ as a subject, i.e. producer of knowledge (how does culture co-construct our ›national‹ identities?). The participants were encouraged to present a cultural product of their choice (a painting, a film, a fiction book, a song, a poem, a web site...) that recently redefined and/or re-inforced stereotypes about national identity of their own countries. The in-puts were various: presentations on artistic urban regeneration of Tirana facilitated by mayor Edi Rama, redefining of the book (and video/DVD) market by actions such as ›books/DVDs with newspapers‹ in Croatia, etc. In connection to this, Mirko Petrić and Inga Tomić-Koludrović presented the latest findings of the content analysis of Croatian web-portals that show their sexist, nationalistic and sensationalistic position. All these examples presented in the workshop revealed the changing nature of cultural production in SEE, and its wider social implications.



The next day the program put stress on cultural policy in the regional context. Nina Obuljen gave a presentation *Managing Cultural Transitions: Impacts of Cultural Policies (EU and Regional Experiences)*, that tackled the burning questions on cultural policies in the context of EU integration. Nina Obuljen presented some current issues in research of cultural policies of the countries of the region. She gave an overview of the *Council of Europe's National Policy Reports* that included countries from the region, and of the Council of Europe and *ERICarts's Compendium – Cultural Policies* website that monitors 36 country profiles. Although many were skeptical about the first appearance of both of these reports and their usefulness, there were many more positive aspects of writing them – a certain level of knowledge was reached, and for the first time people from the cultural sector worked together on joint projects. As a result, with the description of the existing phenomena, a first step towards elaborating cultural policies was made. When discussing cultural policies, it is impor-



discussion followed on questions of accessibility of new technologies in the SEE region, its dependence on state-aid, the small markets of SEE, changed aspects of the work habits in cultural industries and the issue of outsourcing.

In her presentation *Culture industries: In between the Global and the Local* Maja Breznik gave an overview of the Slovenian book industry as a local cultural industry. She tried to examine the book industry in a small country under the influence of globalization. She offered a thorough analysis of the Slovenian publishers' profiles, book genre profiles, lending of books in public libraries and how some of the state-aid instruments work in this context. Maja Breznik defined publishing program of Slovenian publishing houses as monoculture publishing, because their publishing policy is orientated exclusively toward commercial programs while non-commercial programs and more demanding book projects depend entirely on small publishing houses and state subsidies. As considering the public lending right that was recently introduced to Slovenia, Maja Breznik is doubtful about it: it gives greatest reward to the most commercial authors, to international bestsellers and obligatory school literature, which in any case do not have problems to be published or read. Maja Breznik concluded that the local cultural industries are not protecting the community from the global entertainment industries, but are rather their Trojan horse.

The discussion on the cultural and creative industries continued in the afternoon session entitled *Creative industries in transition: Toward a creative economy?* Inga Tomić Koludrović and Mirko Petrić tried to give an overview of how culture is perceived as an economic resource because of the creative industries and knowledge economy. They thoroughly examined the British creative industries model that started with 'Creative industries mapping document' of the DCMS and criticized the direct implementation of this model in the respective SEE countries. What Tomić-Koludrović and Petrić are questioning is the applicability of the model and the strategies used, the local situation. Transition countries are not ideal-typical 'postindustrial societies' (Daniel Bell) nor 'postindustrial modernized societies' (Ulrich Beck), but they are rather 'mixed societies' – having traditional structures, but encountering globalization processes. In this way, one should try to create a model that is applicable to the transition societies, and to see the position of culture in it, and not to directly apply creative industries model examined elsewhere.

During the next morning session the discussion shifted to the *Managing Cultural Transitions: Multiculturalism, Interculturalism and Minority Policies* in which Melita Richter Malabotta stressed that there is no EU model of multiculturalism – every country has their own past, and in that way, own model. The candidate countries is more of a one-way approach – it is the west's fear of the east. She gave an overview of these multiculturalist and interculturalist models, such as 'assimilationist' French model, the German 'Gastarbeiter' model, segmented pluralist (Italian) model, the intercultural model, and the British, Dutch and North American model of 'parallel worlds'. The key point of all these models is the question of dealing with differences – either by negating them, individualizing them, stressing the differences, folklorizing them, making the differences rigid and static, considering the differences as a socio-cultural anachronism, etc. What is important is that new borders in Europe have constructed also new models of migration and immigration that will need a thorough analysis. In this way it is necessary to take into account the communities beyond borders, examine them and develop regional trans-border cooperation, including it in a process establish regional knowledge.

In the second part of her contribution, Richter Malabotta focused on the concept of citizenship in a multiethnic society taking as a departure point René Gallissot's theoretical contribution claiming that an effective citizenship can only take place through the articulation of the political citizenship with the social citizenship, through the renewal of the associative practices and the movement tending to transform the societies and its dominion structures. One of this practices she individuated in the migrant writings.

In the subsequent presentation the topic switched to 'cultural studies'. In the first part of her presentation entitled *Cultural Studies (New Perspectives)* Marina Biti reflected upon Fredrick Jameson's article *On Cultural Studies*. She noted that what is needed is a positive definition of cultural studies, noting that she understands cultural studies not as a discipline but as a field that in need to a curriculum. When discussing the field of cultural studies one has to bear in mind not only the development of British cultural studies from 1964, but also of culturology ('Kulturwissenschaft') that has a history of its own. After the migration of cultural studies across continents in the 1980's and 1990's, the field was connected to 'area studies'. Cultural studies have appeared there as 'postdisciplinary' and have been developed

as external point of reference to the established disciplines. This relationship appears to accommodate both the intellectual and knowledge challenges and provide for better understanding on numerous different cultures.

This overview was an introduction to the second part of the presentation in which Marina Biti gave the outline of the program of the *Department for Cultural Studies at the University of Rijeka* that was created on the views previously stressed. The curriculum of the newly established graduate course is an interdisciplinary one (a horizontal approach) that ›bounds‹ several areas as to present its diversity in its most rich form. The presentation of the curriculum triggered a lively discussion that tackled several issues: from the question of why the local history of the cultural studies was overlooked in the curriculum (e.g. *Cultural Theory Conference at the Faculty of Pedagogy in Rijeka in 1979*), to the issues of the input of regional knowledge in the program. The debate concluded with the discussion on the issues of the future labor market for the students who graduate from the same department. The initiative to establish the *Department for Cultural Studies* is an important point in the future development of the cultural sector in Croatia, and in the region, as it shows the strength of the regional knowledge pool.

Milena Dragičević-Šešić gave the lecture *From neighbourness to globality: has a regional niche been discovered yet?* in which she problematized the question of imaginary and real borders – how are we creating new divides among ourselves. In this way, cultural policy appears to be a tool of distinction. In the EU, cultural policies have been (the territory and citizenship inclusive approach), while in Eastern countries, Dragičević-Šešić stresses, cultural policies are constructed communities driven, i.e. ethnicity is seen as the key element of self-identification. She offered a list of notable differences that between the EU and the East, such as: market of cultural goods vs. public interest in culture, feelings of self-confidence vs. feelings of dependency, widening of international mobility vs. feelings of territorial isolation, cosmopolitanism vs. ethnocentrism, etc. What she sees as important is the question, whether there is a niche that is common to the entire region. Can we define something as a ›Balkan niche‹, a niche of ›turbulence‹, but yet of excellence particularly in knowledge on how to survive in such turbulent times? In this way the question of regional knowledge and expertise has been raised again – regional expertise has to be acknowledged firstly in the region, and then applied. It is absurd that the regional knowledge comes to us through western channels, after it has been approved there (case of Maria Todorova, etc). In addition, Milena Dragičević-Šešić presented the case study on the Eurovision song contest in 2004, where one could perceive the neighborhood voting policy, but also the territory of cultural clashes and conflicts (the comparison with football matches was also offered).

The discussion of different media texts, partly based on views of the films shown during the first part of the program, followed. Two recent movies of the young directors from (S)EE were shown: the *Fine Dead Girls (Fine mrtve djevojke, 2002)*, by Croatian director Dalibor Matanić, and the *Champions (Mistři, 2004)* by Czech director Marek Najbrt. The idea was to present the recent works of young artists in order to compare their perceptions of the national identity of the countries in question, and in this way to prompt discussion on its redefinitions. The participants noted that young directors are trying to present the contemporary grim reality, and to give a critique of the problems of the societies in transition, such as unemployment, defeatism, changing identities, etc. The strongly supported option of ›national‹ identification misses the real problems of populations.

The expert meeting *Cultural Cooperation in SEE* was held the next day; the first part was devoted to *Cultural cooperation in Southeastern Europe: From states to (market) projects* by Dona Kolar-Panov. After the general introduction into the situation of audience research in SEE, she gave an interesting comparison of two projects under the same title – *Toa sum jas! / This is me!* These are two television programs dealing with different kinds of cultural cooperation, and are both broadcast in the region. It is important to note that both programs claim to promote *Communication and understanding among young people in the Balkans*. The first one is a children's program *Toa sum jas - Balkan kids' mosaic* that involves children living in Albania, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia, in making a joint program in which the children present some specific cultural experiences from the region they are coming from. The second project is the reality show named also *Toa sum jas!* - a ›Big Brother‹ type of a reality show whose participants come from the countries of ex-Yugoslavia, and who were living for a period of time in one house in Skopje, Macedonia. This show is not much different from other reality TV shows, but, to the producers' surprise, the



participants in the show did not confront each other on the basis of their nationalities, they were rather exchanging the common knowledge on the pop culture of the ex-Yugoslavia. There was a public outcry due to some explicit sexuality in the show, and due to legislative issues linked to the fact that it is shown on the Macedonian public television. That triggered questions whether the public is better off with or without this reality show type of cultural cooperation.

It also raises the issue of localization of global formats of media. Copycat television (which reality shows are) is not addressing issues of cultural diversity. As considering the first show *Toa sum jas - Balkan Kid's Mosaic* although it addresses the issue of cultural cooperation in a far better manner than the latter one, as the funding for the program is coming from international organizations, and every part of the show is made in the local surroundings, the question is how much of it is real regional cooperation as regional bodies are not involved and children do not meet each other.

Aldo Milohnić who presented his views on the changing nature of employment in the cultural sector gave the input to the discussion. He sees it as a shift from the Fordist to post-Fordist system of employment, that is, from so-called ›typical employment‹ (stable forms of employment, i.e. permanent and full-time jobs) towards ›a-typical employment‹ (non-stable forms of work, i.e. temporary, part-time or second jobs, self employment, freelance status etc.). These forms of ›flexible‹ working conditions, that are actually typical (and not ›a-typical‹) in the cultural sector, have created a new socio-economic situation, where the division between the work-time and leisure time is being blurred. Another point, that is interesting for the discussion on cultural or creative industries is the orientation of the post-Fordist organization of production towards so-called ›new economy‹ products, towards the trade of images, styles, designs etc. In that way the emergence of creative industries is also the result of a much broader process of the post-Fordist mode of the organization of production. The Bad side of post-Fordism and the constant process of ›flexibilisation‹ of working conditions is called ›precarity‹, i.e. instability of employment, social insecurity, dependency and economic weakness. Although precarity is usually associated with marginal employment situations such as seasonal and other types of casual work, there are more and more artists and cultural workers living in precarious conditions. Aldo Milohnić noted that in the context of SEE, the position of employment in the cultural sector is even more difficult as the pressure on the funding for culture on the state budget is rather big.

The expert meeting part of the event was concluded with the lecture by Lidia Varbanova entitled *Cultural economics and financing culture: dilemmas and perspectives (or money, markets and muses)*. Lidia Varbanova first gave a historical overview of the field of cultural economics – from the role of patronages and individual donations towards the birth of cultural economics as a discipline. Mapping down the current situation of the financing of culture, she gave some basic structured views on state-support, art markets, and alternative funding for culture. Considering the state-support for the arts, there are several dilemmas present that everybody dealing with cultural policy is struggling with: the question of the balance of the direct and indirect support; the question of support of state, non-profit or commercial art forms; center vs. periphery; contemporary vs. traditional; established vs. emerging art forms; amateur vs. professional art, etc.

The question rises – should the state-support be for cultural products, processes or maintenance? But the key question that rises is the question of how to foster creativity through policy decisions? As considering the alternative funding for culture Varbanova gave an overview of the possible models such as support from foundations, corporate philanthropy and sponsorships from the business sector, and also, less popular ways of supporting culture and social activities, such as loans, lottery funds, shares, mutual funds, etc. In the second part of her presentation she stressed the practical view on the cultural economics, i.e., Varbanova offered some practical advice on project proposal writing, shared some common mistakes which applicants make when applying for project grants, information on possible funders, their web-links, and in addition she stressed the importance of visibility of a project, public accountability and reporting matters. During the discussion that followed, there were several questions raised on difficulties of funding for cultural cooperation in SEE, out of which the stress was put on the lack of sufficient communication between cultural organizations and networks from various parts of Europe and also on regional level. The LAB (*The Laboratory for European Cultural Cooperation*) was presented as well as a new pan-European initiative which aims to provide access to opportunities for transnational cultural cooperation and stimulate intercultural dialogue across Europe ([www.lab-culture.eu](http://www.lab-culture.eu)).

eurocult.org/lab/).

The last day of the meeting was devoted to the evaluation of the programme. In general, participants were satisfied with the programme and very satisfied with the organization of the meeting. The amount of knowledge offered and gained, and the special type of atmosphere of the event (the equal participations of experts and students) was highly valued. It was stressed that this is a one of a kind event in the region. There were some suggestions for the future, including the one to accept more students, and their preparing presentations on specific issues in the region, such as different art forms, multimedia presentations, and particular projects from the region. All participants supported the continuation of this type of program. It might be given in the virtual space on the Internet, where the information and knowledge could be exchanged, creating a network of experts that may substantially change the regional connections. In addition, the organizers are planning a similar event to be held at IUC in the month of May, 2006, entitled *Cultural Transitions in Southeastern Europe: The Creative City*. The book with articles from this year's event will be published by the end of 2005.

