

ADVOCACY INITIATIVES FOR PUBLIC CULTURE AND DEMOCRATIC VISION IN TRANSITION COUNTRIES: EXPERIENCES FROM ROMANIA

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Public Policy

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2011

Abstract

This paper seeks to give an account of the contribution of advocacy initiatives for public culture to policy change. Experiences from Romania between 1990 and 2009 are explored through a contrastive theoretical framework of pluralist and deliberative democracy. The paper advances the argument that advocacy initiatives for public culture with a deliberative core can permeate the decision-making configuration and lead to policy change, even in a pluralist democracy participation infrastructure. At the same time, in cases in which a univocal source of legitimation of the narrative storyline of policy-making is mainstreamed within the decision-making discourse, bottom-up participation and deliberative democracy bear the risk of being rendered powerless of any real potential to influence policy-making in culture. Policy implications for current advocacy initiatives for public culture are considered.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank professor Dragan Klaic for his inspiring comments and suggestions. Special thanks go also to Peter Inkei, Tsveta Andreeva, Yuriy Vulkovski, Andreea Grecu, Ștefania Ferchedău and Cosmin Manolescu for their invaluable help in the exploration of the topic. Advocacy initiatives for public culture, especially during transition, is a complex and sensitive topic for discussion and reflection, at the same time essential for policy change. I thank all those that supported the exploration of the topic, respondents to questionnaires and discussants in various occasions.

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Introduction

The turmoil that followed the fall of the communist regimes and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989 did not assume an identical path and did not encounter the same political and cultural-systemic features in all countries in Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, researchers still consider that there are reasons to investigate important dimensions of the cultural system change by taking as a main unit of analysis the post-communist region of Central and Eastern Europe. Experts (see Inkei, 2009) bring arguments about the still strong “East European specifics”, even 20 years after the start of the transition process towards a free market and democratic governance. From appreciations concerning the position and status of culture, to the emergence and features of civil society, the patterns of cultural consumption and the economic dimension of cultural activities, the authors claim that deriving East European specifics in culture is most relevant when placed, on one hand, within the framework of policy-making and, on the other hand, when viewed in the light of its Western European counterpart cultural systems. In respect to the profile of cultural policy-making, Copic (2009) argues that post-socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe deal with a much more complex situation than their Western counterparts, when trying to move from an ideological-based style of cultural policy-making towards a more “critical and reflexive”, and so, policy-making in culture is still, in these countries, defined upon ideological impressions (Copic, 2009: 189).

In this context of research, one neglected topic is that of advocacy for policy change and culture and the dynamics of participation. Vulkovski (2005), Nițulescu (2001) and others, especially in the frame of the „Policies for Culture” programme coordinated by Ecumest Association (1999-2007), have reflected upon the conditions of participation and lobbying for

culture, but they did so mostly with a view to highlight best practices or challenges that could hamper the process. They mostly focused on the institutional design (see Vulkovski, 2005), or on the needed skills and mode of organisation of the advocate organisation or initiative (Nițulescu, 2001). In this respect, there are important case-studies that inform about how, in a specific transitional context, bottom-up advocacy has managed to influence policy in culture (Visnic and Dragojevic, 2008, about the Clubture platform in Croatia), or how a committed dialogue and collaboration has linked research capabilities, civil society, and political and administrative decision-makers into a dialogue which shaped policy-making in culture in Bulgaria (Deleva, 2004, about Technological Park Culture). These informative reflections and detailed, focused analysis need to be complemented with a more process-based approach, one that would interpret advocacy initiatives within the participative discourse. The purpose of this would be not only a better understanding of an important feature of transition: policy formulation and policy change, but also the acknowledgement of the nature and frame of dialogue and democratic vision in which culture has been advocated.

The central research question is “What can successful advocacy experiences for public culture tell researchers about the nature of democratic processes involved in policy-making for culture in transition countries?”, with the corollary, “What type of democratic vision of culture has been constructed during transition through the successes of certain advocacy initiatives for public culture?”. The theoretical framework employed is that of a contrastive view of pluralist and deliberative democracy.

The working hypothesis is that the experiences of the first decade of transition were characterized by a reconfirmation of the pre-1989 power structures among artists and cultural operators within advocacy practices, legitimized as a civil society participation in the democratic participatory narrative for policy change through the main legislative and

executive bodies. The profile of participation as lobbying was confirmed by advocates in culture and policy-makers, at the same time that it was legitimized by institutional instances of expertise, such as the Council of Europe, the European Union. In spite of this, more openness for dialogue and deliberation concerning all aspects of policy-making in culture, as it was experienced between 2004 and 2008, lead to significant policy changes within a system of participation with a strong deliberative core. At the same time, as the instances of legitimation of narrative discourses over policy priorities changed, as did the civil society advocacy resources (expertise, research and finances) by the end of the 2008, deliberation was transformed into a strategy to legitimize main-stream policy aims, such as the simplistic subordination of artistic creativity and activities to their economic contribution. This observation blurs the distinction between deliberative and pluralist democracy in participation, and turns advocacy practices into a spectacle of legitimation of policy aims beyond the influence of cultural operators. Evidence-based policy making, aimed at improving policy decisions and promoted as one of the good-governance principles, can suffocate participation and policy-change from below, if either alternative research is not supported and accepted to the formulation of core objectives and aims, or if dialogue and consultation are not considered at the base of political and policy decisions.

The research, while envisioning all countries in CEE region, will only focus on the Romanian experiences between 1989 and 2009, with a stronger close-up on the time-frame 1989-2006. The choice of the case-study corresponds to the need of exploratory and explanatory hypothesis in the Romanian context, whose research capacities in all aspects of cultural policy-making are in much need to be augmented. Moreover, the difficult enactment of participation and advocacy for public culture today in Romania makes it important to critically reflect upon the experiences of the past. Last but not least, the research aims to bring

critical reflections around the implicit assumptions about the character of democratic vision of participation theories, in the light of the widespread advices and tactics for advocacy and lobbying, which are taken at face-value, irrespective of the political and social context in which they are implemented (see ACE, 2010. or NAASA policy brief, 2010).

As this facet of the policy-making process in culture has not yet been systematically explored, one of the important tasks on the project is to devise a theoretical framework for analysis and explore the history of the phenomena under consideration. Chapter 1 of the paper will describe the features of deliberative and pluralist democracy in respect to policy-making, policy change, the role of public entrepreneurs, participation and interest groups formation. In Chapter 2, the methodology of the research is outlined, of which the conceptual delineation of advocacy for public culture and the variables of concern for the pluralist/deliberative contrastive typology are identified. I describe and analyze a set of observations, based on primary and secondary data in Romanian context, in Chapter 3 and in the Conclusions part I summarize the findings and evaluate the working hypothesis in the light of these. Implications for future study, policy implications and limitations of the research are also provided.

The length of the research is justified, on one hand, on the innovative character of the approach, for which a theoretical framework had to be formulated and arguments be brought to support it, and, on the other hand, on the necessity to approach a significant period of time, up to the present day, in order to render meaningful the observations concerning policy-change and participation, the use of evidence and the meaning of the changes in the instances of legitimation of the narrative discourses concerning policy-making in culture.

Chapter 1

A political framework for understanding advocacy initiatives for culture

In this chapter I present and discuss the main concepts employed for the purpose of the research, as well as elaborate the theoretical framework that justifies the approach and the methodology employed, which will be explained in the next chapter.

1.1 Deliberative and pluralist democracy

The most important concepts are “advocacy” and “public culture”, two terms that have been barely used together in past research, but, to some extent, have been used in the practical work of organisations, or in speeches and interviews given by cultural activists or experts. For this reason, a comprehensive theoretical framework that would acknowledge their position in a coherent explanatory theoretical system is needed. I take this framework to be that democratic policy-making, with its two contemporary important variations: deliberative and pluralist democracy. Within this framework, the two concepts are oriented towards policy change, in contrast to policy implementation or evaluation, but complementary to the process of policy formulation.

Deliberative democracy as a concept was defined by Kahane (2010), in opposition with the notion of pluralist democracy on three distinct dimensions.

First of all, while pluralist democracy, as a theoretical construct put forward by Dahl (1998), is a confrontational dispute between already formed opinion and interests among whom the strongest (or majority) opinion becomes the option of the whole population. While the view acknowledges the right and legitimate interest of all citizens to engage in meaningful activities that would channel their opinions and concerns, it cannot effectively resolve the pitfall of reflecting the power differences among interest groups, and thus it supports, reproduces, or even makes them more profound. These power differences, which in Dahl's perspectives are resolved by resorting to elites, that drive the process of deliberation for policy concerns in the name of citizens, could, in Kahane's opinion, silence a legitimate concern, and moreover one that could gather significant support from a large part of the population. In contrast with the pluralist perspective, Kahane considers that "participants in the democratic process should aim at a result that reflects not the balance of contending forces and political skills, but the force of the better argument." (Kahane, 2010,2). This, he names to be the main characteristic of a deliberative democracy. The implications of this difference in aims between deliberative and pluralist democracy are obvious on different aspect of policy-making, starting with the higher moral demands placed on citizens and institutions by the former.

Another important feature of deliberative democracy is that it considers that all parties are entitled to challenge (by examination and reconsideration) not only the operational and strategic decisions of public authorities, but also the "most fundamental political decisions". (Kahane, 2010,11). For this reason, it is considered to represent a more proficient theoretical platform on which institutional designs can tackle political disagreements in multicultural societies. In this sense, albeit both deliberative democracy and pluralist democracy consider participation in the act of governance as essential to the functioning of democratic institutions and a democratic political environment, they render it essentially different values and roles.

While pluralists consider that democracy emerges out of the confrontation of different perspectives, being thus a causal concept, deliberative democracy theorists claim that democracy is the rational process of accommodating different opinions for a common purpose. Consequently, deliberative democracy has placed greater emphasis on the need to better define the scope of deliberation and the deliberative infrastructure, as a way to give a voice to all the parties involved.

As far as the democratic visions embedded in the two views on democracy, the philosophical foundations of deliberative democracy lie in Habermas's "ideal speech situations", and Kahane infers that for Habermas "deliberative democracy is part of a larger, much more ambitious project to do with the role of communication, as a principle driver of human historical development (Habermas 1985, 1988, cited in Kahane, 2010,8). The fact that communication is at the very heart of deliberative democracy, means that the way this communication is understood and the manner in which it takes place, become essential features of a practical nature. In this sense, it is considered that, if pluralist democracy places substantive constraints on democracy, deliberative democracy raises concerns about procedural aspects, what Fischer calls the "deliberative infrastructure" (Fischer, 2003).

The next subchapter will weight the arguments as to why a contrastive approach towards participatory policy-making, either in the form of "deliberative policy-making" (Fischer, 2009) or pluralist policy-making (with a strong focus on the lobbying and Anglo-Saxon experience of participation) can help answer the research question.

1.2 Public benefit arguments and culture

The first argument lies with the historical context in which advocacy initiatives took place. After 1989, in Romania democratic political institutions, civil society and participatory practices had to be reinvented and developed.

If within a pluralist democracy perspective, the voice to express concerns and participate in the formulation of public policy is given to elite or recognized groups of interests (most common under the form of lobby groups), a deliberative perspective focuses on facilitation and deliberation among citizens and organisation, the most important features being the appropriateness of the deliberative infrastructure and position of the facilitating expert. In the turbulent times of transition, a pluralist narrative contends that the diversity of opinions that raise different concerns will be low, and that the opinion of those that position themselves as “representative” will prevail. To support this, an argument concerning the situation in Hungary can be taken to be exemplary. Kuti (1997) considers that Hungary had one of the strongest traditions of voluntary associations among CEE countries before 1945. Nevertheless, Ferenc observes that after 1989 a picture of the civil society emerged with a distinct profile and role to what it was named “NGO” in the Western world: “In Hungary, as in other countries of East Central Europe, many newly born so-called NGOs declared themselves to be advocates and embodiments of civil society. The term NGO is in itself an empty concept. In the West, it seems related to attempts to delegate welfare state responsibilities to society. In East Central Europe, the breakdown of the communist party-states gave primacy to NGOs both in theory and in practice. [...] In many cases in East Central Europe, NGOs are not at all genuine agents of an authentic civil society. More often than expected, they are creatures of governments or politics or individuals who are using them for concealing illegal activities or personal interests” (Ferenc in Cook and Kotari, 2001,93).

It is not much a matter of academic observation, as it is of policy and artistic practice the fact the culture does not accommodate a single, well-defined class of activities, products or services. Nevertheless, for critical or public administration purposes, different rationales and portraits of the concept have been discursively constructed, out of which some have gained pre-eminence over time. I will refer swiftly to Pierre Bourdieu and Theodor Adorno as the most important conceptual thinkers of culture and its public relevance, with important consequences for policy-making and advocacy at large.

One of the already classical ways of grasping the cultural field is that of Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between the field of large-scale cultural production and that of restricted production. Bourdieu considers that "the field of restricted production can only become a system objectively producing for producers by breaking with the public of non-producers, that is, with the non-intellectual fraction of the dominant class" (Bourdieu, 1993,115). Within this framework, there is no clear referencing of which particular cultural activity or creative process pertains to which of the two fields, what appears to be important is the role given to the creator, respectively to the public of the creation. In this sense, Bourdieu notes: "the professional ideology of producers for producers and their spokespeople establishes an opposition between creative liberty and the laws of the market, between works which create their public and works created by their public" (Bourdieu, 1993,127). Bourdieu tracks down throughout the history on the 18th and 19th century in Europe the way in which these two fields have emerged and jointly developed. An important aspect of his intellectual excursion into the topic is represented by the role the state had played in steering this evolution. His observation concerning the market mechanisms and the creative liberty makes a vital contribution to the purpose of the research, in so far that it establishes one of the most common criteria for understanding the struggle of policy-making for culture in the last 20 years of transition in CEE countries: from the audience's point of view, the perspective on

culture is distinguished by the tension between the economic dimension of cultural production, on one hand, and the creative liberty, as the symbolic capital of cultural activity, on the other. Commercial cultures, creative liberty, economic dimension of culture largely define the heart of the debate concerning the legitimacy of public support for culture. In the debate, two types of approaches stand out: one that makes an attempt to reconcile and assess economic and cultural capital features, from a public benefit methodology point of view, and another one that regards culture from the perspective of its relation to its possibilities for social transformation. The first is exemplified by the works of David Throsby, while the second has been represented in the writings of Theodor Adorno.

For policy makers and analysts, such as David Throsby (Throsby, 2010), the two dimensions do not need to lead to a paralysis of decision for policy-making, and they both need to be recognized as legitimate dimensions of the object of cultural policy, through particular methods and tools. Throsby was a pioneer of valuating the public-benefits of the arts already in 1983 using the Contingency Valuation Method in Sydney, Australia, for the purpose of determining the need of public funding and support of the opera. The method is only important for the purpose of this research in that it confirms that when this narrative of culture and economy is institutionalized by public administration, policy-researchers and policy-makers can and do develop tools to accompany the conceptual outlook.

The other aspect of the culture-market dichotomy takes the reasoning in another direction, into the realm of the actual actors of cultural productions and the process behind their work, with the aim to acknowledge the role of culture in society and in the life of the people. In discussing the public benefits of culture for policy considerations, the already classical critical contributions of Theodor Adorno help explain the need, perils and sometimes reluctance with which public support for culture is associated with. Although his essays on mass culture were originally published in the between 1936 and 1949, a time when the

cultural industry and mass-culture had a different meaning to the contemporary society and a different social dynamics in relation to society and art, Adorno's critical claims concerning the role of "cultural industry" and its potential to promote or block "integral freedom" (2001,2) can still bring forward, albeit in an idealized form, some of the challenges relating artistic creativity and cultural and creative industries. "Cultural industry", a term first used by Adorno in 1947 in the book "Dialectic of Enlightenment", is considered to be defined by the mode of production, which reproduces the same "principles of exchange and equivalence that reign in the sphere of production outside leisure [...] and which presents culture as the realization of the right of all to the gratification of desire while in reality continuing the negative integration of society". (2001,3). In doing so, the cultural industry silences reason and denies the possibility of change. Adorno argues that it is not only the cultural producers themselves that amount to such a phenomenon, but that there are different qualities of the value-system and the way to understand the aims of policy-making, that contribute to the silencing of reason and the reproduction of the status quo, taken to be the reflection of inequalities in society.

The objective of the theoretical excursion would still not be complete without a presentation of the stakes that deliberative and pluralist democracy views raise for policy-making, the benefits and challenges of participatory policy-making, and the implications they have for enhancing or annihilating opportunities for change. These are all essential aspects for understanding what is at stake when one speaks about advocacy initiatives in newly (re)established democracies, and also to derive a comprehensive set of indicators that would render meaningful the experience of advocacy initiatives for public culture in CEE countries.

1.3 Participatory approaches in development studies: promises and challenges for policy-making

Participation and the need to redefine citizenship are, according to Fischer (2003), topics high on the political science research agenda. This is due, according to him, because of the drop of participation in many of the EU and Western societies, that remain to be interpreted either as more general or specific feeling of apathy towards political institutions and political practices, or as a signal that traditional ways of participation in political life (mainly, by voting) are outdated, and that new ones need to be established. The promises and challenges of participation are outlined by Cook and Kotari in a collection of essays around the question: “Participation, the new tyranny?” (2001). The view the authors take is mostly evaluating experiences of foreign aid for development and many of the examples concerning participatory practices reflect the ideas put forward by Robert Chambers. As a tool to better grasp the challenges and hopes that participatory approaches bring, I consider that the exploration of observations coming from this field of inquiry, as one that inspired later considerations of participatory policy-making in public administration and political life, are instructive.

A response to the failures of top-down development approaches, participatory approaches aim to “make people central to development by encouraging beneficiary involvement in interventions that affect them and over which they previously had limited control or influence” (2001,5). In doing it, it is considered that development aid decisions that are sensitive to the signals send by beneficiaries, will be more sustainable, relevant and will empower the people for future decision that concern them. In addition to this, Fischer (2003) considers that participatory approaches give more legitimacy to decision-makers. This is an

issue clearly related, yet independent, from relevance and sustainability, in the perspective of administrative behaviour, a distinction that will prove very important for understanding advocacy initiatives for public culture in CEE countries in the last 20 years. The problems of participation in shaping “local knowledge” by means of the expectations and perceptions, from the engaged citizens or interest groups, on what is realistic to expected that the source of power (in our case, the administration), could deliver. This leads, in Cook and Kotari’s opinion, to participatory approaches confirming the power relations and intentions of the decision-maker. At the same time, those participatory approaches that require face-to-face interactions among citizens and groups of interest are subjected to the perils associated with group-thinking, such as taking collective decisions which are more dangerous than those taken if each individual would have expressed separately his/her wishes and concerns, and expressing ideas that are in agreement with the majority or the most influential of participants, while in fact they are not. An interesting critique of participation comes from Giles Mohan, in the collection of essays cited above, who considers that focusing on “the personal and the local as the sites of empowerment and knowledge, participatory approaches minimize the importance of the other places where power and knowledge are located” (2001,9). This proves to be particularly important when talking about advocacy initiatives for public culture and their relations to cultural and artistic practices and their empowerment of local activists, from the academia or the active cultural field and will account for the drawing of a set of indicators and criteria for the purpose of the research, as described in the Methodology part of the paper.

Within the deliberative/pluralist democracy debate, the aims and challenges of participatory approaches outlined above seem to be more coherent with the first view on democracy, with its focus on deliberation lead by stakeholders and citizen involvement, and not as a process driven by elites. Nevertheless, deliberative democracy seems to have developed answers to at

least some of the challenges raised by the participatory approach, among whom one feature stands out: in the practice of deliberation for policy-making, it is important to take into consideration the institutional practices that produce or facilitate particular policy changes (Hajer, 1995, cited in Fischer, 2003,90) and policy learning occurs (or not). The last theoretical sub-chapter will briefly outline the main ideas related to this important theme, for the purpose of conceptualizing advocacy initiatives for public culture in their socio-political context of transition.

1.4 Policy making and the opportunities for change

The debate between deliberative and pluralist democracy researchers touches upon one of the most important subjects for public policy making: that of change and stability of policy. Conversely, by elaborating upon this theme, it informs about the strategies advocacy could use in order to promote change and get the new ideas across to policy makers. How policy learning occurs, what is the dynamics of policy change or stability are some of the important questions relevant for advocacy purposes. Proponents of deliberative and pluralist democracy give different answers to these questions, by choosing different models of the policy-process, supporting different roles to policy-makers and managers of public administration, giving different priority to the proof of competence and expertise and, last but not least, making different claims about the role of the institutional, group and personal belief system in the participatory interaction.

About the role assigned to policy-makers and managers of public administration, Fischer (2003, 2009) and Hajer (1995, cited in Fischer, 2003) discuss the critical importance of the so-called “post-empiricist expert”, who is defined as “an interpretive mediator operating between the available analytic frameworks of social science, policy findings, and the differing

perspectives of the public actors, both those of policy decision-makers and citizens.” (Fischer, 2003,11). He could be found working not only in public institutions, but also in universities, private companies or non-profits, he could even be an independent entity. Whatever the case, his role is essential to steer (Fischer uses the word “facilitate” as well) the problem of competence (and the lack of it) of those that are making claims concerning the orientation of policy, as part of the deliberation process.

This issue of competence and expertise is actually the nucleus of both deliberative and pluralist perspective and it impacts profoundly not only the way policy-making functions, but also the way knowledge is manifested and constructed. In Fischer’s opinion, “if the struggle between those with and without knowledge is one of the key socio-political dynamics of the new century, the discourses of knowledge in their various forms will be a central aspect of political conflict across the policy spectrum”(2009,91). While deliberative democracy supports the role of the post-empiricist expert as facilitating knowledge formation among the various stakeholders, the pluralist democracy perspectives account for a confrontational approach to solve the challenge of both divergent interests and power-relations. The central figure is that of the expert, the elite connoisseur who is either managing and promoting the interest of “his people” (from an advocate perspective), or, if from a policy-maker position, is evaluating and judging the individual, group-interest perspectives that are being advocated by stakeholders and beneficiaries, comparing and weighting them according to a set of general objectives and legitimate criteria. These different approaches can be largely identified with the idea of policy change taking place under the influence of Advocacy Coalitions, or under that of Discursive Coalitions. The Advocacy Coalition Framework, one of the most influential ways of understanding policy-making, was developed by Sabatier and Jenkins (1993) and was a direct critique to the stages-model of policy-making. Its main innovation is that it explains

policy change through the dynamics among competing advocacy coalitions. Advocacy coalitions are defined as “actors from a variety of institutions at all levels of government who share a set of basic beliefs and who seek to manipulate the rules, budgets, and personnel of governmental institutions in order to achieve these goals over time” (1993,5). These beliefs that Sabatier and Jenkins refer to are further discussed as being distinguished into three main categories: deep core, near (policy) core and secondary, instrumental aspects. They claim that successful policy changes most often take place at the secondary, instrumental level of beliefs, rarely at the policy level and almost never at the core level. From a different perspective, that of deliberative democracy, Hajer (1995, cited in Fischer, 2003) talks of discursive coalitions. Rather than being based on a set of common beliefs, in the Lakatof sense, Hajer contends that a much better explanation for policy change is in the intermingling arena of conflicting and overlapping discursive practices. What matters, in this sense, are the “social meanings that are embedded in the discursive practices of the societal and political institutions” (Hajer, op.cit,90), that greatly rely on the discursive capabilities of actors joining the deliberation. What is important about the discursive capabilities is that they do not refer so much to the specific skills of persuasion that one group or actor might or might not have, but that they reflect and can alter, indirectly, the power structure in society. Change at policy level, when it does happen, it does so not because of a certain information or evidence having reached the decision-maker, but because of the social-appropriateness of the discourse employed to advocate the change, in the sense of its coherence with the narrative story-lines that are assumed by the decision-party of deliberation. In fact, says Hajer, it is these story-lines that are instrumental in the very formulation of the policy-problem, and it is by the human desire for social solidarity, belonging and approval, that these same story-lines can change or remain stable, according to the reformulation or the regrouping of the groups of reference.

After the most important theoretical discussion following the presentation of the background information concerning the socio-political context of the advocacy initiatives for culture in Romania, the next chapter will explain the methodology employed. The main task is to support the identification of a research design, and a set of indicators that would trace the main conditions for policy-change in culture, under the impact of advocacy initiatives, within the framework of deliberative and pluralist democracy.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Lobby and advocacy: between a confrontational and a deliberative style of participation

Avner refers to advocacy as an activity which involves „identifying, embracing, and promoting a cause, [...] an effort to shape public perception or to effect change that may or may not require changes in the law” and distinguish it from that of lobbying, as „a specific form of advocacy to influence legislation – specific laws that are formal statements of public policy.” (both definitions in Avner, 2002,26). A meaningful association is, in this sense, that between lobbying and pluralist democracy, especially as the term has acquired, both in practice and in theory strong connotations of being the tool through which interest groups secure or acquire high status within political institutions, with direct consequences for public policy which concerns them (Ainsworth, 2002). At the same time, if advocacy is considered to be just the more general type of activity, of which lobbying is one type of approach, then the logical consequences is that advocacy, in this understanding, is just the more general facet of interest group activity. In this sense, it appears that advocacy has only been conceptualized from the pluralist perspective.

At the same time, discourses concerning advocacy and lobby today tend to blur or overlap the distinction between the possible differences in democratic vision embedded in the lobbying and the advocacy conceptual referring and practices. For example, the European Culture Congress programmed to take place in September 2011 as the most important cultural event of the Polish Presidency of the EU, has as one of its main themes, that of „Lobbying for

culture”, while the general description states that: „The primary goal of cultural advocacy is to bring about improvement and balance in the work of the cultural sector through legislative means. It involves lobbying for a modern and viable cultural policy that would be treated as seriously as social or economic policy. Advocacy also aims to raise awareness and familiarize the public with the ramifications of cultural activities and the influence they have on society.”¹

In an attempt to disentangle possible complications arising from the conflicting ways in which interest-group representation (lobbying, pluralist perspective) and discursive coalitions, narrative storylines lines practices (advocacy, deliberative perspective) might cause not only theoretical confusion, but also failures of advocacy practices, the research also sets itself, modestly, to at least shed some light at this intermingling of terms and the idea that advocacy could be also discussed, effectively, within the framework of deliberative democracy, as an efficient tool for policy change in culture. The further subchapter elaborates upon the idea to establish meaningful distinctive approaches on most important features of concern for advocacy, in order to act as methodological tools to interpret the observations.

2.2 Theoretical framework and methods employed

The first stage of the research aimed at concept-formation. Looking at Romanian experiences in the framework of the Eastern specifics for policy-making, the methodology of concept formation included the sending out of a questionnaire to more than 60 experts in almost all of CEE countries, people with a history of involvement in advocacy initiatives and participation for the purpose of influencing policy-making in culture². The questionnaire was accompanied

¹ http://www.culturecongress.eu/en/theme/theme_lobbying_for_culture (accessed June 4, 2011)

² The complete list of names, contact details and justification for sending the questionnaire(s) is available

by an explanatory note, which included a broad definition of „advocacy initiatives for public culture”, as „any attempt made by support groups (individuals or organizations) that enter the public discourse in an attempt to influence the decision-making process of policy-makers in relation to culture”. At the same time, the countries considered in this research, belonging to the CEE region, were mentioned. A distinct questionnaire was sent to key-experts from countries outside CEE, in order to explore the perception associated with the advocacy activities in CEE countries in culture.

The questionnaires referred to different theory-questions related to the main issue of inquiry:

TQ1: are most important AIPC in different CEE countries of the same type? (a typology of AIPC is detailed below)

TQ2: do successful AIPC in CEE countries rather share characteristics of the deliberative-style of participatory policy-making, or of pluralist orientation?

TQ3: are features accounting for the success/ partial success or failure of most important AIPC in the countries considered as case-studies, more characteristic of the profile of deliberative democracy, or of pluralist democracy?

The identification of the criteria relevant for the examination of the AIPC followed the theoretical observations concerning participatory policy-making, as outlined in the previous chapter, and the information provided by some of the experts during in-depth elite specialized interviews. AIPC were considered to be best defined according to their aim:

Once the understanding of the concept was loosened in terms of the means employed, the:

- increase in resources (spaces, funds);
- recognition of the legitimacy of certain artistic practices or phenomena, or priorities of

public policy to be considered as pertaining specific public benefits (eg. festivals in Hungary, independent culture in CEE countries, creative industries in Europe, role of culture in sustainable development in Cluj (Romania), culture itself at the level of the EU („We are more” campaign by Culture Action Europe) ;

- recognition and implementation of the principles of good governance and participatory policy-making.

	Pluralist democracy	Deliberative democracy
Participatory infrastructure	Groups formed around specific interests, and which attempt to communicate their position to all possible supporters, in order to create the necessary pressure, and be acknowledged	Organised platforms for reflection and debate, in which public authority experts, policy and decision-makers participate and which form the base for policy formulation and policy change.
Existence of policy-entrepreneurs or deliberative democracy experts (and how important they were)	The task of the arrangement of civil participation in the legislative process is “to support the structuring of the reaction of different representations of the society and to catalyse and coordinate their various positions.” Emil Markov, 2003, cited in Vulkovsky, 2005).	The “post-empiricist expert”, who is “an interpretive mediator operating between the available analytic frameworks of social science, policy findings, and the differing perspectives of the public actors, both those of policy decision-makers and citizens.” (Fischer, 2003:11); not necessarily placed inside the public institution.
Legitimate objects of policy change	Certain conditions and processes, which are considered „fundamental” to the particular policy-field fall outside what is considered legitimate to be challenged.	All policy decisions and assumptions can be challenged. What is important is to acknowledge the purpose for which the deliberative process takes place: understand the differences between the parties involved; figure out which argument seems stronger; try to see if participants can propose a course of action that they can all get behind.
Establishing a climate of trust with the politicians / decision-makers in public	Important, but within the idea that broad coalitions of interest can place	Essential to consider the narrative storylines of the institution, as well as the political culture of the

cultural institutions that are the main audience of the advocacy initiative	sufficient pressure on decision-makers or bring sufficient evidence that would convey the more general objectives. already established by the policy or decision-makers, a climate of trust support the advocacy initiative, but is not essential.	policy-makers, in order to have a meaningful participation to the debate, one that could, if skilfully acted, lead to policy change.
Evidence of public culture's contribution to the set objectives/preoccupations of policy-makers being brought in the discussion, as a factor of policy change	Information is essential; the main narrative is that of evidence-based of policy-making, which gives benefits to those advocacy groups and initiatives which are able to bring sufficient evidence as to the extent in which their particular demands will satisfy the larger set of objectives of policy-makers.	Information is important, but not essential. What is essential is that the information is shaped in a discursive pattern which to interfere with the authoritative narrative storyline, in a way which will reassert the new information as knowledge as the same time as it will model the very meaning of the given information.
Diversity of actors supporting the campaign	As broad as possible, in order to create the necessary pressure to demand a policy change; at the same time, the interests and profile of the members of the broad advocacy participants should be as well defined and specific as possible; contrast to other interest groups is important for the advocacy campaign to gain its individuality. Public interest in the cause can be a strategic tool of the initiative, but it does not lie at the core of the initiative.	Public interest in the initiative and the idea that a plurality of opinions is important for the policy outcome lies at the core of deliberative democracy, even when the stake of the debate is to better crystallize the position of each part. This stage is considered necessary, but what is at stake is the construction of the „ideal communication situation” in the Habermas sense. Hence, the diversity of actors is sought, but not essential, in the daily routine of advocacy initiative, even if the normative assumption of the process is that deliberation only makes sense.
Advocates	Interest groups, Advocacy Coalitions; elites.	Concerned parties/stakeholders/beneficiaries, Discursive coalitions.
Importance and role of the media	Essential, in order to convey the message to the general public and situate the interest group.	Important, in order to raise awareness about the way the policy under consideration impacts the life and activity of

		interested parties, and to support the idea that participation is most relevant in an environment where discourses of advocates and policy makers are attuned in order to convey different opinions, by paying attention to the similarities of the different narrative storylines around the issue at stake.
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Chapter 3

Interpreting advocacy: The Policies for Culture Programme and the Romanian experiences

3.1 The predominant view on advocacy: interpreting practices and experts' discourses. The role of the "Policies for Culture" programme

The Policies for Culture programme, running from 1999 until 2007 with funding from the European Cultural Foundation and under the coordination of Ecumest Association (Romania) influenced the understanding the policy-making in culture, and especially the importance of participatory policy-making approach to culture. The countries participating in the programme were those in South-East Europe: Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania and Serbia. Because of persistence, relatively wide range of activities: from the funding of Action projects, publications, to the organization of workshops and the distribution of news, opinions and reflection around the main themes of the programme, it is important to explore its features, in the light of the deliberative/pluralist democratic vision of representation and participation for policy change. The programme has been a large-scale advocacy initiative for public culture, developed with the aim to support good governance in the SEE.

A number of arguments can be brought to support this claim. First of all, the very way in which the programme was described, to have "aimed to encourage a participative principle in the design, implementation and evaluation of new effective cultural policies throughout the countries of this region" (nb: SEE countries). Moreover, as one of the interviewees declared, the programme aimed to communicate and support the importance of the participative

approach in a region that was considered to be, from this point of view, a desert of such public approaches towards policies in culture, and also in the research of cultural realities from this angle. At the same time, notwithstanding the claim that the programme „was structured around the triangular working relationship between civil society, the executive, and the legislature in the policy-making process affecting the cultural sector”, the stronger focus resided with „empowering the independent sector to voice its opinions”. Fourth, this view is confirmed by both the profile of the majority of the projects (called „Action projects”) that were supported financially through the programme, but also by the organization of a workshop and dossier on the very theme of „Advocacy and lobbying for culture”. Fifth, the understanding of the programme as being in itself an advocacy initiative rests upon the opinion of different experts interviewed during the research process, who either pointed at the programme as one of the most important advocacy initiative, or they mentioned as one of its most important results, the raising of awareness in the participating countries of some of the most basic principles of cultural policy: it managed to settle a vocabulary and a set off aspiration.

Was the know-how that was passed upon through the selection of projects, in the different meetings and workshops, of a more deliberative, or rather pluralist style of policy-making?

The analysis of the programme presentation and the information from the interviews makes way for the idea that such framework was not discussed nor reflected upon. The way the programme worked was to encourage local cultural activists, from the civil society or from the academia, and very rarely directly from the executive or legislative bodies, to tailor their approach of the encouragement of participatory policy-making to the local context. Apart from the organisation of several meetings and workshops, the programme did not mean to equip organizations, from NGOs to local authorities and legislators, with particular skills and

a particular vision of participatory policy-making. What it did do was to support those initiatives and people, mostly civil society activities or research, which already had the will, skills or discourse that would fit the programme objectives. It matched their commitment and intentions with funds, networking opportunities and international (regional) support to implement the desired projects and activities. At the same time it provided the space for communication and spread of knowledge acquired in the process, through its Publications programme, e-journal and web page. In doing so, the programme put forward a set of values, recommendations and practices that are considered to have had long-lasting consequences on the advocacy dynamics and expertise in some of the countries that took part in the Programme, such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Macedonia.

One of the most important reflections concerning the participatory policy-making approach at the heart of the programme is that most of the reports and concerns regarding advocacy initiatives for culture referred to the lobby process and, most commonly, on what the cultural institutions can do in order to improve their lobby capacities, by adapting to the requirements and the „way politics works”. This was a particularly strong feature of the Romanian case, but also an important component on the reflections in Romania, Bulgaria and partly Croatia (with texts by Oana Radu, Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu, Lidia Varbanova, Silvia Neycheva, Zlatko Seselj and later Yuriy Vulkovski), where lobby was considered to be the epitome of advocacy for culture and, in the words of Virgil Nițulescu, the „most acceptable” means by which decisions made by the legislature are most likely to reach the best decision for the society as a whole, through democratic means, and as a complement to the ideas of the legislators themselves, which were delegated to exercise power in that particular realm. At the same time, in acknowledging the need for more lobbying for culture, Zlatko Seselj considers that

“lobbying simply means bringing one's legitimate interests to the fore, arguing your case and challenging someone else's, nothing more”³.

These arguments support the observation that the expert knowledge presented in the framework of the programme is most likely to have understood advocacy for culture from a pluralist democratic perspective, rather than a deliberative one. As presented in the introductory part of the paper, the social, institutional, political and economical context of those times are conditions that are more likely to nurture an environment of competition and interest-groups formation in CEE countries. Further research is needed in order that understand to what extent this view on advocacy has positively contributed to the specific advocacy initiatives for public culture in the project and beyond. Acknowledging the fact that not only within the SEE region, but also within each country, the political, institutional, policy and advocacy resources have differed within the time frame of the research, the next chapter will make an attempt at exploring selected Romanian experiences.

3.2 Experiences of advocacy initiatives for public culture in Romania

Chetaru (2011) and Rațiu (2007, 2009) identify three important phases of cultural policy-making in Romania, roughly corresponding to the time-periods of 1990-1996, 1997-2000, and 2001-2006. In this part of the paper I analyze the most important advocacy initiatives for public culture in the discursive context of policy-making in culture within each of the periods, with an extension for the third time-frame until 2008, and a separate sub-chapter for advocacy taking place in 2009.

³ <http://www.policiesforculture.org/resources.php?id=111&idc=31&t=h> (accessed June 4, 2011)

3.2.1 1990-1996: Professional organizations and artist unions rally

The Ministry of Culture was established in 1989. Chettraru (2011,30) considers that the first phase can be characterized by the lack of any “proper cultural policy, what determined the major development of culture were, firstly, the enthusiasm and the ecstasy existent immediately after the fall of the communist regime” (2011,30). At the same time, Rațiu (2007) asserts that decision-making and policy-making were highly personalized, depending on the personality of the minister. Ten ministers of culture occupied the position in this framework of the first six years of transition and five governments came to (and went from) power. This high volatility, combined with the observed lack of relation between the political parties doctrines to which the minister pertained, and the policy decisions they took makes it difficult to even assume that there can be conceived that political and policy-makers, even in the absence of an explicit cultural policy, sent a coherent set of signals that would account for a deliberative or pluralist manner of democratic vision.

Rațiu considers that, from the point of view of the underlying values and preferences “in the early 1990s, the public space in Romania was dominated by a traditionalist conception of art, seen as an activity separated from the society. Consequently, the cultural policy neglected the connection of art to other sectors of the social action, as well as the relationship between art and public, limiting itself to the traditional areas or forms of art.” (2007,214). sorry. This line stays on: T Festival, with an important financial effort from the Ministry of Culture. The edition organized in 1995, one of the most difficult times of Romanian transition, took place with even larger financial effort than the previous one (1991). The website of the Festival informs that 2 million USD were spent from the central public budget, contributing to the

event's success, with the wish to “provide a new image of Romania during the 90s”⁴. Nițulescu (2001) mentions the organization of the festival, and in particular the staging of Andrei Șerban’s “Oedipus”, which required special efforts from the technical staff, as the trigger of the later social demands of performing artists. The technical staff of the Opera House demanded a raise in wages, due to the supplementary work, which the Ministry decided to offer. The way it did so was through a Government Bill (H.G.R. nr. 697/4 September 1995) that decided a raise of wage of 25% for all public employees in institutions in which the activity was considered of „national importance”. Out of the 99 institutions subordinated to the Ministry at that time, only 6 were identified as such, which raised protests among the employers of the other ones, but also from the politicians.

The consequence was the street-protests of cultural employees from public institutions from September 1995, with an important majority from the performing arts professionals. Nițulescu (2001) observes that even though other categories of employees from different fields were entitled to protest, they did not. The outcome of the outbreak of discontent was that the actors indeed later received a raise of wages (and not the other categories as well!). The reason for this discipline-related successful advocacy is, in the opinion of Nițulescu, that UNITER (Romanian Association for Theatre Professionals founded in 1990) was better organized and better equipped to do efficient lobbying. By judging the outcomes of the street-protests, this seems to be indeed so. Moreover, this is confirmed by the proceeding events taking place in 1996, when the same UNITER, having found out that a new law was under preparation, to re-centralize the de-centralized public cultural institutions earlier in the 90s, managed to convince the Ministry not to include theatres and philharmonics. As a consequence, all other public cultural institutions were taken under the umbrella of the Ministry, with both funding and administrative consequences. UNITER, first through public

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<http://www.festivalenescu.ro/index.php?id=12> (accessed June 4, 2011)

pressure (the street protests) secured itself a preferential position in the discussion with the executive and the legislative. In doing so, they negotiated and obtained maximum possible benefits for their members, while other public employees were not even considered in the discussion.

The features of this funds-seeking driven advocacy initiative point towards the idea that the negotiations that took place and the outcome of the process would identify it in the lobby tradition and the pluralist democracy vision. I prefer to believe that in the absence of any open invitation for participation from the part of the Ministry to other categories of public employees in culture, as well as the non-existence of all the other features of “pluralist perspective”, it would be wrong to consider UNITER’s actions as an example of “proficient lobbying”, as Nițulescu acknowledges it. Instead, I consider it to be merely the reaction of a more solidary group towards a perceived threat, but one that would mark the entire participatory process in policy-making for culture, through the example it gave and the appreciation it received both by experts (Nițulescu and Corbeanu in 2001, in the Policies for culture programme). Last but not least, Ion Caramitru, UNITER president starting with 1990, when the organisation was founded, became in 1996 the Minister of Culture. As it will be presented below, the type of practice initiated by UNITER and accepted by the Ministry in 1995, continued from 1996 to 2000, as the professional organizations and artist union formed a federation and secured a unique partnership of debate and consultation with the Ministry of Culture.

3.2.2 1996-2000: National Alliance of Creators Unions as the voice of the Romanian civil society

The period 1996-2000 corresponds to the mandate of Minister Caramitru, who has maintained this position in spite of political change in the Government (three prime-ministers and their cabinets took office between these years). As far as the democratic visions employed in the way participation was understood during these years, one must consider several features concerning the orientation of the Ministry's policy. Chetaru (2011) mentions that one of the most important elements of change of the new ministerial team was the establishment of a Consultancy Council, subordinated to the Ministry, with the distinct attribution to administer the relation with the non-governmental organizations. At the same time, though, Chetaru mentions that the Council has received strong criticism from inside the civil society, one reproach being that, “because the state considers that is hard to find representative partners in cultural issues, the Council has as partners for dialogue the syndicates and creators unions, but the civil society is not included with those two actors” (Chetaru, 2011, 34). In spite of this criticism, the first strategic document in culture after 1989, was prepared by the Ministry with the input provided by the nominated professional organisations and put forward in 1997, under the impetus of the Council of Europe (Ministry of Culture, 2000, cited in Rațiu, 2007:230). A further change was the establishment of the Direction for Visual Arts in 1997, which brought upon itself a more committed orientation towards the Western cultural world and was meant to secure more support for creativity and the arts.

At the level of discourses employed and considerations of external influences, this period is marked by two great contributions for the profile of participation to cultural policy making. Firstly, the Mosaic project of the Council of Europe⁵ (1998-2001), which supported the

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http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/completed/mosaic/evali_matra_EN.asp

organisations of projects, debates, workshops and publications. The Romanian Cultural Policy Evaluation report, prepared by a group of European experts and reflecting upon the preoccupations and orientation of the Ministry of Culture, as well as providing recommendations for what is to be done was an important end result of the project in Romania. The report is an invaluable source of information, but at the same time it reflects the attitude of the Council of Europe experts towards the approach taken by the Ministry regarding participation in policy-making. The report does not address the aspect as such, but makes some significant comments about the civil society, its development and its role. In the first place, it remarked the „absence of civil society” and explained it through „a reflection of the lure of individualism and economic liberalism trends that emerged with the political changes and tend to eclipse community spirit” (1999, 16). In the second place, it made specific comments about the support given by the Ministry to artist unions, applauding the encouragement given to them by the Ministry, with the argument that „for all this contributes to the establishment of an active, independent civil society” (1999, 16).

Second external important influence was that of the European Union, through the PHARE Programme. Between 1998 and 2000 the “Cultural dimension of democracy” programme, with its two pillars, Institutional consolidation, and the European Cultural Fund for Romania / euro art (named in the reference terms: Fund for arts and civil society development) supported several projects of civil society organisations and it lead to the drafting, in 2000, of the „Cultural Strategy”, prepared by the PHARE Technical Assistance Team. Şuteu (2005) considers that this programme was one of the contributors of “self-sustainable important cultural NGOs”, mentioning in Romanian the examples of UNITER, Ecumest and DCM Foundation. (2005, 22).

In these times of major foreign investment (not considering the similarly important contribution of the Soros Foundation and Pro Helvetia grant scheme) and expertise in the evaluation and formulation of policy making in culture, an advocacy coalition was formed. The National Alliance of Creators Unions (ANUC) was established in 1995, and comprised six important artistic unions: the Union of Architects of Romania (UAR); the Fine Arts' Association of Romania (UAP); the Union of Film Makers of Romania (UCIN); the Union of Composers and Musicologists of Romania (UCMR); the Writers' Union of Romania (US); the Theatre Union of Romania (UNITER). The organization set itself with the task to "defend the status and creativity and to promote the image of the professional artist within the society"⁶. Between 1996 and 2000 it consolidated a dialogue with the Ministry of Culture, leading in 1998 to the Declaration Concerning the Status of the Authors and Performers in Romania⁷, a joint commitment between the artists unions, the Ministry of Culture and other non-governmental organizations⁸. The Declaration, discussed presented and discussed in a meeting inside the Romanian Parliament House, gained media coverage and raised the interest of the cultural world. Its formulations were vague and its binding nature was weak, fact proven by the lack of any practical consequences deriving from its signing, neither for the members of the Unions and organizations signatories to the Declaration, nor for other policy measures, with a different target. Apart from the declaration, the Federation worked to amend and elaborate certain normative acts regarding arts and culture in Romania. It did so within a formalized partnership with the Ministry of Culture, secured immediately after Ion Caramitru was nominated Minister of Culture in 1996. The partnership was of a permanent character,

⁶ <http://anuc.org.ro/indexen.htm>

⁷ <http://www.eca.dk/members/romania.doc.htm> (<http://www.festivalenesescu.ro/index.php?id=12> (accessed June 4, 2011))

⁸ The Association of Art Photographers of Romania–AAFR, the REFLEX Association (multi-media creators, Association of the Professional Writers of Romania–ASPRO, ARTEXPO Foundation, the Union for Performing Creation of the Musicians of Romania–UCIMR, Federation of European Cartoonist Organisations, Union of Puppet and Marionette Artists of Romania–UNIMA Romania

according to ANUC. Within this partnership, ANUC was invited to give its expertise towards the (re)formulation of the Law of the national cultural patrimony, the Law of the cultural stamp (Law 35/1994), Law of the social assistance for the professional artists, Law of taxation on the author's right and neighbouring rights (Law no 8/1996) and the establishment of the National Cultural Fund (Government Bill no277/199).

An analysis of these laws would be helpful in assessing the degree in which ANUC secured rights of its own members at the expense of other artists or organization, or if it had worked for a more supportive legislative framework for culture and the arts in general. Nevertheless, even in the absence of such an inquiry, a diligent observer can take note of the fact that the main motivations and features of the advocacy initiative correspond to the set of indicators of pluralist democracy. This view is confirmed by the presentation given by Aura Corbeanu, vice-president of UNITER, in 2001 at a seminar around the topic of lobbying for culture, in which she herself, in presenting the activity of ANUC, referred to it as lobbying. Moreover, the attitude of the Ministry of Culture, open to discuss with the unions of creators, but not considering necessary to invite others, even in cases where the decision clearly affected other categories of cultural professionals or cultural institutions, as well the appropriateness of this action, secured through the encouragement given by the Council of Europe national cultural policy report, and the Cultural strategy elaborated by the experts in the PHARE programme, are convincing enough to consider that the attitude was acknowledged and considered legitimate.

3.2.3 2000-2004: State as mediator and the emergence of active discursive platforms

In 2000, Romanian cultural policy, at least at Ministry level, contained the premises for a leaner implementation. With the support of the Council of Europe and the EU; through the

PHARE Programme, which materialised in two strategic documents, with a pool of experts already having been subject to a number of workshops, debates, capacity building projects and activities in the framework of institutional development, both within the public and the NGO sector, more space for manoeuvre in empowering and facilitating participation of policy-making and policy change was expected. Nevertheless, the political configurations turned the picture up-side down. Between 2000 and 2004, the ministerial office was taken over by Theodorescu, who gave a totally different meaning to the previous observations and recommendation of the experts, which were secured in the strategic documents, and the commitments made to the civil society (see the Joint Declaration signed with ANUC, as main partner, in 1998). Rațiu (2007) identifies in the strategic plans of the Ministry from 2000 to 2004 sufficient arguments that in this time-frame culture was considered to be “carrying national identity” (2007:10) and that cultural policy was “under the aegis of the renaissance of national culture”, with a focus on the “national dimension of culture” (MoCRA, 2003, 91), “national identity” (MoCRA, 2001, 43) and “cultural heritage” (MoCRA, 2001, 129). The changes in the institutional design support this new approach: in 2001 the Direction for Visual Arts merged with the Direction of Museums and Collections into a new structure, named the General Direction of Heritage. Furthermore, the programme for the purchases of artworks of the Ministry merged with the National Program for Promoting Cultural Heritage. Rațiu rightfully interprets these latter changes as a signal that “artistic creativity was subordinated to heritage and interpreted as a patrimonial act” (2009:6). A further signal of the change of discourse of the Ministry is the transformation of its name and remit in 2001, by incorporating attributions in the field of religious public matters. Consequently, the ministry was named from 2001 onwards the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs.

The strategic partnership of the Ministry with ANUC did not further materialize in other policy changes and ANUC does not give any new information about its activities since 2001. Nevertheless, another advocacy initiative took precedence during this time-frame, considered to be the most concerted and sustainable advocacy campaign, by many of the interviewees. Its aim was to recognize the entitlement of Romanian contemporary dance for public support and to advocate better legislative and fiscal conditions for its activity. The initiative was given visibility in international context, as well as through the Policies for Culture programme and was orchestrated mostly through the efforts of DCM Foundation. In June 2002 MultiArt Dance Centre and Project DCM Foundation, initiated a common platform for advocating the interests of contemporary arts in Romanian. They made efforts to convince the central authorities that there is an urgent need for “vital changes that need to be implemented with a view to the long-term development of this art form, which includes new legislation for performing arts, reform of the public funding system, and support for the promotion of Romanian dance at both national and international level.”⁹ Soon after the launch of the platform, Project DCM Foundation suggested to the dance community that a formal structure for advocacy for the rights of the dancers, dance professionals and dance organizations be established. UNDAR was to be the union for dance professionals in Romanian and it was to contribute to the development of a “policy for developing the sector in the short, medium and long term”. Initially, the idea was supported by more than 100 professionals and dance organizations, but later, the project did not manage to lift from the ground. Nevertheless, some important results came out of the effort of the platform: in 2003 a personal counsellor on dance matters was appointed, at the suggestion of the platform, in 2004 funding was allocated to one important contemporary dance programme and later that year the National Dance Centre was established. Manolescu (DCM Foundation) and Mihalcea¹⁰ (MultiArt

⁹ <http://www.policiesforculture.org/resources.php?id=71&idc=31&t=h> (accessed June 4, 2011)

¹⁰ <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/MINISTERIALE.-PROIECTUL-DE-MONITORIZARE-A->

Dance Centre) consider that the actual establishment of the National Dance Centre was less an actual recognition of entitlement of the art form, and more a means through which certain bureaucratic difficulties of spending the public subsidies attributed to the project of contemporary dance could be resolved.

The contemporary dance advocates supported their cause within the frame of a public debate with the legislative and the executive in the Parliament House and aimed at the broadest possible support from the dancing community. They got the attention of the media and, also voiced their cause within artistic events such as BucharEST.WEST International Dance Festival (September 25 – October 18, 2003). They thus made an attempt to breach the dominant narrative storyline of the Ministry. In doing so, their orientation was legitimised and a context of pressure for the new demands for recognition of participatory practices, good governance and transparency to be acknowledged was built through the initiatives of Ecumest and the support of Pro Helvetia. In this respect, the project *Ministeriale. Monitoring the activity of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs*, developed by the Cultural Observatory throughout 2004 with support from Pro Helvetia was considered to have contributed significantly to the establishment of the National Dance Centre. Mihalcea says that it pertained to the same type of offensive attitude, needed, in his opinion, to get the Ministry to pay attention to the opinion of the advocates.

Summing up all the conditions and features of advocacy in between 2000 and 2004, although the participatory infrastructure does not fully correspond to that of deliberative democracy, there is one important difference in the way the advocacy initiative for the recognition of contemporary dance and its entitlement for support was handled, in comparison to the activity of ANUC. Even though it aimed to acknowledge the interests of a specific arts field, it did not

do this at the expense of others and within a privileged partnership with the Ministry, at the expense of other representatives of civil society. At the same time, the most important concrete result of the advocacy, the National Dance Centre, was a public institution, whose establishment meant the promise of support of dance as a form of art, and not a given set of right to just some „professional artists”, members of one of the other unions of creators. It confirmed the promise for the perpetual debate of the development and orientation of the contemporary dance within an institutional setting, something that the Unions of creators did not seem to incorporate in neither their mission, nor their concrete advocacy initiatives. In this sense, the Ministry, although following the same patterns of argumentation and dialogue as previously, by finally giving way to the demands of the independent dancers and choreographers through the establishment in July 2004 of the National Dance Centre (Government Bill 1123/2004¹¹), accepted a different line of reasoning, one in which interest groups are not delineated in a strict and definitive manner, but in the process of involvement and debate in contemporary dance and its challenges. Consequently, the public benefits derived from the entitlement secured through the establishment of the National Dance Centre can, by the very vision at the base of its foundation, be further challenged, oriented and shaped by the wishes and aspirations of those with an interest in arts and dance. This view is confirmed by the identification of the initiative by some of the experts inquired for the research. Tsveta Andreeva considers that “establishing the National Dance Centre in Bucharest, and its development, as a result of a strong civil society movement, was among the most successful sector specific initiative with a long term impact in CEE countries.”

¹¹ (Romanian only) <http://www.legestart.ro/Hotararea-1123-2004-infiintarea-Centrului-National-Dansului-Bucuresti-%28Njk2ODU-%29.htm> (accessed June 4, 2011)

3.2.4 2005 – 2008: Advocacy platforms and proactive contributions for policy change

In December 2004 Răzvan Theodorescu was replaced by Mona Muscă, as part of the change of Government, as the centre-right “Justice and Truth Alliance” won the parliamentary elections. It was the first time after 1989 that the Ministry assumed a different role in relation to cultural matters and cultural operators. As Rațiu mentions, the new vision was that the Ministry had to perform the function of “advising, consulting, and mediating” (2007:4). The commitment was firm and the successful advocacy initiatives for public culture during the short time that Muscă was a minister of culture (December 2004 – August 2005) have had constructive impact on the development of the contemporary arts scene, the transparency of funding and easiness to develop cultural projects.

Muscă was in December 2004 already a positively regarded political figure among cultural operators, having expressed the need of members of parliament to consult civil society and expert opinion before reaching a conclusion (see the interviews taken in 2002 by Oana Radu, and published in the Journal of the „Policies for Culture Programme”). Muscă had, by the time of her nomination as minister, accumulated experiences as an MP in the Committee for Culture, Arts and Mass Media of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies, and the new Government included in the Government Programme for 2005-2008, a very different commitment towards the cultural sector: two of the three major directions of activity that the Government was to follow in culture were: “the reform of the cultural funding system” and “the institutionalization of a system of consultations and cooperation with the civil society” (Romanian Government, 2005). Moreover, Muscă brought along a team of experts with experience in cultural policy analysis and formulation, such as Delia Mucică, as Secretary General of the Ministry. Only two months after the ministry has been installed, a decision to establish the Administration of the National Cultural Fund was put forward for consultation and debate with the civil society within the frame of the series of events organised by

Ecumest (see Ecumest, 2005). This way, the National Cultural Fund, operational since 2002 inside the Ministry, gained autonomy in administering the funds for cultural projects at arm's length distance from the Ministry (Government Decision 802/2005). Moreover, early in January 2005, the Ministry also established the Centre of Study and Research in the Field of Culture, a public institution subordinated to the Ministry, which was to produce relevant research, that would help formulate better policies in the field of culture. (Government Decision 67/2005). In this climate which I consider to be characterised by a convincing openness for dialogue and deliberation, in April 2011 a number of about 70 important artists and cultural managers from a variety of contemporary arts disciplines put forward to the Ministry a number of concrete suggestions to change legislations and provide better opportunities for cultural managers and the development of cultural projects. The letter, which contained both strategic proposals (such as the establishment of a partnership for consultation and deliberation, and the setting of proprietary areas of interests), as well as specific comments and suggestions concerning legislation and policy change, lead to the invitation for discussion with the Minister, which happened only once, but had concrete effects. A Mobility Fund was established soon after, and better conditions for the running of the grant scheme for cultural projects were secured.

In the way the initiative was framed, as a process in which the Ministry's role was to mediate, advise and consult, as well as in the way the advocacy was coordinated, as an effort to favour a "real reform for Romanian culture", not only in title, but also in the suggestions it put forward, and also through the diversity of actors involved, the whole process expresses the traits of deliberative democracy.

One must also acknowledge the climate of the debate, one in which already the experiences of the Council of Europe Mosaic project activities, the PHARE programmes projects and events

and the other activities meant to empower, inform, debate important issues for the Romanian sector, have had their contribution to the legitimization of this “logic of appropriateness” of discourse. At the same time, the expertise and activities of the Ecumest Foundation and the development of important cultural NGOs with the support of the EU, the Council of Europe, Pro Helvetia and the Soros Foundation, inspired cultural activists and informed them about the stakes of institutional change in culture and alternative institutional designs. In an interview, Manolescu mentioned that during this period, the most convincing argument in the dialogue with the Ministers of culture was that of foreign examples of institutions, legislation or acknowledgment shown to culture, civil society, and what this can mean for society at large.

With the abrupt change of ministers in July 2005, Iorgulescu came to occupy this position, which he did until December 2008. Iorgulescu followed the experience of Caramitru almost 10 years earlier, in that he as well was, at the time of the nomination, president of an artists union (to which he also returned after his mandate was finished, in 2008, as Caramitru did as well). Iorgulescu was president of the Union of Composers and Musicologists, but this did not translate into a stronger commitment for dialogue or partnership with the creators unions or artists’ organisations. The partnership of the Ministry with ANUC did not further materialise. Considering the commitment of the Government in cultural matters had not changed for the period 2005-2008, Iorgulescu, although having declared less enthusiasm for policy change following a participatory input, agreed upon some of the most important changes in the legislation for cultural funding took place during his mandate.

The establishment of the Administration of the National Cultural Fund (ANCF) in June 2005, and the experience of the first funding session in December 2005 called a number of non-governmental organisations to advocate specific changes in the conditions of

application, funding and organisation of the call for proposals, as well as the institutionalisation of a permanent consultation and dialogue mechanism for the formulation of a funding strategy. The complex documentation resulted from the collection of feed-back from the cultural operators and put together by Ecumest and AltArt Foundation was sent in June 2006 to the Ministry of Culture and the ANCF. As a result, in June 2006, at the public invitation of the Ministry to all those concerned, a discussion took place, and the Ministry committed itself to making a number of important changes in the legislation regarding the funding of cultural projects¹². Having added that the Ministry „takes responsibility for the changes which are under its direct sphere of competence”, it also made a number of comments regarding the legislation that required the decision of other public structures, such as the Ministry of Finance. If the conditions for the organisation of the competition by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund were soon-after changed, following public consultation (July 2006), the more general legislative changes had to wait and needed a supplementary advocacy effort. In February 2007, a petition¹³ initiated by a broad coalition formed by the Administration of the National Cultural Fund, the Romanian Cultural Institute, the National Dance Centre, the DCM Foundation, ArtLink Association, and signed by more the 430 artists, public institutions and cultural NGOs, was submitted for the attention of the most important legislative and executive Romanian public forums: the Romanian Prime-Minister, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Finance, and the presidents of the Committee for culture, arts, and mass-communication in the Parliament. The document, which contained proposals for a series of concrete legislative changes, invoked as complementary argument to those that had been invoked before from 2004 until 2006, that Romania is now a full member of the European Union, and that legislation needs to be

¹² The summary of the discussion can be consulted here (Romanian only) <http://arhiva.cultura.ro/News.aspx?ID=824> (accessed on June 4, 2011).

¹³ The text of the petition can be consulted at the following addresses (Romanian only): http://coalitiasectoruluiculturalindependent.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/memoriu_initiativa2007.pdf and <http://www.petitiononline.com/coalitia/petition.html> (accessed June 4, 2011).

changed accordingly, so that it would facilitate the implementation of cultural projects, with a highlight on those being part of the Sibiu, European Cultural Capital Programme 2007. The result of the advocacy initiative started in June 2006 was a number of important legislative changes, that improved not only the conditions of the functioning of the Administration of the National Cultural Fund, but also positively affected the administration of cultural grants and the conditions of cultural activity in general. Some of the most important changes were: GD 264/2003 was modified, so that beneficiaries of public grants would not need to make a bank deposit amounting to 10% of the value of grant before receive the first instalment; artists could apply individually for grants from public sources, as long they acquired a special fiscal status (PFA); the possibility to have projects co-financed from different public sources at the same time was introduced. Last two major changes were introduced in January 2008, through Government Decree 2 /2008¹⁴.

The three year-long advocacy campaign (2005-2007) has most features of a deliberative profile of democratic policy-making, though it should be noted that the promise of a dialogue and consultative process with a permanent character, as the Government Programme committed itself to develop, never really became reality. In spite of this, with a strong commitment and valuable expertise within the NGO sector, as well as with an openness for dialogue and cooperation within the Administration of the National Cultural Fund (the director of whom, Grecu, had previously worked in the NGO sector, having been herself an advocate for the public recognition for support of the Romanian contemporary dance scene), the Romanian Cultural Institute, and, to a certain degree, from within the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, important changes did took place. These changes, advocated for the benefit of the cultural sector in general, and putting forward the principles of deliberation,

¹⁴ http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.http_act?ida=77409 (accessed June 4, 2011).

consultation, transparency and participatory policy-making, are not only in concept, but also in means, consistent with the profile of deliberative democracy.

3.2.5 2009: Evidence-based and participatory policy-making in times of financial crisis: integrating the benefits of public culture in the creative industries discourse

The period that followed the change of Government at the end of 2008 shares yet very different traits to the previous one. Theodor Paleologu, former diplomat, with a declared interest in the protection of cultural heritage, took office in December 2008. Immediately after the change of ministers, the Ministry was renamed as Ministry of Culture, Religious Affairs and National Heritage. In respect to the policy of consultation and debate with cultural operators concerning policy formulation and policy change, the new minister assumed a different approach, based on a different set of values and considerations regarding public culture and the benefits it brings to citizens, societies and communities at large. The minister declared in numerous occasions that „one of the ministry’s priorities (nb: the other one being the protection of heritage) for 2009 is to change the vision that culture cannot bring profit, but that it is only a consumer of funds”¹⁵. In this respect, the minister considered that a partnership between the ministry, private organisations and the NGO sector is needed. In February 2009 an event entitled „Meeting of the Creative Guild. Solutions for the development of the independent cultural sector” was organised by the ministry, having as main objective the „preliminary formulation of suitable solutions to the problems faced by the independent cultural sector. The aim would be to identify concrete proposals, that can lead to the formulation of public policies and to legislative changes for a sustainable development of

¹⁵ (Romanian only) http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Theodor-Paleologu-un-ministru-la-inceput-de-drum*articleID_21137-articles_details.html (accessed June 4, 2011)

the creative sector.”¹⁶ Both the meeting’s documents and the discursive framework of the event blurred the distinctions between the creative sector, and independent cultural operators, the most obvious example of this being the match between the titles of the meeting and the explicit rationale: „the valorisation of cultural heritage and the development of the creative industries are two priorities of the Ministry. Because we live in a post-industrial era, economic competitiveness is more and more based on innovation, creativity and cultural added value” (idem). The text also suggested the idea of the „creative cluster”, which having combined both profit and non-profit activities would maximize their economic performance. The outcome of the meeting was a set of concrete proposals, together with the promise of a second meeting. Neither the concrete proposals, nor the second meeting ever took place, and the complementary debate mechanism set up by AltArt Foundation, the website <http://sectorulcultural.info> was also closed soon after. In terms of impact, this meeting led, in the opinion of some of the participants, whom have also taken part in the prior advocacy initiatives, to a fatigue and disillusionment with debate and participation for policy-making in culture. Within the theoretical framework of the research, I consider that the meeting employed the deliberative infrastructure, and stated a commitment to deliberating upon a common vision among all the participants. But at the same time, the evidence it brought to support that vision was univocal: the information brought to legitimise the debate was of a very distinct nature: that of the economic contribution of the creative industries. In this sense, it represented an attempt to merge the two dominant narrative discourses of those times: on one hand, the claims of the independent cultural sector, active and already experienced in carrying a constructive dialogue with the policy-makers, following the initiatives from 2002 onwards, and, on the other, the discourse of creative industries and sustainable development, beginning to be mainstreamed at the level of the European Union since 2006. In this respect,

¹⁶ (Romanian only) <http://www.tulcea.djc.ro/DocumenteHtml.aspx?ID=2804> (accessed June 4, 2011)

the study released by the European Commission in 2006, entitled „The economy of culture in Europe” (produced by KEA), and focusing on the „contribution of the cultural and creative sectors towards the Lisbon Agenda” made an attempt to give an account of the quantifiable socio-economic impact of the cultural and the creative sector (KEA, 2006). This was followed in Romania by a similar research, made by the Centre for Study and Research in the Field of Culture, subordinated to the Romanian Ministry of Culture. The conclusions of this study concerning the contribution of the „industries based on copyright” to the Romanian economy were presented for the first time during the „Meeting of the Creative Guild” in February 2009¹⁷ and framed the entire debate.

In order to understand better the position and the role of the Centre for Study and Research in the Romanian policy-formulation infrastructure and the relation it had assumed to the cultural operators, an interview¹⁸ from 2007 with Radu Mălureanu, deputy director of the institution, is informative. Mălureanu claims that the focus of the institution is concerned with the audience, the consumers of culture, and not with the cultural operators. The studies of the Centre reflect the production and consumption tendencies in the field of culture, and considers that “the independent cultural sector should not have anything to do with central public policies” and that the assessment of the needs of the sector should be the independent operators’ responsibility. Considering that evidence-gathering and data-generation have embraced this position, the process of dialogue and consultation of cultural operators for policy-change and policy formulation, as the 2009 experience brings proof to, escapes the strict logic of both pluralist and deliberative democracy, to include the element of evidence-based policy-making with information being generated by the policy-maker itself. In the absence of alternative and legitimate research structure, the aims and objectives of research, having been subordinated to the central public authority, enforces the dominant perspective

¹⁷ (Romanian only) http://culturadata.ro/PDF-uri/contributia_industriilor.pdf (accessed June 4, 2011)

¹⁸ (Romanian only) www.ecumest.ro/pdf/2007_Interviu_Radu_Malureanu.pdf (accessed June 4, 2011)

and diminishes the opportunities for change from either pluralist, or deliberative perspective of participatory policy-making.

At the same time, the political conditions of 2009 proved detrimental to the initiation of advocacy itself: the financial crisis hit hard and raised the profile of the discourse of the contribution of the cultural and creative industries to the Lisbon agenda at European level, especially in financial terms; the Ecumest Association took an indefinite pause of its activity in 2008; the Council of Europe invested less in cultural policy evaluation and development; Pro Helvetia and the European Cultural Foundation have reoriented towards the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership; other important Romanian non-governmental organizations reoriented their participatory activities towards the local or regional level (AltArt Foundation).

The analysis of some of the most important advocacy initiatives for public culture taking place between 1990 and 2009 is a heterogeneous picture of participatory infrastructure, agreed-upon rationales of the Ministry role, different agents shaping the appropriate approach towards culture, within the framework of cultural policy, the activity of interest groups and discursive coalitions and different rationales for policy change. The last chapter of the research will summarise the main conclusions of the research, and evaluate the working hypothesis. Implications of the findings for the current advocacy initiatives taking place in Romania, in the light of the European-wide advocacy campaign “We are more”, initiated by Culture Action Europe, will be also mentioned.

Conclusions

The research has confirmed the working hypothesis of the research by analyzing the most important advocacy initiatives for public culture in Romania after 1989. It was shown that the first decade of transition was characterized by a reconfirmation of the pre-1990 power structures among artists and cultural operators within advocacy practices, legitimized as civil society participating in the democratic participatory narrative for policy change with the main legislative and executive bodies. The logic of participation as lobbying has strongly permeated the practice of policy-making in culture, but features of deliberative and pluralist visions of democracy have also intertwined, facilitating policy changes, especially between 2000 and 2008. An interesting phenomenon, that would require more analysis in order for its implications to participatory policy-making to be better accounted for, is represented by the 2009 consultation process taking place at the initiative of the Ministry of Culture, Religious Affairs and National Heritage under the name of “Meeting of the Creative Guild. Solutions for the development of the independent cultural sector”. Within a deliberative infrastructure, the organization of the event framed the opinions under the concept of the creative cluster, in which the focus on the contribution of the “copyright-based industries” to the Romanian economy. In other words, by the very way it was framed, the debate involving artists and cultural operators concerned only the means through which this economic effectiveness could be attained. Moreover, the weight of the evidence brought to support this vision was univocal in the support of the economic perspective, through the data generated by Center of Study and Research in the Field of Culture. The meeting had no concrete follow-up in the sense of the concrete proposals put forward by cultural operators, but the participation of the independent actors, lured by the possibility of change, can be argued to have contributed to the construction of the creative industries narrative in Romania, of which new evidence is being

gathered at national level (the Centre for Study and Research is currently preparing the second edition of the research) and a national public policy is being prepared by the Ministry.

In conclusion, I consider that advocacy initiatives for public culture with a deliberative democracy core can in fact permeate and influence policy change, even in a pluralist democracy participation infrastructure. Nevertheless, a disruptive element in the participatory framework is the mainstreaming of a univocal source of legitimization of narrative discourse of policy-making. With the plea for more evidence-based policy-making and the cornering of debate of policy priorities, based on more qualitative studies and value-based type of arguments as being ideological, the importance of research being carried out outside of state subordination is essential for the quality of debate and the vision of democracy. In the case of the discourse focusing on the economic contribution of culture, which has began to dominate the policy-making discourse at European level in relation mostly to contemporary arts and the channelling of creativity, the challenge, as outlined already in the 30's by Adorno, and nuanced further by Bourdieu and Throsby, lies in the difficulty of striking the right balance between the economic and the cultural dimensions of symbolic goods with a public benefit core. To this end, as a policy implication of the research, the "We are more" campaign initiated by Culture Action Europe, and aiming at advocating more funds for culture within the structural funds and the Culture Programme at European level, should, in my opinion, incorporate a clearer vision of the cultural side of benefits of cultural activity, and less on the role of cultural and creative industries. This would send a clear signal and legitimate alternative narrative discourses not only at European level, but also at national level, for those that aim to bring into deliberation not only the procedures, but also the priorities of funding, and the vision of the role of culture to society and communities. At the same time, independent research should illuminate more strongly the need for public support for cultural

activities that would, following Urfalino (2004), paraphrased by Rațiu (2009), to argument for public support with the „aim at safeguarding and developing the economic conditions necessary for creating art freely” (2009, 74).

Limitations of the research concern the methodology, the conceptual stance towards culture and the level of advocacy under considerations. There is a need to acknowledge that the policy changes that affected the cultural sector and in which came about as a result of advocacy initiatives, did not necessarily only emerged from within the cultural sector, albeit the final decision-making belonged to a legislative structures with a cultural remit. Two examples of this sort are particularly important: the “lobby initiative” (named as such by Nițulescu (2001,5) that lead to the modification of the sponsorship law (Law 32/1994) in 1998, through Decision no 36/January 36 1998, and the general activity of the Civil Society Development Foundation. At the same time, there are notable examples of participation and advocacy for public culture in culture taking place in the last 10 years at local and regional level, such as the partnership for formulation of the Timiș and Arad county cultural strategies in 2002 and 2003, and the activity of the AltArt Foundation in Cluj-Napoca, advocating for the role of culture in urban development. Nevertheless, the most representative level of decision-making in culture in the last 20 years, where advocacy was targeted, was the central, ministerial and rarely parliamentary level (Chetraru, 2011; Rațiu, 2007, 2009). This idea was meaningfully stated by Manolescu: “it was pointless to arrange any meeting with another persona than the minister, because nobody dared to make promises and also, the message had huge chances to be transmitted distorted.”.

The research contributes to the understanding of policy change and cultural policy-making not only in Romania, but also in the other CEE countries, mostly Bulgaria, with whom

researchers have often compared the cultural infrastructure and pre-accession challenges in policy-making. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the still persistent discussion of Eastern specifics must be critically approached. The present research has illuminated the sensitive nuances involved in policy change, with the particularities enshrined in the relation between the policy and political level, as well as the importance of the personality of the Minister, as Chetaru (2011) points out. The particularities of the development of civil society, in between the activity of the professional organisations and artists unions, the independent cultural sector and the activity of the Ecumest Association, are sufficient reasons to raise a doubt that addressing the analysis of transition leaning on the assumption of commonalities, or Eastern specifics, could impede the surfacing of important variables for understanding of national contexts. If the treatment of CEE countries as a block was justified in the light of funding and expertise from the European Union, the Council of Europe, the European Cultural Foundation or UNESCO, thus for policy-making considerations at that time, it is perhaps time that research acknowledges that supporting interpretations of transitional phenomena, such as advocacy, in the conclusions or recommendations of these bodies or within projects that aimed at change, and not foremost understanding, might constitute an impediment. It is the practical conclusions of this research, for future research endeavours that policy convergence and commonalities in CEE countries need to be appreciated within-the-country analysis with the view of developing a framework of cross-national comparative explanatory frameworks.

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