

**Thematic Report on Cultural Participation and Social Cohesion
based on the Indicator Framework for Culture and Democracy**

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Interviewer: Do the arts make a better world or is it politics that makes the world better?

Thomas Hampson: Its people who make the world better.¹

¹ Extract of an interview with the renowned singer Thomas Hampson in the Austrian newspaper Der Standard. Online: <http://derstandard.at/2000043092464/Die-freie-Entwicklung-ist-ein-goettliches-Recht> (last access 05.09.2016). Translation by the author

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1. Introduction

This report is based on current social-science based efforts to give evidence of a positive correlation between culture and democracy. In particular the report examines the interrelationship between cultural participation and social cohesion and both concepts are assumed to have a positive impact on the further democratic development of modern societies. The main intention of the following considerations is about outlining the societal context, which frames equally what the initiators of the project conceptualize as “cultural participation” and as “social cohesion” in hoping that they might strengthen each other in the implementation process. The Indicator *Framework for Culture and Democracy* will deliver the methodological backbone allowing to reflect the work, that has been carried out up to now and to produce appropriate recommendations for the further development of the framework but also in terms of (political) use of the resulting data.

No doubt, throughout the last years the belief that culture can contribute to social cohesion (and by that to a better way of living together) has become a public issue of increasing importance. The reasons are manifold and can be seen on one hand as a revival of an idealistic definition of culture as *the* essence of human living-together. On the other hand there might be more pragmatic reasons when the traditional cultural infrastructure (in which the state still puts the predominant share of public expenditure in culture) is challenged by tendencies of marginalisation of the field, which endangers its prosperous independent development. As one of the consequences its representatives have to find new arguments for their further state privileges and by no means the most convincing (beside the promise of its contribution in economic growth) is its ongoing societal relevance.

But the most pressing reasons may lie in the fact, that due to a number of reasons, is it financial and economic crisis, mass-like unemployment, resettlement of the welfare state, migration or other fundamental influences, modern societies are confronted with all kinds of growing social inequality and by that by tendencies of drifting apart that do not find any more adequate political answers. No wonder when culture comes in, promising not only the production of positive future perspectives (which cannot any more delivered credibly by the political establishment) but also its realisation by involving as much people as possible through cultural participation. Admittedly in this constellation lies the chance of a significant growth of the societal importance of culture. At the same time it implies a dangerous element of overestimation of what culture and by that cultural participation can contribute to societal development *de facto*. This is the more true when it is not accompanied by a respective political analysis of the existing power relations (expressing the increasingly different and contradictory societal interests) in which culture is inevitably embedded.

2. The main corner stones

2.1. On the dimension of Culture

Each assessment of the (possible) influence of culture in society starts with the question, what we are talking about when talking about culture. Obviously we have lost generally understandable concepts in the cultural policy discourse during the last 50 years, so more or less everything what people do, think or believe can be stylized to be part of culture. Consequently the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann already 30 years ago spoke of culture “as one of the most terrible terms that have been ever built”², because of an empty “container term”, in which the speaker can fill in what she or he wants.

To avoid this kind of arbitrariness particularly in the European context the Arts are still seen in the heart of culture including visual arts, music, theatre, film, dance and other performing arts, as well as literature, and increasingly other media such as interactive media. Following the given funding priorities of the state these mainly aesthetically (and not socially) based elements are still seen as the first justifying context of cultural policy.

Like many others who argue for a *latitudinarium* in postmodernist times³ that is open both to institutional culture and the arts and more populist models also the Policymaker’s Guidebook speaks about the intention of overcoming narrow concepts of culture “which is necessary to understand its relationship with democracy”⁴. Intentionally such an approach tries to make an end of an existing division of labour which relies on few specialists producing culture, whereas for the big rest cultural participation would mean to appreciate what has been produced for them. In this context a first priority of any cultural policy measure would be fostering cultural activities in which producers as well as recipients are equally and actively involved allowing both, public and private, individual and collective actors to define what is for them of cultural relevance.

Admittedly this kind of broader understanding of culture means a paradigm change in the cultural policy conceptualisation which is up to now highly about the maintenance of an “existing” culture. Accordingly new ways of making non-artists participate in culture in most European countries – following the sheer funding numbers - has not been seen as a first priority in most European countries.

However when we are going to define culture and the role of the Arts in a future perspective, we can’t avoid to mention, that beside an affirmative discourse, culture has a long tradition not as a project of integration, but equally as a project of exclusion, when the evocation of cultural differences can strengthen antagonisms within a state and between them⁵. Therefore we have to take into account, that in a political context culture was and still is used to serve as a force of exclusion, as a ground for separation and differentiation between people along the lines of cultural identity.

² Luhmann 1995c: 398

³ Mulcahy 2006

⁴ Indicators Framework on Culture and Democracy Policymaker’s Guidebook p. 4

⁵ Mokre 2006

Helen Jermyn in her contribution “The Arts and Social Exclusion”⁶ has reminded us, that culture and the political production of cultural identity are two-edged swords that can foster solidarity while also emphasising difference on the other. Following these considerations we have to take into account that it is a long lasting tradition of culture to be used not only for cohesion but equally for the production of difference, essential for defining the ‘us’, and at the same time excluding the ‘other’⁷.

2.2. On the dimension of Democracy

Quite similar things can be said in terms of democracy, for which numerous definitions and concepts exist. On academic level even an own expert field “political science on democracy”⁸ has been established to produce empirical data for making standards of democracy visible and comparable. But beside scientific modelling of democracy the problem remains, that democracy does not exist in a certain way. Apart from the existence of particular measures and procedures in a representative frame it relies on something invisible: on public confidence in politics. This includes a general agreement in the division of power between legislative, executive and jurisdiction. And not to forget the prerequisite, that the majority of citizens are willing not to choose anti-democratic parties in their respective political entity.

When democracy is highly dependent on sovereign citizens who altogether build society I feel reminded of Jürgen Habermas’ concept of constitutional patriotism⁹ that unites members of a nation. In overcoming disastrous ethnic (“völkisch”) definitions of the nation, insinuating something like cultural homogeneity this German philosopher insisted in the existence of a legal framework as a main clue of national and/or societal “togetherness”. His republican nation understanding is politically and not culturally grounded when free and equal citizens (with whatever cultural, ethnical, religious or language background) are united by a common will and – at least partly - by a common history.

When he defines constitutional patriotism as the identification of the citizen with the fundamental values, institutions and procedures of the republican political constitutional system, there is an active civic role of the citizen. This means in practice at least an interest in policy issues and proceeds to select an active policy-making, e.g. in the form of citizens' initiatives or parties. In doing so they should be guided by a rational attitude towards political issues. This does not exclude an affective identification. But an unconditional acceptance of the state or the constitution is not what is meant by constitutional patriotism, Habermas primarily describes but a commitment to the universal core values of the nation and only secondarily an identification with the state and the constitution that reflects these standards. In the republican state it is considered that the political community will be seen not as an end in itself but as a necessary framework for free and equal citizens.

⁶ http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/arts_social_exclusion_uk.pdf (last access 05.09.2016)

⁷ As an actual example can be seen the election program of the Dutch Party for Freedom which pleads for a re-homogenisation of the Dutch society by excluding each Islamic cultural background (and by that neglecting any responsibility of the state for the arts). Online: <http://www.pi-news.net/2016/08/wilders-veroeffentlicht-wahlprogramm-zur-ent-islamisierung-der-niederlande/> (last access 05.09.2016)

⁸ Pichel/Pichel 2006

⁹ Habermas 2008

In the interpretation of Dolf Sterberger¹⁰ the constitutional state is seen as a guarantee of securing freedom and the human rights as the main civic rights are a core issue to legitimize the monopoly of the state, as it ensures the protection of rights. For Sterberger it would be only democracy (and not culture) that can finally ensure this protection most. No doubt, this ascertainment also includes cultural rights and so to take part in cultural activities and consequently to participate in culture.

However these rights are not unlimited. In accordance with international law, the right to participate in culture is limited at the point at which it infringes on another human right. This has to be particularly mentioned when European societies are increasingly confronted with phenomena of cultural diversity which enrich the living together but also produce a new quality of societal conflicts, when the members of different cultures not just live side by side peacefully but interact, intervene and try to dominate one another.

This process of increasing cultural differentiation has been intensified by migrants and refugees, who are going to become part of the European societies even when their status as citizen is still fragile. When an intensive public discussion accompanied by cultural policy measures on “multiculturality”, “interculturality” or “transculturality” is the answer, the question remains in which way cultural diversity (actually with a strong ethnical and religious bias) can be implemented in societies, in which first and foremost equal and free (by that also free from the constraints of their cultural backgrounds) citizens are setting the standards of democracy. Sociologists like Michael Moller¹¹ suggest that new rules of conflict have to be established.

2.3. About categorical differences between Community and Society in our collective memory

The precarious relationship between cultural diversity and democratic society can also be analysed with the glasses of Ferdinand Tönnies, who already at the beginning of the last century tried to make a differentiation between community and society.¹² In his “pure sociology” he reflects different ways of social cohesion, when for him “community” relies on strong basic elements, is it blood, place or spirit, in other words family, friendship, concord, religion or culture that form an entity of people whereas “society” is strongly based on individuality, in which isolated individuals stand alone and in permanent tension one against each other. To survive they have to rely on the construction of a “societal civilization”, in which peace and traffic is enabled by convention based on mutual fear but protected by the state, formed by legislation and politics.

For Tönnies the priorities were clear when “society” was seen as the end of an expiration process in the frame of capitalist development while being part of a “community” was the expression of a virtually natural human behaviour as a cultural being. Comparing Tönnies’ differentiation between community and society with Habermas’ claims for constitutional patriotism as a prerequisite of democracy it becomes clear that – at least on theoretical level – we are facing considerable contradictions between efforts for a rational construction of society and the affective participation in

¹⁰ Sternberger 1990

¹¹ Nollert 2012

¹² Tönnies 1926

a community. What comes up here is the old opposition between “civilisation” and “culture” which in our collective memories tells about different attitudes on the contributions of politics and/or culture for the maintenance and further development of democratic co-existence.

To make these tensions between “cold” or rational and “hot” or affective ways of thinking society a more concretely, it could make sense to mention newly established political concepts of “communitarism”. In describing the relationship between individuals and community for communitarists, the abstract concept of society (and its democratic attainments) seems not any more a desirable point of reference. What primarily counts is the belonging to particular groups which strongly remind of Tönnies “communities”. Based on a family structure they share more than common interests to be articulated politically, it is about the construction of a particular cultural background in which its members are inescapably embedded. Therefore communitarian philosophy is strongly based upon the belief that a person's social identity and personality is largely moulded by community relationships and its cultural particularities, with a smaller degree of development being placed on individualism as a prerequisite for citizenship in democratic societies.

With the growing political influence of communitarian models, liberal versions of society are massively challenged. At the extent ethnical, religious and cultural belongings are politically used for producing community the foundations for democracy are weakened. This paradox can only be solved, when the primacy of free and equal citizen can be maintained and the belonging to particular cultural entities can be referred in the privacy of the citizen.

2.4. On the precarious relationship between Democracy and Social Cohesion

The previous remarks should have made clear that the concept of democracy is strongly based on the existence of sovereign citizens whose participation in political life goes beyond the belonging to particular social and cultural groups. This is particularly true on large scale when ethnically, culturally or religiously diverse political entities like nations only dispose of weak cohesive power. Naturally it depends on different political levels, when municipalities or regions allow a more affective living together, whereas on state level we are facing a weakening influence (obviously one of the major reasons why cultural policy on city level becomes more and more important compared with national levels).

In the actual crisis we are confronted with the upcoming of new political forces that intend to produce new forms of social cohesion with at least two fatal consequences. On one hand their increasing political influence relies on efforts of artificial reconstructions of cultural entities (“We want our England back”) that have never existed (but in a nostalgic view can be imagined). These entities are among others characterized by simple criteria of inclusion and exclusion, what means, that citizens can't decide freely if they want to belong to or not, but being stigmatized by nature as an insider or an outsider. As a result we can see growing social cohesion in particular parts of society whereas society as a whole is disintegrating. Even more dangerous seems the fact that this particular way of social cohesion leads to an up-to-now unknown democratic expiration; when an increasing part of society does not anymore see democratic standards as an essential basis for a further

prosperous development. As a consequence more and more people like in Poland or in Hungary are open for concepts of an “illiberal democracy” and follow neo-authoritarian tendencies.

Quite unexpectedly recent political developments, e.g. in the frame of the “Brexit” discussion in the United Kingdom have made visible a major conflict that goes between liberal elites defending cultural diversity (and by that a particular version of cultural participation) and a big rest suffering from the actual financial and economic crisis, tending to overcome liberal attainments of cultural diversity but willing to participate in a politically constructed cultural unity, which is prepared to fight “the others” who have brought them in their inferior position in society.

In fighting liberal elites, who in the argumentation of far right- but also left-wing populists have caused the actual dilemma among others in defending culturally diverse and open societies, a new political discussion on “direct democracy” comes up. “The people” themselves should take over the mandate of political decision making by that at least relativizing the system of representative democracy and its claim for expert knowledge. Fatally evidence suggests that this trend won’t lead to more societal openness but on the contrary to a further weakening of democratic attainments in Europe when frustrated majorities tend to a neo-authoritarianism and by that to less open and culturally diverse societies.

2.5. Actual challenges for the Cultural Sector

For most of the time the European nation building process was highly linked to concepts of cultural identity which became manifest in an elaborated cultural infrastructure. Mainly a prosperous middle class found its symbolic representation when their members participated in cultural activities. For the big rest of the working population, cultural participation was not foreseen when they were stigmatized as employees “without culture”. Against this bourgeois hegemony it was part of the political and ideological struggles of the 20th century to equip also the proletariat with cultural rights, not only for enjoyment but as a symbolic mean to improve their individual and political standing in society.

It was mainly from the beginning of the 1970^{ies} when mainstream politics in Europe tended to overcome the old class structure, making sooner or later all members of society part of the middle class. With these political intentions cultural policy gained a new status trying to include as many as possible citizens in a cultural mainstream represented by the existing cultural infrastructure. Cultural participation then meant to make use of the offers of the big institutions which should be open not only for a small elite but for everybody. Accordingly the cultural policy discourse was highly dominated by concepts of a “democratic culture”, in which all members of society should be part of. Only a small minority – many of them born out of an opposing youth movement – went on fighting for their own, alternative culture, denying participation in the mainstream culture.

Neoliberal tendencies of marketization of more or less all living and working conditions - and so also of the cultural sector during the last 20 years - have made cultural policy intentions widely obsolete . To the extent representations of a so-called “High Culture” lost its dominant character when more and more cultural goods and services were exchanged on the markets emancipating them from a

particular social class. Admittedly by that culture widely lost its political connotation and became –in principle – an issue of private preference (like religious belief) open for everybody who could afford.

Along this tendency of cultural commodification cultural policy, particularly on national level lost considerably its capacity influencing societal development. When one of its major objectives since the 1970^{ies} was to improve cultural participation particularly of those who haven't been passively or actively involved in culture via political means, it is now marketing strategies mainly of rich cultural institutions, which try to influence the passion of their (potential) audiences to take part in their programmes.

Behind all efforts to involve people, who widely stand apart of the traditional cultural sector there is an ongoing discussion about the necessity to maintain a cultural sector in its own right. This means to take care of the intrinsic value of what the cultural sector is about in a modern, division of labour based society in which the principle of comprehensive utilisation became dominant. In other words: Those who are interested in culture, should take part in respective activities, while others find their fulfilment in the realisation of other passions.

This tendency of accepting culture as a particular expert field among others can be seen as a considerable problem of legitimizing public cultural policy in the frame of democratic societies. When public cultural policy of the 1970^{ies} and 1980^{ies} still could convincingly promote its character as progressive force for further development of the whole society, cultural policy makers became later under considerable constraint to find new arguments for legitimization like promoting new economic sectors, enabling new labour chances, attractiveness of cities or – as in our case – contributing to social cohesion and/or democracy which are all of them foreign to the obstinacy of the sector.

When we refer to the traditional core issue of cultural policy in the shape of the traditional, publicly resourced cultural infrastructure, we should not forget that meanwhile the upcoming of a commercial culture and media industry has tremendously enriched the supply of cultural goods and services. No longer steered by public cultural policy an unsurveyable number of users is going to detect their own cultural spaces is it in reality or virtually (even they themselves wouldn't talk about cultural participation). In doing so they connect with each other – highly informal and mostly temporarily – as groups which share certain attitudes, interests or passions, most of them without revealing any demand to make the world better or at least to contribute to the further development of democratic societies).

2.6. On the categorical difference between Arts and Culture

Talking about the cultural sector and its changing cohesive character we cannot avoid relating to the categorical differences between what we are used to call culture and the arts.¹³ Even when we already mentioned the Arts still as the core issue of cultural policy (at least in terms of public funding) particularly in terms of social cohesion, culture and the Arts do not stand for the same but for the opposite when they are contrasting each other par excellence.

¹³ Burger 1996

As – beside science – particularly contemporary art forms are directed to produce societally relevant knowledge the main intention of their representatives is to produce – with their respective aesthetic means – a picture of the world as it is. This also can imply the sharpening, even the production of social conflicts (by provocations) which can't be solved within the arts system itself. In doing so the arts are dividing society in different conflict actors which might lead to the opposite of social cohesion. This characteristic of the arts is mainly based on its perception by critical and independent individuals who – each of them for their own – are invited to find a respective relationship what is offered by the specific art work. This might happen irrespectively the existence of a common art scene, consisting of a common understanding of quality aspects of art affiliated individuals.

The conflicting character of many contemporary art forms should not make us underestimate the willingness of an increasing number of artists to overcome traditional ways of appreciation of “existing culture”, but to get involved in selected social fields, actively involving people in “community arts” relying on the process character more than on the artistic result. In most cases this kind of involving arts projects are not directed to produce sustainable communities and by that enabling social cohesion, but allowing ordinary people to get in touch with - for them - new aesthetic expression forms in an unknown way (e.g. outreach projects). This preparedness of artists to make up to so far neglected people participating in arts projects was one of the major motives of public cultural policy bodies like the English Arts Council during the area of New Labour to give incentives to artists when they tried to find new relationships with socially disadvantaged people on the margins of society. This bias was seen by those artists who intended to follow traditional ways of arts production as an assault against their artistic autonomy and as a political measure trying to abrogate genuine aesthetic quality standards. With the start of the conservative government, these culture policy lead intentions of reconciliation between the arts world and ordinary people came to an end.

The British example has led also in many other European countries mainly under the title “arts education” to a new generation of cultural policy measure trying to mediate between the traditional and contemporary art world and people widely unaware of its existence.

Mentioning these artistic approaches directed in actively involving their audiences there are also voices warning of naïve hopes of participation. “Nightmare Participation”¹⁴ is the title of a book of the architect and artist Markus Miessen, broadly anticipated in the artistic scene, in which he speaks of participation as a way of avoiding to take responsibility. With the invitation to take part in decision making processes of any kind, a new organisational model would be established not to solve problems but to legitimize existing structures. “Real participation” following Miessen would rely on mature citizens, who have prepared themselves for the involvement in which ever field thoroughly and know about the consequences of their participation. Following the warning of Socrates, it would be reckless to talk about something and to do something you do not understand. It would be a devaluation of the arts when everybody would be able to participate without understanding what the arts are about.

In opposition of the tendentially dividing character of the arts, culture has a much more harmonizing connotation trying to allow the entering of isolated individuals in a common community who are really or supposedly sharing common interests, values, attitudes or perspectives is it in the world of

¹⁴ Miessen 2012

the arts or is it elsewhere. Undoubtedly in this context culture and the participation in it, contributes to social cohesion at least of certain groups that are willing to share common experiences.

This differentiation has to be made particularly, when in the current crisis a new politicization of culture can be observed. Apparently political efforts of reconstructing cultural homogeneity is used to make people affiliated to right wing populist parties. When e.g. the Dutch Party for Freedom states in its current election campaign to make an end of any kind of public arts funding and promises the regain of a pure “Dutchness” against all kind of migrants and foreigners (particularly when represent Islamic belief) the contradictory character of both, the arts and culture at least in the political arena becomes evident. Looking at other rampant forms of political extremism in other European countries, an additional kind of “functionalisation” of the rebirth of national cultures in times of growing social inequality finds an explanation. It’s about culture as an instrument for hiding different interests. Authors like Monika Mokre¹⁵ speak about new ways of “culturalisation” of inequality in the actual society and by that of the opposite of what Jürgen Habermas made a prerequisite of constitutional patriotism in a democratic society: the voluntary affiliation of free and equal citizens, who actively oppose neo-authoritarian leadership on the back of disadvantaged compatriots.

3. Historical aspects

As an Austrian author allow me a short review on the implementation of the Viennese cultural infrastructure¹⁶, which up to today finds internationally a high, not only touristic reputation. The main manifestations (State Opera, Burgtheater, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Musikverein and many others) have been built in the second half of the 19th century when the late Austrian monarchy denied the political participation of a wealthy bourgeoisie, so they were in search of an alternative arena of self-representation. Accordingly this cultural infrastructure can be seen as a complementary measure of self-mirroring when the activities in parliament were widely seen as unalterable by the citizens. To actively participate in culture was not only seen as an offer but as a must, for which schools had to prepare in an elaborated way. Insofar cultural institutions became not only the places in which social cohesion of a social class of increasing importance took place. They became also the places in which the denial of political participation could not only be withstood but celebrated as a better way of taking part in society. The result was a feeling of supremacy of bourgeois people in the world of culture compared with the world of politics as something of inferior importance. This was the more true when cultural institutions became symbolically outstanding places of delimitation against the big rest of society not been able to appreciate culture as such and by that excluded from cultural life.¹⁷

It was part of the political controversies of the first half of the 20th century (Kulturkampf”) when socialist politicians for the first time tried to develop a positive connotation of culture for the proletariat. In practicing their own culture, working class people should be strengthened in their

¹⁵ Mokre 2006

¹⁶ Wimmer 2011

¹⁷ Schorske

social standing, overcome the existing cultural hegemony of the bourgeoisie, establishing their own cultural representations and by that finding also politically an active role in society.

I do mention this historically exceptional situation in the heart of Europe, because it represents in a special way the tensions between culture and democracy, cultural participation and social cohesion (and exclusion). And I do mention it, because the impact of this constellation can be felt 150 years later, even when the constitutional framework has changed. It is still a small share of mainly middle class people who participate in the activities of the former bourgeois cultural infrastructure and it is still high cultural policy priority in maintaining this infrastructure.

When similar cultural infrastructures have been built all over Europe, we can see – with the actual demographic changes – their hegemonial character is getting lost. When in parts of Eastern Europe after the fall of the iron curtain considerable institutions have been closed or destroyed, also in western parts their legitimation became fragile. Accordingly their representatives are searching for a new position in their rapidly changing societies and participation is one of the answers.

3.1. Current situation

In trying to find a new relevance for the cultural sector it is often forgotten to develop a more in-depth sociological view on what actually is taking place in European societies. Obviously the traditional dominant status of the middle classes is weakening, at the same time we are facing an increasing segmentation accompanied by increasing social inequality. It seems that an insidious detriment of societies takes place when more and more people are confronted with a change for the worse of their working and living standards with the effect of a general feeling of insecurity and even anger.

One of the main outcomes of this social segregation process on political level is an alarming tiredness in defending democratic standards. Sociologists like Colin Crouch already in 2004 spoke about a new area of post-democracy¹⁸ in which a few international monopolists have taken over the national political system limiting the chances of democratically legitimized influence of the respective population. The only remaining answer – so the general feeling of an increasing number of frustrated citizens – would be to vote for neo-authoritarian forces promising to defend them against an international directed liberal elite.

When cultural institutions at this stage of comprehensive socio-demographic changes offer new ways of participation (and by that more social cohesion) their representatives have to find new connecting factors particularly for those people who up to now did not participate. What have cultural institutions in their traditional middle class attitude really have to offer? What can they contribute in the improvement of the survival strategies, when e.g. meanwhile more than 50% of the young people in the Mediterranean countries are unemployed and in others more than 30% leave school without the competence of meaningful reading and writing. The problem can be sharpened when most of the cultural institutions up to now did not find a respective answer to migration when their

¹⁸Crouch 2004

representatives are still mostly of middle class origin and by that only insufficiently reflect the growing ethnic (and by that social) diversity of European societies.¹⁹

In trying to find new relationships with people on the margin of society, cultural institutions should avoid an overestimation of their societal influence (which was widely undisputed in the past). Anyway a respective production of hopes in these days could easily backfire to them when obviously current dynamics of social disintegration are much stronger in influencing the living and working conditions of ordinary people. Additionally they have to anticipate, that for a growing part of society (including representatives of the traditional middle class) the invitation to get involved has become irrelevant when their first address for leisure time activities and enjoyment is the market on which cultural goods and services of all kinds can be bought mostly with any ambition to belong to any social group.

3.2. Political answers

The growing ethnic, religious and cultural diversity in European societies is meanwhile represented in a number of international and European political documents. Particularly relevant in this context seems to be the UNESCO-Declaration of Cultural Diversity²⁰ as a common heritage of humanity. Originally intended to find a more equal relationship in cultural exchange between developing and developed states it has meanwhile become a main source of defending public cultural policy in a market driven society. As a global document it relativizes the up to then dominant European definition of culture and could have – at least in principle – consequences in the future priority setting of European cultural policies.

Even more focussed on the relationship between culture, cultural participation, social cohesion and democracy is the statement of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers for Culture: Governance of Culture – Promoting Access to Culture 2013.²¹ As a result of their discussions they stated a clear link that

“has been made in recent years between a strong, well-functioning democracy and an abundance of cultural opportunities for citizens. Societies tend to be more open, tolerant, well-functioning and economically successful where people have easy access to a wide range of cultural activities and participation rates in these activities are high. Certainly, cultural activities are an important part of building citizens’ skills to express themselves, inform themselves, think critically and hold opinions – skills that are essential for a democracy to work. And respect for the need to support a wide range of cultural activities requires a strong sense of openness and tolerance by governments.”

When the ministers from their political perspective state a categorical positive attribution of “Culture” and so of “Access to Culture” and “Cultural Participation” they nevertheless ask for a scientific processing of relevant data to harden their political diagnosis. Therefore the Council of

¹⁹ This phenomenon has been researched in detail in the frame of a European cooperation project „Brokering Migrants’ Cultural Participation“ which among others produced a benchmarking tool for self-evaluation allowing cultural institutions to better relate to migration

²⁰ http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13179&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (last access 05.09.2016)

²¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/Moscow/default_en.asp (last access 05.09.2016)

Europe was asked “to put this phenomenon on a more scientific footing, so that in a budget-squeezed era culture and cultural policy are given their well-deserved priority, and can be spot on and productive.”²² The assignment of the Hertie School of Governance to prepare an *Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD)* is an immediate consequence of this plea.

Whatever the political discussions around IFCD might bring, already now it can be said that the existing funding structures in most European countries are hardly prepared to meet the increased needs in terms of cultural participation. Traditionally they have a massive bias towards artistic production (and its institutional framework) side, whereas those who are going to be invited to participate are structurally underestimated. Up to now most of the respective initiatives are seen as ad-ons which - the more in an budget-squeezed era - are under particular pressure are referred to private funding.

Already three years earlier the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has published a New Strategy and Action Plan for Social Cohesion.²³ As a political document it does not explicitly relate to an assumed cohesive character of culture but on the necessity for all to “participate and cooperate fully in a democratic and sustainable development process”. This would help to overcome “conflicts and divisions caused by disparities in the distribution of wealth, ethnic and cultural diversity and the different ways that environmental conditions affect peoples' lives.”

At that time the main guarantees of an inclusive society were seen in political and not in cultural actors. Accordingly culture moreover as a driving force in producing social cohesion in the frame of democratic societies does not play a major role in this document. Most prominently the term culture is used in describing a wishful relationship among people, when in § 14 a “culture of mutual recognition could develop into a tool for mobilisation and fulfilment that gives meaning and purpose to everybody’s life, in particular those who are isolated and not active within their community.”

No doubt beyond these fundamental political documents there is a lot more. E.g. the European Union has published a number of relevant documents and even implemented a “Platform for Access”²⁴, many others have been formulated in a national, regional or even city context. Most of them are trying to find new answers to challenges, culture is facing in increasingly competitive (also between different policy fields), fragmented and democracy sceptic societies.

4. What research can provide

When we are in a next step focussing the relationship between cultural participation and social cohesion more closely, we should be aware, that the given *Framework on Culture and Democracy* has to be seen as a model by which possible relationships can be interpreted and understood. This is the more true when it is based on a set of assumptions which have to abstract from the respective

²² http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/culture/digitisation/brochure-culture-democracy_en.pdf (last access 05.09.2016)

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http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/2010Strategy_ActionPlan_SocialCohesion.pdf (last access 05.09.2016)

²⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/policy/index_en.htm (last access 05.09.2016)

political context or current changes of the socio-demographic composition of the societies, that should be compared. This has to be mentioned when a few years ago the specifications of the Council of Europe concerning democratic standards were widely undoubted, whereas the actual upcoming of antidemocratic forces (together with their cultural representations) have to be ignored in modelling the relationship between culture and democracy. The political context might also play even a decisive role, when it comes to the relationship between cultural participation and social cohesion: Anyway we dispose of sufficient knowledge from Europe's recent history of the strong socially cohesive power of totalitarian regimes which understand virtuously to instrumentalize cultural participation for the maintenance of their regime.

In saying this previous considerations might be useful as a background foil when we now try to have a closer look on the framework.

4.1. The Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy (IFCD) and the relationship between cultural participation and social cohesion

As an indicator framework IFCD tries to explore a set of policy relationships that can be examined by reliable data; altogether 191 variables covering a wide range of issue areas relevant for 37 member states of the Council of Europe have been developed up to now. As such IFCD intends to provide a stronger evidence base for policymaking; at the same time it should also allow policymakers to examine their own positions and compare them with other actors in the cultural policy arena and beyond with other countries.

At this stage the team of the Hertie School has developed a number of specific indicators, relevant for cultural participation, whereas the aspect of social cohesion still remains rather open within the proposed dimensions of democracy.

4.1.1. On the dimension Cultural Participation

Following the explanations of the IFCD authors they see after Adolfo Morrone "wider participation in cultural life...a major concern of national cultural policies in different countries around the world. Cultural participation is associated with a more active lifestyle; those who are excluded from participating in cultural activities also have lower level of social cohesion."²⁵

In his effort to structure the field Morrone distinguishes between three categories of cultural participation:

- *Home based (culture d'appartement) refers to the amount of time spent on watching TV, listening to the radio, watching and listening to recorded sound and images, reading and using computer and the Internet.*

- *Going out (culture de sortie) includes visits to cultural venues such as cinema, theatre, concerts, museums, monuments and heritage sites.*

²⁵ Morrone 2008

- *Identity building (culture identitaire) covers amateur cultural practices, membership of cultural associations, popular culture, ethnic culture, community practices and youth culture.*

In 2009 UNESCO has published in its preparatory documents for a *Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS)* in which it also tried to describe cultural participation as:

"including cultural practices that may involve consumption as well as activities that are undertaken within the community, reflecting quality of life, traditions and beliefs. It includes attendance at formal and fore free events, such as going to a movie or to a concert, as well as informal cultural action, such as participating in community cultural activities and amateur artistic productions or everyday activities like reading a book.

Moreover, cultural participation covers both active and passive behaviour. It includes the person who is listening to a concert and the person who practices music. The purpose of cultural participation surveys should be to assess overall participation levels, even though it may be difficult to distinguish active from passive behaviour. For example, in some festivals, individuals may be performers at one point (active, creating and inspiring others) and be the audience at other times (passive or seeking inspiration). Cultural participation does not concern activities carried out for employment purposes; for example, cultural participation would include visitors to a museum but not the paid guide".²⁶

In delivering a set of measuring methods in the field of cultural participation UNESCO has published a handbook.²⁷ In its approach it wants to reflect changing cultural attitudes but also takes into account the changing socio-democratic composition of societies as well as technological innovations. By doing so, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) tries to steer away from the traditional view of cultural practices when it developed new guidelines which can be applied across countries to measure cultural participation globally. As a guideline it also provides a checklist of critical topics for designing future surveys and wants to serve as an important resource for organizations involved in collecting data on cultural participation.

Another valuable set of data concerning cultural participation has been developed by Compendium initiative²⁸, in initiative of the European Research Institute of Cultural Research (ERICarts) also in co-operation with the Council of Europe. Already since the beginning of the Compendium project, cultural participation has been treated both as a transversal issue of relevance in different areas of cultural policy making and as a theme of specific sub-chapters in the Compendium country profiles. As a consequence, there are several strands of related information and data found in various sub-sections of individual Compendium country profiles.

Some of this content has already been condensed into comparative/statistical tables that address e.g.: active cultural participation in Europe; Internet penetration rates and Facebook users; trends in visits of libraries and in reading; participation in selected cultural activities; number of screens, cinema admissions and cinema admissions per capita; etc. Relevant data are presented by age, sex and educational attainment level.

The intention of the section cultural participation is also in this case to provide information that can assist politicians but also NGOs in their efforts to start monitoring and comparing policies and related measures that aim at enhancing cultural participation or improving access to cultural activities for

²⁶ UNESCO Working Document

²⁷ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/culture/Pages/fcs-measuring-participation-handbook.aspx> (last access 05.09.2016)

²⁸ www.culturalpolicies.net(last access 05.09.2016)

different groups of the population. As well, reflection processes are supported in order to determine, in which way cultural participation plays an essential role in democratic governance and as a human right.

Within this context also *Hotopics – Cultural Democracy in the 21st Century*²⁹ as a debate forum initiated by the Council of Europe should be mentioned when a particular focal point is put on the relationship between “New Media and Cultural Participation”.

On the level of the European Commission cultural participation was considered by the ESSnet-Culture final report (2012)³⁰ using the conceptual model of cultural participation (ICET) which in principle distinguishes four forms of participation:

- *Information — to seek, collect and spread information on culture;*

- *Communication and community — to interact with others on cultural issues and to participate in cultural networks;*

- *Enjoyment and expression — to enjoy exhibitions, art performances and other forms of cultural expression, to practise arts for leisure, and to create online content.*

- *Transaction — to buy art and to buy or reserve tickets for shows.*

Thus, in the light of the ICET model, a broad range of activities refers to cultural participation: reading books and newspapers, going to cinema, theatres and concerts, visiting museums and historical sites but also playing music, painting, dancing or doing other activities with artistic dimension.

Practice of artistic activities was not investigated in the AES 2011 but was included as a variable in the EU-SILC 2015 module on social and cultural participation. Data from the latter survey will be available in 2017.

In the related area a European co-operation initiative on “Access to Culture”³¹ took place which also includes a chapter on Access to Culture from the Perspective of Social Inclusion and Diversity³².

Relevant data are available by EUROSTAT which offers an own chapter on cultural participation³³. Also a closer look in the data set of the Compendium initiative³⁴ on key resources on cultural participation might be helpful.

Additional data on cultural participation (reading books and newspapers, attending cultural events and visiting cultural sites) come from a specific module on cultural participation of Adult Education Survey (AES). That survey was conducted in 2007 (on the basis of a gentlemen’s agreement) and in

²⁹ www.hotopics.net (last access 05.09.2016)

³⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/culture/library/reports/ess-net-report_en.pdf (last access 05.09.2016)

³¹ EDUCULT 2015

³² Concerning this issue comprehensive literature review is available at: <http://educult.at/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Review-on-the-policies-at-European-level.pdf> (last access 05.09.2016)

³³ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3217494/7551543/KS-04-15-737-EN-N.pdf/648072f3-63c4-47d8-905a-6fdc742b8605> (last access 05.09.2016)

³⁴ <http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/cultural-participation-resources.php> (last access 05.09.2016).

Additionally: Cultural Participation by counting adults in public performances. Online:

<http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/statistics-participation.php?aid=193&cid=74&lid=en> (last access 05.09.2016)

2011 under EU legislation. But as the specific module on cultural participation was optional in the 2011 AES, there are no 2011 AES data on this topic for Belgium, Denmark, Ireland, France, Croatia, the Netherlands and Sweden (nor for Norway and Switzerland). For the United Kingdom, data are available on 'reading newspapers' and 'going to the cinema'.

4.1.2. Discussing the indicators for Cultural Participation

In the Policymaker's Guidebook of IFCD the main indicators on cultural participation, developed up to now, are listed and described. Accordingly only a few additional comments might be added at this stage.

Artistic Expression and Creation

Following the saying of Farida Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, artistic expression and creation would decisively "contribute to the vibrancy of a country's cultural life according to the share of people engaged actively in a broad variety of artistic forms". Here it might be helpful to remember that public cultural policy still considerably relies on professional artists (mainly within an institutionalized cultural infrastructure) and other professional cultural operators. Mentioning this it can be easily found out that artists – as a public voice – have a different status within European societies. When in some countries they play an active, often dominant role in the intellectual and consequently also in the political discourse their role as a thriving force in social change processes is at least underestimated. This also relates to the differentiation between creative and reproductive artists who claim a different status in society. In terms of the increased importance of the creative and cultural industries it has to be taken into consideration, that most of the creatives are still working in more than fragile conditions. Representing an avant-garde as entrepreneurs on the current labour markets their creativity is highly linked with insecurity, by those temporary and project-oriented working courses, in many cases not an ideal requirement to think and act beyond his or her own survival.

Interest in Foreign Cultures

Interest in foreign cultures not only among a small elite but in the majority of the national populations seems to be indeed an important proof of an open society. What we can observe in many European societies (even those which had been showcases of an open and liberal character) are tendencies of re-nationalisation. This goes together with the actual refugee movements and finds its confirmation in a number of terror attacks. The result is a particular anti-Islamism that infiltrates increasingly the *raisonnement* not only of conservative elites but also of ordinary people. In consequence there are massive cultural policy trends which again tend to rely on the appreciation of an assumed common cultural heritage which can be delimited from representation forms of foreign cultures. When talking about interest in foreign cultures a traditional bias should be also considered when particular (mainly western) cultures are more appreciated than others (that means for example that an average Austrian is more interested in English or French Culture when in Bulgarian or Romanian and learns more likely English, French or Spanish than language of eastern neighbouring countries).

Non-Partisan Citizen Involvement

Non-partisan citizen involvement is indeed an important indicator of the public standing of cultural institutions and initiatives. Nevertheless different traditions should not be underestimated when e.g. in Anglo-American countries private initiatives from the very beginning played an important role in the implementation of the cultural infrastructure while in the middle of Europe the state traditionally plays a decisive role in constructing and maintaining. These different starting points go together with different tax regimes giving incentives for a broader private engagement – or not. There is also a dangerous implication of an increased non-partisan citizen involvement when particularly right-wing populists make increasingly use of the *raisonnement* of people that are against the redistribution of public resources for maintaining the cultural infrastructure. A series of plebiscites have shown the will of majorities to make an end of state privileges for culture and better invest in other policy fields.

Online Creativity and Participation

The use of online media is going to change everything what we – up to now – thought about culture. As new cultural spaces they don't only produce new cultural content in a virtual surrounding, they also make the existing cultural infrastructure completely changing. They allow a new quality of communication and immediate interaction that was not possible within the traditional cultural infrastructure. In terms of reliable data we still don't know very much about the ground-breaking changes we are facing by the current technological revolution. Anyway one more time there are reasons of assumption that public policy has not even anticipated let alone reconceptualised its requirements according to the importance of the digital media and its cultural impact.³⁵

Passive Cultural Participation

Talking about passive cultural participation it is unavoidable to talk about the sociological composition of the respective societies. Most of the current actors in the cultural field are still motivated by concepts of a "Culture for All" of the 1970^{ies} and 1980^{ies} intending to overcome existing social hierarchies by cultural means. When the origins of culture at least in Europe started from aristocratic and later bourgeois groups, the emancipatory potential of cultural policy at that time was to make this heritage available for everybody. Meanwhile two considerable changes took place: One is about the increased social differentiation of society, which means among others also a cultural differentiation. The result is the fact that a common binding idea of culture got lost, more, for an assumed majority of the European populations public cultural policy measures seem to be completely out of their perception of what is going on in society. Instead of that they have developed their own cultural attitudes (even when they have no name for it) alongside their social backgrounds.

Even worsening is the fact that after the phase of societal and cultural differentiation a new class confrontation becomes evident bringing a remaining liberal middle class elite (with high affiliations towards the cultural sector) in opposition to an increasing part of disadvantaged citizens full of anger and *raisonnement* against those who represent the political (and also cultural) decision making process. On the contrary of the class identities of the early 20th century which was a positive one it is now mainly negatively co-notated when it is against "the foreign", "the others" (including their

³⁵ The fact that it took almost hundred years that public cultural policy realized that film as a then new medium has become the most important artistic expression form of the 20th century and still resists to provide the sector with similar resources than the traditional media might be warning.

particular cultural attitudes), who are seen as the primary enemies to be guilty in producing the actual crisis in the living and working conditions. That these precarious social circumstances do have consequences for passive cultural participation should be more than obvious.

Students in the Arts

Throughout the last years we are confronted with a remarkable increase of numbers of students in the arts. To the extent professional artistic training is flourishing we have to experience a considerable downsizing of arts education within the formal school system. This structural lack can only be compensated incompletely by arts and culture education and mediation provision of cultural institutions. These oppositional tendencies between the few who become an essential because professional part of the cultural sector and the many who do not any more dispose of the elementary requirements to understand what the cultural sector is about, what it has to offer and consequently how to take part are an additional argument for a further fragmentation and hierarchisation of society also by culture.

4.1.3. Other dimensions relevant for indicating Cultural Participation

Even when they are not mentioned explicitly among the indicators describing the aspect of cultural participation, there are some others like “access to culture” or “arts education” which might influence attitudes of cultural participation. While “access to culture” has been negotiated in detail in the frame of a European co-operation project “Access to Culture – Policy Analysis”³⁶ dealing with questions of democracy, heritage, digital access or social inclusion the dimension of “arts and cultural education” which is now listed under the dimension of policy seems to be of particular importance also in respect of cultural participation.

It is again UNESCO which has started a global discussion process under the title of arts education³⁷. Up to now two World Conferences for Arts Education have been organised leading to a Road-Map and a Seoul-Agenda for Arts Education as guidelines for further prioritisation of arts education equally in cultural and education policy. Around these UNESCO initiatives a number of Research Observatories³⁸ have been established producing relevant data and also a network of arts education researcher could be implemented. Since 2013 they produce a regular yearbook which – among others – also discuss societal consequences of arts education.³⁹ In this context OECD has launched a study trying to find out to what extent the necessity of dealing with the arts can be argued by not art-immanent affects. The publication “Arts for Art’s Sake.”⁴⁰

³⁶ EDUCULT 2015

³⁷ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/creativity/arts-education> (last access 05.09.2016)

³⁸ <http://www.t-tudok.hu/?en/current-events-2/european-network-of-observatories-in-the-field-of-arts-and-cultural-education-linked-to-unesco-eng> (last access 05.09.2016)

³⁹ Bamford/Qvortrup 2014

⁴⁰ OECD o.a.

4.1.4. On the dimension Social Cohesion

The already mentioned Strategy and Action Plan of the Council of Europe starts with a definition of social cohesion: “as the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members – minimising disparities and avoiding marginalisation – to manage differences and divisions and ensure the means of achieving welfare of all members.” Social cohesion is declared as a primarily political concept that would be essential for the fulfilment of the three core values of the Council of Europe; human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

One does not have to go back to times of Margaret Thatcher, who provocatively declared that “there is no such thing as society” under universal market conditions, to doubt that each version of social cohesion relates to the whole of that what we are used to see as society. But what is the unit, in which cohesion should it take place, is it on local, regional, national, European or even global level? And in which way does it relate to different societal strata (groups, classes, ethnicities, milieus,...) that are all together in their diversity form society?

When this project is going to compare national societies there is the fear of underestimating internal partial cohesive tendencies which are going to conflict each other in a given society (which in the recent past even lead to make nations break apart). And there is also the “emancipatory” role of a transnational market to be taken into account, which contradicts the idea of social cohesion when the only language, it speaks is about individualized producers and consumers and their particular product and service affiliations.

Nevertheless – beside the Council of Europe – there is a countless number of political affirmations stating the necessity of social cohesion. The main question remains, in which way it can be realized in times of increasing social differentiation and inequality not only on limited group level (united by common interests, norms, values but also raisonnements) but on national, even European level and what might be the role of “Culture” in these efforts?⁴¹ Documents like the Social Cohesion Guide of the Council of Europe⁴² try to give an answer.

Also here a critical remark alongside a historic review might be helpful. When after the cruelties of the Second World War starting in the 1970^{ies} at least in the western part of Europe the conflict between different classes was going to end by the implementation of a new generation of political means. The idea of sovereign citizen as free and equal members of society was not anymore only an idealistic impression of some enlightenment advocating philosophers but became an issue of practical politics.

As the main instrument to bring sooner or later all in a status of a citizen the Welfare state was implemented. It can be up to now be seen as a major European attainment allowing a practice of solidarity on national level. Accordingly people could base their individual decisions upon how to live and work in a functioning social secure system regardless their actual social status. The consequence was the production of the main source of social cohesion which is trust.

⁴¹ <http://www.creativeurope.at/eu-kulturpolitik/news/eu-kulturministerrat-moechte-kulturelle-und-kreative-crossover-effekte-staerken.html> (last access 05.09.2016)

⁴² http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialcohesiondev/source/GUIDE_en.pdf (last access 05.09.2016)

In most European countries we are now confronted with a considerable drawback of social standards alongside the weakening of the Welfare principles (at the same time a social Europe is more far than ever). Not surprising when more and more people are not any more trusting but mistrusting the given societal constitution (and its democratic standards) by that as frustrated individuals without any perspective a loss of social cohesion at least on national and transnational level (and better rely in the membership of particular groups).

The era of configuring the Welfare state is also characterized by the upcoming of cultural policy with its new claims of contributing in the further development of society. It was a then active Austrian Minister for Culture Fred Sinowatz who argued for a “cultural policy as a continuation of social policy.”⁴³ He wanted to express that a functioning Welfare state (guaranteeing the redistribution of material resources alongside the needs of the affected) and its capacity to produce social cohesion via solidarity on national level is an indispensable requirement for any cultural policy measure.

When IFCD is now putting the relationship the other way round trying to find out how cultural policy may produce a new quality of social cohesion, a view on the sheer numbers comparing the different ways and extents of social and cultural policy might be helpful not to bridle the horse from behind.

4.1.5. Discussing the indicators on Social Cohesion

The Council of Europe itself has provided the main indicators of social cohesion on comparable national level: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As within IFCD democracy is one of the two main issues of research it finds its differentiation in four dimensions civic, policy, rule of law and freedom & equality. Accordingly rule of law is seen as an imminent and indispensable factor of democracy while the aspect of human rights only finds indirect representation.

Up to now IFCD does not provide explicit indicators on social cohesion. Of course implicitly the civic as well as the policy dimension of democracy refers to the claim for citizens to politically participate and to take an active role in society and its political institutions in which they trust as a cohesive factor.

At this stage I would propose to think about additional, more explicit indicators which e.g. tell about the conditions of the welfare state (which I propose to be the most relevant factor of solidarity and by that social cohesion on national level), of job satisfaction, income disparity or unemployment rates. As there are meanwhile comparative statistics on well-being available this also could be a cohesive factor, not to forget the status of minorities and migrant parts of population, which both show the openness and readiness to support disadvantaged people individually and publicly (as a concrete expression of solidarity).

⁴³ Sinowatz 1975

4.2. Country Profiles

Meanwhile a first country ranking based on the existing indicator structure is available. It will be the task of the cultural politicians in charge to draw out the respective consequences. In any case it has to be taken into consideration that the political and socio-demographic context in which the dimensions of culture and education, in particular cultural participation and social cohesion will be measured and compared is going to change considerably. Following the public debate it becomes evident, that European nations – accordingly their internal growing societal contradictions – are increasingly seduced to find their own way in a globalized society. These efforts of renationalisation even endanger a prosperous future of the European unification project when main common values represented by the Council of Europe are under disposition.

Yes, there is – looking at the example of the PISA ranking in the field of education policy – some hope, that cultural politicians who find their country as not top performing alongside one or the other indicators may receive another set of good arguments to strengthen their position within national governments. At the same time there are still dominant stereotypes even on government level stating that there is certain uniqueness around the performance of national culture, which can't be compared with the situation in other countries.

After all we have to take into account that – even when neo-nationalist political forces want to make us believe – culture is less and less represented on national level. Instead of that the importance of cultural policy shifts from national to regional, even more on the level of urban conglomerates, where artists and other cultural operators mainly live and work. This again might lead to a considerable inequality, which is more and more concentrated on city level, whereas special cultural policy measures have to be taken to avoid a cultural emptiness. This kind of redistribution of the national populations also has a massive impact on our expectations on social cohesion, when concrete solidarity on rural areas has another tradition than in the anonymity of big and permanently changing cities.

The topic is discussed in very different ways in European countries. According their traditions and the different standing of the cultural sector in society the expectation in terms of producing social cohesion is varying and equipped with a certain bias. E.g. in Germany the discussion is strongly driven by actors in the field of arts and cultural education which as a new expert field is at the moment a top priority in public cultural policy.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ <http://www.bpb.de/apuz/31616/sozialer-zusammenhalt-und-kulturelle-bildung?p=all> (last access 05.09.2016)

5. Conclusions

It is almost 20 years ago when Ken Robinson, professor for arts education, started the report of the project "Culture, Creativity and the Young" for the Council of Europe: "We are living in times of unprecedented change". When his findings at that time still sounded quite theoretical we had to accept meanwhile these changes became concrete and permeate comprehensively our way of thinking and acting.

Accordingly we had to learn that the financial, economic, technological, ecological, social, political or cultural parameters are changing fundamentally in a way we could not imagine a few years ago. These multifaceted changes concern also our main issues to be discussed here: culture and democracy respectively cultural participation and social cohesion.

In terms of culture it seems as it would have lost its innocence. Traditionally all actors working in the field of culture are convinced that there is inescapably a positive impact in dealing in and with culture. All the main arguments came from liberal elites that were up to now convinced to represent the universal (cultural) values to be infiltrated in all parts of society.

And suddenly they are confronted with evidences that there are increasing parts of society that do not share their values; on the contrary they look at these values mainly as means of an egocentric elite that is trying to defend their own privileges by among others maintaining a cultural infrastructure which is of no use for improving the living conditions of the remaining majorities.

This kind of questioning of traditional culture and of contemporary art forms is meanwhile not only an attitude of an increasing number of frustrated and disadvantaged people. It has equally reached the economic elites, when sociologists like Michael Hartmann have found out, that the management of big companies is increasingly disinterested in cultural issues.⁴⁵

In the course of re-negotiating the importance of culture in society political populists have detected cultural policy as an important mean to collect their electorate behind them. Admittedly their intention is not to get in line with the liberal elites propagating universal cultural values but to redefine culture as a mean to divide society in those who belong to and those who do not belong to. In playing with integrative as well as excluding dimensions of culture they come close to racist definitions of culture, we thought Europe has overcome for ever.

Irritatingly at the moment the political and cultural establishment seems to be rather helpless when it is confronted with this claim of a new cultural hegemony fuelled by political radicalism which is going to destroy European democratic attainments.

I do mention this kind of political re-loading of culture by anti-democratic, authoritarian and nationalistic forces when IFCD at this stage still might give the impression that each kind of cultural participation has a positive impact on the further democratic development of the European societies. The actual re-rise of cultural conflicts („Kulturkämpfe“) would make this assumption a short circuit.

⁴⁵ Hartmann 2012

It was another leading arts educator, Anne Bamford, who stated in her global research for UNESCO, which was published in her book “The WOW-Factor”⁴⁶ that there are scenarios in which no arts education would be better than bad arts education. Accordingly I feel encouraged to raise the question if the same can be true in terms of cultural participation; in other words that at least in some cases no cultural participation is better than ways of cultural participation that produces foreclosure and discrimination. If the answer is yes we cannot avoid talking about culture not only formally but also textually to better find out which kind of content is negotiated in cultural participatory settings.

When the changes of the political landscape (and by that the standing of an culturally affine elite) have considerable consequences for culture, the same has to be said for the current economic transformation processes, which meanwhile have reached the last columns of our everyday life.

There is no doubt about the emancipatory character of cultural markets allowing everybody to participate is it as a producer or is it as a consumer. And indeed the growth of new industrial sectors like the creative and cultural industries have contributed to more and even better ways of participation in cultural life regardless his or her social standing. At the same time we have to accept that this kind of marketization of culture has led to an extensive privatisation which makes the question on a respective impact in terms of social cohesion rather obsolete. We can see the consequences immediately when the social bindings between traditional cultural institutions and a culturally educated middle-class audience becomes weaker (making these institutions desperately searching for new audiences) while for the majority of the population these cultural institutions have lost any relevance for their way of living. Instead of changing their cultural attitudes (which was the original intention of arts education) they are referred to the media and cultural markets in which all kind of products and services can be exchanged without any deeper cohesive motive. Also in this case segregate forces seem to overtake, when ideologies of innovation and creativity are permanently proclaimed promising in a „success society“⁴⁷ some happy few to win the competition and so to let the big majority behind. Not really a strong argument for further democratisation based on social cohesion.

If there are good reasons not just for cultural participation but also for non-participation we also might raise the question why people are participating and why they aren't. A number of research has shown, that being part of a particular social group always means to be involved in cultural constraints and restrictions that are not easy to overcome. In this context reading the book “Retour a Reims”⁴⁸ from the French sociologist Didier Eribon was very informative when he talks about his individual efforts to escape from his social origins and its cultural constraints, which took him tremendous efforts he could not bring to a good end during his whole life. In his report another meaning of social cohesion comes up, full of limitations which – at least for him – seems to be an ideal fertile soil of a populist agitation to identify with what you have and to keep the rest of the world outside. And so it becomes evident how important it is for the functioning of a democratic society to at least relativize the power of culture in a particular social context, to “de-learn” culture and to dare, not to participate to become a sovereign citizen in a democratic society.

⁴⁶ Bamford 2006

⁴⁷ Neckel 2015

⁴⁸ Eribon 2009

When in the frame of the current refugee movements cultural institutions and initiatives try to make refugees participating in their programs it becomes evident that many of them are – to say it carefully – restrained. Asking them the reasons do not lie in the fact of not appreciating the cultural particularities of their guest country. They simply lay in the fact that they have other problems, is it about housing, workplace, earning money, health care or education which seem to be more pressing. This fragile relationship between the cultural sector and refugees seems to me a good example to think about cultural policy as a cross-sectoral issue. There are a lot of reasons to assume that culture in the current phase of democratic societies is going to lose its dominant status as an outstanding factor for the further development. Instead of that a more comprehensive view might be helpful trying to find out if there is a role of culture in other political domains. At least on city level we are already in a discussion in which way culture can be repositioned within the value chain together with other indispensable factors like education, migration, health, transport, and tourism or business settlement. Such a more comprehensive view also on national level would be more appropriate to the complexity of society in which enforcing just one issue, even it is culture, won't solve any problem. And it would make a broader understanding of culture (*latitudinarium*) more convincingly also in social groups which up to now felt excluded from the cultural sector.

With such a more comprehensive understanding of what can be the contribution of culture –among other issues – to further develop European societies we come closer to Thomas Hampsons statement from the beginning. It is not arts or culture, its people as complex human beings, who can make the world better.

If IFCD is able to sensibilize for the chances which lay in a more complex view on what might be the mutual relations between culture and democracy and between cultural participation and social cohesion (and not to forget about the socio-political context as an indispensable background) it would have fulfilled its purpose.

6. Literature

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