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# *Culture in Kosovo*

BRIEF ANALYSIS *. A Species that  
Needs to be Saved*

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November 2014, Prishtina



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# *A Species that Needs to be Saved*

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# CONTENTS

## **AIM**

Introduction **7**

## **1. RESTRAINTS**

- 1.1. Limitations of traditional approaches **9**
- 1.2. Legal Framework **10**
- 1.3. Arts and culture: the hobby of evening hours **10**

## **2. CURSES**

- 2.1. Phobia of institutions and bureaucratomania **12**
- 2.2. A small country dreaming of a big explosion in culture **16**
- 2.3. Each itemEUR 1 – Everyone happy in the cultural paradise **17**

## **3. LOST CHANCES – CULTURE THROUGH USURY 18**

## **4. PLACING A DEVELOPMENTAL TREND IN CULTURE**

- 4.1. Measuring, identifying potentials and analyzing possibilities **20**
- 4.2. Practicing modern policies of cultural development **23**
- 4.3. Enabling the Inclusive Process for Strategic Creative Thinking that will Pave the Way for Cultural Development **27**

## **5. CULTURE IN MOTION – NEXT STEPS 28**

## **6. VERIFYING THE QUALITATIVE POLICIES IN CULTURE: OTHER QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED 29**

# AIM

The aim of this paper is to provide a summary into the argument for the need to have a strategic approach toward culture development in Kosovo. By attempting to collect facts, phenomena and the most important practices of cultural life in Kosovo, especially during the past 15 years, this paper aims to shed a light on a concrete process which would place developmental trends into the cultural sector in Kosovo.

By being a part of the initiative of the Cultural Forum, a network of independent cultural organizations of Kosovo, this paper has used data from reports produced by this initiative, such as: “Why Do We Need a Culture Strategy?” prepared by the Cultural Forum, for the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, “Researching Culture Governing Policies in Kosovo”, drafted by the Station – Centre for Contemporary Art for the Culture Forum as well as the research report “Cultural Policies and Budget Allocations for Culture in Kosovo”, drafted by Dren Pozhegu for the Cultural Forum.

However, this paper largely coincides with the views and concepts developed by the author during his 20 year experience within the cultural sector, by analyzing trends and practices of the cultural life in Kosovo, but also based on principles and practices from his international experience in the field of culture.

By not attempting to create a rigid framework, this paper attempts to provide clarity and supply concrete guidelines of undertaking a comprehensive process that would place culture on a developmental trajectory and, without any hesitation, would greatly impact in increasing the quality of cultural life in Kosovo.

## Introduction

Cultural life in Kosovo: What have we built and what have we destroyed? How did we lose our chances? Did we, as a society, have any cultural paths plotted? What do we hold on to now?

To analyze and reach a conclusion about the condition of the cultural sector today in 2014, we need to carefully tackle all the historical eras of the cultural development in Kosovo. The social and political developments have undoubtedly reflected in cultural developments, and the cultural sector has always paid the expensive bill during troubled times of political and social developments. The cultural development movements, same as all other walks of life, are unavoidably divided into pre and post war eras in Kosovo of 1998–1999.

After the Second World War in Kosovo, the late 60s and 70s and 80s are known as an era when there was a more rapid, comprehensive social development, and with this, there was also a development of culture in Kosovo. It can be said that these developments laid the foundations of more rapid cultural development in general and influenced the professional development of artistic activities and

production. This era consolidates cultural institutions in Kosovo and begins a period of cultural exposure that also transcended Kosovo boundaries.

Through the de jure occupation of Kosovo and the suspension of autonomy in 1989, the next era begins, which, until the time of liberation in 1999, is known as a dark social era, especially for culture. Cultural activities take place outside of cultural institutions and even what little cultural development there is, begins to become a part of the resistance movement against the regime installed in Kosovo. This period is characterized by activities of solidarity which kept alive the spirit of the occupied people and, at the same time, caused the birth of a new generation of artists, who will be the carrier of artistic developments of Kosovo after the war. Despite being occupied, the 90s create a vibrant cultural movement of a good quality that is featured by solidarity, support and empowerment of the public, namely the occupied nation.

While during the 90s the justification for poor developments within the cultural sector was the occupation, this rationale does not stand after the liberation of 1999 and despite an infinitely more

favorable climate as well as ever increasing potential sources, Kosovo failed to establish a strong basis for the development of the sector. Initially, the biggest spasms were created by the UNMIK Administration (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), which governed Kosovo until the Declaration of Independence in 2008.

Although cultural governance was largely in the hands of the locals and especially after the Declaration of Independence where all the competencies for governing the cultural sector were in the hands of the Government of Kosovo, very little was achieved to having a more developed, consolidated sector and consequently a more dignified cultural life for the citizens of Kosovo.

This paper aims, as comprehensively as possible, to analyze and record the shortcoming, degradation and wasted opportunities in the past, by elaborating the possibilities for a strategic cultural development from today's perspective for the future.

The aim of the analysis is to exclusively reflect the approaches and action strategies so as to avoid the failures

of the past by attempting to use the full development potential of the sector, always bearing in mind the real existence of resources that Kosovo has in the culture sector.

# 1. RESTRAINTS

A conclusion needs to be drawn whether there was no development at all or there was very poor development of the culture sector during these last 15 years. There is a wide consensus about this from a large number of studies, analysis and debates from both the cultural actors, as well as from the results of various researches that were undertaken with the citizens as the final and most important beneficiaries of culture life. This part attempts to analyze the phenomena, policies and approaches that restrained cultural developments.

## 1.1 Limitations of traditional approaches

Starting from the mindset that culture includes marking certain important dates and listing other activities, cultural governance in the political plane has always been and remains the leftovers of finalizing governing coalition agreements or the accommodation of political figures for which no other more attractive position could be found. Consequently, being perceived as such, cultural governance did not include experts of cultural developments, starting from ministerial posts, municipal directorates for culture and all the way to cultural institutions, which serve as a blank list

for employment, without taking into consideration any expertise or employee profiling.

By closing the circle in this manner, the capacities, those managerial or intellectual, as well as creative and artistic, remain excluded and neglected in the majority of cases and in this manner the developmental potential of the sector has largely been restrained. By thinking of culture as a listing of cultural events, the impression is given that management is quite easy, or that anyone can do it. This approach has fully excluded the engagement and creation of missing capacity-building policies, such as management of culture or a large number of more-than-needed profiles for the execution of cultural programs and projects. Such an approach has also put a restraint in the development of expertise which has been established without any public-funding incentives. A number of personalities that included in successful cultural entrepreneurship in Kosovo who are not part of public institutions and structures failed to maximize the potential specifically as a consequence of this approach which does not recognize culture as a sector of serious premise such as the energy sector or any other similar sector and consequently

due to the lack of needed support has put a huge restraint in the development and further professionalization of this existing potential.

## 1.2. Legal Framework

By always attempting to establish the grounds for a better and more sustainable development of the sector, largely initiated by the artistic community itself, a legislative bombardment of the sector has taken place during the last 7-8 years. A very dynamic and marathon agenda of drafting cultural legislation has taken place by largely side-stepping the comprehensive processes with all the actors of the sector and by organizing ad-hoc-debates through selective inclusion. This legislation was drafted without any prior policy or vision, therefore a list of laws that someone thought that the sector needed was drafted. The desire to secure a performance of the cultural institutions as per the vision of certain members of the cultural community that can influence decision-making level has been translated into numbers that have taken up positions within articles of cultural legislation. Approved by the Assembly of Kosovo, as the highest legislative entity of the state, this

legislation continues to be blatantly violated by state institutions even at the time of writing these very lines. The desire to have laws, by attempting to report that work is being done, has created a ridiculous anomaly, as is the establishment of inter-municipal libraries through the law from 2003, this governing level does not exist in Kosovo, by importing the entirety of the Croatian Law of “Croatian Parish Libraries”. As a result, the functioning of these institutions has been put in serious jeopardy by leaving them “orphaned” in a static waiting position on municipal borderlines. Other anomalies include the definition of theatres in the Law, which defines “Association theatre” that deals with promoting theatrical activities based on the number of premiers and actors that the National Theatre should have.

## 1.3. Art and culture: the hobby of evening hours

A discussion of the author with an acquaintance of his parents in front of the National Theatre when the author was working at the NTH:

- “Oh good afternoon, how much you’ve

“Parishes “ are regions or counties in Croatia as a level of governance, between the central and local levels of governance

grown! Where do you work? What do you do? “.

- “I work here, at the National Theatre “.
- “No, no, I meant do you really work somewhere?....?!”

This dialog best reflects the mindset installed for the cultural sector. Unfortunately, this mindset has also present in the decision-making levels and in culture management of Kosovo. Without recognizing the inevitable role that culture has on the overall social and economic developments, without recognizing the economic and social potential and without recognizing the undisputed values that culture carries in a large number of cross-cutting policies, this sector is perceived as a myriad of activities that serve as a form of entertainment for both those that create it as well as those that experience it. Expressions such as “support” that have taken also place in the official terminology of naming budget codes within the public authorities of Kosovo, and all the way to daily communication of culture officials of the kind of “we have helped you as much as we could” have continuously and largely restrained the establishment of sound premises to develop the sector and have, as a consequence, created an image of the overall cultural life as a crippled and disjointed being one which continuously

needs help, support and a kind of “artificial feed”.

Such an approach has excluded culture from the categorization that we encounter within other sectors as, for example, construction of roads or other infrastructure is called “investment for the common good”, subsidizing farmers “economic development” or investments in the health and education system never received the title of “aid”, “support” or “mercy”. Through this, no attempts is being made to minimize the importance of the citizens’ needs for infrastructure of other services necessary for the daily lives and neither is an attempt being made to equal the importance of cultural needs with other basic needs for the lives of citizens. This analogy simply serves to clarify the starting point of the strategic thinking when talking about cultural development.

Finally, such an approach has nearly halted the appropriate development of the relation between “provider of cultural services” and “beneficiary of cultural services” who in fact are the taxpayers, or those that pay for this service and thus undeniably have the right to benefit from high quality cultural services, based on their choices and preferences, while it remains with the society and state to offer this choice to the citizen.

## 2. CURSES

This part aims to analyze the spasms that prevented or stopped the development of the sector, the basis of which are the mindsets established which, with time passing have solidified into sector “curses”, which seemingly cannot be changed, reviewed or surmounted.

### **2.1. Phobia of Institutions and Bureaucratomania**

Since the whole Kosovar society lived in a parallel system during the 90s, outside of the institutions of the regime, after the liberation, the thirst for institutionalization of life was turned into a mania and in due time it developed into a phobia, which did not allow processes to develop toward their normal flow and in a manner dictated by the “culture market”. UNMIK Administration, which by nature was overly bureaucratic, contributed greatly to this. With hope that this spasm would ease after the declaration of independence and local institutions taking over full responsibilities, in fact the opposite occurred; local institutions with their aim of establishing and strengthening the state continued further toward institutionalization as

a phenomenon and bureaucracy as a form of “raising” the importance of the state and its instruments. While this phenomenon may even bear fruit in other sectors, it impacts the culture sector largely by creating a petrification and denigration of quality, as well as serious development obstacles to cultural life in general. Every problem that would emerge in the sector, an attempt would be made to solve it through a legal or sublegal act and then the authorities used this to hide and state that they have no legal means to “help” or “improve” something. Such a phenomenon occurred at the time when city’s theatre funding was stopped by the central level by creating sublegal acts and then followed by the Law on Theaters by leaving the funding of the work of theatres fully under the responsibility of municipalities. Ministry of culture would fund them on ad hoc basis through a certain amount that was distributed to various city theatres without estimating neither the strength, size nor the seriousness of these theatres, which, in fact have huge differences between themselves. By always calling on the curse that allegedly the law and other legal obligations would not allow greater funding of the institutions, be those public or independent, and impression was given

that the value of the proposed projects and the potential of these institutions is very good and significant, but it is the legal obstacles that do not allow for more funding.

Thus, by creating “legal curses”, instigated by the authorities themselves and frequently by influential individuals, whether placed within institutions, respectively as advisors to the Ministry of Culture, or even other individuals from outside who could impact the decision-making structures of the Ministry, have created these curses and, on behalf of the same, a routine of linear distribution of funds was put in place without any analysis of the proposals made by these institutions, or the baggage, potential and strengths that they represent within their domains. This created irreparable consequences by enabling weak institutions to utilize these funds as if they were brought by Santa Claus, as a welcomed gift, while other institutions of higher potentials have stagnated and have produced demoralization and depression within their institutions and consequently toward their public where they operate.

Thus, by also “cursing” the central level dependant institutions as a burden

that falls on the Ministry of Culture, continued and increasing funding of these institutions was considered a “legal obligation” of the Ministry and never was there a relation established that would promote or penalize the success or failure of these institutions. Regardless of the performance, the level of funding did not change and the increases were made in a linear form for all the institutions and this was always presented as success of the Ministry.

Another “curse” that comes from higher instances is the obligation of public institutions to pour their own revenues into the state budget and then have the right to use them for certain expenditures through special requests. This was regulated through a memorandum with the Ministry of Finance, which was initially drafted by allowing institutions to use these funds for daily office expenses and for facilities, but was never reviewed, nor corrected based on the needs of institutions. Thus, this “curse” was further solidified when the institutions required additional funds for e.g. expenses for travelling abroad to festivals or other events the “memorandum curse” prevented them, by not being able to use these funds for this purpose. This is how the opportunity to present the

work of these institutions was “cursed” – a work that was created from a large portion of public funding granted to these institutions. This aspect has taken place in this part of the paper by being phrased as a “curse”. It goes without saying that this memorandum can be amended based on the requests and needs of institutions so that this long lasting “curse” could finally come to an end.

Leaving temporarily aside this bureaucracy, it needs to be emphasized that own revenues of cultural institutions are the main indicator of the success and the best mean to evaluate the management performance of public cultural institution. This evaluation is the key indicator in grading the performance of cultural institutions in the modern trends of cultural policies. This assessment has never been used in Kosovo to review the work of management and such situations have produced anomalies that, to the developed world are not only scandalous, but also totally meaningless: as are the cases when during 2006 the National Theater generated a total of EUR 600 of own revenue, or also the case when the first sale of a ticket by the Kosovo Philharmonic Orchestra after nearly a decade of operating becomes media-

worthy news. Finally, an inexplicable phenomenon was created for modern trends of cultural management, bearing in mind the extreme bureaucracy (read curse) of own revenues of the institutions: a drop from EUR 91 thousand (which is a very low amount compared to the budgets at their disposal) that the central cultural institutions generated in 2008, to EUR 20 thousand in 2011 and to have it remain at that approximate level in 2012, at around EUR 25 thousand. This phenomenon becomes even more inexplicable due to the fact that during this period their budgets increased greatly, whereas the drop in own revenues has more than quadrupled. Expressed as a percentage, compared 2008, the drop in 2011 is 455% and in 2012 – 358%.

Another aspect of the relation of central cultural institutions with the Ministry of Culture, that fell as a “curse” on public funds, are operational expenses and public investments, which are taken for granted and are administered directly by the Ministry of Culture through the Ministry of Finance. This “cursed” centralization produced a plethora of problems that extensively damaged the functioning of institutions, and through this also damaged the cultural life of the citizens, as well as public funding.

This means that the management of cultural institutions does not hold in its hands the workers that work for this very management, while it is also not in a position to administer its own revenues and does not even have the possibility neither to promote nor penalize the work, lack of, or the drastic violations that normally occur on daily basis in such situations within the cultural institutions of central level. Furthermore, there is a very large number of persons, both known and unknown, in this list of wages that is blindly executed by the Ministry of Finance, which, in the majority of cases, were close to the government, that have been in charge of culture from the time they started this “(non) working relationship”. By being treated as a “curse” this part of public spending remains as an appendix, where various parasites not accommodated anywhere else have taken residence. This, beside creating a position of being able to abuse public funds, has also had another effect: the budgets of public institutions of the central level are declared to the opinion only for “project budgets” thus hiding a huge bill which is “unconsciously” paid by the citizen.

## 2.2. Every Item EUR 1 -A small country dreaming of a big explosion of culture

This part attempts to elaborate the grand “curse” that has fallen on the shoulders of culture in Kosovo, by requesting an artistic or cultural production which would be bombastic for the whole world, something so big of epic proportions that would amaze the world. This dream of creating big, complicated and megalomaniacal things by fully exhausting both the resources as well as the capacities that this cultural sector has in Kosovo has left the development of the sector and, consequently, its actors, in a nearly static position. To make the “curse” even bigger, this approach has continuously come both from the cultural authorities, as well as from the cultural actors themselves, namely from the cultural producers and servants.

Initiatives for cultural export were undertaken on behalf of cultural democracy without an appropriate cultural analysis of the quality of representation, determining audiences as well the impact of the undertaking itself. “We have faithfully represented Kosovo “, was the echo that accompanied nearly every cultural presentation of any level,

thus feeding the “megalomaniac” need of Kosovar culture.

Such a “curse” had, as a consequence, something else: the “Rita Ora” hallucinative syndrome. Cases of world-wide individual success, such as Rita Ora’ one, as well as a lot of other cases, have a tendency of becoming “adopted” as successes of Kosovo, especially by the cultural authorities. The only merit that may be attributed to the cultural policies in Kosovo is the fact that the cultural non-development influenced the low quality of the cultural life of the citizen (amongst other aspects) and thus impacted on these individuals to abandon Kosovo and find their success abroad. And in this manner, as is a characteristic of hallucinative syndromes, by creating this illusion, cultural policy-making in Kosovo failed to at least analyze the described road of the success of these individuals. From analyzing the success of these individuals, at least examples of undertaking cultural policies would be established, which would create and multiply these successes that initiated in Kosovo and its cultural environment.

### **2.3. Each item EUR 1 – everyone happy in the cultural paradise**

While the majority of sources and capacities have been spent on the dream of a small country dreaming of a great cultural explosion as well as other bureaucratic and institutional curses, the happiness of everyone else – without exception – was targeted through the leftovers by allocating funding to an as big as possible number of projects. This effect which resembles pouring miniscule amounts of magic water from the test tube into the ocean in which rare species are drowning produced the next “curse” that has “minimized” culture in Kosovo.

Continuing along the path of producing “legal curses”, the Ministry of Culture throughout these 15 years, with sporadic exclusions, acted only as a Ministry of eight dependant institutions and considered as having no other obligation or responsibility to fund the remainder of cultural life, but simply that it would only help as much as it could. Being put in the position of “helper” necessitates the imposition of the mindset of allocating a little for everyone by attempting to, at all costs, create a balance based on the level of

funding, or better said, subsidizing. Furthermore, the number of projects funded was promoted as the indicator for success without any evaluation of the quality or impact of these projects. The effect in the field resulted in wasted and lost potential, since the low level of funding for these requests did not have the potency to create activities or services of the desired quality. Subsidizing was, very frequently, translated into personal gain for the applicants, and this constantly thanks to the missing mechanisms of the funder who finalized the relation with the contractor by closing the advance payments against the presented invoices. However, even the closing of advance payments remains a very problematic area. To be more exact: A beneficiary of subsidizing is obliged to report only project expenses through invoicesso as to close the advance payments, and any other mechanism for measuring the success of the project is inexistent.

# 3. LOST CHANCES – CULTURE THROUGH USURY

Starting from the points explained above, the current situation within the culture sector is permeated with huge gaps in expertise. A large number of profiles are inexistent in culture institutions, in the administration of the Ministry as well as in other public and non-public parts of the cultural life in Kosovo. Without wanting to conduct a full identification of the lacking expertise in culture through this paper, it should be mentioned there is an obvious great lack of culture managers, professional staff for reviewing and assessing projects and all the way to the greatly needed specific professions for the daily operation of cultural institutions such as curators, but also artists of specific disciplines such as ceramics and a lot of others in the visual arts, or insipients, light designers, sound designers, wind instruments, puppeteers and a lot others from the scenic arts, or curators, professional guides and museum restaurateurs, including other experts from the field of cultural heritage. Almost nothing is being done toward capacity building for these professions. The historic opportunity to be equipped with the expertise from the existing staff or even to build newer expertise by promoting professionalism in these very important aspects of cultural life seems

to have been wasted. A large number of, for example, instrumentalists have been hired from abroad for a long time now to meet the needs of the Philharmonic Orchestra and, without going into a deep analysis, we, more than likely have until now spent perhaps hundreds of scholarships for the training and professionalization of these instrumentalists.

Of course, these chances were not wasted as a consequence of lack of information or crisis of ideas. Investments in long-term benefits were never a part of the cultural policies in Kosovo. In the minds of all ministers of culture, such an investment was seen as an exhaustion of funds that they designed to have under their management, be that to be given as a “treat” to those close to their government, but at a large extent also to conduct political advertizing utilizing these available funds for culture. It has been clear for a long number of years that culture has been translated into an office and a budget for advertising the party that was managing the ministry, as well as the government. Megalomaniac activities were organized to mark dates, as was the one of marking the 125 anniversary of the League of Prizren in

2003 (not such a large jubilee) through a megalomaniac program which included, amongst others, the playing of an opera, which was played two nights in a row to the same line of people that were invited to attend in accordance with the political protocol and thus depriving those that were not in the list and have a passion for opera of the opportunity of purchasing tickets, while the hall on the second night was only 30% filled. This because the guests attended the first night, and would not attend two nights in a row to see the same play. A simple analysis of the time resulted that it would have been cheaper to have the overall number of those watching the opera travel business class to Vienna, accommodate them at a 5 star accommodation and watch the most expensive piece of opera in Vienna. Such anomalies without even the slightest basic analysis occurred continuously and this best represents the approach that the cultural executives had toward culture.

Finally, seeing the expenses caused to fulfill that which does not exist resembles living with usury for a very long time. Therefore, the crisis and zero level of development in this kind of “life-style” are unavoidable. We have, most likely, paid for the missing

professionalism and expertise that is still missing in Kosovo ten or twenty times over by now.

Acting in this manner has also resulted in the loss of human potential. By being an underdeveloped sector, even the human potential that existed and could have developed in the missing fields has dissolved by finding themselves in other sectors and frequently even abroad.

# 4. PLACING A DEVELOPMENTAL TREND IN CULTURE

Taking experiences from the past as the basis always guarantees us a review of policies which is based on reality. This way the possibility of creating strategies and cultural policies that are aimed at fulfilling dreams or visions of individuals that are not based in reality, namely on existing potentials and possibilities is extremely narrowed.

In this way this paper attempts to, in a generalized manner and based on experience, analyze the potentials and possibilities, present a plan that would enable the placement of developmental trends in the culture sector of Kosovo, by always strategically planning the development of the culture and thus enabling it to play the vital role in planning and other cross-cutting policies. This development would also increase the quality of cultural life of the citizens and greatly impact the improvement of quality of life in general, which is the essence of public service and finance in an open and democratic society.

By not exempting certain very important factors and special problems of both the culture sector as well as culture sub-sectors, a generalized summary will be presented below of the vital aspects and principles of creating a developmental trend in the culture sector in Kosovo.

## **4.1. Measuring, identifying potentials and analyzing possibilities**

Based on numerous thoughts, practices and trends, both in other sectors and the culture sector in modern democratic societies, measuring and identifying potentials and possibilities is the basis for any type of development. We conduct numerous measurements in our daily routines and identify potentials and possibilities, as well as weaknesses and obstacles; however, by not doing this in a systematic manner and by not following it up with strategic plans of either overcoming the obstacles and weaknesses, or utilizing the potentials and possibilities, we, consciously or unconsciously, hamper the development, if not, totally stop it.

Well-known maxims such as the one by Peter F. Drucker “What’s measured improves” are the basis for numerous

[http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/12008.Peter\\_F\\_Drucker](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/12008.Peter_F_Drucker)

undertakings in tackling problems when talking about management, be those within the sector or organization or also at state and society levels.

Without data in place, it is almost impossible to intervene to correct things. Although we can say that research and measuring in the culture sector was nearly inexistent, work by independent actors has begun in the culture sector to bring about this trend, especially a large number of studies and research within the initiative to produce knowledge in the culture was undertaken by the Cultural Forum, a network of independent cultural organizations of Kosovo, with this paper being a part of it. This trend is a necessity to place developmental premises in this sector. All the aspects of the functioning of cultural life need to be measured so as to have the opportunity to draft improvement plans, to avoid and eliminate deficiencies as well as increase, exploitation and empowerment of possibilities.

Summary of existing studies and data, as well as the initiation of other studies need to be undertaken so as to create a full picture of the situation in the field. Later on, the trend of measuring and intervening, based on results, should

be carried over to the narrower fields of culture sub-sectors and within cultural institutions.

For this problem area not to be too abstract, below we will present certain types of measuring indicators and their meaning.

Current situation	Comparative references	Comments
In 2011 Kosovo spent €6.3 per capita for its cultural needs (the lowest amount spent in all of Europe)	Moldova (€7.7), Georgia (€9.3), Macedonia (€24.5) and Serbia (€15 central level only) Norway (€446), Switzerland (€235), Azerbaijan (€39)	Such comparisons and measurements speak clearly of the inevitable need to increase the culture budget in Kosovo. Results should be designed so as to equal Moldova with the longterm goal being Azerbaijan.
In 2012 dependant institutions of MCYS generated €25.457 of own source revenue. In this same year, these institutions operated with “project budgets” with a total of over €1.5 million and not having the exact data of other costs such as wages and services, the total invoice for these institutions toward public funds may be around € 2.5 million according to the percentage that exists in certain institutions between project budgets and total costs.	In 2012 only ODA Theatre (an independent theatre) paid around €46.000 into the cash box of the stat through taxes for annual activities without accounting for the overall economic impact.  On this same year, ODA Theatre was subsidized with €10.000 by the MCYS. (National Theatre with around 500.000 in total, with €300.000 for projects)	These records speak clearly about blindly directing funds towards public cultural institutions without measurement of performance (the quota of own source revenues 0.1%) as well as non-recognition of work done by the independent sector. These numbers should design an emergency attempt to lower this enormous difference always bearing in mind other performance-related data that have not been presented here.
Public funding of central cultural institutions in Kosovo is at over 99%.	Modern European practices of public funding for cultural institutions of around 50-80% depending on the country and cultural policies.  ODA Theatre generates approximately 28% of its annual budget from own revenue.	Conditioning of cultural institutions with own source revenues in relation to public funding is done for the purpose of stimulating the work of management and added care in contracting services, including those artistic. Management is lot more dynamic in providing quality services for the citizen (audience).

5 Research report “Cultural Policies and Budget Allocations for Culture in Kosovo, Dren Pozhegu for the Cultural Forum, October 2014, Prishtinë.

6 Research report “Cultural Policies and Budget Allocations for Culture in Kosovo, Dren Pozhegu for the Cultural Forum, October 2014, Prishtina – from sources: Kosovo Budget (author’s calculation) and Compendium. ([www.culturalpolicies.net](http://www.culturalpolicies.net))

7 Idem.

8 ODA Theatre Annual Financial Report, Prishtinë, March 2013.

9 Author’s calculation based on financial reports of ODA Theatre during the last five years.

By using these examples for general illustration purposes just to show tendencies and trends, we can reach the conclusion that measurements and comparative analysis serve us best for the creation of cultural policies based on reality, which maximize the possibilities for sector development and then grant culture a position based on merit in the social developments by being an important catalyst and by taking the position of merit in general policy-making in the country.

#### **4.2. Practicing Modern Policies of Cultural Development**

Nëse paramendojmë situatën që kemi çliruar ato që u identifikuan si frena të zhvillimit kulturor dhe kemi larguar “mallkimet” që kanë rënë mbi sektor, kemi siguruar që të mos humbim shanset e ndërtimit të potencialit dhe kapaciteteve në sektor dhe më pas kemi futur mendësinë e matjes dhe analizës afëherë do të duhej të instalonim praktika të politikave të vërtetuara të zhvillimit kulturor në mënyrë që sektori të krijojë bazat e shëndosha për zhvillim dhe qëndrueshmëri.

If we imagine a situation where we have rid ourselves of the identified restraints placed on cultural development, and we removed

the “curses” that have befallen this sector, we would have ensured the not wasting of chances of building the potential and capacities of the sector and later would have included the mindset of measurement and analysis, then we should install verified practices of cultural development so that the sector may establish solid grounds for development and sustainability.

#### **Creation of Fertile Ground for Development**

A proper development of the sector and, in particular, of the specific aspects of day to day functioning of cultural life would not be imaginable without proper investments in artistic and cultural research, including the capacity building. Based on global practices, and considering the overall status of culture in Kosovo, at least one third of public money investments should be streamlined in this direction. Such investments would achieve full potential, initiating:

- special competitions with budgets dedicated for projects on artistic and cultural research and on capacity building and arts and culture in education. Undoubtedly a good synergy with other sectors could multiply the current public financial capacities of culture at all levels,
- establishment of institutes specializing on specific fields of expertise stemming from priorities identified in initial “measurements”,
- placing condition to the culture programs

and budgets to allocate a part of their budget for educational and research purposes,

- conditioning the program activities with larger participation of citizens, providing additional services, especially educational ones, thus enriching and developing the relation between the citizen (as service beneficiary) and provider of culture service (sector),
- scholarships for specialized education aimed at lacking expertise, which came as a priority during the previous “measurements”, that would include arrangements on specific contracts for mandatory contribution following the completion of education,
- competitions for financial support and provision of cultural spaces for the development of young artists and beginning of their carrier.

Being not a closed list, these are some of the required and indispensable steps that would significantly improve the situation for a multitude of benefits resulting with the sector development. This development is impossible to be sparked or implemented from other sources save from the public funding as the benefit is not direct and concrete one. Therefore, the interest of long term benefit and development should be at the exclusivity of the public policy of culture, and consequently funded through the public money.

#### Strengthening the Principle of Meritocracy

The linear distribution of funding of Kosovo’s culture is the best possible example to justify that such an approach kills the cultural initiative, results with misuse and mismanagement, institutional depression, and finally it ends up with absolute development stagnation. On the other hand, the “blind” funding made to the sector without a relationship of meritocracy and without putting “measurable” results as a condition produces laziness and “cultural delinquency”.

In installing a development mindset and stimulating the cultural work and values, the public funding system based in meritocracy should be put in place. In doing so, the mistake of translating the merits into numbers should not be made. The merit in this case needs to be measured through several factors depending on the field and profiles of public funding beneficiaries. For this system to function the competitions for public funding need to be separated at least in the following categories:

- young artists initiatives,
- existing programs of independent institutions of culture,
- festivals of culture,
- educational and research projects,
- cultural mobility.

Depending on the need of cultural policies in place, as a result of requirements developed after the “measurements”, special competitions can be designed with very narrow specifics and precise criteria.

As in other fields, the competitions in culture need to have precise criteria, clear coverage based on clear criteria. If this is the case, the evaluation of projects and proposals by competent people will be much easier.

Until such a standard is in place, the public institutions of culture can function very easily by installing conducive policies and conditioning the amount of public funding depending on the following:

- quantity and quality of service provided to the citizen,
- quantity and success of education, research and participation within their program,
- evaluation of artistic and cultural level of artistic and cultural production.

#### Artistic and Cultural Critique

An important and vital aspect of the development of culture, which is almost totally underdeveloped in Kosovo, is the artistic and cultural critique. Putting in place the principles of meritocracy cannot be done without a credible and professional critique. Cultural services of all culture providers

should be evaluated by credible persons for citizens who benefit from these services and for operators who provide them. Lack of artistic and culture critique resulted with anarchy in the sector on both sides. On one hand, the service providers are themselves in confusion, without having an external eye that evaluates them. In this situation, very often we see artists evaluating their work themselves or the managers swim in the performance of institutions they themselves lead. The confusion is even bigger on the other side, namely on the side of citizens or better said the audience, who due to the lack of a credible critique is faced with extreme disorientation that results with detrimental prejudice: without participation, there is belief that cultural creations in Kosovo are not valuable.

It goes without saying that development of genuine artistic and cultural critique that is credible to citizens firstly and foremostly, but also to the sector itself, is a vital aspect for the creation of the hierarchy of culture with an accurate evaluation of what is offered to the public, thus providing to the public a guide leading it to the benefits of cultural services. Development of critique enables the public to find its credible medium that would lead it towards values and quality. Of course, greater development would provide room for variety and opportunities for everyone to find

his/her own preferred critique provider, who does not let him/her down.

Development of this very important segment is impossible without public investments. Since it does not bring immediate benefits, it remains a sector that needs to be exclusively developed through the incentives of public funds. In doing so, there is enough room for coordination and synergy with other sectors, such as education and media.

#### Decentralization and Depoliticizing

The best modern practices show that decentralization and depoliticizing approaches were the main factors for a speedy development of culture. In achieving this standard, further evolution of political mindset in Kosovo is needed, with general principles of good governance as its vanguard enabling the following:

- inclusion of experts in the evaluation of cultural performance, both of culture actors and the sector itself,
- legal framework and functional daily practices ensuring full autonomy of culture institutions, thus decentralizing the current financial system and enabling the institutions to manage themselves with their budgets and giving them access to the salaries paid to their staff, but also to the goods and services they procure for the needs of programs, always being under financial control by the

relevant state authorities,

- establishment of bodies composed of experts free of political influence that will be credible to appoint managers and evaluate their performance,
- to put in place culture policies that support the development of culture at its relevant levels, namely the MCYS for the central level and municipalities. These policies would enable the MCYS to be responsible for the culture that is produced throughout the country, without limiting itself to funding of a list “of its dependant institutions”, and on the other hand the municipalities will also be responsible for the culture created in their own territories (not only cities), also not limiting themselves to a “list of supported institutions and activities”. This policy based on criteria and meritocracy coupled with credible evaluation will enable the return of public money to those who invest, namely the MCYS, Kosovo citizens and relevant municipalities,
- put in place legal framework for the devolution of competencies from the political level related to direct appointments of councils, board directors, but also establishing processes that will ensure for these positions are assumed by persons with experience and competence in their relevant field, thus maximizing their performance in the day to day cultural life. The political level

should be focused on essential issues, such as drafting the policies of culture that ensure the development and implementation of election program that brought them to power.

#### Cross Cutting and Inclusive Approach

By isolating culture within its sector frame and minimizing it into a list of activities, one makes the fatal mistake crippling its power for the social development. Culture actors and policy makers should be more dynamic and active in the policy making of numerous important sectors for the society. Culture occupies a specific and important place in many fields and it should not be neglected. When drafting the development policies on economy, tourism, employment, environment, spatial planning, foreign relations, diplomacy, local governance, sports, youth strengthening and many other aspects of the daily functioning of society, the consideration of cultural aspect is of specific importance.

In ensuring the application of this approach, there need to mechanisms in place that would ensure the consideration of the culture aspect in the general policy making processes, with special emphasis in the above fields.

### **4.3. Enabling the Inclusive Process for Strategic Creative Thinking that will Pave the Way for Cultural Development**

The Kosovo policy making in culture would by all means have miniscule results if we do not ensure inclusivity, thus drawing on the sector potential in creative and strategic thinking with the purpose of development and sustainability.

Drafting the modern policies of culture excludes the possibility of activity list, such as having in the agenda drafting of some pieces of legislation or of a single strategy. The genuine policies of culture result with sustainable processes of strategic planning, inclusion and consultations that precede and follow the cultural development in a country.

Inclusivity needs to be built chiefly in the field of consultancy. In drafting the development policies, time and importance should be dedicated to those affected by cultural policies on daily basis, such as its beneficiaries, citizens and providers of this benefit – actors in culture.

## 5. CULTURE IN MOTION – NEXT STEPS

In ensuring a sustainable cultural development, the important steps to be taken need to be focused in the following:

- removing the barriers, firstly, within ourselves, and, secondly, in the legislation and secondary legislation in order to enable the elimination of stereotypes built over several years, also referred to in this paper as “obstacles” or “curses”,
- analysis of lost chances with the purpose of not repeating the strategy related mistakes that were made over a long period of time,
- installing the mindset of measurement, thus clearly identifying the development potentials and opportunities,
- application of cultural policies that provide for investments in education and research, resulting with solid foundation for the development of culture,
- strengthening the principles of meritocracy, ensuring that every public investment finds a right place and maximizes the result in proportion with investment,
- decentralization and depoliticizing of cultural life in Kosovo in order to

ensure a cultural life that is developed in line with the needs of society and unhindered by the state bureaucracy, at the same time giving more accountability to the public for whom it serves,

- establishing synergies for putting the culture at the policymaking focus of numerous instances in the country,
- ensuring an inclusive process as a guarantee in paving the way for the development of culture in Kosovo.

# 6. VERIFYING THE QUALITATIVE POLICIES IN CULTURE: OTHER QUESTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

In ensuring a quality process of policy making in culture, one should not forget the following:

- Which are the standing mechanisms in ensuring the creativity, good managerial performance and continuity in the institutions of culture and in the cultural life in general?
- Which is the cultural potential of Kosovo, and what is feasible and realistic to be projected as a result?
- Have all the actors affected by a policy been consulted, including the external ones?
- Was there sufficient room for consultation with affected actors?
- Which are the mechanisms that will tackle the concerns of actors during the process?
- Was the applicable legislation consulted for the potential overlapping or initiatives for amendment of legislation if required?
- How the global development and trends should be incorporated in the policy making of Kosovo's culture?

# Cultural Forum

Oda Theatre held numerous meetings during the end of 2011 with the purpose of establishing a network of the cultural organizations in Kosovo.

These meetings were attended by more than 60 participants, representatives of different organizations of culture, thus creating the possibility to organize the founding Assembly on 23 March 2012, which laid the foundation of the Network of Independent Organizations of Culture – Cultural Forum. The founding Assembly laid the foundation of the Cultural Forum with 22 independent organizations as members. Through democratic voting, the Statute was adopted and the network presidency was also elected. The Cultural Forum is an entity registered as a network of independent organizations of culture. It was decided that the role of interim Secretariat will be assumed by Oda Theatre until the capacities are built to form a professional secretariat of the network.

The Cultural Forum of Kosovo is a network of independent organizations of culture in Kosovo, established with the purpose of:

- Strengthening the independent

- organizations of culture by developing their capacities for the implementation of their programs ,
- Promotion of member organizations,
- Inclusion of member organizations in decision-making,
- Boosting the support for the independent cultural scene,
- Protection and improvement of the position of organizations vis-à-vis the relevant institutions in Kosovo and abroad.

The Cultural Forum aims to fulfill its mission through the following activities:

- Communication and networking of independent organizations of culture,
- Dynamic exchange of information and experience,
- Lobbying and advocacy activities,
- Specific trainings for the needs of member organizations,
- Organization of debates and fora,
- Coordination of artistic and cultural activities

# Cultural Development Forum

Forum for Cultural Development is a Project aimed to further develop and strengthen the Cultural Forum established back in 2012, by providing advice and valuable expertise for the cultural policies of Kosovo.

independent culture and public authorities so that concrete solutions for Kosovo's cultural development could arise.

Forum for Cultural Development is a Project aimed to further develop and strengthen the Cultural Forum established back in 2012, by providing advice and valuable expertise for the cultural policies of Kosovo. The Project is supported by the European Union Office in Kosovo, and implemented by the Cultural Forum, Oda Theatre and DokuFest. The first Project activities were carried out in December 2013. The Project is supposed to continue through to November 2015. During this two year period, the Cultural Development Forum will come up with at least 28 cultural policy products that will result from research, debates, focus groups and conferences. The Project will also strengthen the network of independent culture organizations, built its internal capacities and impact the development of culture policies of Kosovo by producing the knowledge for culture. In addition, the Project will spur the dialog and cooperation between the sector of

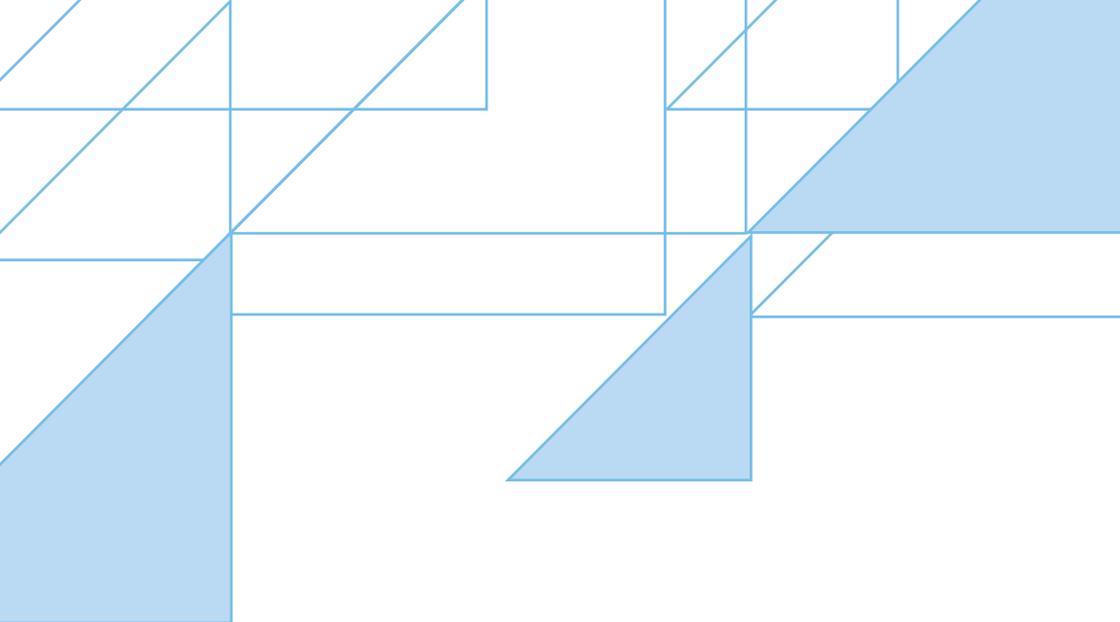


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