

The Transition of Albanian Art and Culture Facing the Future Challenges _____

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Abstract

After the end of the communist regime in Albania, culture and its institutions were the areas which had to suffer the most extreme damages and transformations. It was not only the way of thinking for a new way of managing, but its infrastructure as a whole, on a regular basis has suffered from considerable damages. In a different point of view, there was also a further considerable departure of individuals and the artistic community with the phenomenon of emigration. In these conditions, the first step that was taken was the drafting and implementation of legislation through which cultural and artistic institutions could operate, as well as free private initiatives. Firstly was first introduced the concept and were taken steps for drafting an intellectual property legislation, the law on cinematography, theater, cultural heritage, libraries and the book, in accordance with the recommendations of the expert representatives of the European Union authorities. Further, the first efforts were made by setting up working groups to draft the first strategic drafts on art and culture as well as medium and long-term budget projections. Consequently, the first effects of a cultural policy aimed at implementing a new administrative-legal platform were felt. This policy would firstly respect the principles of decentralization and secondly the cooperation with the homologous structures of the countries of the Balkan region and further with those of Europe and beyond. The various phases of the reform did not always brought the expected expectations with the projected objectives. As a result, the transition to art and culture institutions lasted somewhat longer than in different sectors of Albania's socio-political development.

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General view of art and culture in the transition period

The collapse of communism in 1990 involved Albanian culture in the same process of reforms and transformations, which the whole Albanian society has gone through. During this process, Albanian culture has experienced the following major developments:

- Its de-ideologies and breakaway from “socialist culture” created during the communist regime, whose major goal was the ideological and cultural public manipulation through cultural products.
- Decentralization of cultural life and aversion of state control over the free creativity of cultural subjects
- Preparation of the necessary legislation governing the activity of the cultural entities in the Republic of Albania.
- Reform of the country’s cultural institutions and providing opportunities for their operation under the market economy principles
- Fostering a supportive climate for artists’ creativeness, by financing their projects through state and private donors
- Reform of the state administration, starting with the Ministry of Culture so that it would be capable of mapping up efficient cultural policies to the benefit of culture and arts in the Republic of Albania.
- Protection of cultural heritage, making it available for tourism
- Setting up cultural industries and their support
- Embarking Albanian culture into the European integrating processes.

The cultural policies targeted at meeting these goals have been only partially successful. Along these years of cultural transition, Ministry of Culture, as the main institution in devising cultural policies has not been coherent in its work. Due to the frequent changes of the Ministry’s Principals and the lack of a technical administration in particular, the policies of this Ministry have often been contradictory. It has failed in establishing a professional administration, capable of shaping sustainable development policies in the field of culture. The frequent political changes at the administration have made impossible the setting up of a team with cultural experts in this Ministry.

Likewise, the major cultural institutions have been only partially reformed and some of them bear still signs of the mode of operation of communist times. They have failed in management policies and most of them even today continue to be state – funded in full. Although there have been several experimental interventions into their organization, most of these institutions have not yet found the ways and means to foster competition and artistic quality through modern management.

The quality of the realization of artistic projects is quite inferior with a few public benefits only. Consequently, their impact in the cultural life is not to the required extent.

The major cultural institutions have been bundled in Tirana; in fact, it is only this city that boasts of a relatively rich cultural life. In several other cities and towns, the cultural institutions are in a much more serious state than those in Tirana. There is also a poor theatrical life in other cities, although at some of them there are theatres, which once used to have a some bearing in the cultural life of these cities and other cultural institutions. The public participation is at desperate levels. Almost in all cities there are cultural centers with effective activities. Nonetheless, their reform is also indispensable, since several of them operate like the “Palaces of Culture” of communist times.

The protection and restoration of cultural heritage has been and remains one of the areas, whereby part of projects in the field of culture are focused. Some of the major projects are pinpointed in the revitalization of some major archeological sites, as the Park of Butrinti or Apollonia, and in rescuing the museum values in the towns of Gjirokastra and Berat. Of significance in this respect is the promulgation of Butrinti Archeological Park and the town of Gjirokastra, as cultural premises under UNESCO’s protection. The town of Berat is also under the process of completing the file to be included in the list of UNESCO’s cultural heritage. The Government’s program for the promotion of cultural tourism is also important. This will produce mutual benefits for the utilization of the country’s natural beauties and the revitalization of the cultural heritage. Still, several important centers are in danger. The process of registering and cataloguing the country’s cultural heritage has not still concluded; meanwhile, legislation in this field is still incomplete.

Establishing an effective cultural market remains still one of the major issues of Albanian culture. The Government has adopted a couple of laws in favor of creative industries. Their worldwide success is based on an effective combination of creative skills, business and the application of state-of-the-art techniques. The sophisticated technology is entering Albania rapidly and this makes these industries quite competitive.

The media is playing a significant role in disseminating cultural information. The major distributing media for cultural information in Albania are the printed press, radio–television and Internet. However, the overwhelming part of cultural entities have discontents concerning media activity for the distribution of cultural information. On their part, the cultural entities devote very little attention to the process of distributing the information on their cultural products.

There is a substantial progress in the field of legislation on culture. The Ministry of Culture has referred to the Parliament and adopted the major laws in the cultural area. Some of them are the Copyright Law, (2005), the Law on the Cinematography,

(1996), the Law on the Scenic Arts (2000), the Law on Libraries (2000), the Law on the Museums (2005), the Law on Cultural Heritage (2003, amended in 2006) and the Law on the Books(2006). One of the important steps in the field of legislation has been drafting the Copyright Law and setting up the relevant structures for its implementation. In 2007, the Ministry of Culture opened the Copyright Protection Office; the latter has taken over the implementation of this Law throughout the territory of the Republic of Albania. («INTAT GIS». Archived *from the original on 1996-2018.*)

The Ministry of Culture bears the major responsibility for the promotion of culture at home. It is the major institution that implements the major projects in the field of culture, while working together with the actors operating in the area of culture, as the subordination institutions, the country's cultural and artistic associations, foundations and producers at various fields. In line with the Government's Program, the Ministry of Culture draws up the country's cultural policies and overhauls their implementation. Likewise, the Ministry of Culture prepares the Draft-Laws and refers them to the Parliament. There are four Directorates in the Ministry, covering the work and projects in the cultural area: The Directorate of Letters and Arts, the Directorate General of Tourism and National Culture, which does also encompass the Section of Cultural Heritage, the Juridical Directorate and the Directorate of International Projects and Relations.

The decisions for the project approval submitted to the Ministry of Culture are taken by the Artistic Council, a body composed of six artists and experts of various genres. The following subordinating institutions account for a major part at the country's cultural life:

- The National Films Center
- The National Theatre
- The National Gallery of Figurative Arts
- The Theatre of Opera and Ballet
- The National Museum of History
- The National Library
- The Institute of the Monuments of Culture
- The National Children Center
- The Cultural Centre "Pjetër Arbënorë"

These institutions are autonomous in their activity, while relations between them and Ministry of Culture are governed by law and embodied in each institution's Statute. They have an annual budget allocated by the Ministry of Culture, which serves the performance of artistic projects and salaries' funding. Nevertheless, the reform of these institutions is a "Must", since some of the reforms unveiled there

have not as yet yielded the expected results. Their major concerns are failure in having a modern management at these institutions, so as to enable them for a better orientation to market economy, lack of the esthetic and artistic contemporaneous values of their creativeness. Other institutions dealing in part with culture and arts in Albania are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science. Looking at culture in line with European concepts and standards, - as a measurement unit of a country's immaterial well-being, and as a tool vigorously helping the country's democratic development, it is already an accepted fact that in Albania, there are still low levels of culture as a whole and the cultural policy and reform, in particular. Both in the official presentations and media debates, there is a confusion in defining European parameters in the cultural area on issues such as: public or private; national or international; traditional or innovative; cultural diversity or monoculture; centralization or decentralization; consumption or production and others. Lack of adequate funding and the minimum levels of percentages allocated to cultural budget, as compared to the European average have dictated the fact that the present day cultural policy relies on the demand rather than on supply. There have been no open, public and all-inclusive debates to date on the problematic of European integration in the field of culture. No harmonization is noted in this regard among the decision and opinion-making structures, as the Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Science, The Parliamentary Commission on Education and Culture, the Ministry of Finances, the division of Local Government at the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the advisory offices at the Presidency and Prime Ministry, the art and cultural NGO-es, the local authorities and others. The state administration has been powerless in assessing the effectiveness of its own actions and services, since an institutionalized dialogue between the public and private sector is not still in place, whereas the public opinion's role is at its lowest levels, when it is admitted that it is the public opinion in Europe that makes the final assessment of any cultural policy. Consequently, the current situation is being confined simply to a commercial demand for cultural production, narrowing down considerably the scope of cultural projects and events. The limitations maybe seen in the type of cultural actions, the implementing instruments and adoption procedures. The cultural goals have been almost replaced with sheer commercial goals, under the principle that it is only that sort of art to survive which earns money, stripping arts off their spirit and history. Even those attempts that place cultural policy only at the focus of arts and artists have caused the underestimation of society creative potentials and of the positive effects stemming from the existence of a creative society. The attention shown in practice to what is called legitimate or cultivated culture has ignored traditional folk cultures, the urban folk cultures related to the youth, cultures of minorities and emigrants, as pivotal parts of European cultural diversity.

Today, there is a passive consumption rather than an active participation at cultural events. It is not seldom that some exalted situations of professional artists overshadow the works of a more inferior level, which make, however, the vital element at the social and noncommercial level. Referring to the copyright field, as one of the primary areas of the negotiations on the Stabilization and Association Agreement between EU and Albania, there is already an imbalance, which permits the pirate copies of imported materials or domestic authors to create deterring and unfavorable conditions for the national cultural creativity and production. There is no evidence and naturally no coordination or support to assist the diaspora, neither are there subsidies for emigration, as for instance constructing internet sites on the Albanian culture, libraries, on-line book shops, and fostering a much more active stance in the field of culture by our diplomatic representations abroad. The new realities of Albania's European integration process and the inner developments of the Albanian culture itself dictate the changing of the dynamics of the cultural policy in terms of the country's cultural integration to Europe, international relations and cultural cooperation. This is explained with the fact that cultural life today is increasingly displaying a European consciousness, as compared to the international consciousness noted after 91ies. Consequently, cultural reform imposes not only the appliance of a new structural mechanism, but also a fundamental review in terms of policy guidance and reformulation of the cultural goals in Albania. Albanian culture has stepped up its contacts with Europe, both in the institutional and individual aspect; besides, it is increasingly assimilating European developments. The geographical space of the spread of Albanian culture is steadily expanding. This development has had a direct impact not only in the cultural field, but also in the administrative, economic and technological areas. There is a growing awareness that if Albania is to keep her own place in the cultural map where it intends to be integrated, then it has to make new efforts to solidify its own cultural values; the starting point in this respect is the approach in favor of inter - actions among national, regional, European and wider cultural developments.

The cultural policy is going to face the challenges of European integration in reforming the cultural governance; this would depend, to a large extent, on the way of achieving the social consensus, mobilizing the human resources, managing the cultural dimension and the impact of communication revolution, ensuring employment opportunities in the field of creativity, facing the new dynamics of cultural exchanges and cooperation with European countries and finally, the way how would be culture used in view of Albania's social cohesion to the EU.

Different data indicate that the reading level has substantially declined. It is almost an all-accepted fact that this reading decline started in the 90ies. There are many factors explaining that. The new communication technologies in the 90ies

came through in Albania, which considerably reduced interest about books. Till then, access to TV programs was restricted on the account of ideological reasons; therefore, reading books was one of the opportunities of spending the leisure time in a cultured way. The massive widespread of satellite dishes in the aftermath of 90ies oriented the people towards TV programs; hence, a part of cultivated public, changed from a book-reader into a viewer of televised programs. The reading decline is also explained with the fall of employment level in the domains of intellectual work and due to occurrence of narrow specialization of professions after 90ies. Economic reasons are also another factor adding to the said decline in book reading. Unlike TV culture, which until a few years ago was received free of charge or at a very low price, the written culture is expensive. The book prices, compared to the population financial level are still expensive and even unaffordable for a part of this population.

The level of written press reading does also indicate the low reading level. According to a poll conducted by the Media Institute, only 26, 68 per cent of the people read everyday a daily newspaper, whereas 74 per cent of the people do never read any newspaper. The age-group structure of book – readers is also a matter of concern. The medium and old ages prevail over the mass of readers, whereas the youth read very little or not in the least.

Monitoring reading habits against unstable terrain

While creating a new vision on public libraries, the managers and their staffs are faced with a series of challenges related to the perfect command of technical and professional knowledge they need for the development and promotion of new computer – based technologies for the library services. They should know, better than now the multifaceted funding opportunities and financial strategies, by acquiring more dynamic managing skills and attitudes. From the perspective of defining the service policies, they should develop and determine a clear meaning of the potential contribution of public libraries on such fundamental social issues, as life-long learning, social all-inclusiveness and democracy. Likewise, they should be able to define and improve the delivery of library services, including the electronically - provided services. From the technical viewpoint, they should increasingly know better such aspects as access to Internet sources, description and indexation of these resources, digitalization, digital saving, fulfillment of access requirements, permission and the access rights into the telecommunication waves and infrastructure.

It goes without saying that as in other countries, the music impact on the population is larger than in other arts; therefore, music assumes a significant

role as a spiritual nourishment, for the education of citizens, their emancipation and improvement of life quality. After the collapse of communism, several cultural centers where music was produced and taught(infrastructure) changed their destination or went even to ruins. Some symphonic orchestras and other musical formations in some of the major country's cities, as in Shkodër, Tiranë (Philharmonic), Fier, Elbasan, Vlorë were disbanded. (*Raport mbi politikat kulturore në Shqipëri*, Shtëpia Botuese “Onufri Tiranë” 2002.)

Currently, there exists a fund of creations and interpretations, covering every musical genre and form. The central musical institutions in Albania are the Theatre of Opera and Ballet, the Symphonic Orchestra of the Albanian Public Radio & Television, the Academy of Fine Arts, and the Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances. Besides, there do also exist dozens of other private and state musical formations in Albania, acting not only in Tirana, but also in Durrës, Korçë, Fier, Vlorë, Shkodër, and elsewhere. They have been set up thanks to individual initiatives and in the form of associations, producing a considerable concertal life, financially sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, foreign and domestic foundations and other projects as well.

The creative industry contributes to Albania's economic development. This business benefits hundreds of jobs and considerable revenues. For this reason, the cultural policies in the musical field should pursue the following goals:

The musical cultural industry should have the attention of the Ministry of Culture; besides, it should have development and partnership programs with the Ministry of Finances, and the fiscal system should be different from that of commercial business.

The new developments in Albania, the reform of all life sectors make it also necessary for the strategy on culture to seek support for projects aimed at setting up orchestral groups, particularly symphonic orchestras in the major country's districts and cities. The local initiatives should back up these projects and have a part- time financing through cultural funding provided by the Government, the municipalities, the business and various financial bodies. A significant development in this respect would be the establishment of a philharmony of young artists in Tirana, which would be attached to the International Cultural Centre; that might be permanent or non-permanent, financed through projects launched by organizations or private individuals for young musical artists. This musical ensemble would engage and employ school graduate musical producers, soloists, administrators and managers.

In these ambiances and rooms, dozens of graduate students should also conduct the teacher's role for the passionate folks, who want to learn to play musical instruments, or follow various musical teaching and training courses.

The local authorities are the major players in envisaging the musical culture and its promotion. Decentralization is considered as the major priority in the cultural

domain. Despite their limited budgets, they possess a high degree of autonomy. Local cultural commissions have been set up and attached to local representations. The decisions have to be taken at the point of delivery, i.e. the cities should take over the major responsibility for their own musical cultural life. Likewise, most of cultural institutions would have links at national, regional and local levels.

The major institutions of state - owned musical culture should foster the projects designed to extend their own activities at the country's regions, while designing, within their own terms and possibilities, flexible artistic and interesting programs for the public.

The copyright and related rights

There is an almost complete legal frame in Albania; this frame relies on the standards defined by the international community.

The level of copyright protection in the field of music in real terms is still extremely low.

This is an evident fact and is expressed not only in the discontents of Albanian and even foreign authors from the unlawful use of their own creative works (the phenomenon of piracy) but even in the reports of international bodies.

However, a relevant structure is in place now at the Ministry of Culture, namely the Juridical Copyright Directorate, which is tasked to strictly apply the law.

The two most noticeable effects from failure to apply the law in this respect are as follows:

- Ignoring the property right
- Affecting market rules

Media, radio and television are significant show instruments and promoters of musical arts and the artists who produce them. Albania's positive experiences are welcome in this respect. However, in separate radio or television channels there are often promoted anti-values imposed by the informal commercial market or the cultural level of this media owners, distorting or educating badly in this way the viewers and their followers.

The national mentality on music intends to boost cooperation with the media, by promoting joint sensibilizing programs in censuring the anti - values. Likewise, while encouraging the media to deliver periodically all the musical genres and forms with an impact on the public cultural and musical education. Another goal of this Strategy is to encourage the media debate on the criteria related to the musical programs, making a clear distinction between the true values and their opposites.

Prior to 90ies, it may be said that there was no market for visual arts in the real sense of the word. The whole artistic activity was governed strictly by the communist regime; whereas the orders, purchases, and the destination of works were entirely determined by state structures. The competition and exhibition opportunities were decided from above. The Association which brought together the visual artists was the League of Writers and Artists, an ideologically conditioned and controlled institution. During the communist dictatorship, arts were regarded merely as propaganda instruments to the service of the ruling Party, whereas the artists as state employees, hired or given a fixed salary only to illustrate the glory of the Party leadership and the achievements of socialism! In almost every country's town there were art galleries or cultural centers, whereby the exhibition of art works was aimed mainly at the people's visual obsession with the communist dogma.

After the 90ies, although with hesitant steps, first, a fragile arts market started to be outlined, although the mechanism of arranging supply and demand were not in place yet. The first private Art Gallery.

"Te - Gi" was set up in Tirana in 1993, as a pioneer in this field. Meanwhile, the artists started to sell on their own the art works in different ateliers. Still, there can be no talk of a true domestic market, since the major sale volumes apply to foreigners (Embassies, tourists and others). Several things have changed in the course of these years; yet, even nowadays is hard to provide a definition of the situation of private market for visual arts. It may be said that visual artists do not produce their own works "for the market" but they are setting up this market by virtue of their quality. Despite the boom in quantity terms on the part of private art galleries and the space of private exhibitions, the market remains occasional in its own calendar, confused and sporadic, and refractory towards the inter-active and synergic opportunities with the institutions, quasi informal and a far cry concerning the public participation by and large. Nevertheless, the galleries have turned to be communication centers, whereby the artists and their works attempt to find out, create and reach the buyers, the collectionists and the public. (Albania: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2006». *U.S. Department of State. 6 March 2007*. Retrieved 20 December 2010.) Among the major reasons for the lack of public interest for artistic products the following may be singled out:

- The weak exhibition infrastructure,
- The low purchasing population power (despite the steady growth of per capita personal incomes, Albania remains still among the poor countries), the still unsatisfied basic needs (housing, employment and others),

The inadequate artistic education (no attention at all or very little attention is devoted to the subject matters of arts or the history of visual arts at the school curricula).

The lack of serious media and critic's attention towards the exhibition events is another strong reason explaining why a genuine visual art market fails to be shaped and promoted. It is very encouraging that some newspapers and televisions are very sensitive and active in this regard; however, they confine themselves in announcements or panegyrics and do not contribute to the proper extent in cultivating a critical opinion and a value selection.

The lack of effective associations of artists has caused a low negotiating level with the privates and lobbying impotence with politics. The League of Writers and Artists (set up in 1952) has lost its own function long ago, whereas the various groups and associations emerging during these years have failed to impose themselves.

Efforts to build a system of stable values on arts and cultures in the optics of market economy

Viewed from the perspective of cultural governmental policies, the visual arts have not had an economic approach to date. Their products have been regarded at random as "tourist" categories of "works of art" and they have missed their affirmation as "cultural goods" or as "services". In the governing vision (both central and local) they have remained as "permanently subsidized" sectors, justifying this with the non-profit and non-viable nature of the works of art. It is only recently, that thanks to the awareness that the creative sectors are vigorous instruments for a sustainable development and the synergies of cultural tourism, the social and economic added value provided by visual arts has begun to be considered. They are seen as catalysts for the dynamisation of those cities that intend to turn into "creative cities" and are at the frontline of distributing the following values to the community: belonging, tolerance, freedom and justice. The studios and galleries rank among the SMEs with the most innovative behaviors, and they merit a more adequate fiscal treatment, reducing in this way the costs for their full formalization.

While having a good tradition in arts and culture, the major cities, as Tirana and Durrësi, followed by Vlora, Korça and Shkodra are also at art market frontline. If Durrësi and Vlora are tourist cities and they are enlivened largely in spring and summer, the case of the capital is very telling. Tirana's population has quadrupled within a decade, as an outcome of geographical demographic displacements. Today, Tirana has a population of about 1 million. These figures may increase more sharply in the years to come, overtaking any prediction. The demands for cultural products and services keep on increasing with each passing day, thanks to the growth of per capita incomes and the extra-economic needs. Therefore, a more consistent and flexible supply, a more effective and stable cultural infrastructure and larger attention to the variety of artistic presentations are indispensable in

meeting the needs of a growing population, which becomes increasingly more willing, more sensitive and more receptive to artistic products and activities.

The dual «symbol - commodity» nature of artistic products make the art market an counter- typical market, a *contre - marché*. It is hard to make the quality comely with commercial values and even harder to measure them. The Albanian market has had to get in terms right from its very beginnings with this contradictory feature of artistic product. As a “symbolic commodity” it serves as a status symbol, lending social prestige to its possessor. The economic function, closely connected with the symbolical function regards the artistic product from the perspective of the exchange value and profit chances. Referring to the above – mentioned observation on the art infrastructure and the need to further expand the activity of domestic artistic market, the cultural strategy aims at the following:

The legal definition of property rights, extending it to the *droit de suite* (- the right of the author or its family members to receive after selling it a percentage of profits from every subsequent hand-over of the property). Likewise, this requires setting up a database and a stricter listing of the works of art by artists and gallery owners.

The further improvement of the legal frame on the artist’s status, clarifying his own rights and obligations. It should also be considered the possibility of accommodating the *free lance status for artists in Albania*. Visual artists do not comply with the models of the labor market, insurance system and social contributions to date. Their voluntary contribution as self – employed maybe facilitated by the state via specific fiscal techniques.

The conventions helping the young artists to overcome the entry barriers. Apart from the work over their artistic project, the young artists have to collect a related capital (credibility, acquaintances with gallery owners, critics, collectionists and others.) in order to be able to take an active part in the artistic community life. The state may intervene in this *trade off* (in – between the time & resources allocated to the artistic work and time & resources devoted to market affirmation) by promoting the projects of the most promising young artists via fellowships, public orders, and others as well as by increasing the exhibition opportunities for them. The effectiveness of this state intervention depends a great deal on the partnership with the market: the State should not be arbitrary while lending direct support to artists, but it should cooperate with the market and the critics for their selection.

The direct support is the best way for that. The state could finance the galleries(chiefly the National Gallery of Arts) in employing artists who would produce and present the works. The amount of this financing should be adequate so as to meet the needs for creativity, producing, showing and promoting their works. This mode of support would substantially update the status of young artists, associating them in the public’s eyes with a respected institution. The state could also offer this support in

the form of returned loans, on the revenue basis, after submitting the piece of work or as a warranty against losses. This system should not be closed up to itself, (keeping a group of artists working solely on the basis of direct subsidies) but it should be time conditional with the approachment of artists to the market. When an artist becomes capable of ensuring a certain amount of incomes from the market, or when this support extends for long and without any expectation in time, then the public money should be offered to somebody else. (Politikat kulturore në Shqipëri Shtëpia Botuese “Naim Frashëri” Tiranë 2001, f. 232. ISBN 99927-38-26-X)

The improvement of the exhibition infrastructure. The system of public art galleries has 12 local galleries (Durrës, Shkodër, Fier, Pogradec, Korçë, Vlorë, Berat, Elbasan, Gjirokastër, Kukës, Dibër, Lezhë) with around 5.000 art works in their funds. These institutions, with some exceptions only, leave much to be desired in terms of their physical state, the hall conditions, inadequacy of personnel, the administrative and maintenance capacities of local government. They suffer likewise from lack of selection of works available (most are doubtful since they come from socialist realism).

The National Art Gallery cannot meet alone the needs of contemporary works, since its spaces could hardly “shelter” the permanent museum funds. Albeit and growth of the number of private galleries, the opening of a hall at the Academy of Arts and the commitment of the National Museum of History and the International Cultural Centre, which have made some of their halls available, the exhibition needs are much larger. It is necessary that the capital should have a public gallery and to this end the Tirana Municipality should cooperate with the Ministry of Culture, to make that possible as soon as possible.

Artistic education in the field of visual arts is still at a low level. This sort of education is still schematic at the general educational system and follows on the tradition of artistic education of the previous system. Therefore, it should be reconceived and this reconception should start with the school texts up to the training of the teachers of these subject matters. Likewise, the artistic schools should be entirely reformed, since most of them have turned into institutions of cultural regress and intellectual backwardness.

Cinematography after the fall of the dictatorship and the first tendencies for reform and integration

With the major paradigm shift of Albanian society at the debut of 90ies, the film makers were undoubtedly the first to seriously think and invest in changing the system of the operation of the cinematographic activity and culture in Albania.

Convinced that even some of the major relying principles of the operation of this activity have fallen short, both as an instrument and institution in assisting the political education of the masses, they started the switch to the new system and philosophy, whereby the individual, competition of values, the market of ideas and products, European integration and the product commercialization constituted its mainstays. Thus, in 1993, the process of drafting the Law “On the Cinematography” started, which was adopted in the Parliament and was decreed by the President of the Republic by mid – 1996. This Law prescribed the political, economic and commercial reform of the structure and functions of cinematographic activity, which has been realized through the former Kinostudio “Shqipëria e Re”(Albafim Studio).

Regarded and admitted by all that the reform provided in this Law and the actions for its enforcement present the best pattern for the restructure of cultural activities and institutions at home, albeit the high enthusiasm and dynamics of its implementation, it turned out to be a fragmented and unpurified process, both in terms of time and its process.

Hence, April 1997 marks the founding of the National Cinematographic Center, as the institution responsible for the administration of public policies and funding, supportive of the independent cinematographic production, completed in 2005 even with the function of administering the cinematographic production prior to 90ies.

The National Cinematographic Center has scored admirable results in recycling the new cinematographic production in the reformed system, not only in maintaining the continuity of the film culture, not only in international promotion of the artistic product, but also with the growth of the total budget allocated to domestic films, thanks to steadily getting foreign co-producers, whose participation on one hand helped to recover the weak state budget, but on the other hand, it introduced a qualitative gigantic stride forward, in terms of the technical services and an unprecedented dimension of the international product distribution.

Apart from innumerable direct participations by our film makers and their movies to the international film festivals and the numerous prizes awarded even in Cannes, Venice, Thessaloniki, Cairo, and elsewhere, only in 2007, the National Cinematographic Center has also conducted several state promotion events of Albanian movies abroad, as in Prague, London, Athens, Paris and Rome.

Although the most recent accomplishments of Albanian cinema are strengthening the film making culture in Albania, still the Albanian film is suffering from fixed artistic forms and schematics, on the account of an alleged modernization of expressive means. The producers attach little attention to scripts and its cultivation. (Albania: Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2006». *U.S. Department of State*. 6 March 2007. Retrieved 20 December 2010).

Whereas in USA, the production cost for the script accounts for 10 % of the film budget and in Europe 2 %, in Albania this amounts only to almost 0,5 %.

While most of the budgets allocated to the overall National Cinematographic Center activity for the season 2006 - 2007 amounted only to 142.000.000 lekë, the approved budget for project financing in 2007 is only 72.000.000 lekë. The opposite has occurred in regard to long films with an amount of around 3.5 million Euro being allocated to this sort of film making in 2007. Let us underscore that this relationship, whereby for each financial unit from Albanian public funding there are about two units allocated by foreign funding sources indicates on one hand the success of the integration of our own producers into the international co-production market, placing Albania first in the region, but on the other hand, it marks a much higher effectiveness in terms of public funding use. (Programi analitik i Ministrisë së Kulturës 2005 -2013)

The above overview clearly indicates that while the number of readymade projects and those in process, the capitals ensured by alternative sources of financing are considerable and successful, the National Cinematographic Center budget available to their support is extremely low, endangering in this way not only their fulfillment, but also the loss of developing pace of Albanian cinematography, the loss of co-producers and large financial amounts already ensured through the foreign financial sources.

Meanwhile, due to the inaccurate prediction of developments, the terms of the said law, but also due to the lack of attention and interest on the part of responsible institutions, not only are we far away from having the same pace, but the distribution structure and the network of auditoriums for film projection is being seriously damaged, reducing drastically the number and quality of cinema services at home. This is the reason that Albania is still among the few European countries not still member of one of the most power centers of supporting the cinematographic activity, i.e. "Euroimazh."

The appearance in the projection market of the network of Millennium cinemas marks undoubtedly a momentum of enthusiasm; however, it is not sufficient and almost monopolistic. Distortion in favor of other economically profit-making events from inherited halls, lack of facilitation fiscal policies in this field have produced the rapid collapse of some other private and alternative enterprises, at some major country's cities.

On the other hand, the boom of televizive operators into the market, product trading for family consumption formats, the unlimited piracy of domestic and foreign movie production and the major electronic consumption of film works have struck sharply the culture of movie - viewing at large cinema screen; it has equally demotivated the world of free enterprise in this area. Besides, there is no initiative in the field of public cultural education over the necessity of a selective knowledge and consumption of the cinematographic product.

The newly- signed Memorandum between the National Cinematographic Center and the National Council of Radio & Television and the setting up of the Albanian Copyright Office are only the first steps towards disciplining and gradual eliminating this badly enrooted phenomenon. Linking this initiative with other interested entities is expected to produce the proper spirit and network for a better organization and results.

While the said law does not provide for any significant change or reform concerning the functions of the National Film Archives (NFA), the period in – between was not associated with substantial changes of this institution, apart from the continued funding, conservation and maintenance. Even some initiatives on fund digitalization or involvement of Archives into commercial operations now are either blocked, solid or frozen, pending the drafting and adoption of sub-legal and administrative acts. The low investment level for the NFA, the non-permission of utilization of the revenues for technological renewal and enrichment of archive funds have overshadowed considerably the activity and factorization of this Archive into the country’s cinematographic activity.

Theatrical stage and the atmosphere around it

State support in the field of theatre is seen not only as being supportive of financial policies on theatre, but also in the steps made for legal reforms in this domain. Theatre has got problems concerning legal adjustments, infrastructure, professionalism and financing of theatrical activities. The problems that creativity in this domain exposes remain even today unresolved, both legally and conceptually or financially. The treatment of producers and actors is at undesirable levels. The policies to date have been spontaneous and there has been a lack of understanding among the community of artists and producers. There exist more or less 23 state – owned theatrical groups in the 10 major cities of the country, with eight drama, eight comedy and seven children theatres. A good part of these theatres are inactive and the number of performances put on stage is extremely low. Likewise, the number of viewers is very small. The most active theatres are the National Theatre, Theatre “Petro Marko” in Vlorë, Theatre “Skampa” Elbasan, and the Theatre “Aleksandër Moisiu” Durrës. The treatment of theatrical activity lacks a managerial vision and the idea of value return. As to the latter, the preference for theater festivals rather than direct support for theatre production is noticed. The local government has not been active in support of the theatrical activity, being simply an employer for inefficient theatres serving simply as decoration. (Politikat kulturore në Shqipëri Shtëpia Botuese “Naim Frashëri” Tiranë 2001, f. 232. ISBN 99927-38-26-X)

The failure of initiatives in establishing private theatre companies indicates the lack of any sort of balance in market and at the same time, it indicates the lack of clear policies in this field, with deficiencies reflected to the uncompetitive artistic quality and the lack of alternative theatres.

Cultural heritage and endangered space, the role of institutions and developments perspectives

Cultural heritage is a treasure of generations and our major obligation to the past and to the future, the material and spiritual continuity of nation. As such, cultural heritage is an ongoing challenge in the wake of the national and state attention, designed to retain the imprints of the century – long creative genius and convey that to the future. The Albanian cultural heritage is rich in values. It encompasses archeological, urban, historical and engineered values. Likewise, it entails the movable heritage, archeological and monumental objects, books and documents, numismatics, almises and fire guns, artistic products and precious goods.

The spiritual heritage includes the language, oral and musical folklore of all genres, traditions and beliefs of all sorts and crafts.

The Albanian heritage reflects the millennium – old history of the Albanian people. It finds its expression among the archeological ruins and inhabited houses. They date back to pre-history up to the last century and they number in over 2400 objects of a broad range, about 200 cult monuments, 600 antic and medieval monuments (fortresses, ruins, sites, bridges, water mains) and the rest are folk constructions divided into categories. The List of monuments is open to further ameliorations according to the legally defined parameters. Most of the monuments are to be found in the towns of Gjirokaštër, Berat, Korçë, Shkodër. The monumental sites in Butrint, Apollonia, Durrës, Voskopoja, Gjirokastra, Berati, and others are renowned not only on national, but also on international wide scale. The state institutions legally entrusted to take care of monumental heritage are the Institute of Archeology, the Institute of the Monuments of Culture, 8 Regional Departments for the Monuments of Culture, and the National Centre of the Inventoried of Cultural Assets. Apart from the constructions and construction ensembles, the specialists of the monuments show attention even to the graving of wood, stone, metals, ceramics, afrescoes, and iconostases, other major assets of the Albanian nation. (*Raport mbi politikat kulturore në Shqipëri*, Shtëpia Botuese “Onufri Tiranë” 2002).

Nevertheless, monuments are suffering the devastating effects of natural occurrences and the human devastating interventions. From the year 1990 until the year 2000, there was no adequate financing for the monuments. During this

period, a series of monuments have been damaged irretrievably. Still, this stage, has not come simply due to lack of financing. The crisis was also caused due to the decline of the institutional authority of the Institute of the Monuments of Culture, causing the loss of control over the territory on the part of the state, due to the less relations with international partners; to shortcomings at the scientific activity of the institution; departure of specialists and lack of institutional reform. This entire crisis produced a genuine emergency concerning the monuments; the latter are in danger also due to the lack of vision concerning them. (*Law no. 27/2018 "On Cultural Heritage and Museums"*)

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