



SECOND WORLD CULTURELINK CONFERENCE

Dynamics of Communication: New Ways and New Actors

Zagreb, Croatia, 9-12 June 2005, Mimara Museum

Summary and Main Findings

The Second World Culturelink Conference, held in Zagreb from 9 to 12 June 2005, was attended by 150 participants from 37 countries, who represented different national and international associations, centres, cultural institutions, foundations, universities and various other organizations, or were individual Culturelink members. The Second Conference worked in three plenary sessions and one special session devoted to the Culturelink Network.

The first plenary session was devoted to globalization and the redefined roles of all actors involved in the processes of globalization in the cultural field. The first part of the session was entitled **The End of Globalization? Redefined Role of States and National Cultures. Regionalization and Decentralization. Trans-border Cooperation.** Eleven speakers took the floor to discuss pertinent issues that influence changes introduced and developed by globalization processes in the cultural field. Different concepts of globalization were mentioned, as well as the new tasks and roles of cultural policies in the processes of decentralization and regionalization of cultural development and cultural life. As the role of the national state diminishes, local authorities and professional organizations are taking over new tasks and functions in cultural policies and cultural development. However, with the possible decline of economic and social performance of some states, the cultural policies may experience setbacks and get again more centralized and state oriented. As globalization prompts interconnectedness among cultures and societies, many physical borders have been abolished. However, new intellectual and technologically prompted borders are appearing now (digital divide, high individualization of cultural values, etc.), which announces the restructuring of the global cultural space. The second part of the first plenary session was devoted to **New Actors: Local Communities, Civil Society, Professional Organizations and Individuals. New Public Policies / Cultural Policies: Developing Partnerships with Civil Society and the Private Sector. Mobility.** The overview of the new actors involved in cultural life was impressive. Nine speakers presented a number of organizations, centres or institutions involved in cultural creativity, cultural work and development of links among different spheres of life, work and cultural creativity. Notions of 'network sociality' that stands for crossing different borders all the

time was mentioned, as well as the new challenges for cultural policies: recognizing the hybridism of the cultural field; thinking culture in relation to new forms of citizenship; understanding the uses of culture in creating lifestyles; engaging in cultural economy; establishing 'places' in the space flows; recognizing all kinds of vernaculars, as possible challenge to creativity, etc. The role of civil societies was widely discussed, as well as their specific development in transitional countries where they may be weak, but still potentially important actors of cultural policies and cultural development. The need to start developing cultural policies as *shared* policies, implying state and private sectors, but also civil society was particularly stressed, and both positive and negative aspects of this approach have been mentioned. The dialogue and partnership among public and private sectors and civil society in the process of reshaping public cultural policies is necessary in order to establish flexible and open approaches to cooperation. In designing the *shared* policies, references were made to joint institutions, creative communities, to strengthening cultural statistics and relevant studies. Intergovernmental and international organizations (e.g., Asia-Europe Foundation - ASEF, that links civil societies from Europe and Asia), were particularly discussed in respect of artists' creativity and freedom. The national tools to develop international cultural relations (e.g., mobility programs, networks, specialized partnership schemes, etc.) were particularly highlighted.

The second plenary session devoted to cultural diversity was entitled **Cultural Diversity. Full Affirmation of Multiculturalism/Interculturalism. Mediated Cultures and New Technologies. New Cultural Identities**. It was introduced through presentations of UNESCO and Council of Europe activities in this domain, and through the particular mention of the *Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions*. Fourteen speakers, organized in two panels, discussed various aspects and issues related to cultural diversity, including: global interculturalism, new identity policies, the social position of indigenous peoples, the identity of Bantu peoples, linguistic aspects of multiculturalism, developing democracy through cultural diversity, national and cultural diasporas, legal regulations to promote cultural diversity, etc. The numerous aspects and problems related to cultural diversity incited vivid discussions, which testifies of the practical importance of this issue and the strong interest in supporting the regulation of cultural diversity.

The third plenary session was devoted to **New Ways of Communication and Cooperation. Internet and Cultural Networks: Diversity of Cultural Communication. Impact of Virtual Communication on Cultures. Cultural Participation**. The main points raised in this session by

ten speakers included observations about the 'explosion' of cultural portals in the world, but also about the more traditional functioning of museums or libraries in the field of cultural information processing and distribution. Both national governments and civil societies are ever more active in supporting and creating cultural portals, specialized data bases and data banks, etc. They usually target very specific, but different audiences. However, evaluations of their impacts are rather rare. This mirrors a situation in which the spread of information is faster than the analysis of its cultural and social impact. Digital cultures, spreading from technological backgrounds, concentrate on communication as the strategic input of cultural development. They dematerialize and produce new mutations. Whether societies and individuals are ready for the changes they introduce remains an unanswered question. Digital cultures are definitely cultures of users, and in this respect network participants are users of cultural values. Thus cultures become contexts for communication. Some cultures and societies are, however, marginalized in this process. Such marginalization appears as a border, preventing the faster development of developing countries' societies, which concentrate on traditional identity building in the frameworks of ethnicity or nationality. Examples from South Africa and efforts of Caribbean societies were mentioned to illustrate the uneven global spread of digitization. As an illustration of digitization in arts, the presentation of "Architecture in Digital Age: Architects as New Actors in Communication" was offered by the Croatian architects Penezić and Rogina. Another interesting example of digitalized art forms is digitized music that is spreading rapidly among young generations. However, cultural policies do not fully recognize these new digital art forms and the newly emerging trends they set. Paralleling the acknowledgment of new actors in the processes of cultural development, new types and areas of artistic and cultural creativity need to be better integrated into cultural policies.

The third session also included a Special Session on **Culturelink 10 Years After. Cultural Change and Cooperative Networks. Culturelink and International Cultural Cooperation**, and a Special Presentation of the "Walk and Squawk Performance Project", as well as a presentation of the "World Cultures Yearbook Project", and other new networks and projects in the making.

Biserka Cvjetičanin, the Culturelink Network Director, spoke of the experiences of Culturelink during the past 15 years. The Network has grown rather quickly but also steadily, to become not only an efficient tool of communication, but a valuable stimulator of the exchange of ideas, and a reliable tool of establishing connections among different cultural networks. Culturelink has also developed a number of specialized data bases and research activities. It particularly promoted

research on cultural policies, cultural development, multi- and inter-cultural relationships, cultural identities and cultural transitions, as well as quite specialized issues like cultural tourism, etc. This is reflected in a number of Culturelink publications. Numerous young researchers and specialists have developed their activities through the Network. The record of Culturelink's work and activities is outstanding, particularly because the Network has always supported communication and cooperation with African, Asian and Latin American countries.

The other issues discussed during the Special Session included the global position of other specialized cultural networks; cultural centres and their functioning abroad, aspects of international cultural cooperation related to networking, cosmopolitan identity and cultural democracy as reflected in networks.

The **Summary and Main Findings** proposal was discussed at the end of the Conference. Participants agreed that the Conference has been very open and all inclusive. The large number of speakers and interventions, as well as their valuable and interesting contributions will be presented in a collection of papers from this meeting. The Culturelink team is therefore entrusted to prepare and produce the collection of papers from the Conference.

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