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Bettina Heinrich

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Changing Cities and the New Role for Urban Cultural Policy – Perspectives from Germany

Bettina Heinrich

Head of Department for Fundamental Cultural Policy Issues,
Senate Chancellery of the Governing Mayor of Berlin (2007-2009)

Up to the early 21st century, cultural policy used to be mainly a national or at the most a continental political issue. This has changed within the last five years; cultural policy has become an issue that is discussed internationally or, to use a buzzword, 'the issue has gone global.' Two key documents have been adopted in this context. The first one is the *UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*¹ (*UNESCO-Convention*), originally drafted as a reference document to the GATS negotiations, which was adopted in 2005 by the General Conference of UNESCO.² The second one is the *Agenda 21 for culture*³ that was adopted in 2004 by the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). The Agenda 21 for culture is one of the most important politico-cultural documents because it highlights the key role that culture plays around the world in urban policies.

The agreement of a general or internationally shared consensus on the role of culture and related policy requires a common understanding and definition of cultural policy. This is provided by the *UNESCO Convention*: "Cultural policies and measures" refers to those policies and measures relating to culture, whether at the local, regional, national or international level that are either focussed on culture as such or are designed to have a direct effect on cultural expressions of individuals, groups or societies, including on the creation, production, dissemination, distribution of and access to cultural activities, goods and services.'

The definition shows the 'simple complexity' of cultural policy, which concerns the interdependent relations between the character of cultural expressions/products (cultural activities, goods or services) and the political levels (local, regional, national, international), as well as the producers of cultural expressions (individuals, groups and communities), and finally the context of production (public authorities, cultural industries and civil society).

1 Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); 171 EX/INF. 18), April 2005

2 For more information: www.unesco.org

3 <http://www.agenda21culture.net/>

Using the plural, the definition furthermore clarifies that there cannot be only one cultural policy, but that there is an impervious framework of different cultural policies. Thus it is important to clarify from which angle cultural policy – and its new role – is examined here. There are three rather specific perspectives: firstly, the local perspective, generally looking at local level policy-making; secondly, it is the perspective of a cultural policy-maker; and, thirdly, this view has a European and a specific national – in this case German – background.⁴

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Before outlining the new role for cultural policy, one has to address the changes and challenges the cities, especially the so-called global cities, are facing: firstly, to deal successfully with the new multilateral cultural landscape in the cities; secondly, to cope with the changing urban societies; and, thirdly, to tackle the pressure of being competitive on the world stage of cities. Using several specific examples from Berlin and Germany, I will briefly discuss some cultural policy strategies and point out some unresolved questions.

1. A new multilateral cultural landscape

In the last three decades the cultural landscape has been shifting towards a multilateral cultural ‘playground’ – in a local as well as a global context. Today we have three different crucial players within our cultural scene: the local government (public authorities), the autonomous cultural scene (the third sector) and the cultural entrepreneurs (the commercial sector). These changes towards a shared cultural landscape are more obvious in countries with a strong tradition of public funding of culture, such as Germany.

Up to the late sixties, the public authorities were not the only, but by far the most important, protagonists in the cultural field. Pushed by the new social movements in the early 1970s and their demands for ‘more society and less state,’ civil society gained importance as a new societal, political as well as politico-cultural power. Around 20 years later in the early 1990s, a third player appeared: the cultural and creative industries. They are one of the fastest growing economic sectors – also in Berlin. There is no reason to claim that the diversity of players in the urban cultural landscape – the booming economic cultural sector, the continuously growing third sector and the public cultural sector – poses a problem as such, but it makes the political supervision and governance of this diverse playground more difficult. Scrutinizing the creative sector in Berlin reveals that cultural policy in particular still has to define its role in the field of the creative industries.

⁴ Germany has a strong and long tradition of publicly funded culture based on public decision structures. This includes the fact that the politico-cultural discourse is, unlike in Anglo-Saxon countries, clearly linked to the idea that there is a basic and absolutely indispensable public responsibility for culture and its financing and furthermore that the German cities are the key actors with regard to cultural policy and institutions.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, POLICIES REGARDING FUNDING FOR CULTURE AND POLITICAL STRATEGIES IN BERLIN

The creative industries, including software development, the telecommunications sector and architecture, are among the strongest economic sectors in Berlin and a real 'economic shooting star.' The annual turnover runs to €17.5 bn (in 2006), representing about 21% of the GDP of Berlin. 160,500 people work in the creative sector representing 10% of total employment.

This also made the creative sector an important field of political action. In 2005 the Government Administration (Senate) of Berlin published its first report on cultural industries. In January 2009 the second report was launched. Unlike the first, the second is a joint report between three different administrations and departments – under the auspices of the Directorate for Economics,⁵ the departments for economy, urban development and culture were collaborating in the preparation of the report. The Senate for Economics is today the crucial policy-maker regarding the creative sector.

One action field is, for example, the cluster management approach for the 'cluster for communication and creative industries.' The Senate defined seven lines of business that are crucial for the economic development of Berlin.⁶ Every sub-segment will be scrutinized separately with a view to drafting a master plan or action plan. Another action field is its specific funding policy. The Directorate for Economics in Berlin and its related bank is, for example, in charge of providing micro credits or venture capital for enterprises (also cultural enterprises) and maintains a creative coaching centre.

But what might be the role and the contribution of cultural policy? Is a shift in policy-making required? On the one hand, there is a need for making transversal policies for the creative sector to link economic policy and cultural policy. On the other hand, one crucial question remains for cultural policy-makers: what about our funding policies? Do we have to redefine, or at least reflect upon, our funding priorities and mechanism in light of the diverse and changing cultural landscape?

The story of funding for culture in Berlin is rather easily told: the total budget for culture of the State of Berlin is €370 m. About 95% of the whole budget (about €353 m) goes to the cultural institutions, mainly the theatres and the music institutions⁷ and the museums, the state library, the state archive, the literary institutions and the seven memorials. Of the remaining 5% (€18 m) 3% is allocated to so-called free projects and artists and 2% to the administration.

5 Senatverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Technologie und Frauen

6 1. the print (book and press) market, 2. film, TV, radio (broadcasting), 3. music industry, 4. art market, design, fashion 5. advertising and Public Relations, 6. architecture, 7. information technology and telecommunications.

7 These are 3 opera houses, 1 philharmonic orchestra, 1 state ballet, 1 concert hall, 4 state theatres, 8 public theatres and 5 private theatres.

On the one hand, we strive for new political strategies to cope with the changed cultural landscapes, taking into account other cultural players, cultural and creative industries as well as free projects and artists. On the other hand, we are held hostage to our funding traditions – funding mainly institutions. There is almost no leeway or space for experiments, setting new priorities, placing new emphasis and supporting new ideas. At present the impulse for new exciting artistic projects in Berlin comes from the civil society and the cultural economy.

It is necessary for cultural policy-makers to reflect on funding policies. This includes entering into dialogue with the neighbouring political fields, for example economic policy, in order to define the division of tasks and responsibilities, the areas for cooperation and the terms of reference of cooperation. What is now the task for the – local – cultural policy in the field of the creative industries? Do we have to support the artists to develop their products into marketable commodities? Do we have to support the artists to get access to the art market? And what might be the appropriate and successful way? Under the new circumstances of multilateral landscapes the final question remains: which political field – economic policy or cultural policy – is responsible for supporting what? We, in Berlin, have not resolved the questions and tasks yet, especially with regard to the lack of leeway for setting new funding priorities.

2. New urban societies

We all know the buzzwords connected with the current changes going on in our urban societies: diversity, cultural diversity, globalized cities and multicultural urban societies, ‘urban growth’ or shrinking cities, ageing society or, in one notion, demographic change. At a first glance this observation is quite simple, but with a second look it is a severe political task – also for cultural policy. Generally, the issue of demographic change is reduced to a purely financial and social problem. The only key question is usually: how do we afford to finance our social security system in the context of demographic change?

Let’s take only one of the above-mentioned aspects of demographic change – for example, cultural diversity – meaning the ethnic, linguistic, religious differences: do we really think about the impact of multiethnic society on our cultural infrastructure? We know that in a globalized urban society all cultures are minority cultures – but what does this finally mean? Do we need to reorganize our institutions – theatres, libraries, museums, etc. – in order to include the different communities? If yes, what do we have to manage, to change? Technically, this means: what kind of user demand – currently discussed under the terms ‘access’ and ‘participation’ – will our institutions have in the coming years? In Germany and in German cities – but not only there – we are still searching for appropriate responses.

In this context one has to touch briefly on a crucial aspect. Across Europe, the question of how to address the new urban societies, and especially the multiethnic society, is high on the agenda of policy-makers. In 2008 – parallel to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue – the Council of Europe (COE) and the European Commission (EC) launched the joint action *Intercultural Cities: Governance and Policies for Diverse Communities*. This programme proposes to review the range of local governance structures and practices. It aims to advise on ways of improving the sensitivity and understanding of decision-makers regarding concerns of members of different cultural communities and involving these communities in the public debate and decision-making processes. The fact as such that the COE and the EC launched a project that is aiming at improving governance at the local level and focussing on one crucial aspect of diversity reveals the pressure cities across Europe are facing to rebuild their political management with regard to the new urban societies.

NEW URBAN SOCIETIES AND ARTS EDUCATION IN BERLIN

Managing diversity also means rethinking the programmes of our cultural institutions, bringing ‘governance’ to life, thinking about the next generation. This means, as mentioned above, addressing the issue of ‘access’, ‘participation’ and ‘audience development’ in the context of demographic change. One response to the matter of access and participation is the discussion about arts education, an issue that the city of Berlin has been addressing since 2006. Two years later the Senate Chancellery of Berlin issued a fund for arts education that, in an initial phase, primarily targets children and adolescents.

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There are two reasons for this initiative. The first reason: children from socially deprived families and families of ethnic minority background do not go – e. g., do not have access – to most of our publicly funded cultural institutions, such as opera houses, theatres and museums. In Berlin, almost 40% of all children are socially deprived, live on welfare and, hence, are likely to be excluded from access to the cultural landscape the city provides. Increasing the access for socially deprived young people is an issue of social justice. Secondly, there is a necessity to build new audiences for the cultural institutions, which are facing shrinking audiences in shrinking cities, a reality in Germany as well as other countries.

The Berlin Fund for Arts Education is a joint initiative of three directorates – the Directorates for Youth, for Education and for Culture. The fund has one crucial funding criterion: it always has to be a cooperation project, for example, between an individual artist and a youth centre, a cultural institution and a school, a music school and a kindergarten. Regular educational programmes of a single cultural institution are not eligible for a grant. The fund received €1.5 m in 2008 and will receive €2 m in 2009. The Berlin Fund for Arts Education is one attempt to develop creative skills and audiences and thus to respond to the new urban societies and realities.

3. Competing cities and the role of culture

Cities are competing in the regional, national, continental or in the world 'league'. Small cities compete in the region, or sometimes the country. Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, New York, Paris and London all play in the world league. Berlin belongs somewhere in between the European and the world league. Cities are competing to attract the global tourist, the global investor and the global creative class. To withstand this competition, the cities and towns invest in a coherent identity and image policy. Culture is one important tool to be a successful competitor. Therefore a lot of cities in Europe, including the city of Berlin, claim to be not only a metropolis but a cultural metropolis.

CREATING IDENTITIES AND IMAGES – BE BERLIN

In August 2007 the Governing Mayor of Berlin announced that the city needed – and would get – a new marketing strategy. The main motive for launching this campaign was to create a trademark for Berlin. He wants the city to enter the global stage of world cities. The campaigns of New York (I heart NY), Amsterdam (I Amsterdam), Singapore (Integrity, Service, Excellence) and Hong Kong (Asia's World City) had been taken as good examples.

Berlin is the biggest city in Germany, has 3.5 million inhabitants, is the old and new capital and, unlike other world cities or capitals, is the 'poorhouse' of the country, rather than its 'growth engine' – e.g. the unemployment rate is higher and the economic growth is weaker than the German average. Berlin is usually perceived – in Berlin and in Germany more generally – as an economic dwarf and cultural behemoth.

As one result and way out of the economic crisis the Senate, supported by a high level board of 12 prominent persons in spring 2008, launched a Berlin campaign *be Berlin*. The idea behind *be Berlin* is only the last and fixed part of a slogan that consists of three 'be' parts that can be modified: *be city, be change, be Berlin*. In his keynote speech the Governing Mayor called on Berliners to take part in the campaign, to be Berlin, to write their own Berlin story and to create their own Berlin slogan, such as *be vision, be innovation, be Berlin* (from the Deputy Director of The University for the Arts, Berlin). The 'be Berlin story' is a story of ownership. Up to now the story was quite successful – during the first year the campaign was accepted and adopted by the citizens.

It is not my aim to assess the quality or the success of the marketing idea, the slogan and the campaign as a whole. The interesting aspect is how the campaign was drafted and implemented: firstly, the Governing Mayor had not commissioned a marketing consultancy to produce a campaign. Instead, a sort of think tank – a board of people who are associated with Berlin – was set up to work out the Berlin campaign.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, the capital campaign addresses in its first phase 'the Berliner', the inhabitants, rather than the global tourist, the global investor or the global creative class.

In its second year the be Berlin campaign has gone abroad. In March 2009 the outgoing part of the campaign was launched. Under the title *Berlin – The Place to Be* the campaign became a classic tool of the marketing of a city and went firstly to the USA and New York. The overall goal of the whole Berlin campaign is to create an identity and an image, rather than just a trademark that can be sold. Berlin historically has a special and somewhat broken identity, but the identity/image issue is not merely a German or Berlin one.

CREATING IDENTITIES AND IMAGES – RUHR.2010

In the European Union the idea of (re-)shaping a city or metropolitan region through culture is promoted by the EU initiative European Capital of Culture. Germany and Hungary – both EU member states – will host the European Capital of Culture in 2010 – with *Ruhr.2010* and *Pécs*.⁸ *Ruhr.2010* envisions building a single metropolitan region out of 53 individual cities and altering/converting one of the former most important European centres of heavy industries into a cultural metropolitan area.⁹

The *Ruhr.2010* and the be *Berlin* stories reveal two noteworthy facts: we have to recognize that there are new forms of urbanity, the metropolitan areas. And we have to be aware of the role of culture in the global competition of world cities. Culture in the city has become a main pillar of an urban identity and image policy. Berlin is a self-defined European cultural metropolis that eventually wants to become a trademark. *Ruhr.2010* – like other places in Europe – consistently uses culture for reshaping a whole region. Both initiatives are aiming at giving back and creating an identity as well as an image.

8 The initiative European Capital of Culture is the flagship of European cultural policy; it was launched in 1988 and every year from 2009 two European Union member states (an old one and a new one) and a third state will host one European Capital of Culture each year. In 2010 the city representative of the third state will be Istanbul.

9 The decline of the 'major industries' started about 25 years ago and left enormous buildings and open spaces behind. A radical transformation process of the industrial region started. The gigantic industrial wastelands were systematically registered, secured and rendered accessible again for the tourist and leisure industry.

4. The way forward for cultural policy - addressing competing principles and with growing expectations

Considering the new contexts and challenges that urban cultural policy is facing, there are four crucial tasks for the future.

A. FIRST OF ALL WE HAVE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE COMPETING PRINCIPLES AND GROWING EXPECTATIONS CONFRONTING CULTURE.

There are not only competing cities but also competing principles. The city as such is expected to be a 'regime of integration' and a 'regime of economic growth' – thus the city as such ought to be socially inclusive and ought to be economically competitive. Undoubtedly, only a socially inclusive city can be 'rich' and hence competitive, but culture has to tackle its double role: culture ought to be a tool for social inclusion and for economic growth. Cultural policy has to cope with these arguably fundamentally contradictory principles and their underlying competing ideologies. We as policy-makers have to be more aware of the tensions that culture has to bear and that cultural policy is expected to resolve.

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B. 'CULTURE IN THE CITY' MAY BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN SHAPING AN URBAN IDENTITY AND SHAPING AN URBAN IMAGE.

A successful urban cultural policy must find cultural answers for the general societal challenges as well as being committed to the individually shaped city with its 'identity' that is embedded in its own, the regional, the national and even the continental historical, economic and social context. One can assume that without an identity policy that is dedicated to the city and its citizens, every image policy will fail: the more globalized our cities are becoming, the more individually-shaped city profiles are needed.

C. 'CULTURAL POLICY IN THE CITY' HAS TO BE MORE AWARE OF CHANGING URBAN SOCIETIES.

Cultural policy has to be very aware of societal changes and the new urban societies. The tasks for cultural policy are quite clear and rather specific:

- to scrutinize and to adapt the programmes of cultural institutions –theatres, museums, art galleries – to new audiences;
- to strengthen arts education, aiming both at guaranteeing individual access to culture and creativity and at sustaining or creating future audiences.

D. CULTURAL POLICY HAS TO RETHINK ITS POLITICAL STRATEGIES.

We as policy-makers have to – and want to – share the changing cultural field with the other players, the cultural economy and the third sector. As a consequence, cultural policy has to share influence and power. On the one hand, there are limits to be set and to be accepted. One has to clearly define who does what and who will support what. That includes seriously rethinking our funding policies. On the other hand, there is a new demand for generating transversal policies – and cultural policy is intrinsically a transversal policy. We claim that culture is important for society, economics, education, urban development. In fact, cultural policy is (and seeks to be) anywhere in the middle of the political framework, anywhere in between the economic, social, education and urban development policies. Maybe that is the main task for urban cultural policy, to be a kind of junction and 'transmission belt' for ensuring a linkage between the different political fields and tasks, protecting diversity, boosting culture to become an economic pillar and including civil society. As policy-makers, it is our role to find solutions to these challenges and tensions.

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**United Cities and Local Governments
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos**

carrer Avinyó, 15
E-08002 Barcelona
Spain

Tel: +34 93 342 87 50
Fax: +34 93 342 87 60
info@cities-localgovernments.org

**Ajuntament de Barcelona -
Institut de Cultura**

Palau de la Virreina - la Rambla 99
E-08002 Barcelona
Spain

Tel: +34 933 161 000
Fax: +34 933 161 020
agenda21cultura@bcn.cat

www.agenda21culture.net

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