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Cultural Policy in Romania: Justifications, Values and Constraints. A Philosophical Approach*

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This study proposes a philosophical analysis of the public discourse that accompanies the cultural policy in Romania: justifications and finalities of State intervention in the cultural field, as well as representations of the roles that the public authorities attribute to culture/art. The objective is to bring into light the philosophical, political and aesthetical values that found and legitimise the cultural policies and shape the relationship between State and artists/art. It is basically about understanding the nature of representations on culture and art that underlie the State intervention in the cultural field and, consequently, to determinate the ethos of the cultural policy in post-communist Romania and to expose the constraints that are still limiting its exercise.

The transformations that took place in Romania in the process of transition from a centralized economy to a market-oriented economy and the approaching of its accession in the European Union bring into attention, here also, the topics of principles, finalities and modalities of the cultural policy, as well as of its impact on structuring and functioning of the art world. In the western countries, where, already in the 1960s, strategies of public support for arts and artists were put into practice by the Welfare State, there is an abundant yet diverse scientific literature – coming from various discourses like philosophy, sociology and economy of culture – on the public policies and particularly on the State interventionism in the cultural or artistic fields. In post-communist Romania, where a long-term cultural strategy was formulated only in 1997, those who got involved in a debate, often ignored by academics, were mainly cultural administrators, experts and animators of

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NGOs. Thus, the theoretical corpus regarding the Romanian cultural policy primarily comprises *strategies and policies* realized by the staff of the Ministry of Culture (1997-2000, 2001-2004, 2005-2008) or by foreign experts in the framework of the PHARE-RO9709 program *Cultural Dimension of Democracy* (1997-2000), and *evaluation reports* by Romanian and European Council experts in the framework of the European program of national cultural policy reviews (1999), which were gathered in a compendium entitled *Cultural Policies in Europe: A Compendium of Basic Facts and Trends* (2003). Secondly, the theoretical corpus consists of interventions at seminars and workshops organized during various European and national programs – such as *Mosaic* (1998-2000) initiated by the European Council, *Policies for Culture*, launched in 2000 by the European Cultural Foundation and the ECUMEST Association, and *Culture Forum*, initiated in 2000 by the Romanian Presidency and continued in 2002 under the title *National Cultural Forum* – or initiated by alternative artistic institutions (the International Centre for Contemporary Art-CIAC, the Contemporary Art Archive-aac etc.) The applied analyses of cultural practices and consumption, able to found the cultural policy, had been missing for a long time, with the exception of several researches initiated or realized by IMAS (1999), the Concept Foundation (2000) and ARCULT (2002), while the academic research of cultural policies has only recently drawn attention thanks to the initiatives of the *Policies for Culture* program that put into play the comparative analysis of regional cultural policies and their evaluation in terms of cultural management¹. As far as the problem of the relationships between public authorities and “artistic scene” and its role in the framework of a cultural policy is concerned, the approaches are often fragmentary and limited to random articles in art and cultural magazines

(*Arta*, *Artelier*, *Balkon/Idea*, the Cultural Policies supplements of the *22 magazine*, *Dilema*, *Observatorul cultural*, *Cuvântul*, etc.), while the interdisciplinary enterprises aiming at joining art theory and history with sociology or political sciences are either rare (e.g. Magda Cârneci, *Artele Plastice în România 1945-1989*, Meridiane, 2000) or they do not directly question the principles and justifications of the many modalities of public support for visual arts or their impact on the art world and particularly on the status of the artists. Furthermore, the theoretical enterprises regarding public policies theory and practice (Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Sorin Ioniță, eds., *Politici publice. Teorie și practică*, Polirom, 2002) have, till now, ignored the field of culture and arts.

Therefore, the involvement of the academics in the actual debate concerning public policies is necessary and philosophers should take on the task to reflect on the problems generated by the State’s interventions in the field of culture and artistic creation. These problems have to be rigorously approached in terms of cultural/arts policies, but accordingly to the exigencies of the philosophical reflection and not only in the experts and cultural managers’ technical language – which tends to eliminate any reflection regarding values, seen as “ideological”. Therefore, our analysis will focus not only on the strength or weakness of cultural/arts policies but also on their founding values and legitimising conditions, their dilemmas and contradictions. A *philosophical approach* supposes the interrogation of “certitudes”, a critical reflection on what seems to be beyond any question, as the justification of State intervention in the field of culture or the futility of defining the operating concepts of any cultural policy – “culture”, “art”, “artist”, “creation” etc. For sure, neither the justification of State intervention nor the definitions of these concepts are self-evident or innocent, as the

coherence as well as the legitimacy of a cultural policy are depending on the relationships between the justifications and institutional mechanisms or financial means at issue, and on the meaning (explicitly or implicitly) associated to these founding concepts.

From this perspective, the major questions that arise regard the arguments that justify the State intervention in cultural field: the arguments expressed in terms of national interest and prestige, of socio-economic benefits or of correcting the market “inequities” are they legitimate and sufficient in order to justify the State intervention in the (autonomous) field of culture or is it necessary to appeal to other justifications? Is the “market failure” an useful concept for understanding and explaining the cultural policies and the high degree of governmental intervention in the artistic field? Can public authorities play a (legitimate) role in the process of defining art, the artist and the artistic quality?

In order to respond, we will conduct an *analysis of public discourse*: justifications, finalities of the State intervention in the cultural field, formulated by public authorities or cultural administrators in discourses, debates, strategies and reports of the Ministry of Culture (and Religious Affaires) during the governments 1997-2000, 2001-2004 and that started in 2005 (for the corpus of cultural policy, see the *Bibliography-Sources*.) In other words, we will focus on the *cultural policy* (term employed in the singular form), defined after the French sociologist Philippe Urfalino as “an alliance [*mise en cohérence*] successful, that is socially accepted, of a representation of the role that the State confers to art in order to consolidate or to transform the society, and a set of public measures” proposed for that purpose – and whose main component is of ideological nature². Starting from the idea that the “cultural policy” (as defined) is inseparable from certain values and open to conceptual invention, our approach will try to bring into

light the philosophical, political and aesthetical values that found/legitimise it and shape the relationships between State and artists. It is basically about understanding on what type of conceptions on culture and art is the State intervention in the artistic field grounded and, thus, to determine the ethos of the Romanian cultural policy and to expose the constraints that are still limiting its exercise.

1. Justifications and finalities of the State's intervention in the cultural field.

Our analysis firstly concerns the nature of the arguments used by the State in order to justify its intervention in the cultural field, in other words the answer to the question *why* must culture or artistic creation be an issue of public support: in the name of the national interest or prestige, because of the social and economic benefits that culture can provide, in order to correct the “inequities” of the market or to insure the existence of an autonomous cultural and artistic life? Public authorities do not always explicitly formulate these justifications but they can be deduced from, or depend on the expected *results* or effects of the public aid. Differently put, they depend on the *functions* the State tends to prescribe to culture and art. Furthermore, these expectations become the referential system when evaluating the cultural act and the public action that had supported it.

1.1. A grandiloquent justification: the national interest and prestige.

The ultimate purpose of the public involvement in the cultural field, as revealed by the *langue de bois* of the official discourses and reports, would be “promoting art and culture”, with the international extension of “promoting Romanian cultural and artistic values worldwide”. Such a general discursive formula leaves open the problem of the finality of the public support for culture, that is the problem of roles attributed by the public authorities to culture. Compared with the prior period, we obviously witness, after 1989, a transformation or “normalization” of the mission of culture, which liberates itself from the strongly propagandistic task of being an ideological instrument used to shape “the new man” of the communist era and to construct “the multilateral developed socialist society”. This does not mean that public authorities renounce to expect some results in exchange of financing art and culture, as new functions are now assigned to them, reflecting this time “a new vision of the art and culture’s role in constructing the consumption society”³.

In terms of importance, the first fundamental role assigned to culture is the *identarian* one – “to promote the identity of the society” –, as it is mentioned in a *Common Statement* of the Ministry of Culture and the main unions of cultural creators, released at the closure of the “National Alliance of the Creators’ Unions” (ANUC) annual symposium in November 1998⁴. Viewing culture primordially as “carrier and generator of identity” is a position once more reinforced – under the form of the *national* identity – in the presidential discourse of Ion Iliescu at the National Cultural Forum “The Romanian Culture’s Status and Perspectives at the

Beginning of a New Millennium” (June 2002), which was aiming at defining a national strategy regarding culture as a synthesis of the previous debates within the regional cultural forums: “Culture, as part of our national being, is meant to assert our national identity within the globalized world of the future”⁵. Therefore, the intervention of the Romanian State in supporting culture is mainly founded on a justification formulated in terms of *national interest* – supporting artists, creators as “guarantors of the national cultural identity” – and *prestige*, which is presumably attainable (at international scale) by “Romania’s participation in the international cultural dialogue”, by the “worldwide dignified affirmation” and “imposing the Romanian culture on the international stage”⁶.

Despite the apparent generosity, such a grandiloquent justification in terms of national interest and prestige generates a serious problem, that is the *evaluation*: the results of a policy tending to “promote art and culture” in order to “guaranteeing the national cultural identity” are extremely difficult if not impossible to quantify (quality or quantity? success or failure?), leaving a broad space for arbitrary in the public action: not having to concern themselves with any measurable or accountable effects of their policies, the public authorities are in a position that enables them to manage resources at their will. On the other hand, at the international scale, the actual effects of an imperial type of cultural policy like the one of “imposing (Romanian) culture on the international scene” depend on the allocated resources – there can be visible results where massive institutional and financial resources are involved (the example of France, but there is no lack of surprises here also) –, as well as on the acknowledged capacity of the State institutions to provide cultural legitimacy⁷. Or, both the infinitesimal resources put up by the Romanian

State on this purpose, and the decisional arbitrariness or the lack of transparency with which the former had been administered, cannot else but condemn the public action founded on the national prestige argument and the cultural acts subsumed under this purpose to a limited public impact and irrelevance from the cultural point of view⁸.

Unassuming an exhaustive evaluation of the policy of promoting Romanian culture abroad, even a sketchy analysis of the founding discourse and the review of the cultural actions developed in this aim in the last years can offer us a good suggestion about the character of this policy and about the efficiency of the actions under the sign of “promoting culture and art” in the name of national prestige or interest. The manner in which the public discourse and the 2001 to 2004 reports of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs underline the “promotion of the *image* of Romanian art abroad” [a.e.] and the “art’s festive stakes”⁹, bears witness to the submission of the cultural policy to a rhetoric whose main target is the cultural image. It also exposes its *festive-glorifying, official* character, both through the nature of the cultural supply submissive to the diplomatic rigours rather than to the artistic excellence and through its addressees: the favourite events are “The Days of Romanian Culture”, “The Year of Romania”, “centenarians” or celebrations of scholars and artists, all these under the ministry or presidential patronage, profiting by the presence of the official representatives of the Ministry or of the President of Romania, while the audience is frequently limited to the diplomatic community or Romanian communities, ignoring the large cultural public in those countries; in the mean time, the displaying places are not recognized cultural spaces, but our own (the embassy or Romanian cultural centres headquarters) and those of some official

governmental or international institutions (Ministries of Foreign Affairs, European Council in Strasbourg, European Parliament in Brussels, The Nations Palace in Geneva, etc.) Some examples of actions of promoting Romanian culture are fairly relevant. In 2002, “the most important cultural events” in Germany had been, according to the MCC report, “The Days of Romanian Culture in Bavaria” and “The Festival of the Danube Countries” where “The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs had a remarkable presence” through a delegation which consisted in “craftsmen, Info stand, traditional dishes and shows of *Masca* theatre” under the management of a State secretary. The “Romanian Cultural Year in Sweden”, intended to be “one of the most complex actions of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs”, finalized in February 2003 through an “itinerant tour” considered to be “one of the most appreciated actions of promoting Romania by the State”. Let us consider: “The tour consisted in the official trip of a delegation of artists to Sweden which sustained jazz concerts with folk influences in every Romanian cultural centre or embassy in the western countries the caravan had crossed. In the same time there have been offered CD-s with *Eminescu*, *Brancusi* and *UNESCO*, books, albums, etc. for the Romanian Diaspora. The action culminated [...] with the concert in Geneva, at the UN Palace in the presence of the President of Romania, Mr. Ion Iliescu”. The Project “Romanian Cultural Year in Great Britain” scheduled for 2004, includes as priority, besides a Brancusi exhibition at Tate Modern Gallery (actually organized by the English!), and a painting exhibition (Victor Brauner), sales exhibitions of contemporary vernacular creation, of naïve art, presentations of wines and traditional dishes, folk music shows and fiddlers bands¹⁰. Otherwise, the international presence of Romanian creators “from the craftsman and

folklore singer to [...] famous fine artists” had been programmatically assumed in the official discourse of the minister of culture and religious affairs in the period 2001-2004. All external cultural manifestations like “The Year of Romania” or “The Days of Romanian Culture” in that period lay under the sign of a celebrative patrimonial saga, voluntarily exhaustive but extremely composite, so that the modern or contemporary art exhibitions (group or “centenarian” – Ion Irimescu, Alexandru Ciucurencu, Victor Brauner, etc.) in the Romanian cultural centres or other places more or less known coexist with those of archaeology, history, folk art and handicraft, technical heritage, etc.¹¹

This frenzy of commemoration and celebration which characterizes the cultural policy of Romania not only abroad, but also inside the country, shows that it was intended to be “a machine producing consensus”, i.e. “national culture”, in a country in double search (national and international) of identity¹². But, in fact, as remarked in the ICR case, the cultural supply and, implicitly, “the national identity” proposed as such have been marked by a lack of equilibrium between the traditional-particularistic and modern-synchronic forms of Romanian culture, in the latter’s detriment. On the other hand, the emphatic presence at the “remarkable events” of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs – which had mostly acted not as a mediator, but as a direct producer of culture -, transformed “the promotion of Romanian art and culture abroad” into an approach of status or self-representation, in other words, into a status earning activity of the cultural administrators, rather than of the culture representatives or of the artists themselves.

1.2. A pragmatic justification: the socio-economic benefits of culture funding.

Another role attributed to culture, subsequent to the identitarian one from a chronological point of view as well as from the point of view of its importance, is that of an *instrument* or *parameter of economic and social development*. After 1996, when Romania entered the European Council program of national cultural policies reviews and, then, started the negotiations for accessing the European Union, a (new) European perspective is imposed into the public discourse, according to which “culture is to be regarded not as a consumer of funds, but as a generator of economic sustainable development and social cohesion”¹³. Accordingly, *The Status of Art Creators and Performing Artists in Romania* adopted in 1998, combining the language of the “golden age” with the new jargon of the informational era, recognizes the role of culture in “the processes of social transformation” and assumes “the key role of contemporary artistic creation in the construction of the informational society”¹⁴. This new perspective was nationally consecrated through the *Cultural Strategy* initiated within the framework of a European Union program (PHARE-RO 9709-01) and finalized in 2000 that regarded culture as part of the market-oriented economy. It was also embraced – at a discursive level –, at the National Cultural Forum “The Status and Perspectives of Romanian Culture at the Turn of the Millennium”, held in June 2002. But, in fact, that strategy was to be abandoned, the new forum dedicated to culture under Ion Iliescu, again president of Romania, explicitly aiming at building a new national strategy in the cultural field – “*the renaissance of the national culture*”. In that context, the discourse of president Iliescu reasserted the “economic potential” of culture as

“a mean of general growth of the country”, the fact that culture “is not *only* [a.e.] an unprofitable consumer of resources, but, on the contrary, it can and it should be creator of resources”, and added: “Culture is a superior form of freedom; it should essentially contribute to the progress of the entire society. I want, through this succinct definition, to emphasize the value of culture from the human-social point of view and its impact in *the world of real, practical values* [a.e.] of democracy, including the economic sphere and the construction of a democratic State, of the civic, communitarian spirit”¹⁵. In this case, however, the presence of the restrictive-limitative adverb *only* (“doar”), as well as the implicit separation between culture and “real, practical” values that is noticeable in the president’s discourse, unwillingly translate an opposition between culture and “real” world, rather associated to the old Marxist dialectics of the superstructure and the infrastructure than to the dialectics of the cultural demand and supply in the market-oriented economy.

On this basis, the prestige argument is completed by a *pragmatic justification* of financing culture from public funds, formulated either in terms of impact or *social benefits* – “social cohesion and inclusion”, “struggle against inequalities and discrimination” and “satisfying cultural needs” of the public –, or in terms of *economic benefits*, initially evaluated in general terms as “general growth of the country”, “durable development”, then employing an argument already used in the European discourse but only recently brought into the Romanian discourse in an explicit way, that is the precise economic benefits that the presence of culture could offer to a community: development of cultural tourism, attracting investors, urban economic revitalization etc.¹⁶

Such a justification has the merit of repositioning the cultural act in relationship with the public to which it addresses, the culture in general in relationship with the

social, and of reconciling art and economy, after the rupture provoked by the romanticist and then vanguard artistic ideology. Furthermore, it presupposes as a *sine qua non* condition the evaluation of cultural policies efficiency thus inducing an increased degree of responsibility of the public action. Neither are there missing problems in this case. On the one hand, this is about the overestimation of the possible impact of the cultural act, which can be followed by deception even in the cases of massive allocated financial resources. This could lead in the end to the questioning of the public support for culture itself. Once again, France’s case is relevant: not only have philosophers who quibble been very sceptical towards the capacity of art and culture to ensure “social cohesion and inclusion” and to eliminate inequalities, but also classical researches of sociology of culture have contested such claims¹⁷. That is why, the public authorities’ expectations should be properly calibrated, and the effect of the cultural act should be pursued at the micro-social level rather than globally¹⁸. On the other hand, the pragmatic justification of culture funding in terms of socio-economical benefits involves the risks of generating an administrative-bureaucratic vision over the artistic creation and of instrumentalizing art, as public authorities would tend to confound it with the “cultural animation”, and the artists with the “cultural animators”. This is proved by a strong affirmation made by an important cultural administrator (actually only at a regional level) at the first edition of the Debates market “Why and how should culture be funded? In Romania” (February 2005), according to which “the artists need to understand they only exist in order to satisfy the public needs”¹⁹. Without making further considerations on this statement, we need to say that the categories of *animation culturelle* and *animateur culturel* had appeared in France not to replace those of “art” or “artist” and the correspondent

practices and professions, but to manage a surplus of “creativity” postulatores, also turned up as an effect of cultural policies centred on the budgetary and administrative interventions of a State waiting for the social benefits of culture funding!

Underneath this pragmatic-instrumental vision, one question stands still: what (else) can justify the public support for culture and artistic creation, if we cease to consider the idea of a social impact of the arts obvious?

1.3. An ideological justification of the State intervention: correcting the market „inequities”.

The first episode of the project of the Debates market “Why and how should culture be funded? In Romania” launched by the ECUMEST Association at the end of February 2005²⁰, occasioned an interesting official discourse trying to justify the public action supporting culture, which should be considered. As an answer to the challenge issued by the moderator of the debate – Corina Şuteu, who was wondering if, in the currently context of globalisation, Romania was or not in the situation of following the European tendency of “less-State” in supporting culture – the State minister coordinator of the domains of culture, education and European integration (and a writer, on the other hand), Marko Béla, proposed another argument of the State intervention in the cultural domain: “The State should support culture, creators, because culture should not be considered a ‘product’ in the market conditions”, adding that “it would be a mistake to believe that we could submit culture to the market conditions”²¹.

If the idea according to which the Romanian State should continue to financially support creators is

acceptable, considering their precarious social condition and the actual state of culture, its justification – which goes back on the thesis according to which *the freedom of creation, as well as the access to culture, are facilitated by the existence of a public space insubordinated to the market laws*, namely exempted from risk and competition – imposes serious reserves. It is true that such an ideological presupposition is quite largely spread. We find it in the review of the Romanian cultural policy accomplished by an European group of experts during a programme of the European Council²², as it has for a long time fostered the cultural policy of the Welfare-State in France: along the successive surveys of the French Ministry of Culture “there appear as mutual objectives of governing the arts not only the consolidation of the conditions of artistic production and distribution, but also - symbolically - the solidary taming of the market pressures on the creation and the minimizing of the obstacles towards democratisation”²³. Or, if the aim of the public action in favour of the artistic creation is to assure the economical-financial conditions for its surviving – on which it is added, as previously stated, “the promotion of the (Romanian) culture on the international scene” –, then such a justification like the one mentioned above risks at producing effects contrary to those in view.

Two arguments can be counter-positioned against the justification of State intervention in terms of correcting the market “inequities”. On the one hand, our communist past not very far off (whose consequences we all know) shows that the price paid by the Eastern artists for the “liberation” from the private capital’s guardianship and for avoiding the risks of the free profit culture was their submission to a bureaucratic system (through the agency of the unions of creation, totally dependent on State), or, in some cases, their subordination to the State-Party and their transformation

into “artists of the State”, either “officials”-engaged or passive, with the mentality of assisted persons²⁴. Or the purpose of the actual cultural policy is not and cannot be the bureaucratisation of the artistic life and the reproduction of the former “artist of the State”, or the production, instead, of the “socially assisted” artists. This objection deserves to be kept in mind, so much more as, on the other hand, the State interventionism and the protectionist system thus created can provoke distortions in the art world even in a democratic system, as proved by the French experience of the last decades. As the analysis of the sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger demonstrates, the cultural policy of the Welfare-State debouched in the control of some assisted segments of the artistic market, quite protected domains in which the logic of the State’s cultural voluntarism involved the blowing up of the population of candidates to artistic profession and of the number of institutions with cultural aims, as well as of the assisted artistic production (the “official” art), and finally led to an overpopulation and artistic overproduction crisis²⁵. Other researches on this topic, conducted by Raymonde Moulin in terms of the sociology of art, also prove that the conjugated effects (even though undesired) of the concern of compensating the “market failure” consisted in modifying the organization system of the artistic life and the modalities of the artistic recognition and in promoting an art indifferent to the public taste, but which was imposed as a dominant aesthetic paradigm²⁶. More, as the recent report of another French art sociologist attests, the attempt of decoupling the contemporary French art from the art market system drove to a failure of the initially proposed purpose, that of propelling it in the foreground of the art worlds (and this in spite of the huge amounts of allocated public funds) – fact proven by the weak positioning of the French contemporary artists in comparison with the

American, German, English or Italian artists, both in the international classifications of the great artistic institutions and in the international art market²⁷.

1.4. An a priori justification: culture as source of human progress.

An argument of a nature different from the previous ones had been formulated in the debates on cultural policy in France, outlining a justification of the public action in favour of creation which depends, in a certain manner, on evidence: art, culture are promises of human accomplishment, they participate in what favours the conception of a better life²⁸. In the public discourse in Romania, a similar argument is bound to the role attributed to culture or cultural creativity as “essential source of human progress” and “improvement of the quality of life” (on which is added, in more instrumental terms, the culture’s “educating-intellectual mission”, on which the MCC report in 2002, for example, insists)²⁹. The merit of such a justification is based on its gratuitous or humanitarian character: in this case we do not deal with a sponsor-State, which expects determined services or benefits in exchange for its financial intervention in favour of the artistic creation, but with a generous *maecenas*-State³⁰. Nor is this *a priori* justification non-problematic.

As Ph.Urfalino remarks in the *Postface* (2004) of his book *L’Invention de la politique culturelle*, the pertinence of the observation according to which art and culture participate in what favours a better life tends to become uncertain, as nowadays it gets to be more and more difficult to fix indisputable referents for the words “culture” and “art”. Therefore, the dispute over the contemporary art in France re-imposed in the debate

“the philistine’s question”, already invoked by Tolstoy: “Is it true that this is art and that art is as important as we could make such sacrifices for it?”³¹ Setting out, another question should necessarily be asked: in this case, what can still justify the intervention of the public authorities in the artistic field, in order to support art and artists? In the actual ideological conditions, fixed by Ph.Urfalino³² in the formula *l’après-politique culturelle* – that is the double exhaustion of both State and intellectual’s sacredness, and the end of a philosophy of history, of the cult of art, which founded the heroic cultural policy *à la française* –, there remains a less exalting justification of the public action of supporting the artistic creation: the very existence of an autonomous artistic life. And this action should have as a directing line the ensuring of the artistic life’s economic pre-conditions.

We can add to all of these the observation that a responsible public policy in the artistic field cannot ignore *the actual status of the artist*. As Pierre-Michel Menger observes in his excellent book *Portrait de l’artiste en travailleur* (2002), the artists, beside scientists, seem to be nowadays at the hard core of a “creative class” or of an advanced social group, “the manipulators of symbols”, at the vanguard of the transformation of high qualified professions, and the cardinal values of the artistic competence – imagination, play, improvisation, behavioural atypicality, even creative anarchy – are regularly transposed in different productive worlds³³. That is why, if a final justification of the public support for the arts and artists should be found, we believe that this can derive neither from the concern of sparing them from the competition risks and the market “inequities” nor from their (presumed) capacity of producing “social cohesion”, of eliminating the social inequalities or their passive answer to predetermined “cultural needs”, but from that what

fundamentally defines them: innovating capacity, originality, non-conformism, even “creative anarchy” – that the society itself needs. Artist or creators in general should be considered neither as “socially assisted” nor as “social assistants” or “cultural animators”, but as the innovative, imaginative core without which the society itself would be poorer.

2. The founding values of the cultural policy: representations of culture and art in the public discourse in Romania.

If the idea stating that culture and art must be publicly supported is undeniable, the legitimate question that still arises is: *which culture, which art?* This question proves the importance of defining the terms with which any type of cultural policy operates: “culture”, “art”, “artist” etc. Another question immediately arises: *who* must define them – the State through the Ministry of Culture, the artistic institutions, the artists themselves or the public? It has also been observed that in the public documents from Romania, there does not exist a national definition (*i.e.* unanimously accepted) of culture and art, that can be a unique methodological instrument³⁴, but one has to immediately add that the public authorities are not the ones who are called to explicitly formulate it. If the artistic institutions, the theoreticians, the critics, the artists and their public can be legitimately subjected to the exigency of answering “the philistine’s questions”, the State cannot be subjected to this exigency: as Ph.Urfalino puts it, the State cannot act and think but on a large scale, which means in a *neutral* way, trying to avoid the excesses. However, both the public discourse – the formulated policy and strategies, the roles attributed

to art and culture – and the actions and institutional structure of the Ministry of Culture translate a certain (implicit) vision of the cultural administrators on art and culture. This is why by analysing the public discourse we can bring at light the representations of art and culture that found the different cultural policies, and their axiological options.

2.1. Culture as identity, heritage and literature.

In what follows, we shall try to determine firstly the nature of visions on culture, that underlie the cultural policies in Romania in the period 1997-2005, and also the tensions between different competing visions, starting from the attributed roles to culture and from the terms – cultural-individuals or national-collectives – in which it is understood.

An identarian vision on culture: from “cultural identity” to “national identity”. The occurrences of the term “culture” in the cultural policy discourse constantly translate the pre-eminence of an *identarian vision* on culture, understood as a “carrier and generator of identity”, although this identity is not defined the same in the successive governments in Romania (1997-2000, 2001-2004, 2005-). However, such a vision and the dilemmas of identity are not specific for the Romanian cultural space, but are widely spread in the European space, especially in the Eastern countries where, as Corina Șuteu observes, after the fall of communism the attempts of regaining the traditional values or the modern occidental ones have taken the form either of a violent „identarian revendication” or of a „quick fix internationalization”³⁵. This is why, the problem which is firstly put, in our case, is to determine the constitutive elements of this identity and implicit of culture: are

these just the *memory* and the *traces of the past* – the heritage, the traditional and vernacular culture – or/and the *contemporary creation*? Another question concerns the nature of the identity that culture confers: is it conceived in the first place in individual-cultural terms or in national-collective terms?

A first observation that has to be made is that the attributes “national” or “Romanian” attached to the term “culture” do not have a unique meaning in the analyzed period. The meaning of the term “Romanian culture” or “national culture” enters an axis that goes from a neutral pole (the simple territoriality), designating the culture produced on Romania’s territory³⁶, up to a strong pole, an identarian one, but which stands either for a “cultural identity” of the individual or for a collective “national identity”, which is sometimes understood (in a “nationalist” manner) as a national specific in opposition to the international one. Consequently, in the public discourse and in the cultural policy there still subsists the ancient ideological conflict between (national) tradition and modernity, as well as a tension or even an opposition, to the extremes, between a vision on culture which is rather utilitarian-individualistic (centred on the individual) and another one “nationalist”-collectivist (centred on “the national being”).

Thus, between 1997-2000 (the CDR-PD-UDMR government), the preoccupation for the “national culture” is considered by the cultural administrators a false problem: as it is affirmed in the evaluation report for the cultural policy, elaborated by the Romanian experts, “the cultural identity” supposes other frames than the frontiers and the criteria of the nation; consequently, the specificity of the Romanian culture is equivalent to what Nicolae Iorga had already designed as “the Romanian synthesis”³⁷. The strategy of the Ministry of Culture from this period has an utilitarian-

individualistic tint, putting along the social development and the individual one – which is understood as the intensification of the “cultural creativity”, for the “improvement of the life quality for all the members of the society” –, and emphasizing the individual and the participation: “The Ministry of Culture grants priority to the fundamental right of each individual to the access and the participation to the cultural life and to the improvement of the life quality.”³⁸

Differently from that vision, the policy and strategy of the Ministry of Culture in the period 2001-2004 (PDSR/ PSD government) are explicitly set under the sign of the *national culture renaissance*, although there is an appeal to the “understanding of culture in the modern way as a development instrument which contributes to the raise of the general level of the life quality”. The accent is set on the “national dimension of culture”, on the “national identity” and on the “cultural heritage”, a priority being the strategy of stimulating the vernacular creation and protecting the traditional culture – as signs of communitarian identity. But this prior objective, formulated in heroic terms, actually hides a reaction of a national re-alignment in opposition to what, in the previous governance, had seemed an international opening, now qualified as a “national and international manifestation of some tendencies for minimizing the importance of the national identity”³⁹. Significantly for the horizon of the ones who administrated national culture in that period, settling the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affaires in the Village Museum is symbolically assumed as an “arrival to the core (“matca”) of the rural and originating (“aurorale”) civilization of the Romanians”⁴⁰. Similarly, in the discourse of president Iliescu at the National Cultural Forum in 2002, after resuming the thesis according to which “culture, as part of our national being, is meant to assert our national

identity within the globalized world of the future”, postulated that this identity would be generated especially by the “Romanian village [which] has always been the keeper of traditions, of the heritage of spiritual creation and of the national identity”.

Certainly, the identarian vision on culture is not to be blamed in itself. Nevertheless one should observe that an extension of the notion “national culture” that especially covers the traces of the past – heritage, vernacular and traditional culture –, risks to induce a tension between the *vernacular-traditional* and the *high-contemporary* forms of culture or even to disrupt the cultural landscape, the heritage and the contemporary creation, the handicraft and the cultural industries or the media culture, arriving at the point when they are opposite as the *genuine-native* and the *unauthentic-foreign*. On the other hand, the approach of the national culture in identarian-collective terms, just as in president Iliescu’s discourse at the *National Cultural Forum*, risks to revive a passé, outdated vision on culture, with idyllic and nationalist tints⁴¹. Besides, in the same frame, even the Prime Minister Adrian Năstase had warned that such a discourse can easily give up the temptation of a “certain sentimentalism lightly idyllist (*semănătorist*)”, and also implies the “risk of slipping in a nationalist paradigm of culture, a temptation which is often hard tried in the history of Romanian culture”⁴².

A patrimonial vision on culture: preserving the heritage versus supporting the creation. Besides the identarian vision and in tight connection to it, the principles, policies and strategies formulated by the Ministry of Culture (and Religious Affaires), as well as the budget structure and its actions, all stand as a witness for a predominantly *patrimonial vision* on culture, translated through the pre-eminence of the preservation of national heritage – understood as a factor of identity

and of historic legitimacy – on supporting the contemporary creation or “living culture”. We find this vision especially between the years 1992-1996 and 2001-2004 of the PDSR/PSD government (presumably social-democrat), but it actually transcends the political and ideological cleavages of “right” - “left” type.

Although, at the level of the cultural policy principles, the cultural administration in the period 1997-2000 had proclaimed the necessity of maintaining a balance between different elements of the cultural life – like creativity and heritage –, a marked discrepancy is *de facto* manifested. There stands witness the evolution of the budget of the Ministry of Culture, more exactly the weight of expenditures regarding the heritage: in 1996-1998, for protecting the heritage there was allocated the third part of the budget, representing a massive increase, 20 times more, in comparison to the previous years.⁴³ During the 2001-2004 governance, the function of funding culture was to be explicitly subordinated to the patrimonial function of the ministry, and as proclaimed priorities there were the heritage, the written culture, the institutions of spectacle and the churches. The “heritage priority” was translated both through the cultural policies and strategies, and also through the structure of the ministry, which was reorganized in 2001 as The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs: The Visual Arts Direction (founded in 1996) was to be merged with the Museum and Collections Direction, among a General Direction of the Heritage, the works were redefined as “mobile cultural heritage”, and the programmes for exhibition and acquisition of the works of art were set under the sign of the valorisation of heritage, within a National Programme for the Valorisation of Cultural Heritage⁴⁴. The fact that the acquisitions of contemporary fine art works and of public monuments in 2003 (in amount of

32 billions ROL, representing 52% of the total amount of the acquisitions at the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs) have as stated purpose “to endow the central administration”(!), is highly significant not only for the patrimonial vision which underlies the cultural policy during this period, but also for its orientation towards the self-promotion of the cultural bureaucracy. Similarly, the strategy project in the visual art area in 2004, mentions as priorities “to support and to promote the national events”, and the acquisition of valuable works of art in order to “*complete* [a.e.] the national heritage”, while the support of the contemporary creation disappears as a (explicitly) cultural policy objective. At the same time, in order to accomplish these strategic objectives, the budget project for 2004 foresaw an allocation of 10 billions ROL (only) for the “acquisition of *contemporary art* works with the aim of developing the heritage of the national and local institutions from this category”, while 30 billion ROL were generously allocated for the “application of the legal regulation for the protection and the assurance of the mobile national heritage within the *Thesaurus* category”⁴⁵.

The attention for the cultural heritage and its protection is, undoubtedly, a legitimate option of a society, in our case being urgently imposed because of its pronounced degradation and neglect in the communist period and even in the post-communist period. The problematic or disputable character of this cultural policy option is about, on one hand, the lack of transparency of decisions and financing and especially of their current inefficiency, signalled by all the successive evaluations made by the press or by the officials of the ministry themselves. But, on the other hand, one can formulate even a principle objection regarding the “heritage priority” within the general objectives of a cultural policy: in terms of cultural policy, a fundamental

direction should not be privileged in comparison to others, neither on the political plan, nor on the financial resources plan, but, as recommended by the report of the European experts group, they should be maintained in equilibrium⁴⁶.

A limited vision on culture: the pre-eminence of the *writing* on the *visual*. Another consideration which can be made concerning the public discourse in Romania, is that it constantly translates, in the entire period, a limited vision on culture, in the sense that the *writing* / *book* has always enjoyed an overwhelming pre-eminence in comparison to the other forms of cultural expression, especially the *visual* ones – fine arts and also dance (but not the theatre which has a written support). Thus, the access to culture is defined as “access to book, to education”, by this distinguishing, again restrictively, especially the literary forms (educational-canonical)⁴⁷.

Such a representation of culture does not miss practical implications in what concerns the modalities and mechanisms of the public support for culture. Due to this dominant vision, the written culture has special and exclusive programmes - *State subsidies* or *commissions* for editing books and magazines (especially literary), acquisitions for libraries etc. Between 2001-2004, for example, the funds for the visual arts represented only 2% from the total funding for cultural actions, while this financing had in its turn only 17-20% from the total expenditures of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs. The discrimination against the visual, but in favour of the writing, and the ignorance of the real interest of the public, are more flagrant, if we compare the level of financing allocated to visual arts with the weight that the programmes in this area detained within the thematic programmes of the ministry and the County Directions for Culture (constantly situated within 11.2%-11.8% from the whole cultural programmes), as well as with the public's

expectations: on a scale from 1 (minimum) to 10 (maximum), the public's interest for the supply of representative cultural products within the county, is situated at 8 for the visual arts and at 7.78 for literature (average national grade)⁴⁸.

One can explain this vision or cultural policy option through the historic motives of the pre-eminence of the writer's figure in the Romanian culture, but can not justify it, because of the patent disproportion between the different areas of culture as the writing and the visual. Or, in the European space, we find today a larger and more balanced vision on culture, even if we were to refer just to the known examples grace to the action of the different cultural centres (French, German, English etc.) in Romania. The paradox of a limited vision of culture, like the one dominant in the Romanian cultural space, or what is to be accused in what concerns the orientation of the cultural policy mainly towards the written culture and the book production (but through bureaucratic mechanisms of the “State aid” type), is the evident lack of result at the cultural practices level or the cultural consumption of the Romanians: in spite of this orientation of the cultural policy, we are witnessing the constant decrease of the number of readers and not only of the number of spectators in theatres, museums or exhibitions⁴⁹.

2.2. Art: between traditional and contemporary, professional and amateur.

The public discourses or the reports on cultural policy do not explicitly offer (with one exception) a definition for the concept of “art” they use. Nevertheless, even a short review of the reports and the official discourses can offer us sufficient clues to outline the

prevalent vision, generally accepted, on visual arts, but which is not exempted of ambiguities or contradictions, of tensions or even ruptures.

Up to recently the public space in Romania was dominated by a *traditionalist conception on art*, seen as an activity separated from the society, which made the designed cultural strategies and policies to neglect the connection of art to other sectors of the social action and also the connection of the art with the public, and to limit themselves to its traditional areas or forms⁵⁰. An exception to this restrictive policy (but in a reversed sort of way) can be observed between 1997-2000, when the newly founded Direction of Visual Arts within the Ministry of Culture assumed the sustaining and promoting mainly of the “professional”, “contemporary visual discourse”⁵¹, but in the conditions of limited financial resources and with the lack of some institutional structures of exposing and consecrating the contemporary art (until the inauguration of the National Museum of Contemporary Art in October 2004, in Romania did not exist but a specialized Museum of Contemporary Art, in Galați). This strategy of supporting the contemporary creation, that aspires to “a redefinition of the national identity by pertaining to the actual occidental time”), was to be gradually marginalized and then abandoned with the coming back of the PDSR/PDS government at the end of 2000 and with the reforming of the cultural policy under the sign of the major desiderate of the “renaissance of the national culture”. But the way in which it was understood the “national culture” in that period, as seen above, only re-induct the ancient tension between *professional* and *amateur* (exploited before by the communist regime), moreover that the presidential discourse from the National Cultural Forum (2002) understands, by the assurance of the “access to culture”, rather the promotion of the “mass culture”, vernacular-amateur, while the area of the

visual arts is the only area in the invoked cultural ones, where the “peasant-creators” (*creatorii populari*) are mentioned aside and equal with the professional artists, as the “inexhaustible spring of the Romanian creativity”⁵².

On the other hand, when art is preponderantly defined in terms of *high culture*, they are coloured in different nuances, that go from multimedia to art works as “social laboratory”, but excluding this time the traditional media or forms. For example, the theoretical considerations from the *Cultural Policies and Strategies 1997-2000* report, on what contemporary art/creation is, define it as: “a cultural production where ‘the artistic object’ [...] eludes from form, becoming a contemporary language of communication, that appears on the basis of the passing from an art using traditional techniques, to an art that assumes high technologies”, and which “integrates the social and the political in its aim”⁵³. Accordingly, the Visual Art Direction states the priorities of its 2000-2001 strategy for supporting the contemporary creation as it follows: “*Financing conditions*. The initiatives of national interest are considered top priorities if they promote: original creation, creation with a contemporary perspective which rule out the neo-realist-socialist perspective and the obsolete academic perspective”. In what the selection and promotion principles are concerned, the prevalent ethos, necessarily implied by a definition of art in the high culture terms, is the *principle of excellence*. Nevertheless, besides the artistic quality criterion (“originality of the artistic work”), the *positive discrimination* also takes a place, in favour of some non-artistic categories, among the criteria for selecting the financed projects being the “participation of artists representing national minorities” and the “participation of female artists in the project”⁵⁴. Thus, in the “high”-“professional” art itself, a tension appears between the

traditional media or forms and the proclaimed contemporary ones, as the “creation with a contemporary perspective” is opposed not only to the “socialist-realism” and to the “academic” art, but (considering the assumed definition of contemporary art) also to the “modern tradition”, while at the level of selection and promotion principles there is a tension between the artistic criterion (the intrinsic value of art) and the social ones (belongingness to a national minority or a gender category).

Therefore, there are reasons to state that during the period 1997-2005 we are dealing with an art policy predominantly interventionist, but which oscillates in favour of one or other type of artistic practices, either the traditional ones (vernacular or “high”) or the vanguard-contemporary ones. This attitude of divergent, conflicting axiological involvement seems to be a constant trait of Romanian cultural policy: the new government PNL-PD-UDMR-PC, settled at the end of 2004, still hesitates between an interventionist policy and a neutral attitude, the strategic objectives of cultural policy oscillating between “favouring the new forms of expression and cultural practices”, as it is stated in the Governance program, and “maintaining an equilibrium between tradition and innovation”, as is stated in the strategy of the Ministry of Culture, afterwards presented in the Parliament by Mona Muscă, the (liberal) minister of culture⁵⁵.

Conclusions.

The analysis of the public discourse that accompanies the cultural policy reveals, on one hand, that the Romanian State has justified its intervention in the cultural field through different arguments – grandiloquent, pragmatic, ideological and *a priori* –, but

all of them connected to different roles attributed to culture and art: promoting the cultural or national identity, instrument of economic and social development, source of the human progress. Thus, the idea of culture as “carrier and generator of national identity” has been, especially between 2001-2004, at the basis of a grandiloquent justification for the “promotion of Romanian art and culture”, in terms of national interest and prestige. However, in comparison to its effects, this policy has quickly revealed its limits and endemic inefficiency. The commemorative and celebration frenzy, that characterizes the cultural policy set under this sign both on external and on internal directions, shows that this was wanted to be a “machine for producing consensus”, *i.e.* “national culture”. Actually, the cultural supply and implicitly the “national identity” thus proposed were conflicting, marked by a profound dis-equilibrium between the traditional-particularistic and modern-synchronic forms of culture, that reveals the remanence of the ancient conflict between social values such as conservatism, authoritarianism, equalitarianism, and the values of modernity. Moreover, the emphatic presence of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs – which acted rather as a direct producer of culture, not as a mediator – has transformed the public action of “promoting Romanian culture and art” into an approach of status or self-representation, in other words, a status earning activity of the cultural administrators, rather than of the artists themselves.

Starting from the role of culture as an “instrument of the economic and social development”, to the argument of prestige was added a justification of the public support for culture formulated in terms of socio-economical benefits: “social cohesion and inclusion”, “satisfying the cultural needs of the public”, “general growth of the country” or “durable development”. This

pragmatic justification is not exempted of risks either, just as the overestimation of the social impact of the cultural act, followed by deceptions that can lead to questioning the public support itself in favour of culture, or the instrumentalization of art, public authorities tending to confound it with the “cultural animation”, and the artists with the “cultural animators”. Similarly, the ideological justification of the State’s intervention in the cultural field, formulated in terms of correcting the “inequities” of the market, risks also to produce contrary effects to the expected ones, such as the bureaucratisation of the artistic life and the reproduction of the former “artist of the State” or the production, instead, of “socially assisted” artists, and the creation of a protectionist system that can provoke distortions in the art world even in a democratic State, as the European experience has proved. Or the artists should not be seen neither as “socially assisted” nor as “social assistants” or “cultural animators”, but as that innovative, imaginative core without which the society itself would be poorer. This is why, a final justification of the public support for arts and artists can derive neither from the care of sparing them from the competition risks and the market “inequities” nor from their presumed capacity of producing “social cohesion” and eliminating the social inequalities, or their passive response to predetermined “cultural needs”, but exactly from what fundamentally defines them: innovating capacity, originality, non-conformism, even the “creative anarchy” – that the society itself needs. In the currently ideological conditions, fixed by Ph.Urfalino in the formula *l’après politique culturelle*, there remains a simpler and less exalting justification of the public action in favour of the artistic creation: *the very existence of an autonomous artistic life*. And this action should have as a directing line the ensuring of the economical pre-conditions of the artistic life. In the last analysis, the public support for

the artists cannot aim but for the safeguarding and the development of the pre-conditions, of the economical basis necessary for creating art freely.

On the other hand, the analysis of founding values of the cultural policy or of the prevalent representations of culture and art in the public space in Romania, has proven that the public action in the cultural field is submitted to some *constraints* that are not only of historical nature – the centralized tradition or even the totalitarian one in the case of the communist State (from where some ideological anti-market presupposition survive) – or economical (the insufficiency of the financial resources), but also of *conceptual order*. Thus, when the extension of the “national culture/identity” notions cover especially the traces of the past – heritage, vernacular and traditional culture –, the public policy founded on an identarian-collectivist vision on culture risks to induce a tension between the vernacular-traditional and the high-contemporary forms of culture, or even to break the cultural landscape into “genuine”-native and “unauthentic”-foreign figures of culture. At the same time, when the public policy is underlie by a patrimonial vision on culture, in the sense of a principled primacy of preserving the heritage over sustaining the “living culture” or contemporary creation, “the heritage priority” becomes a problematic, disputable option, moreover that it is accompanied by the lack of transparency of the decisions and public financing, and especially by a patent inefficiency. Lastly, a public policy founded on a limited vision on culture, understood especially as “written culture”, and then preponderantly orientated towards supporting the books production through bureaucratic methods (government subsidies and commissions), leads to favouring writing in comparison to other forms of cultural expression, especially the visual ones, but without noticeable results at the level of dynamics of

cultural consumption and practices of the public, because ignoring its real interest. In what art policy is concerned, the traditionalist conception of art that has been dominating up to recently the public space and discourse, according to which art seemed as an activity separated from society, leads to neglecting for a long time the connections of art with other sectors of social activities or with the public, and to limit itself to the areas or traditional forms of art. Such a representation of art, in connection with the predominant manner of understanding the “national culture”, has done nothing but to resettle the ancient tension between professionals and amateurs and to induce new tensions into the “high”-“professional” art itself, between the traditional and contemporary forms, the “creation with a contemporary perspective” being opposed not only to the “socialist realism” and the “academic art” but also to the “modern tradition”. Or, in order to reach its objectives, a responsible cultural policy has to overpass these limitations or *partis-pris* and to take into account the diversity of the cultural expression forms, the plurality of actors involved in artistic activities, particularly the different types of artists, the plurality of the artistic practices – traditional, modern, “contemporary” – which are competing one with each other, as well as the considerable mutations related to the emerging cultural industries.

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¹ Policies for Culture on line Journal, October 2001: Cultural Policy in Romania; November 2002: Advocating for Culture in SEE; Winter 2003: Artists in SEE Cultural Policy Making; Insight. A Policies for Culture Analysis and Opinion Reporter, no.3/December 2004: Cultural Policy Research in the countries of South East Europe – setbacks and prospects, <http://www.policiesforculture.org>.

² Philippe URFALINO, *L'invention de la politique culturelle*, deuxième édition, Paris, Hachette, 2004, pp.385-386.

³ Ion CARAMITRU, „Cuvânt înainte” [Foreword], *Politici și strategii culturale 1997-2000* [Cultural policies and strategies], Institutul de Memorie Culturală cIMeC, Bucharest, 2000, p.5. As an example of the langue de bois in which the official discourse states the roles of art and culture, see the report of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs (MCC), *Cultura și cultele 2002. Evaluări, perspective, strategii* [Culture and Religious Affairs 2002. Evaluations, perspectives, strategies], Bucharest, 2002, p.13.

⁴ Statutul creatorilor de artă și artiștilor interpreți în România. Declarație comună, [The Status of Art Creators and Performing Artists. Common Statement], Bucharest, Ministry of Culture and ANUC, 1998, p.5: „We, the undersigned, recognize the following principles: 1. Cultural creativity is an essential source of human progress. Cultural policies have to recognize the essential contribution of art creators and of performing artists to the improvement of the quality of life, and to promoting the identity and the cultural development of the society.”

⁵ Forumul Cultural Național [National Cultural Forum]: „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu”, pp.1,4, Bucharest, June 19th, 2002, <http://www.presidency.ro/discursuri/2002/mes-020619-ForumCult-Buc.htm>.

⁶ See „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu”, pp.2-3.

⁷ As a study on arts policy in Finland and Norway puts it, “the transformation of money into recognition is not possible if the criteria for distributing the financial support are based on economic and social considerations and not solely on artistic quality”. Merja HEIKKINEN, „Artist Policy in Finland and Norway. Considerations for comparing direct support for artists”, ICCPR Bergen, Norway, 1999, p.20.

⁸ A recent evaluation of the activity in the last few years (2003-2004) at the Romanian Cultural Institute (ICR), former Romanian Cultural Foundation, confirms this diagnostic: „Promovarea în străinătate a culturii române a însemnat, în anii din urmă, transferul patologiei instituționale și procedurale a sistemului public din România. Centrele (institutele) culturale românești din străinătate au fost doar ecoul servil al deficiențelor administrației culturale și, într-o oarecare măsură, ale corpului diplomatic post-comunist: lipsa de orizont strategic, politizarea sau personalizarea funcției publice, deruta axiologică, slăbiciunea pentru viziunile particulariste și închise ale culturii naționale, capacitatea limitată de comunicare și relaționare, recrutarea arbitrară a personalului, opacitatea la inițiativa privată, competența managerială echivocă sau simulată. Circulația ideilor, valorilor, a artefactelor sensibilității românești mai este încă blocată într-un ambuteiaj cronic, iar succesele externe nu sunt rezultatul unor politici cursive dublate de acțiuni eficiente, ci se datorează mai curând abnegației private sau accidentului.” *Strategia Institutului Cultural Român pentru perioada 2005-2008*, p.1, <http://www.icr.ro>, accesat 18.08.2005.

⁹ See the report of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, *Cultura și cultele 2003. Evaluări, proiecte, strategii*, p.92.

¹⁰ Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, Report 2003-2004, point F, „Îmbunătățirea imaginii Ministerului. Relații publice”, pp.9-10 (www.ministerul-culturii.ro, accessed 15.12.2004). See also the MCC reports: *Cultura și cultele 2001*, sections „Relații bilaterale”, pp.23-24, „Centrele culturale românești în străinătate”, p.25; *Cultura și cultele 2002. Evaluări, proiecte, strategii*, „Relații bilaterale”, pp.19-21,34 (Sweden), 21 (Germany); *Cultura și cultele 2003. Evaluări, proiecte, strategii*, „Cuvânt înainte de Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu, Ministrul Culturii și Cultelor”, pp.5-6, and „Relații culturale internaționale”, pp.15-19, 44, „Principalele politici și strategii în domeniul culturii în anul 2004”, pp.84-85. See also

Strategia Institutului Cultural Român pentru perioada 2005-2008, p.2.

¹¹ Răzvan THEODORESCU, "Cuvânt înainte", *Cultura și cultele* 2002. Evaluări, proiecte, strategii, p.6; see also *Cultura și cultele* 2001, section „Punerea în valoare a patrimoniului cultural național”, pp.52-53, 58-59.

¹² We have to observe that such an identarian tactic is not specific to Romania but largely employed in other countries, such as France for example. See Emmanuel de WARESQUIEL (dir.), *Dictionnaire des politiques culturelles de la France depuis 1959*, Paris, CNRS/Larousse, 2001, art. „Commémorations”, pp.141-142.

¹³ Ministry of Culture, *Politici și strategii culturale 1997-2000*, „Introducere”, p.7. This formula is taken over as such from the Cultural strategy elaborated in the framework of the PHARE project financed by the European Union: „3. Mission statement. 3.1 Romania, taking as a starting point in heritage, traditions and cultural contributions from all social and ethnic groups as well as its infrastructure and monuments, will develop and support cultural life and creators of art and culture focusing in joining the EU in the context of a democratic and open society geared to a market-oriented economy. For this reason, culture is to be regarded not as a consumer of funds, but as a generator of economic sustainable development and social cohesion.” Cultural strategy. Final report Project RO9709-01, February 2000, p.6, <http://www.eurocult.ro/politici/prezentare.htm>.

¹⁴ Statutul creatorilor de artă și artiștilor interpreți în România. Declarație comună, pp.9-10.

¹⁵ „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu, la Forumul Cultural Național”, pp.2-3. The abandoning, after the general elections in November 2000, of the Cultural Strategy elaborated in the framework of the PHARE project (despite that it was finalized by a symposium at Cotroceni Palace in spring 2000), was followed by a change of accent of cultural policy on the identarian dimension of culture. We will approach again this topic below. On this issue, see also „Proiectul cultural RO 9709-01. O strategie culturală plătită și abandonată”, *Cuvântul*, no. 2, February 2005.

¹⁶ The pragmatic, socio-economic, justification of the public support for culture is re-installed in the foreground of the cultural policy after the general elections in December 2004, in the D.A. Alliance government. See *Programul de Guvernare. Capitolul 22 - Politica în domeniul culturii* [The Governance Program. Chapter 22- Policy in the field of culture], <http://www.gov.ro/obiective/afis-docdiverse-pg.php?iddoc=266> (accesat 9.03. 2005) and *Planul Național de Dezvoltare a României. Participarea sectorului culturii*

la dezvoltarea pe termen lung a României, Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, Bucharest, March 2005. This type of arguments was already formulated in the Report of an European group of experts (1999), where it is stated that, “apart from purely cultural considerations, there are three reasons to invest in culture. The first is the economy: culture is a factor in growth and job-creation, and investing in culture means investing in economy. The second is democracy: culture is part of the social ‘cement’ that binds people together, promoting dialogue between different groups and helping to develop an independent, active civil society. The third reason is Europe. A number of Romanian political figures emphasised their country’s wish to belong to Europe and stressed the importance of culture as a ‘passport’ in this connection. This implies making the necessary budgetary effort.” Cultural policy in Romania. Report of an European group of experts (compiled by Jacques RENARD), European Programme of National Cultural Policy Reviews, Council of Europe, CC-Cult (99)33B, Strasbourg, October 1999, p.6, <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural-Co-operation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/Romania.asp>.

¹⁷ Ph. URFALINO, *L’Invention de la politique culturelle*, p.394: „Pourquoi ne pas se résoudre à admettre que les différents avatars de l’esthétique romantique, que toutes les variantes du thème de la puissance sociale des arts sont de mauvaises bases pour penser l’action publique en direction des arts et de la culture ? Il faut se résoudre à admettre des choses simples. L’idée selon laquelle l’Etat peut transformer ou améliorer significativement la société en utilisant le levier des arts est fautive [...] Plus exactement, c’est l’idée même d’une causalité sociale reliant les arts comme cause à un état de la société comme effet qui est dépourvue de pertinence.” See also François CHAZEL, „Introduction”, in: *Pratiques culturelles et politiques de la culture*, Maison des Sciences de l’Homme de l’Aquitaine, 1987, p.13.

¹⁸ These expectations or effects can neither be separated from the degree/intensity of the cultural participation of the public. Or, the few estimations of the cultural consumption, as the first poll in this purpose realized in 1999 by IMAS (Alin Teodorescu), indicate a very low degree and, as general tendency, the decline of the cultural participation of the public. For example, visiting the exhibitions and museums counts only 2% from the time dedicated to culture by the Romanians. On this topic, see also the reports *Politici și strategii culturale 1997-2000*, pp.108-112; *La Politique culturelle en Roumanie. Rapport national, Programme Européen d’examen des Politiques Culturelles Nationales*, Conseil de l’Europe, CC-Cult (99)33A, Strasbourg, 1999, pp.3,138-139, <http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural-Co-operation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/Romania.asp>.

www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural-Co-operation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/Romania.asp; Politica culturală în România. Raport al unui grup de experți europeni, p.9.

¹⁹ Corina RĂCEANU, intervention in the Debates market „De ce și cum finanțăm cultura. În România”, Bucharest, February 25th, 2005.

²⁰ The purpose of this first edition of the Debates market was that by the reunion of the main actors of the domain - artists, ONG, public institutions, cultural administration - to promote the dialogue between the public administration and the civil society about the reform of the system of financing culture.

²¹ Béla MARKO, intervention in the Debates market „Why and how is culture financed. In Romania”, Bucharest, February 25th, 2005.

²² Politica culturală în România. Raport al unui grup de experți europeni, 1999, p.7.

²³ Pierre-Michel MENGER, „L’Etat-Providence et la culture. Socialisation de la création, prosélytisme et relativisme dans la politique culturelle publique”, in: François Chazel (ed.), *Pratiques culturelles et politiques de la culture*, Maison des Sciences de l’Homme d’Aquitaine, 1987, p.30.

²⁴ Miklos HARASZTI, *L’Artiste d’Etat. De la censure en pays socialistes*, Paris, Fayard, 1983, cited by Magda CARNECI, *Artele plastice în România 1945-1989*, Bucharest, Ed.Meridiane, 2000, pp.181-183.

²⁵ P-M.MENGER, „L’Etat-Providence et la culture. Socialisation de la création, prosélytisme et relativisme dans la politique culturelle publique”, loc. cit., pp.29-52.

²⁶ Raymonde MOULIN, *L’artiste, l’institution et le marché*, Paris, Flammarion, 1997, p.88.

²⁷ Alain QUEMIN, *L’Art contemporain international: entre les institutions et le marché (Le rapport disparu)*, Nîmes, Paris, Jacqueline Chambon/Artprice, 2002, „Introduction”, pp.10-13, „Le handicap lié à la faiblesse du marché français de l’art contemporain”, pp.183-191: „La faiblesse du marché privé en particulier – auquel doivent parfois se substituer les achats publics – fait suspecter la France de promouvoir un art officiel toujours soupçonné de médiocrité, en particulier dans un pays comme les Etats-Unis, attaché au libre jeu du marché.”

²⁸ Ph. URFALINO, „Postface”, *L’Invention de la politique culturelle*, p.401.

²⁹ Statutul creatorilor de artă și artiștilor interpreți, 1998, p.5; Strategia culturală. Raport final Proiect RO9709-01, 2000, p.3; Raport MCC Cultura și cultele 2002, pp.13-14.

³⁰ According to the legislation, “the maecenatus agreement is a gratuitous act through which a natural or a legal person, referred as the maecenas, transfers, without obligation to receive nothing in exchange, nor directly or indirectly, its ownership right over physical assets or financial means to a natural person, as philanthropic activity with humanitarian character, for the performance of some activities in the following areas: cultural, artistic, medico-sanitary or scientific fundamental or applied research” (art.1, par.3 of the Sponsorship Law). See *Sponsorizarea în cultură. Atitudinea comunității de afaceri din România / Business attitudes on art sponsorship*. In Romania, add Business chance on art, Bucharest, 2004, p.106.

³¹ Ph. URFALINO, „Postface”, *L’Invention de la politique culturelle*, pp.401-404; Léon TOLSTOI, *Ecrits sur l’art*, Paris, Gallimard, 1971, p.4.

³² Ph.URFALINO, „Postface”, *L’Invention de la politique culturelle*, p.406.

³³ Pierre-Michel MENGER, *Portrait de l’artiste en travailleur. Métamorphoses du capitalisme*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil et La République des Idées, 2002, pp.7-9.

³⁴ *Politici culturale în România. Extras din Compendiumul “Politici Culturale în Europa”*, The Ministry of Culture, Romania, European Council, September, 1999, p.8 (<http://www.eurocult.ro/politici/prezentare.htm>). Instead, two ideas of culture are formulated in this Compendium, that circumscribe „a general frame in an anthropologic perspective, of the totality of the intellectual aspects of a civilization; and a specialized area of the cultural activity, that forms the subject-matter for the Ministry of Culture [sic!] and of the cultural institutions from Romania and which consist of: literature, dance, theatre, film, the plastic arts, architecture, etc. (Loc. cit., p.8.)

³⁵ Corina ȘUTEU, Overview on cultural policy in central and eastern Europe between 1990-2003, Policy paper UNESCO 2003, p.11, <http://www.policiesforculture.org/articles&reports>.

³⁶ It is thus met in „Introduction” to the MC report *Politici si strategii culturale 1997-2000*, pp.7-8.

³⁷ *La Politique culturelle en Roumanie. Rapport national*, pp.12-14.

³⁸ *Politici si strategii culturale 1997-2000*, chapter „Strategia generală a Ministerului Culturii. Principii fundamentale” pp.17-20, and chapter „Susținerea, protejarea și conservarea culturii tradiționale”, pp.113-114. See also the Cultural Strategy. Final report Project RO 9709-01, 2000, p.3.

³⁹ See the report of Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, *Cultura si cultele 2001*, pp.15,43-44,129; *Cultura si cultele 2003*,

section „Principalele politici și strategii în domeniul culturii în anul 2004“, pp.91-92.

⁴⁰ Răzvan THEODORESCU, „Cuvânt înainte”, *Cultura si Culte* 2003, p.5.

⁴¹ *The National Cultural Forum*: „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu”, p.4.

⁴² The National Cultural Forum: „Intervenția primului ministru al României, Adrian Năstase“, Bucharest, June 19th, 2002, p.1 (<http://www.ecumest.ro/arcult/stire07.30.htm>, updated 30.07.2002).

⁴³ *Politici si strategii culturale 1997-2000*, pp.45-47,52,71,170-171; *Politica culturală în România. Raportul unui grup de experți europeni*, 1999, p.17. For the budget allowances of the Ministry of Culture in the period 1990-1999, see *Politica culturală în România. Extras din Compendiumul „Politici culturale în Europa”*, pp.13-14.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, *Cultura si Culte* 2001, pp.8-11, 43; *Cultura si Culte* 2002, pp.9-14,34-35; *Cultura si Culte* 2003, p.36.

⁴⁵ Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, *Cultura si Culte* 2003, chapter „Susținerea financiară“, pp.80-82, and section „Principalele politici și strategii în domeniul culturii în anul 2004“, pp.88, 91-92,100.

⁴⁶ *Politica culturală în România. Raportul unui grup de experți europeni*, 1999, pp. 8-9,17,28.

⁴⁷ National Cultural Forum: „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu“, pp.4-5. The very large weight which in the presidential discourse is held by the written culture, „the production and distribution of books“, compared with the other cultural areas mentioned – „theatre“, „national cinematography“, „musical school“, „choreography“, „fine arts“, „architecture“ –, is also relevant for the limited vision which dominates the cultural policies in Romania.

⁴⁸ *Piața culturii în România [Cultural Market in Romania]*, Concept Foundation, 2000 (http://www.concept.ro/index.php?filename=Piata_culturii_in_Romania). For the structure of budgetary funds for the Ministry of Culture – financed projects and acquisitions of contemporary fine arts works and public monuments –, and those of the thematic county programs, see the reports of the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, *Cultura și Culte* 2001, chapter „Susținerea financiară“, p.102, p.123; *Cultura siCulte* 2002, pp.70,79-82, p.80; *Cultura și Culte* 2003, p.74, pp.79-82, 88-100.

⁴⁹ For quantifying the decline in cultural participation between 1990-1995, see *Politica culturală în România. Raportul unui grup de experți europeni*, p.9. For the negative dynamic of the consumption of culture between 1993-2000, the study on the

market of culture in Romania requested by the Concept Foundation contains in the third part („Consumul cultural al populației”) extremely relevant data: the percent of people who don't read books increases from 39% to 48%, those who do not go to theatre, opera, concerts, increases from 75% to 87%, etc. See *Piața culturii în România*, Concept Foundation, 2000 (http://www.concept.ro/index.php?filename=Piata_culturii_in_Romania). This decline of the consumption of culture continues visibly even after 2001, although there are no statistical estimation through polls.

⁵⁰ The report of the European experts (1999) underlines the ignoring of the phenomenon of the mass culture production and consumption, and the new or non-traditional artistic expressions, in a large part of the years analyzed (1992-1996). *Politica culturală în România. Raportul unui grup de experți europeni*, pp.7-8, 15-16. An evident change in tonality intervened in the artistic policy formulated between 1997 and 2000, and at the beginning of 2005.

⁵¹ Ministry of Culture, Direction for Visual Arts, *Strategy 2000-2001* (English version), Bucharest, 2000, p.1: “Main objectives: 1.Connection to the European cultural systems by stimulating private initiative to create, preserve and emphasize artistic works that integrate Romanian culture in to the world circuit of artistic values. 2.[Foundation of a] Contemporary Art Museum”. See also the strategy for financing contemporary creation in *Politici si strategii culturale 1997-2000*, pp.65-71.

⁵² National Cultural Forum: „Discursul președintelui României, Ion Iliescu“, pp.4, 7. See also the MCC report *Cultura si cultele* 2001, p.129.

⁵³ Ministry of Culture, *Politici si strategii culturale 1997-2000*, p.65.

⁵⁴ Direction for Visual Arts, *Strategy 2000-2001* (English version) pp.8,13. See also *Politica culturală în România. Raportul unui grup de experți europeni*, p.24.

⁵⁵ *Programul de Guvernare. Capitolul 22 - Politica în domeniul culturii* [The Governance Program. Chapter 22 -Policies in the field of culture], <http://www.gov.ro/obiective/afis-docdiverse-pg.php?iddoc=266> (accessed 9.03.2005); *Strategia Ministerului Culturii și Cultelor pentru perioada 2005-2008. Prezentare ținută de dna Ministru Mona Muscă în fața Comisiilor de Cultură din Camera Deputaților și din Senat în săptămîna 7-11 martie 2005* [The Strategy of The Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs for the period 2005-2008. Presentation held by Minister Mona Muscă in front of the Commissions for Culture of the Parliament in the week 7-11 March 2005], <http://www.cultura.ro/News.aspx?ID=514> (accessed 6.04.2005).