

ENCATC Glossary - ACCESS

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The access to culture is one of the crucial notions of cultural theory and cultural policy. It has been developed in different social theories: regarding barriers in satisfying cultural needs (Dumazedier, Nemanjić) or enabling cultural decentralization (“toposociologie” of Abraham Moles); within theory of cultural homogenization (Kłoskowska); popularization (vulgarization) of culture, mass media representation (from Frankfurt critical theory to British cultural studies...); theory of cultural rights confronted with economy of culture – network society (Castells and Riffkin)... the notion of access had always raised different policy issues, and imposed its own change – from inactive concept of *accessibility* of culture, to pro-active concept of *inclusion*.

The policy of accessibility of culture had gone through several phases – from the politics of accessible reception toward policy of accessible production participation:

I Making culture (ideologically suitable) accessible *to all* (agit-prop cultural model of socialist countries) – agit-prop trains, caravans... trade-union theatre ticket distribution...

II Making culture (elite culture) accessible *to everyone* (Malraux) - decentralisation

III Making culture (mostly elite but also amateur) accessible to different groups (i.e. groups with special needs)

IV Making cultural field accessible to all diversities of cultural expressions

V new “access society” in a virtual world; “two distinct civilizations - those living outside the electronic gates of cyberspace and those living on the inside” (Riffkin, 2000)

The notion of access to culture had entered the world of cultural policy since its creation. In both Eastern cultural policies (of socialist states) and in Western socio-democratic cultural policies – the notion of access had been one of the crucial – used to explain the main RATIONALE of cultural policy.

But, the policy of access to cultural offers and goods, promoted by socialist governments in Eastern Europe and since 60’s in French and Scandinavian cultural policies, represented two different values systems and two different theoretical concepts. The first one was inspired with Marxist policy of enlightenment of the working class, which has to oppose hegemony of cultural elites in production and use of cultural goods and services. The second policy model was part of the democratic public policies of welfare state in post World War II period.

The analysis of cultural field (le champs culturel, Bourdieu) had shown great discrepancies within same society regarding not only cultural capital (Bourdieu) mostly reproduced through “family inheritance”, but also possibilities to approach and use cultural offer. The centralization of cultural production in cultural (national) centers, its presentation and display within institutional system which demanded also “the capacities

for use” (educational level, family habits, financial capital, free time), not offering much stimulants (such as attractive appeal, adapted working time, friendly hosting, special programs for groups with special needs, etc.) – provoked two major tasks of “new” cultural policies in 60’ - task of *democratization* and *decentralization*.

From access to participation, from participation to inclusion, this “aim” of cultural policy had symbolized the changes in conceptual, referential frame, as well as in the ways of practical implementation of cultural policies in Europe in second part of XX century.

European states have seen as their major role, since Malraux cultural policy declaration, to foster access to culture (meaning “elite culture”, culture cultivee, Morin) for everyone. In the same time, in Great Britain and Nordic countries, the rationale for spending the money of tax payers had exactly been this fact: cultural institutions who receive the public subsidy have a major task to be as open to everybody as possible – to develop policy of accessibility.

This led toward major changes in the operational practices of cultural institutions, which introduced new programs, such as educational workshops in theaters, or music concerts in libraries, as well as “decentralized” practices – bibliobuses or museumbuses which from day to day had visited different regions or villages.

The cultural policy as such supported enlargement of the cultural infrastructure, defining norms and standards of cultural equipments per capita (such as 2 books per inhabitant in a city public library; polyvalent cultural center in each municipality etc.).

In Yugoslavia, the specific model of cultural self-governing community of interest had been invented, in order to foster accessibility of culture to “working class and citizens”. Congress of cultural action held in Kragujevac in 1971, tried to foster this policy of accessibility, enumerating positive actions such as village touring companies, free theater tickets, partnership in between theaters and enterprises, visual art colonies (residencies) in factories and villages, etc.

But, transfer from socio-democratic toward *neo-liberal public policies* in 80’ and 90’ had brought crucial change within the notion of access and accessibility.

On one side – it demanded heavy justification within assessment and evaluation practices of art councils or cultural ministries from each public cultural institution (or institution from civil sector which demands public subsidies), and in the same time it imposed marketing and audience development (outreach) – as necessary parts of the institutional engagement, regardless if it were libraries, theaters or archives. Public relation and marketing had been seen as necessary part of new managerial and entrepreneurial culture which was imposed within cultural sector – justified also with the notion of accessibility (institution had to prove that their making efforts in creating programs which will bring new audiences – thus proving that they are having policy of accessibility which is entrepreneurial, as it would in the same time bring new funds from box office, or through diversified fundraising which is now possible because of diversified programming).

The evaluation of national cultural policies launched by Council for Cultural Cooperation of Council of Europe had reinforced this process. From the first reports (French and Swedish) this is underlined: "In France, as in all other countries, the main goal of governmental interventions in the fields of arts and culture is to provide *access* to quality activities and entertainment for all citizens, or at least the largest possible number of citizens" (Gournay, Bernard, 1988 : 337). But, throughout the 90's the national cultural policies emphasized access to culture as their main priority and task. "The aim common to all democracies, i.e. to make culture available to the masses..." (CENSIS, 1995: 106)

The foundations of civil sector had joined those governmental practices in the late XX century, asking more and more for accountability of the programs and projects – specifically in the respect of its accessibility, its responses toward different groups of population. There are no cultural program and competition for projects, where criteria set in advance do not nominate *accessibility as one of the major criteria*, which is also directly visible in application form (request for subsidy demand precise nominations of "target groups" and methods of attracting them toward proposed programs). Transparent procedures of decision-making processes in cultural policy rewarded those institutions who made their politic of accessibility clear and well represented in an administrative manner.

Strategic planning which was introduced in cultural sphere in late 80's and 90's imposed as major used strategies: strategy of audience development and strategy of commercialization – paradoxically linking the two in a hybrid form proving that "good programming" will bring more audiences and more money. Museums started looking for "blockbusters" exhibitions (mostly those representing art from late XIX to mid XX century), and theaters to more and more spectacular projects (musicals...) bringing new, popular audiences, but audiences ready to pay high prices for the tickets. However, those policies of accessibility are combined with still remnant policies of "gratuity" – free access to major museums in Great Britain, Museum nights, (les nuits blanches in many countries in Europe), street theater festivals and performances, etc.

During transition, the countries of the Eastern world have understood as the major task of cultural policy, even in this field of "accessibility" - creation of entrepreneurial society. This was seen in cultural field as part of acquiring a new managerial and marketing skills – but on the policy level, the large, old and "sclerotized" cultural network was considered as a burden – and let to die through privatization and commercialization of spaces (the disappearance of cinema-halls, bookshops, library extensions etc.).

However, cultural policy theory, fighting against neo-liberal tendencies, had find a new term, trying to prove that it corresponds more with new democratic cultural policy demands in a new, transcultural Europe. It is the notion of *inclusion*. From *policy of access* to *policy of inclusion* cultural policy theory and practice want to show another type of responsibility of the public cultural sector. It is not sufficient any more to give conditions which would enable free access to cultural goods and services for population and its specific groups; it is more about development of pro-active access policy, which will take in account cultural diversities, preventing ghettoization of minority groups, and

limiting hegemony of cultural elites. Policy of accessibility of cultural production is fostering development of such institutions offering music studios to “musiques actuelles” – to group of young people still without cultural reference.

But, now there is a new generation coming, for whom the “access is already a way of life. People of the twenty-first century are as likely to perceive themselves as nodes embedded in networks of shared interests as they are to perceive themselves as autonomous agents in a Darwinian world of competitive survival.” (Riffkin)

“The world is fast developing into two distinct civilizations - those living outside the electronic gates of cyberspace and those living on the inside, in a second earthly sphere above the terra mater, suspended in the ether of cyberspace. The migration of human commerce and social life to the realm of cyberspace isolates one part of the human population from the rest in ways never before imaginable. The separation of humanity into two different spheres of existence - the so-called digital divide - represents a defining moment in history. When one segment of the human population is no longer able even to communicate with the other in time and space, *the question of access* takes on a political import of historic proportions. (Riffkin)

However, within the contemporary world of free trade and globalization where both concepts of accessibility and inclusively had shown its limits, the new issues of digital divide is imposing new measures to promote accessibility – open source, easy access to new technologies as crucial mean of new cultural practices. The concept of “free culture” (Lessig), supporting idea of free/open source software and innovation

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