Conceptualizing Greek Cultural Policy
THE NON-democratization OF PUBLIC CULTURE
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key words: national identity, hegemony,
cultural policy, cultural politics,
democratization

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Words: 8.100

SUMMARY

This paper concentrates on several of the most significant moments of Greek cultural policy, together with its key concepts, since World War II. Through a socio-cultural analysis and a look at the political and cultural events which occurred, the paper traces the cultural policy of the country, its main changes and its relationship with politics (Burke 2004; O. Bennet 1995, 2004; Poirrier 2000). The concepts of national identity, hegemony, civilizing mission and democratization are applicable in this framework. Despite various attempts at reforms, the country's cultural policy could be characterized as "path dependent" – it connected unwaveringly to its two main objectives: heritage and the arts.

Despite the range of consequences that the tenacious focus on this diptych had, which we will examine, it completely disregarded the democratization of culture. That means cultural policy followed a narrow traditional model, leaving aside important courses of action and unaddressed challenges which arose from society's progress and needs: social welfare goals, cultural citizenship, cultural distinctions and hierarchies, inequities and discrimination regarding access and participation, social cohesion, diversity, decentralization and other issues connected to the public sphere and the politics of culture (McGigan 1996, 2004; Mangset et al. 2008).

The democratic institutionalization of cultural policy started in Greece in 1974, the day after the fall of the Colonels' junta. The Ministry of Culture, which had been founded in 1971 by the dictatorship as a propaganda instrument, only started from 1974 onwards to become

involved with public cultural policy under the authority of a parliamentary democracy. Before then, public cultural life had undergone approximately three decades of tension since the end of World War II.[1] In contrast to other European countries that had a smooth transition to democratic life after the World War II, cultural life in Greece showed an autarchic imposition of an official national culture, as well as lack of freedom and democracy (Hewison 1995; Poirrier 2006; Dueland 2008).

For Greece, the end of World War II did not mean the end of belligerency because of the immediate commencement of the Civil War, which ended finally in 1949. Afterwards, the victors on the Right chose a model of exclusion of the Left, and not that of reconciliation between victors and vanquished. They invested more energy in suppression and humiliation of the former opponent than in dialogue and the pursuit of hegemony. Due to this choice, during the decade of the 1950s the State apparatus, together with those intellectuals who collaborated closely with it, used culture as a tool. Public culture was instrumentalized as a field for propaganda.

With the domination of an ideology of "national law and order", the governments of the Right tried to monopolize memory in order to conclusively influence the construction of the national identity, resolutely excluding and silencing any dialogue with the broad progressive intelligentsia (Nicolakopoulos 2003; Lampiri-Dimaki 2003). Coercion, direct ideological control and the suppression of free cultural expression dominated the 1950s: dissidents were hounded with exile, imprisonment, and execution. The model was that of an autocratic, paternalistic state, based on a sickly democracy. Civil rights –including free artistic expression, freedom of language and religion, as well as freedom of speech– were under special restrictions until the early 1960s. Communist ideology was of course banned. Films, theatrical plays and newspapers were under censorship by the government. Access to higher education or public sector employment had an ideological prerequisite : a "Certificate of Social Beliefs". Any progressive opinion was in danger of being labeled as "communist" and thus being propelled to the sidelines, effectively marginalized. Cultural expression outside of the borders of the official culture was deemed conclusive of dissidence.

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[1] Specifically, World War II and the Resistance to fascism (1940-1944), the Civil War (1946-1949), then a period of parliamentary governance (1950-1966). But even this last was not smooth, as it had the clear stamp of political tension and was characterized by severe social and political clashes, rigged elections and the arbitrary intervention of the King in the democratic institutions. To this must be added the impact of the prewar dictatorial regime of the 4th of August of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-1940), a period of martial law and censorship.

Thus, after the end of the Civil War many artists and writers took the road to other countries, because of their ideological or political stance. A significant number of youth who had participated in the Resistance against the Germans went to France, while many young people who had participated in the Civil War went to socialist countries (Andrikopoulou 2008). During those years the mechanism of the State systematically attempted to impose the official culture, which was based on a nationalist identity, the religious credo and the ancient Greek heritage – unilaterally as interpreted by the conservative governments of that epoch.[2]

Overlying this as a framework, the first post-war State cultural structures were set-up or re-established: the Athens Festival and the Epidaurus Festival (1954-55), the State prizes for Literature (1956), the New Hellenic center of the Athens Academy (1957), the center of Historical Research of the National Research Foundation (1958), the Athens center for Social Research (1959), the Week of Greek Cinema in Thessaloniki (1960), and the State theater of Northern Greece (1961).

At that time, radio offered the most significant source of information, entertainment, cultural communication – and homogenization. Apart from its character of clear propagandistic and manipulated culture, the State radio network offered an important service for the cultural enrichment of daily life, such as theatrical performances, musical programs, interviews with artists, etc. However, anyone reputed to be an anti-government intellectual was excluded from the programming, and a clientele system was established, which closely linked the right-wing intelligentsia with the cultural services of the State and the benefits, symbolic and material, which resulted from this relationship.

During that period, for the cultivated upper class -the courtiers of the power elite, palace and the governmental cadres, together with conservative intellectuals- the concept of culture was restricted to the ancient Greek cultural heritage on the one hand, and selectively, to modern and contemporary arts on the other. Education and aesthetics meant communication with Europe, learning foreign languages (French predominantly), classical music, elegant style and good manners: such values were oriented towards the retention of the *Distinction* (Bourdieau 1979) that was the cultural capital of the "bourgeoisie". Thus an ethnocentric cultural model was reinforced, conservative and elitist, in contrast to the general lifestyle of the common people.

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[2] This national identity was called *Εθνικοφροσύνη*: nationalism mixed with loyalty to the ruling party and discrimination according to ideology and political beliefs. This identity had to be proved by a "Certificate of Social Beliefs" necessary to be employed in the public sector and for entering higher education.

This model served a from above approach to "culture" and promoted, more than a vision of enlightenment, an internal civilizing mission (Elias1939), disdaining the working class and demonstrating superiority and arrogance towards them. This disdain and the emotional and aesthetic gap exacerbated the fresh wounds from World War II and the Civil War, underscoring the social divides and the lack of cultural parity. At the same time it impeded the osmosis and the dialogue between the elite and the popular culture, as well as the "democracy dimensions" that were promoted in other European countries within the framework of the welfare state (Vestheim 2007). The National Theater and the Odeon (a venue of ancient drama performances) provided diversion and amusement with social distinction, for the upper class and the elites.

On the other hand, the disadvantaged lower classes– workers and farmers – were clearly pushing their claim to free, democratic schooling, which would ensure not only education, but also the legitimization of their culture. This tension affected the emerging student movement and the politicized students' unions were at the forefront of all the political struggles which began in 1950 and which continued throughout the decade. But independently of the aesthetic or socio-cultural choices of the citizens, the state authorities subordinated culture to its immediate economic goals. The model for the economic development of the country upheld the instrumentalization of Greece's cultural heritage as well as the unrestrained exploitation of the natural environment. Both policies had one basic goal: the attraction of tourism (Gray 2007). It is significant that the establishment of the Greek Tourism Foundation dates back to 1950: more than two decades before the establishment of the Ministry of Culture in1971 (Hewison 1987).

As the 1960s started, political protest and demonstrations for more democracy were massive and the suppressive political climate gradually became more liberal. In 1963 a government of the Center brought with it a brief cultural "springtime". The two short years of this Center government (1963-'65) were dense with political activity and rich with cultural experiences, especially for the youth. The government, democratizing the state apparatus, tried to abolish specific mechanisms of oppression. The relative liberalization which was attained showed how necessary it was that Greek society escape from the authoritarian state control. Freed from the political limitations which had been imposed during the previous decade, public culture began to develop widely and excitedly. This liberalization had a great impact, and with the freedom of expression, increased social access and participation, came creativity, diversity and pluralism .

The doors opened : literature, poetry, music, the theater, criticism of visual and performing arts, literary criticism – the sudden evolution of all these new ideas attracted many and charmed especially the youth, creating a new public cultural space. A circle of intellectuals with fresh ideas, a critical eye and inspiration came to the fore (Sokka & Kangas 2007). The progressive politicized culture was invigorated and united by two important democratic demands: respect for the Constitution by the King and the right-wing circles, and a increase in the State budget for public education. Both demands formed a strong alliance based on widespread popular feelings in the hinterland which endowed the political practitioners with extra energy and created a cultural spill-over.

In literature and the arts, within the various streams which arose, e.g., modernism, artistic militancy, surrealism or criticism, a new relationship of politics with culture arose (Belfiore & Bennett 2007). New cultural practices were cultivated quickly within the new atmosphere. Pupil and student initiatives, revamped associations, new publications, new literature, increased scholarly and theoretical journals, the advent of societies engaged in socio-political brainstorming, public debates, peace marches and demonstrations, the new wave of music in the *boites* –these were some of the resultant trappings of this intense cultural movement.

This breath of freedom on the political , social and the cultural level lead to an unprecedented creativity, full of energy and optimism. The country lived at a fevered pitch trying to regain the lost time which had driven it into a two-decade delay in comparison with other European countries, from the protracted war situation towards peace, from rural to urban life, from economic insufficiency and failure towards prosperity.

The major institutional reform – establishing obligatory and free public education – reinforced this atmosphere of cultural "springtime" as soon as it was implemented. The government of the center applied also more objective and less discriminatory criteria for the entrance to higher education. At the same time, propaganda in schools was reduced, the demotic Greek language was institutionalized, and the "Certificate of Social Beliefs" was abolished as a prerequisite to higher education. During this period more women began to enter the university, and the socio-economic status of the students begun to

diversify as the new measures gave the opportunity for children from farms and remote villages as well as from the urban working class to enter institutions of higher education.

This educational reform of 1964 very likely produced the most meaningful institutional change in public culture. Education was perceived by all as being closely entwined with civilization and culture. Cultural life had emerged from the freezer, and the presentation of the self met the sense of community belonging, which contributed to greater self-assurance and aspirations for the future.   Cultural analysis and theories filled the pages of the literary reviews and art journals, through intense ideological debates on issues such as the role of art, the avant-garde, abstract art, socialist realism, etc. took place. The aesthetic choices of the elite upper classes remained largely with Greek and international companies of ballet and classical music, as well as classic Greek drama, which underscored their cosmopolitanism and ties with Europe and the world outside Greece.

However, the blossoms from this cultural "springtime" sprouted in the gardens of popular culture, evident in periodicals, popular song, entertaining movies and the popular theatrical reviews. This popular culture comprised the expressions and lifestyles of large parts of the population and reflected also the political life, which was incorporated in the rhythms of the street, during the student demonstrations, as well as in the popular performances of the well-known composer Mikis Theodorakis, who often used the lyrics of renowned poets. This politicized and spirited culture was widely-prevalent, asserting its difference and its hegemony towards the "academic bourgeois", sophisticated culture. Popular culture, democratic, progressive and rich in quality, claimed center stage in the life of the country which wanted innovation. The Greek cinema, as well as classical drama and the theater, evidenced analogous progressive attempts to renew themselves.

Nevertheless, there were gradations regarding the acceptance of several sides of the popular culture not only by the conservative intellectuals but also by the progressive. The leftist critics and intellectuals regarded with elitist skepticism the "mass" culture, considering it as leading to disorientation and as the Trojan horse of an « introduced-from-abroad American way-of-life». At this point one can remark on the deep division line between the enlightenment and the internal "civilizing mission" on one side, and the democratization and the egalitarian element on the other side. The dividing line, that at the epoch of the "short cultural spring" seemed to search for its own transcendence, remained over the next decades as the central axis around which cultural policy

developed. This meant also that the dominant conception of culture remained immutable – and, subsequently, influenced cultural policy itself (Lewis & Miller 2003)

However, the political system did not bear the pressure of the progressive forces for further democratization and the process was abruptly ended with the imposition of the dictatorship of the Colonels on the 21st April, 1967. The junta proclaimed martial law and the abrogation of political freedoms for an entire seven years, up until its collapse in 1974. Together with the opportunity of political democratization, all the vital elements of cultural democratization which had bloomed, giving rise to such great expectations, were abruptly lost.

The Colonels used as their basic slogan "Greece Greek Christians" inventing as the cultural identity of the country an unhistorical combination of devotion to ancient Greece blended with Christian belief which bordered the ludicrous. The junta enforced an asphyxiating political and cultural control: imprisoning and exiling politicians and citizens suspected of resistance, isolating the country from the world outside, imposing censorship on the press and other mass media, banning books of left-wing writers. It attempted to construct a formal culture based on spirited militaristic ethics, and to this end deployed strong propagandist mechanisms, the apogee of which was the foundation of the Ministry of Culture in 1971. Together with the political parties and organizations, all the cultural entities were summarily abolished, with the result that overnight the country found itself without political and cultural structures. To replace what had been summarily dismissed, the junta tried to establish an identity which was a mixture of nationalism, a return to ancient roots, anti-communism, xenophobia, and isolationism, with a didactic element and "Greek-Christian Civilization" as a reference point for the supreme value : the cultural superiority of the Greek nation and civilization.

Posited against this imaginary were social resistance movements which formed an underground progressive democratic sub-culture. A entire body of writing, music from the previous democratic "springtime" as well as important new songs written by Mikis Theodorakis in exile, the translation of foreign books which spoke of freedom and democracy –all of these began to circulate illegally, chiefly amongst the students. This formed an alternative network of information and passive resistance below the evidently immobile cultural life, where nothing happened anymore, at least until 1970. Within this time period the resistance of the artists and the intellectuals slowly became more

visible, and as time went by the students openly rebelled against the junta with sit-ins, chanting pro-democracy and freedom slogans.

In 1974 the downfall of the dictatorship of the Colonels marked the return to a normal parliamentary government and democratic life. The procedure of democratization was applicable to the Ministry of Culture as well to the entire state apparatus. From that time onwards, the Ministry of Culture has assumed the task of organizing public culture and fostering cultural policy under the rules of parliamentary democracy. Cultural integration with the rest of Europe only started after 1974, when the country experienced a stable democratic parliamentary life, accompanied by economic development, the return to the process of accession to the European Community and membership in the Council of Europe, from which it had been expelled owing to the dictatorship. The autarchic instrumentalization of culture, which had been built steadily for four decades, began to be deconstructed under the pressures of liberalism, the installation of democratic processes and the removal of the junta's collaborators from public administration. The changes which pertained to the cultural field had to do with the fundamental determinants of the public culture, which ceased to defer to the nationalistic loyalty (εθνικοφροσύνη) and to the academic bourgeois conservatives.

After 1974 public life expanded, and cultural activities took place in a consensual democratic atmosphere of freedom of expression. Artists, journalists, publishers of books and magazines, and other cultural groups formed the first important hub for a network of cultural dissemination. Cultural policy began to progressively take shape giving priority to the support of public foundations and institutions. The priority was to remove the adherents of the autarchic ideology and mechanism of the dictatorship from the official staff of the state machinery, from the state monopoly of radio and television as well as from the cultural entities. The dominant discourse was that of the enlightenment and the internal civilizing mission. The philosophy which reigned followed the policy line of the cultural elite, which became acceptable to the wide spectrum of the intelligentsia and to the majority of the people involved in cultural affairs, independent of their political placement. The trauma of the junta's populism and autarchism lead to the civilizing mission as a safe haven of elite culture.

It seems a paradox that the political democratization was not followed by the discourse of cultural democratization and an egalitarian project on the part of the progressive intellectuals. These latter, educated with (both political and aesthetic) ideology of the

avant-garde, had no confidence in the common people's discrimination and taste, and they remained connected more to the enlightenment and less to democratization. In any case, the transformation of the discourse of the civilizing mission into a policy of democratization would have taken quite a few more years of maturation. The political intent for the general climate of change began in 1981 with Melina Mercouri. However, even then it was not based on cultural analysis but merely on instinctive policy, as the more influential intellectuals, independently of their political placement, kept their distance. The democratization of culture was for them neither required nor feasible. To the extent that they considered their role to be guardians of the quality of works of art and guardians of Culture they could not realize democratization to be anything surpassing populism. Adopting as a basic axiom that communication with high art needs education of the common people, they asked that it be furnished by the State, and not policy convergence, access and participation. In a few words, they were committed to the service of Civilization and Culture, in capitals, denigrating the anthropological concept of culture, the cultural practices and the popular culture.

Therefore, society was caught up in the disruption and the intense energy of the unprecedented reforms which free expression and communication proffered. These years, from 1974 until 1981, when a new period marked with the rise of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) to power began, alternative cultural expression flourished asking for democratically-apportioned expression in the public space. This was led to a great extent by the leftist artists as well as the social movements at the time (feminist, youth, and homosexual) which imparted their own hue, demanding the legitimization of diversity and the plurality of identities in cultural life. Within such a climate of liberation from the strictures of the dictatorship and autarchy, the opportunity arose for all the blossoms to open and to find room to spread. Deprived and isolated for seven entire years, society sought to regain its lost time at the quickest possible speed (Voulgaris 2003).

Cultural production and the market began to modernize as industry and to show the first signs of dynamism. The wave of translations of fiction and essays , which had manifested itself after 1970, surged, and Greek literary output intensified with the appearance of a great deal of new writers (Kotzia & Hatzivasileiou 2003). The movement of ideas which was reflected in book publishing as well as in theater, plastic and visual arts, songs and the currents of the underground culture was potent. The New

Greek Cinema which had briefly made its appearance in the 1970s with new directors and fresh cinematic vision and themes, turned to the contemporary and the historical aspects of Greek society. With new aesthetic pursuits and experiments it distanced itself from commercial films and attempted to decipher social realities in the search for a new identity (Lambrinos 2003). In the immediate climate of societal exploration the prior cultural practices were renewed, producing a fermentation with rich ingredients – and anxious questions concerning the newly changing cultural identities.

At the beginning of the '80s the cultural approach of PASOK attempted to address these anxious questions, and in the person of Melina Mercouri it found its expression. For the first time the national component merged with democratization transformed into a new patriotism, the popular element was lauded and became accepted without snobbism, and the newly-ascendant petite-bourgeois strata found the means to express their emotional burden. This emotional wave of the petite-bourgeoisie's ascendancy brought into the light a culture which would try to balance between democratization and populism in the next years.

Melina Mercouri was the first Minister of Culture to give definition to the democratic parameters of culture: creating bridges with the left intelligentsia, international and European artists, and at the same time searching for ways to attract the public and to amplify their access and participation. She also gave expression to popular, and repressed, emotions. In this way she played an important role in the construction and promotion of a "progressive popular national patriotic identity" in contrast to the "conservative national bourgeois tradition". Around this nucleus she added, depending on the occasion: European and international cultural diplomacy, such as the institution of "The Cultural Capital of Europe" or speeches to UNESCO Conferences; claims of national prestige such as the return of the Parthenon Marbles to their homeland; developmental perspectives (tourism and culture); decentralization, such as regional theaters and municipal concerts.

For the PASOK government of Andreas Papandreou, Melina Mercouri personified the depiction of Greek culture both nationally and internationally. A Minister from the first PASOK government of 1981, she remained through sixteen cabinet shuffles, institutionally representing the cultural policy of the country. The presence of "Melina" in the Ministry of Culture transformed it rapidly from a combined archeological service and propaganda

machine, which it had been heretofore, to a place of fermentation, exploration and experimentation.

The materials the Ministry of Culture used to construct this new cultural policy did not consist of a social-democratic concept of cultural theory and analysis, but in what was found by coincidence and good luck . Primarily, there was a "dowry" of cultural capital that came with Melina and her close circle, which had been woven on the canvas of the film industry, on relations with international artists and political personages, on her internationally well-known name which opened doors, on her connections with the American left-wing intelligentsia which resisted McCarthyism, and even on the touristic Greece she had promoted as an actress. This was all spun and held together with her personal singular characteristic of aristocratic popularity which, as was evident, could move not only the voters of her constituency in a run-down neighborhood of Piraeus, but all of Greece – and abroad as well. She followed her infallible instinct which directed her to the recognition of what people were asking for, and that was the reason she pursued democratization of culture regardless of the critical opinions.

Another part of the cultural capital of this Ministry was its scientifically co-ordinated archaeological service, the main corps of civil servants of the Ministry, with purpose, tradition, method and prestige. These were civil servants who identified with the cultural heritage of the country, who were its loyal and true guardians, interpreting it ideologically, sustaining it technically and defending it against each negligent and often somehow ignorant political leadership (Peckham 2003; Brown, Hamilakis 2003).

The third bit of cultural capital was an agglomeration of heteroclite cultural components : artists, requests, cultural associations, intervention of party people and local authorities, trade unionists, propositions and ideas for the arts. It was a cataclysm that resulted after the chronic exclusion of the progressive intellectuals from the State initiatives was rectified. A traditional left-wing cultural view, together with the neophyte aspirations which had come to light with the ascendance of PASOK, tried to construct the main axes of cultural policy. Where was the juncture between all these different sources and textures which made up the whole cultural capital of the Ministry of Culture during the 1980s? Given the weakness of the political and ideological impetus, as well as that of the State and ideological structures, the point of concurrence was in the person of Melina Mercouri herself: "But since Reagan is in politics, why not me – who am the better actor?" she once asked.

Indeed, Mercouri managed to successfully blend the different expectations and requirements within the breadth of her own role – which gratified most palates. The intimates of PASOK aired their claims on either a personal or on a collective level, as a national association, as a branch of a party organization, as a local authority. Mercouri was receptive to creative people and supervised their corresponding requests. She was liberal with regard to the leftist artists, open to the people, the citizens' indeterminate but thirsty desire for culture both in the city and in the countryside. She responded to everything. Under these conditions, the only thing she could not do alone was to formalize a consistent cultural policy. In order for her to be able to accomplish that she would have had to rely upon the assistance of an important group of intellectuals. And for this the distance she had kept from the intelligentsia was too great. As she herself admitted : " Shall I tell you the black truth? I don't get along well with the sophisticates. I didn't get along with them since I was a child. My skin doesn't want them."

Amidst all this re-orientation after the explosion of the PASOK ascendancy , at the very core of this new cultural system, was a dominant view which identified cultural policy as primarily meaning generous State grants to artists. Another dominant view identified culture with ancient Greek civilization itself, giving it absolute and even exclusive precedence. In time, there were other additions to the above sentiments, such as: economy is the main enemy to an art work; popular appreciation of "higher" culture is impossible; culture equal with "the arts";   State enlightenment is necessary to make the people understand beauty. All these axioms seemed to spin subject to a centrifugal force, while the political will remained incapable of competently formulating an efficient cultural policy, which would address the new needs as well as the new cultural practices.

Quite on purpose, to transcend the problem, Mercouri acted mainly by instinct. From the beginning she gave preference to international communication, practicing a distinctive cultural diplomacy which was based on her cosmopolitan social contacts, and which took place beneath the lights of the public eye, with personages such as Jack Lang, Olaf Palme, Felipe Gonzales, the Pope, Indira Gandhi, Francois Mitterand. This communication helped her to launch well-timed projects, exhibitions, declarations, and to successfully deal, through media promotion, with the internal discomfiture and the criticism which was coming from many directions. In a 1985 photograph, when Athens

was celebrating itself as the first Cultural Capital of Europe, she can been seen, radiant, between Papandreou and Mitterand.

She may be best remembered for prioritizing ancient Greek culture, with the high point being the demand for the return of the Parthenon Marbles from the British Museum. She introduced the claim for the first time in July 1982, at the UNESCO International Conference of Ministers of Culture in Mexico : " You must understand what the Parthenon Marbles mean to us.   They are our glory. They are our sacrifice. They are the supreme symbol of respect. They are our obligation of honour to the philosophy of democracy. They are our ambition and our name. They are the essence of being Greek ." The symbolic level at which she was referred to, this firm "Great Idea" which drove her during the entire duration of her time as Minister contained the elements which made up «Greekness», as she understood it to be. This «Greekness» was a cultural identity with a large dose of ancient Greek civilization, Greek honour and manliness, conviviality and Mediterranean temperament, pride-set and touristic folklore, all expressively charged with social sensitivity, emotion, the complaint of the small country against injustice, as well as the development of a phobic syndrome.

What was the conductive thread of all this? Looking at the public culture of that period, one can observe that the long-inhibited social culture which was manifest the day after the fall of the dictatorship was established in 1981 as governmental cultural policy. However, being newly-freed, that policy could not immediately mature, embrace new tasks, and autonomously change the existing conditions. It remained captive to the past and to the matrix that bore it, according to the new institutional theory that recognizes often in public policy a path dependency (Tsakatika 2004). In this way the new progressive cultural policy of PASOK swapped subordination for domination, not for hegemony. It also traded the lack of democracy and authoritarianism for a civilizing mission, but not for the democratization of culture and an egalitarian project (Laclau, Mouffe 2001; Venn 2007). And as policy it had to respond to the waves of disturbance provoked by the European Community in the face of Greece's ambivalent attitude about participation in the EEC – which had to do, except others, with the dilemma of the southern or eastern national identity, a dilemma that still remains active despite the steps of modernization the country achieved during the '90s.

But it is interesting to go even further with the problem of hegemony. The deconstruction of the tradition of the long undemocratic past, the lack of freedom and

the nationalistic domination , on the one hand, and the need for the establishing a modernized public culture and policy on the other hand, brought a great deal of vying for hegemony. The page had turned, but the struggle for the redistribution of the cultural capital under the new conditions, had just begun.

This was evident in cultural politics. Issues which concerned Greek national identity or which were perceived as such provoked fanaticism, culture wars, and political conflict within society before and after the Mercouri years. Clashes about the official adoption of the commonly spoken vernacular (demotic Greek) and abolishment of the erudite "pure" grammar (katharevousa Greek) from education and public administration; implementing educational reform allowing a simplified orthography which expunged the complex aspirant and stress marks; equality of women; the separation of church and state; the acceptance of civil marriages; immigration rights and diversity; the right of top students of Albanian nationality to carry the Greek flag at parades and school pageants; abolishing the specification of religion on the national identity cards; the content of scholastic history books and many other similar questions of public politics which to a greater or lesser extent consistently divided public opinion.

Conversely, at the level of cultural policy which was exercised during the last quarter of the twentieth century by the Ministry of Culture, the controversies had more to do with the narrow sense of cultural policy, that is, cultural heritage and state support of arts and letters. The issues revolved around: the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, the subsidization of the arts, the financial support for cultural associations and foundations, the efficiency and transparency of committees within the Ministry of Culture, the modernization and the expansion of museums, and of course the budgetary levels of the Ministry of Culture.

This distance between cultural politics and cultural policy was never bridged – not only because of the political decision of the Ministry of Culture to remain within the narrower sense of cultural policy. To this the mentality of the Greek intellectuals that influenced the whole society also contributed.   These last were consistently oriented towards "high" culture and therefore could not hold the concepts of cultural rights, cultural citizenship or the egalitarian project to be important tasks in the framework of the welfare state, as it was practiced in the second half of the twentieth century in many

European countries. Thus, cultural discourse remained attached to the twin axes of ancient heritage and the continuity of the national identity, and to the arts. Popular culture, diversity, democratization, social cohesion, unequal access or participation had nothing to do in their mind with the notion of Culture which was for them synonymous to civilization. In this context, national prestige, state-patronage of "high-quality" arts, and elitism easily dominated.

Accordingly, although with regard to social policy the ruptures of the socialist governments with the past were audacious, in cultural policy not only their discourse but their political projections and agenda stayed attached to a conservative matrix. The cultural policy was never embedded socially (Kiwan 2007). It was not the social but the national that dictated the agenda: the patriotism of the left and the right, the love of antiquity of the left and the right, the elitism of the left and the right , contended with each other as two sides of the same coin. Etatism and populism prevailed, consistently ignoring the emerging practices, representations and clash of identities, combined with politics and the messages that had to be delivered and elaborated from that in favor of public consciousness. This ensured that cultural policy was removed from any operative reality of socio-cultural conflict, leading in turn to a series of culture wars, the expansion of discrimination, new hierarchies and real social exclusion.

In the middle of the 1990s a new sensibility arose: the modernization of the country in the framework of European integration and the process of expanded globalization. The re-elected socialist government of PASOK made modernization of the county's structures its main goal, with the assistance of the EU Structural Funds. Cultural projects were supported by an impressive 1,7 billion Euro economic investment between 1994 and 2006. Never once in the past did the country have such an opportunity to invest in culture through a long, well-elaborated plan.

Unfortunately, the implementation of the EU Structural Funds Operational Program for Culture strengthened the long-standing traditional political view of culture. Ambitious economic objectives translated in reality into modest tasks with regard to the sociocultural vision or the democratization of culture. The political agenda continued to give priority to the old values of the dominant culture, ignoring the new generation's needs, ignoring popular culture, immigrants, community culture, urban regeneration, and many vital issues. The political choice was to enhance the prestige of the nation-

state on the basis of the promotion of heritage, and at the expense of functionality, democratization and participation.

The allocation of the budget was characteristic: 90% of the budget for the 2nd Operational Program for Culture was spent on the protection and display of Greece's ancient cultural heritage and only the remaining 10% on contemporary culture. In the 3rd Operational Program for Culture, the split was 64.6%, with 32.4% directed at the development of modern culture. This was for support to the infrastructure for major cultural communication events (mainly the Cultural Olympics) and for the completion of metropolitan conference and cultural centers. Culture continued to be perceived only in an extremely narrow sense provocatively giving priority to the past instead of the present, to the elite instead of the popular, to the culture of display instead of participation. As a result modernization meant the reinforcement of the elite pyramid and the construction of new hierarchies. Neither better access for the public, nor increased participation was stimulated. Recent research shows that the majority of Athenians have never visited the National Archaeological Museum (73%), the National Gallery (77%) or the Athens' Concert Hall (83%). [3] In conclusion, it must be recognized that in this case diversity, pluralism and cultural democratization did not find fertile ground in the European Funds. In the name of the cultural heritage only few contemporary, large infrastructures were completed, aimed solely at the cultivated upper and middle classes – the economically stable, socially-favored audiences – the same audiences that take advantage of government-subsidized tickets for the public and private artistic events of highly prestigious foundations.

As a corollary of the above, two questions attracted the general interest of Greek society and achieved a broad consensus in the '90s. These were the claim on the Parthenon Marbles against the British Museum and the Olympic Games of 2004. Both of these functioned as a "Great Idea" which related the past to the future in a critical way. The demand for the Marbles, an idea of Melina Mercouri, has been an obligatory course for every subsequent Minister of Culture. It involved the symbolic question of acknowledging equality between a small country and a more powerful one, and the fulfillment of a feeling of national prestige. The Olympic Games, again, instigated intensive activity towards the completion of essential public works. In the name of

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[3] Metron Analysis, 2005. The cultural practices of the Greeks, *Highlights*, 19, p. 1-53.

modernization, cultural policy was summoned to submit to the ambitious demands for designing and implementing infrastructure, rennovating museums and archaeological sites, organizing international artistic exhibitions and big events (Cultural Olympics). All of these steered cultural policy through path dependence: mainly, to culture as display instead of the democratization and the socio-cultural turn which Greek society had never enjoyed.

After 2004 the new conservative government put the accent on the economic aspect of culture, economic growth and priority to private sponsoring of the arts. A new law was passed by the Greek Parliament to encourage private patrons and companies to act as sponsors by allowing them tax exceptions, although the mechanisms of the Ministry continued to conserve control centrally and had the last word on which institution would be sponsored. The political control of the budget directed for culture was in this way not only applied to the public sector but amplified to include the private one.

An enormous scandal about the distribution of public money, with erotic implications, erupted during the last days of 2007, driving the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture to a suicide attempt and spinning the Government into a crisis. The result was the cessation of a large part of Ministry's activities together with the Minister's declaration that the Ministry will be re-structured, with new principles and rules. This remains to be seen.

Conclusions

A survey of the entire Greek public culture together with cultural policy shows that its experience is dependent on its post-war political circumstances, suffering from a lack of democracy (Muller et al. 2002). Until 1980, the meaning of democratization was synonymous with a recognized need for political freedoms and, in the cultural field, free expression, but neither in a unified way nor including the egalitarian element. The imposition of an official national culture and the construction of the national identity under conditions where stable democratic structures were nonexistent set up constraints and barriers in the culture of the society and delayed the process of modernization (Sotiropoulos, 2006).

Later on, cultural policy entered a new period with Melina Mercouri: new cultural institutions were founded, decentralization was attempted, priority to theater and film industry was given. Cultural policy after the '80s converged with that of the other European countries. However, cultural policy never ceased to be captive to a deferred public administration, never abandonned lateral and local interests and client relationships which blocked it from formulating any contemporary program, never achieved stable alliances with education, or other related sectors then developing. This is why no cultural policy agenda, extensive enough to answer to the crucial questions about the democratization of culture and the rights accruing to "cultural" citizenship, was ever formulated (Mercer 2002).

Cultural policy did not take any stance regarding the conflicts which occurred in the field of national identity and representations, and neither did it manage to defend the rights of access and cultural equality as a public interest or good. Much later, it did not advocate a fair policy favoring the enhancement of cultural democracy in the public sphere (Habermas 1989, 1987). The public culture itself carried with it a heavy past, with all the elements of an intimate relationship with the autarchic political authority: *glorification mechanism , state patronage of the fine arts, nationalistic identity, national prestige, reasonable social control, civilizing mission*. For these reasons, democratization never took root at the core of the cultural policy agenda. In adopting culture as a civilizing mission, cultural policy mainly pursued the substantive affiliation of the citizens to a single and singular culture – which was, to high culture, designated worthy of the name. (Williams 1981).

In the 1990s the concept of culture, which had been identified traditionally with the ancient cultural heritage, the popular culture of rural life and the arts, thus covering the national imagination, the nostalgia of the traditional social life and high culture, began to change. This happened under the pressure of the budding anthropological approach to *culture,* which no longer affected exclusively the elites but rather the many. The one-dimensional national identity and the artistic or literary *canon* sustained many challenges. These took place under the pressure of the economy, under the pressure of the mass media and the new technologies, which were steering towards a "cultural democratization" within the limits of the market (Girard 1972). But at the same

time, this showed the great disparity and discrimination within the public sphere. Unequal opportunity of access and participation, unequal distribution of public resources, regional inequities, gender, racial, ethnic, generational discrimination, and social exclusion. The discriminatory allocation of the symbolic and cultural recourses was transparent. These new approaches – and their sheer magnitude began to exert force on the public cultural policy agenda.

In more recent years intermediate spaces came to light, especially in Internet, where an osmosis is going to develope between the borders of public and private. Old, frozen identities began to liquefy in an environment which was warmed by the opening of information and by diversity, searching for answers within new subjectivities, new lifestyles, new prospects and aspirations. But this new process, as such, although it contributes to a kind of cultural democratization must not make us abandon the question of redistribution of the cultural capital – or to put it bluntly, the expectation of cultural democracy and the state guaranties on diversity and pluralism. Consequently, if we consider culture as a basic component of the public sphere, then we can imagine a cultural policy which surrenders decisively its goal of "encivilization": it will support political responsibilities of regulation in the area of confrontation of ideas and clashes of meaning, with democracy as a goal. Yet how could these clashes be translated into the practical tasks of cultural policy? How could a cultural policy be able to intervene in these broad cultural wars that take place inside the public space? Who are the conductors who can funnel into the previously narrow bed of cultural policy the wider clashes for hegemony? How could one formulate a public cultural policy that does not merely have to do with the past and the high (the excavations, the museums and the arts) but which would draw material from the collision of ideas, the attitudes and the cultural practices of the citizens?

One such approach must be, in my opinion, decisively socio-cultural although there are many strategies to follow (Bennett 2008). It could have e,g., as a starting-point the existing cultural phenomena and the confrontations around them (e.g., xenophobia, racism, national identity – but also hooliganism or sexism). It could, as well, investigate the disparities which occur at a regional level, in combination with the inequalities in the allocation of public resources and infrastructure (e.g., urban regeneration, artistic networks, etc). It could

either begin from the asymmetries in access and participation which occur in the cultural practices (such as museum visits, participation in the arts, entertainment, allocation of leisure-time, television viewing time, Internet usage). It could as well have as an epicenter particular social groups, such as groups those socially excluded and disenfranchised (a model which was applied in Great Britain over the last decade) or even youths, the elderly, persons with special needs, immigrants, the population in remote communities, and, in all those cases, their cultural activities.

Cultural analysis based on the principles that must be fulfilled in the public sphere could, in fact, be used to formulate the adequate democratic cultural policy in every specific case. Basically, from the view of a contemporary cultural policy, the responses which remain to be given would be initially refer to four fundamental parameters: access, participation, pluralism, and diversity. As a general course, public cultural policy would owe a duty to serve and enhance these parameters, to the degree where they achieve basic preconditions of cultural citizenship. In any case, far from any vestiges of etatism and paternalism the status of cultural citizenship must be guaranteed and regulated by the public cultural policy. Within this framework , finally, it would be possible to delineate the borders of a long-term redistribution of the cultural capital as a public good, as well as the equal access of citizens to culture, with the goal of cultural democratization.

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