

Wrapup of the discussions of 24th October

by *Chikhi Réda, Algeria, at la Friche La Belle de Mai, 6.30pm, 24th October 2008*

Keynote speech: Culture and globalisation: international cultural challenges

Barbara Loyer

During this first speech, Mme Loyer devoted herself to an exercise of deconstructing concepts. This masterful introduction conducted by an experienced and competent academic allowed a good number of received ideas to be put into perspective. It is thus that the notion of “starting” is no longer synonymous with progress, just as the notion of the French-speaking world cannot be synonymous with a common philosophical ground. As for “portmanteau” concepts, we could consider that all are such given that their frequent use has overworked their meaning. Hybridisation, heritage, identity and many other words should be viewed in the future with caution and circumspection. Mme Loyer finished with a very important question: What culture(s) is Culture aimed at? By exaggerating just a little, we could consider that this introduced the key subject of the first session: Mobility, particularly that of artists.

1st session: Mobility and artistic creation: what ways towards interculturality in the Euromediterranean arena?

Ahmed El Attar (Theatre director, Cairo)

Ozlem Alkis (amberFestival, Istanbul)

Nevenka Koprivsek (Bunker Institute, Ljubljana)

Moderator: *Laëtitia Manach* (Fond Roberto Cimetta)

The idea that, despite all the political efforts, a demarcation line remains, a split between North and South, was pitched in a boldly direct and effective manner by the speeches of this first session. A forceful idea supported by the fact that interculturality has always existed and that it is, by definition, supported by the fact that artists choose or not to work together through shared interests and values.

What then becomes of mobility, what would its function be and how can meaning and a framework be injected into it?

a. Mobility implies a social redefinition of the artist’s status. The artist is a free agent, it’s true, but also invested in a mission within his environment. The artist influences his public, institutions, partners, etc, hence the question of meaning, the first level of mobility. Mobility is also the right to stay at home and be useful as Mme *Nevenka Koprivsek* explained so wonderfully.

b. Mobility would aim to reach physical territories, but also symbolic territories. Mobility is the renewal of artistic supply and such would be its framework. Turkey is an example that finds its entire dimension in Mme *Ozlem Alkis*’ illustration. Indeed, by turning to its immediate neighbours, Asia or Russia, Turkey proves that artistic expression can aspire to other audiences and exit from a difficult, indeed forced, bilateralism with Europe.

2nd session: What European responses to the international cultural challenges? Perspectives from actors of the international cultural cooperation field

Ronan Mac Aongusa (Sector Coordination Unit for the European Neighbourhood Policy in DG External Relations, European Commission)

Steve Green (British Council, Head of European Research and Anna Lindh Foundation, UK)

Fabien Janelle (Director, National Office of Artistic Diffusion)

Philippe Le Moine (Director, External Relations, Festival d’Avignon)

Moderator: *Odile Chenal* (Deputy Director, European Cultural Foundation)

This theme could echo that of cultural diplomacy with, as subtitle, the definition of tomorrow’s

challenges. In other words, why are we now experiencing an acceleration of this preoccupation in terms of cultural politics? This panel explained to us how, from a rise of information emanating from the experience of actors and operators, to be able to put culture, in the same capacity as economy or commerce, at the centre of European external relations' policies. An important paradox when we know that the EU has no cultural diplomats. That's why it cannot and could not economise on the expertise of organisers in the field. As an example, the Festival d'Avignon has chosen to become an interface between the real needs of artists, with a certain idea of taking risks, and those European institutions that are often decision-making at this scale.

Likewise, but on a different level of intervention, the NOAD could become a kind of ambassador of the reasons of State, but also the "state of unreason". This expression signifies by itself alone all the possibility that the operators can have of being both guarantors of central policies and the instigators of them, or at least the inspiration behind them. Defending interprofessional cooperation, sustainable development and good governance are also the responsibility of the operators that are part, or tend to be part of, the international arena. Without calling into question the nobility of such an approach, the threat of paternalism nevertheless hovers.

The current state of culture in Europe is the culmination of the thinking and the march of peoples who've experienced the same traumatism and obstacles of history, hence the reason why perhaps the notion of "time delay" should be introduced as a moderating element. The "time" of the South is not necessarily that of the North and the emergence of a participative democracy carried along by a civil society in the partner countries outside Europe is surely in the process of happening, although not yet visible. A reason why this must not be a disqualifying factor in the establishing of the EU's external policies. To say, as Steve Green did, that the influence of the great powers' cultures on the rest of the world must transform towards a policy of integration of partners and must also be accompanied by a better understanding of the context of the Southern shore and accept the fact that culture can be envisaged in a less formatted way.

In any case, and as Mme Loyer said, the more the rift deepens between the cultures and artistic expression of the populations of the North and South, the more we witness a homogenisation of mass culture. Television and the Internet, having occupied spaces left vacant, are the vehicles of this.

3rd session: The role of the local authorities in European and international cultural cooperation

Alain Hayot (Vice-President, Regional Council of Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur)

Ziani Chérif El Ayad ("Alger-Marseille", theatre exchange project)

Michel Quévit (Professor, Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium)

Moderator: *Pascal Brunet* (Director, Relais Culture Europe)

This session attempted to rehabilitate "the Region" in its role as the beneficiary of central policies, but also and most particularly as a terrain of experimentation both in the implementation of projects, along with the introduction of partnerships.

All in all, the regions become terrains of the concrete expression and manifestation of political desires. The latter must not hesitate from spreading beyond the EU's territorial borders in its way of thinking about cultural policies; likewise in the quality of its external relations. The ENPI is one of its first achievements. As for the regions, they must continue to defend an idea of decentralisation. Féconde and the Marseille meeting in 2013 will provide tangible proof of this.

Conclusion:

On a more philosophical level and in order to put into perspective the tensions linked to notions of mobility and international relations, let's keep in mind that "the nomadic state existed before the sedentary one and migration would be the most ancient method of population development".