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# THE FORMS OF DECISION-MAKING IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE MEANS FOR CULTURE

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In this brief paper I should like to focus on the *forms* of decision-making in the distribution of the means for culture. I shall not enter into other questions concerning cultural policy, which are inseparably linked to the method of distributing means and the forms of decision-making on these means.

Generally speaking, there are only *two global sources* for the financing of cultural activity in Yugoslavia: first, cultural activities, i. e. expenditure in the field of culture, as part of overall social expenditure, is financed out of the surplus of labour, like all other forms of socially beneficial expenditure; second, the individual personally uses cultural goods and services and sets aside a part of his personal income for this purpose as a counter-value for this use.

Depending on the source for financing culture, several mechanisms of decision-making exist for distributing the means for culture. Some of the existing, and otherwise complementary mechanisms of financing culture have been applied to one or the other degree in various periods

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of the development of social relations in Yugoslavia. These mechanisms include the following: *the market, the budget, the mechanism of social funds and foundations and the new present-day mechanism of self-management agreement and social compacts.*

In the market mechanism of financing it is the *individual* who decides, who in using cultural goods and services, pays a certain supplement. At first glance one may think that this method of decision-making is the most just and that the market mechanism of financing, in which each person decides individually, should be present in all mechanisms. In my opinion, the dominant principle is that each individual take part in decision-making (be it a question of part of one's personal income or part of the surplus of labour) when distributing the means for culture. The market mechanism, however, under no circumstances can be the sole mechanism. Let me just mention a few of the reasons to support this. Culture is a specific field of social work, and the effects of the market mechanism on culture considerably differ from those in the economy. In culture, prices are not formed on the basis of supply and demand; they are influenced by many other factors. The „market” in culture is something quite different than in the economy. In certain milieux, due to the unequal locational distribution of cultural institutions, the „market” is over-sated, the capacities are too large, while in other places there are few possibilities for any kind of cultural life at all. The greater application of the market mechanism leads to commercialization in culture, etc.

Decision-making on the distribution of means for culture through the application of the *budget mechanism* brings out several weakspots which are, above all, the result of the „forced” manner (fiscal) of collecting revenue for culture. In this kind of financing, he who creates the means, the surplus of labour, has no possibilities or rights in decision-making, he has no influence on the steering of means in various forms and contents of cultural life. In the budget mechanism it is the State which decides, and State administration which distributes the means. The budget mechanism is a necessary phenomenon and acceptable at a certain level of social relations and in the absence of another better mechanism. It, too, however, has its drawbacks: the subjective steering of means, the unequal development of individual branches of culture and art, the strengthening of the institutionalism of cultural institutions in a negative sense, etc.

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The logic of the budget in decision-making is contrary to self-management, and this method of financing decelerates the development of self-management relations in the sphere of culture as well. Realizing the weakness of the budget system of financing culture, Yugoslavia has been gradually but increasingly decreasing its role, so that within 20 years, for instance, (from 1948 to 1968) it was reduced two times over in favour of other, better ways of distributing and deciding on the means for culture.

The *fund mechanism for financing culture* was established in 1968. That year 63.6% of the total means for culture given in Yugoslavia through the society was already meted out through funds. This system certainly represents progress in terms of the budget system, although it, too, reflected the basic weakpoints of the budget method of forming means. The fund mechanism could not develop further because of the still present fiscal mode of collecting the means for culture. In the fund system it is the fund assemblies and their executive organs which decide. Assemblies and managing committees are composed of elected delegates from all fields of culture. The decisive role, however, is played by representatives of institutions. The assemblies adopted programmes and financial plans on the basis of the means established by the State for cultural activity. Global distribution greatly depended on the distribution of forces in the assembly mechanism. Those delegates who were larger in number and more resolute, succeeded in obtaining higher means for their institutions and their fields of activity.

This period of the distribution of means via funds is characterized by the decentralization of means and the inception of the democratization of distribution. Until then major concentrated means at the level of the federation were entirely turned over to the republics, which turned them over to the provinces, and a part to the municipalities. With the emergence of decentralization, these means have been brought closer to the milieux in which they were created and to the people who created them. This was a normal road for the next phase in the development of social relations as a whole, and the emergence of a new method of financing and decision-making in culture.

The self-management character of the Yugoslav society and social relations, the striving of the worker to be the subject of cultural policy, the latest constitutional changes, have all strongly

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reflected the need for a radical change in the method of forming means for culture, in the method of managing over these means and in the forms of distributing them.

The fund method could not introduce radical changes, but the decentralization of means and democratization in decision-making on the distribution of means mark a serious step forward. The former subjectivism of the individual, which was so present in the budget system, has been checked by the collective method of decision-making.

The newly created *interest communities of culture*, like interest communities in other fields of social labour, are based on the principle of *self-management agreement* and *social compacts*. Interest communities mark the beginning in the creation of a new mechanism of financing cultural activities.

The differences between all previous methods of financing and decision-making on the distribution of means for culture and this new method, via interest communities, are major and important:

1. The source of the means for culture in interest communities of culture is not nor can be tax-based. The means are collected without the mediation of the State, through direct contacts between workers in the economy and cultural workers.

2. Communities are the result of agreement reached between those who create the means in the economy and workers in culture who need these means in order to create cultural goods and extend cultural services. The management of the means determined for the development of culture is organized by consensus through the assemblies and executive organs. The assembly and executive committee are composed of an equal number of delegates from workers in culture and workers in the economy.

3. Given means formed in this way, and this mode of management, it is only natural that there is a common interest in investing in the development of true cultural values. Interest communities of culture are the right place optimally to dovetail the aims of cultural policy, the interests of cultural workers and the increasingly developed cultural needs of the people.

Certain difficulties, a lack of understanding and resistance accompany the formation and development of interest communities of culture,

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for this new way of financing culture cannot and must not jeopardize any created cultural value, nor, however, can it support certain outdated forms of institutionalism. In paving the way for new content in cultural life, outdated concepts, not unnaturally, clash with these new contents.



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