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FROM IDENTITY MISTIQUE TO IDENTITY CULTURAL POLICY

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INTRODUCTION

Power of culture has become politically visible very rare in history. Usually it was connected with periods of grobal social transformations.

An unintelligible resistance to the attemps to civilize the peoples (one can mention the history of water pipe dissemination or the history of agricultural settlement projects in the Extreme North) also put on the agenda cultural issues. During the last years more and more Europeans were manifesting their interest in cultural actions. As Eduard Delgado has marked that was not a social demand or concern *for culture* itself. Most probably, that is a demand *for cultural policy* (see Delgado, 1993). That is a demand for debates *on culture* as an *area of policy-making.*

It is said that civil society has aged in Western Europe and has not become grown - up in Eastern Europe. Sometimes to discuss priorities of public cultural policy is the only chance to make one's own priorities visible. The impact between politicians and population is demonstrated in debates on cultural policy - making. The connotations and connexions between policy on culture, other policies (economical, military, educational, social, etc.) and decision-making are under discussion. The problem is not to loose cultural policy itself.

Key issues are the frameworks of policy-making and underlying concepts of human activity and human being.

These notions (as well as visions of a future which also define cultural policy) are more implicit then concsious. But they dominate not only possibilities to access · benefits and richness of the established culture, but also possibilities to challenge cultural dogma from different points of view (class, race, ethic, sex, gender, environment, region, etc.) and to integrate new aspirations in policy-making.

That is why it is so important to reflect essential notions underlying cultural policy. It will give a chance to promote the necessary shifts through different cultural, training and networking projects. During the last years debates concerning these issues were focused mainly on themes "Culture and Democracy", "Culture and Totalitarism".

In this paper I would like to continue the discussion, referring to the concept of cultural identity.

RUSSIAN CULTURAL POLICY
IN EUROPEAN CONTEXT

I has to choose strange genre for this observation. It would be a historical study and an analysis on current developments at the same time.

The problem is that it is impossible to describe *Russian current situation* as homogeneous. That could be conceived only as the *comlex of trends related to different historical times*. I will not pay special attention on *totalitarian culture* which was rather fully studied by many authors. I would like to note only that the mechanism of implementing state ideology (whatever it would be) is not destroyed hitherto.

I would like to refer to the concept of *democratization of culture*.

The first demands for it were connected with the idea of "just distribution of the cultural riches". Later it was replaced by the notion of "free access to cultural facilities". That was considered as one of the essential human rights and, at the same time, as a vehicle to over-

come the gap between upper and low classes, to achieve social consensus.

This version of democratization of culture could be named *cultural distribution*. It was widesperad in Russia as well as in Europe.

I have not enough knowledge to clarify the origin of this idea in European context. But I would like to mention the activity of the German Union for Social Policy founded by a group of 'ethic economists' in 1870s.

In Russia this idea was discussed by liberal intelligencia at the beginning of the centure. The caimpaign on democratization of culture started in February 1917. After the October 1917 it was continued by left intelligencia collaborated with Bolshevics.

One could mention, for example, the grand idea of the popular Library of International Literature projected by M.Gorky. Masterpieces from all times and peoples were translated into Russian for this project. It goes without saing, that many well-known writers were exluded from the International Literature because of their "wrong" ideas. But speaking in terms of cultural distribution the project could be considered as successful. The Library was really accessible for any average family. Many people (including myself) first read Japanese, French, Arabic and Swedish classics thanks to it.

" Mozart concert during a break at a factory " - that was not only Western European project till 1968. That was also Russian/Soviet (from 10s till 80s) and Eastern and Central European project.

I would like to stress that the notion of *cultural distribution* implicitly contains the idea of *distribution of the culture of the dominant group*. The "elite, or high culture" (that was not the culture of proletariat) continued to be the most acknowledged even after the October 1917. The futurists' slogan "Pushkin has to be kicked out from our modern ship" was not very popular.

One had joke the final outcome of this affair [socialism] was still in doubt because of that. Speaking seriously,*"high culture"* was deeply integrated into the system of secondary and artistic education. Just now it is

the *point of reference* and the *identity* basis for many people.

It is even said that Russia and some other post-totalitarian countries with similar educational systems could be considered as the last "high culture" countries.

Returning to the notion of cultural distribution, I would like to point out that it correlated with "total distribution" principle of socialist economy.

The strategy of cultural distribution was the main strategy not only on the state level, but also on the local level.

There was only one factory in many small towns and settlements in former Soviet Union.(I think it was the same in other former socialist cointries).

Special "social, culture, everyday life" programmes were conducted by each soviet factory in 60s - 80s.One could not get food, or medical service, or a role in amateur theatre only through this system of distribution. That provided all the inhabitants with jobs, industrial style of life and suitable *factory-settlement identity*. Now it is difficult for factories to make both ends meet. Socialist corporations are forced to think about market and competitive ability. The customary lifestyle has collapsed. That means the *time of cultural distribution as main ideology of cultural policy has come to an end* in Russia (and I think in other post-totalitarian counries) as it has come to an end in Western Euroupe. The attempts of our state cultural authorities to keep it could not stop the process.

I would like to empharsize that the crisis of the model of cultural distribution has started since the end of 60s, not now. At that time the activism of non-official groups interested in amateur arts and seeking for their own "creativity" took the features of social movement. That could be correlated to the resembling processes in Western Europe.

"Author's song" festivals, for example, got together thousands of fans in the forests near Kuibyshev. The "author's song" was a form of personal and group liberation from official rhetorics.

However, these groups could not be compared with Western European post-1968 urban movements which challenged the idea of established cultural dogma. The "author's song" and others groups did not put forward global cultural aims as feminism did.

On the wave of perestroika former participants of 60-s-70-s movements have come to the policy-making institutions. That is the common trend for Eastern and Central Europe.

I do not know about other countries, but in Russia the ministry of culture and local cultural committes are now the strange places where former "apparatchics" and underground artists share rooms and views on culture. The last ones changed 'socialist realism' for 'conceptualism' as state acknowledged art. But they could not break *the hierarchial principle of soviet art and cultural distribution ideology as the ideology of state cultural policy* which continues to rule the events in public cultural sector.

That is the problem that has not yet found proper solution. I think that new approaches will be put forward during next years. The pre-requisites are being formed now on the basis of socio-cultural stratification. The *emerging independent subjects of cultural policy* put forward their own priorities and conduct their own cultural pojects. The alternative cultural sector is rapidly developing. For example, feminist groups in collaboration with women artists have organized exibitions and published a journal in order *to challenge* gender *identity* through arts.

(The problem of constructing new identities will be discussed later)

That put on the agenda the concept of *cultural creativity* which has played an important role in developing cultural democracy in Europe. I would like to point out two other trends which are becoming more and more important for Russia and other post-socialist countries.

The first trend is connected with changes in relationship between culture and power. One of the most widespread international notions of culture is *culture as a luxury* that can be protected after satisfaction of the priority needs. In marxist terms it was interpreted as "basis and superstructure theory". *To show culture* means to

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show *a sign of welfare and prestige*. This idea unites extremely different approaches. I would like to emphasize that it gives a chance to power symbolic games. *Culture*, or *an open concern for culture* were used many times in a European history as the symbolic system for *representation of power*. That could be concieved as the political symbolism, *a certain form of power identity*.

This notion could help to understand the relationship between culture and power under totalitarian regime in the former Soviet Union (for exaple, Stalin's extremely high interest and care for cinema making. Stalin used *cinema myth* to construct *distinct identity of soviet people* that forced everybodyto believe in happy life and made the real state of affairs unimportant.

An open concern for culture is also an effective, flexible and comparatively cheap *vehicle to create positive image* of a party, or a politician, or political idea in general. Cultural policy may clarify and stress the differences in approachs to social issues. In Europe that was an important background of urban cultural policy in 70s:

"...parties across the whole political spectrum used cultural policy to establish a connection between the distictive style of their governance and the citizens' identification Šwith their cityĆ, often in implicit or explicit counterposition to other political parties and styles of governance" (Bianchini, 1992, p.82)

In Russia this idea has not become popular hitherto. Present electoral campain could be considered as the very beginning of this strategy. The second trend is the development of *artistically mediated power of market*.

In Western Europe the arts have become one of the main engines of economy. That is also becoming important in Russia now. Advertizing, fashion, design, product styling have been rapidly developed during the last three years. The aim is to form a consumer through a permanent changing set of artistically mediated expectations and aesthetically intensified consumer requirements. (see Luke, 1991)

In Russia *consumer identity* is actively cultivating not only in commerce, but in different spheres, including policy. The same artists are invited to make political appeals and commercial announcements.

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I would like to stress dangerous consequences of this process. Giving the illusion of free choice, consumer identity makes the person passive and controlled.

I think that the well-known "Your voucher - your choice" could be named as the slogan of the campaign on constructing consumer identity. The analysis of current developments makes me to refer to problems of constructing identity. However, I have to return to discussion on identity crisis.

IDENTITY CRISIS

Firstly, I would like to note two sides of an identity crisis in terms of conceptual crisis. Then I shall comment them using examples from Russian experiences. Both side of identity crisis are personally painful and socially and politically dangerous.

Identity is vitally important. The *absence of identity* is the *absence of references* which are necessary as a basis and a direction for interactions. To be pure of contacts with identity is to be pure of contacts with past and future, *to lose meanings of the activity*. A search for identity as an essential personal and social demand.

At the same time identity is a certain stereotype and therefore a *form of oppression*. It is culturally and socially constructed prescription which can or can not correspond to one's own experiences. To have some distinctive identity (race, ethnic, gender, etc) often means to belong to the so called disadvantage group. Sometimes it means exclusion from dominant culture and society (racist, nationalist, patriarchal). *Uncritically accepted identity* is a possibility to become *exploited*. For example, to be "a good woman" means to have double burden every day and to lose heart every night, to be "a good epmloyee" means to keep silence about the low salary and so on.

During the last years the most dangerous trends in Europe have been connected with *exploitation of national identity*.

Under ideological and economical crisis national identity looks as the most natural basis for co-operation. Europeans can not say that they understand the mecha-

nism of tragic trasformation from national identity to nationalist dictatorship and ethnic cleanness.

Political exploitation of identity is not phenomenon which is specific for post-totalitarian period. But I think an analysis of post-socialist countries experiences could clarify the situation in general.

In Russia identity crisis was especially sharp and painful during the first years of perestroika. Many peoply felt that they have wasted their lives. It was not only because of the loss of communist ideals. It was because of the loss of meanings of activity. For example, one was working at the factory during 20 years. During all these years he/she tried to increase productivity and to work better. His/her efforts were honored by a medal or by photos and articles in city's newspaper. He/she lived with other five members of a family in a nice flat (29,9 sq.m) and was going to take a new one next year. Suddenly this good worker was informed that

* the ideals were ruined,

* he/she lived all the life as a pauper and will live worse,

* Lenin really was a German spy,

* the production of the factory was out-of-date 15 years ago and was kept in storehouse during the last five years,

* and his/her new flat would be sold to a successful businessman who was a leader of city's communist party committee last year.

This picture helps to clarify how disoriented people were. I would like to remind about above menyioned factory-settlement identity here.

The custom for this specific lifestyle was more important then communist ideology. People have *difficulties* in *changing this lifestyle and in seeking new identities*. That has to be taken into account when *social basis of resistance to reforms* in post-totalitarian countries is discussed.

Some of people refered to the past. To find roots meant to renew oneself, and, in many cases, to avoid discussion about future. Associations of descendants of aristocrats and merchants were very popular at that time.

Some of them refered to the image of a "market" and "American dream" as to the image of a happy and healthy life.

Later the direction of economic reforms connected with "westernization" has become a subject of critique from different point of view. Critique position was occupied by national-patriotic forces(the environmental critique of re-placing dirty and out-of-date technologies from West to East has not become politically visible) as well as "care for social needs" position was occupied by former communists.

Russians in the former Soviet Union (as Serbs in the former Yugoslavia) were considered as dominant nationalities. For many people who were not Russians (or Serbs) it gave chance to feel themselves as victims of regime and to estimate "Russian occupation" as the only course of economic and ideological crisis.

On the other hand, Russian "patriots" remembered that Russians were the only ones who had not represented as a nationality in the Soviet Union. They started to look for the enemy and revived the idea of Yudeo-bolshevic conspiracy. It confirms that the best way to find an enemy is to divide people on the basis of nationality.

Unfortunately, modern communicaion technologies have been playing a significant role in the expoitation of national identity. Firstly, I have to mention media war in Yugoslavia. (see Dragicevic-Sesic, 1993). She described the tools of media war: the selection of information; re-interpretation of information - first comments then the information itself; special black and white vocabulary which humiliate the opposition; descriptions full of hate, a.s.o). I was shocked to recognize them in Russian media which showed the events in Moscow at the beginning of October, 1993. Special identity "Moscovites suffered from White House bandits" was cultivated, and was being known that Armenian and Azerbaijan speculators (which were hated by some people because their success in running for money) were included later in the number of the above mentioned bandits.

At the end of this part of the paper I would like to say some words about debates on national identity in Russia.

This discussion went out of the academitian commutity at the end of 80-s. The open debate started when the independent philosophical club "Free Word" was open under the umbrella of the democratic authorities of the Federation of Cinema Makers. Then discussions were continued by many academicians and journalists in mass-media.

The myth of mono-ethnic basis for national identity was critisized. The most radical point of view was that national identity had no links with ethnic sub-cultures. Every time when it was necessary to covert economical and political interests (and trans-national ideologies, e.g. proletarian, were in crisis) national identity was specially constructed. (see Seminar on federalism..., 1990)

It is hardly possible to follow the fever of these debates here. I would like only to point out that they were thought provoking and inspired some methodological notes on cultural identity.

CULTURAL IDENTITY AS CONCEPTUAL PROBLEM

During the last years *cultural identity* was placed in focus of interests in discussions on cultural policy. But it was rather hard for me to think about it not in terms of mists and *mistique*, but in terms of *theories* and *projects*. It seems to me that it would be more correct to discuss:

- *different types of identities* (professional, sex, gender, racial, ethnic, intellectual, etc)

- *different types of situations* which can provoke an emerge of identity or an increase of identity importance

- *different types of communities* (professional, consumption, neighbourhood, etc) which are social units keeping the identities.

What does "cultural identity" mean? What does "to appropriate cultural identity" mean?

One can says that it means to be united by common behavioral patterns with other members of a community.

But these patterns themselves are determinated by a set of norms, stereotypes, images. The last ones have to

be transmitted and interiorized by newcomes to keep cultural identity. But what about common visions of future which could be more real then customary stereotypes and actualities of everyday and everynight routine?.. What about common challenges and choices based on these visions?..

Trying to answer these questions, one comes to the conclusion that identity can not be conceived as cultural in terms of a subject (culture as an established sphere of institutions, etc). The broad vision of culture (a way of life, or lifestyle) was a response to attempts of new social actors to challenge the established model of culture. But this definition can not also clarify the mistique of cultural identity.

I will try to analyse cultural indentity in terms of *culture as specific dimension of any type of human activity*. In this analysis I will follow Russian tradition of "cultural-historical approach" (see Vygotsky, 1962, 1982-84, Kozulin, 1986, Schedrovitsky, P., 1992) and its developments in works by the Moscow Methodological Circle (50s - 80s) and the School of Cultural Policy (1989 - present) (see Schedrovitsky, G.,1988, Schedrovitsky, P.,1991,1993, Rotkirch, 1993, Liborakina, 1993) Vygotsky can be considered as one of the first action theorist who developed an interactive perspective on human society. In Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory the sentral feature of human activity is its *mediated nature.*

So called mental tools (sign systems, logical concepts, mnemonic devises, a.s.o.) help the subject to organize him/herself and the action undertaken. The special sphere of norms, models, examples of human activity should be identified and transmit to newcomes (new generations, strangers, etc) in order to re-produce this activity.

Culture is viewed as the sphere of activity norms and models. These norms mediate human deeds and communication and implicitly contain and fix admissible ways of interactions. On the other hand, these norms are symbolically mediated themselves.

To organize oneself through mental tools (culturally) means also to identify him/herself through cultural sign, symbol, myth.

Semiotic images, human perceptions and expectations are as real (and in many cases more real) as actualities, or actual states of affairs.

Cultural identity does not only define the *spectrum of images and orientations*. It also defines the *method of correlating actualities and images*. Practical observations show clearly the links between identity and types of interactions. It is obvious, for example, that networking is not good working method to mobilize people on the basis of ethnic identity. Cultural identity determines the way to overcome the gap between the images and actualities. It could be conceived as the rool to shape the course of events.

Cultural identity is specific dimension of each identity.

TO TURN TO CULTURAL IDENTITY POLICY

This concept can be used as the *theoretical basis* for the projects dealing with identity issues.

That provides with possibiliyies to turn from cultural identity mistique to *cultural identity policy*.

I would like to identify *three aims of cultural identity policy:*

* to construct identity

* to liberate from identity

* to organize dialogue between identities, to construct identity - to challenge cultural dogma.

Firstly, I would like to mention one of the forgotten ideas of Russian cultural policy.

The attempts *to challenge dominant culture* from the point of view of *class* were enterprised by the group of Alexandr Bogdanov. They worked from 1910s till the beginning of 1920s.(see Bogdanov,1924)

They emphasized that the type of cultural identity should be changed in order to establish just society. Otherwise, "it will not be a proletarian who appropriates culture. It will be culture that assimilates this proletarian as human material for its tasks".

Cultural and pedagogical innovative programmes were conducted by this group in the Worker's University on Capri (where Maxim Gorky was living at that time).

Unfortunately, Bogdanov's works were forgotten for a long time. The idea of Proletarian Culture was barbarized and became the ideological basis for oppression of artists with "non-proletarian" origin.

To construct identity as an objective of cultural policy means a help in shaping *positive identity of disadvantaged* groups. These groups are oppressed by dominant cultural dogma and therefore could not be presented as important actors in human activity and as full members of society. For example, women are culturally oppressed group in patriarchal society. Traditional images of femininity justify the discrimination on the basis of sex. These images and expectations limit fields and possibilities of women's self-realization and legitimate their position as a subordinated group.

I think that now the most interesting attempt to challenge cultural identity is feminist critique of gender stereotyping. Feminist activism put forward the problem of new female identity as cultural problem. Consciousness-raising and collective memory groups can be considered as attepmts to shape *new cultural identity on grass-root level.*

To feel that you are forced to behaviour in accordance with prescribed feminine identity and you have no voice and no language to express your disagreement is a tragedy. To identify that you belong to the oppressed group because your feminine identity is a beginning of liberation. To analyse feminine identity as a result of "sexualization" and to construct new images and perceptions on the basis of your own experience is identity cultural policy on grassroot level. Youth, feminists, environmentalists, ethnic/racial minorities, gay and lesbian groups challenged the established culture and cultural technologies (including language) which pushed them out of cultural space. They put on the agenda their issues as problems of cultural, social and political oppression.

Their search for new ways of self-expression and new identity gave impulse to new strategies in cultural policies. New priorities of personal and community de-

velopment, participation, egalitarianism were put forward by left-controlled local authorities (see Bianchini, 1992,1993). Animation initiatives were developed to promote people to speak and to shape the identity corresponding to their experience.

Cultural animation can help disadvantaged groups in "culturalization" of their aspirations and new experience and to make them socially and politically visible, for example, in the field of community and city planning. Cultural animation activity can be conceived as *identity cultural policy on the level of social institutions.*

The development of *citizenship* as a strategy of urban cultural policy in 70s can be also analysed in this framework (see Bianchini, 1992, 1993). Bianchini points out that promoting citizenship was particulary important for disadvantaged groups. It gave them possibility to access the policy-making process and demonstrated the relevance of their ideas and skills to the city's overall development From the point of view of above mentioned notion of cultural identity (which limits types of interaction) I can say that *civic identity* subscribes the orientation to a *dialogue and consensus.*

'-One of prerequisites of a dialoque is shaping common communicative space. In its turn, it needs special work for *the widening frames* of participants of communication. This work is also an issue of cultural policy. Bianchini showes it on the example of urban cultural policy: "1970s ideas about about cities as *projects* for the widening of people's horizons, the raising of expectations and the redesigning of the organization of life and work (for example, Nicolini's view of Rome as "a system of life which develops desires)" (see Bianchini, 1992, p.89)

TO LIBERATE FROM IDENTITY
- TO CONSTRUCT INDIVIDUALITY

As showed above, identity may be a form of oppression. One can says that if it is dangerous not to have identity, it is twice dangerous to have the only one. In this case the power of identity can be easily exploited. The liberation from identity does not mean that one has to close his/her door and to reject to act because it demands the acception of cultural norms. It means that one

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has to reflect his/her own beloning to any identity, limits of distinctive identity and possible consequences of its acception.

The customary way of socialization and traditional pedagogical systems did not provide a person with such opportunities. Now the development of permanent education is forming pre-requisites for liberation from identity.

This notion needs clarification and supplement. Infortunately, I could not provide with them here. It would be a special theme for an analysis of innovations in education which are promoted as *"pedagogy for freedom"* (see Schedrovitsky, 1993).

I would like to point out that the idea of *liberation from identity challenges the concept of individuality.* In this framework individuality is defined as the complex of appropriated and rejected identities which can be more or less important in different situations. More correct, *individuality* could be conceived as *the trace of the way* which a person passed accepting and reflecting identities, challenging the dominant and shaping the new ones.

TO LIBERATE FROM IDENTITY
- TO ORGANIZE A DIALOGUE
BETWEEN IDENTITIES

One of the methods of liberation from identity was developed in *Russian activity games.* At the same time, it helps to organize dialogue between different identities.

Activity games have certain similarities with brainstorming and simulation practices and action research. Rather, they use more general *developmental systems thinking approach.* Activity games are aimed to solve complex problems on the basis of *multiprofessional and multicultural cooperation.* I do not attempt to analyse the whole method in this paper (see Schedrovitsky, G. & Kotel'nicov,S., 1988, Rothkirch, 1993, Liborakina, 1993), but only focus on *professional and "position" identities.* It is not easy to organize multiprofessional cooperation. In many cases professionals can not and even do not want understand and listen to each other. In order to organize dialogue and cooperation between professionals it is necessary to transcend professional boundaries. That means

that special work should be done to help professionals to reflect possibilities and limits of their identities. This work is organized in framework of "positioned activity" and "positioned communication".

Referring to professional division and identity, one could claim that professions are determinated by their specific nets of techniques, values and myths. One can always distinguish a biologist from humanitarian.

But there are also divisions according to the basic type of activity: analyzing or planning, sustaining innovation or re-production, etc. Different professions could be united by common approach or by this basic type of activity. For example, biologists and geologists use a general systematic approach to nature. Political observators and doctors do partly similar work: they analyse.

These different types of activity are mediated through so called "positions". The actors in activity games are supposed to define themselves as "players" in relation to different positions which were included in the game's project. They are also supposed to identify similarities and differences of professions uniting by distinct "position" as well as similarities and differences of "positions". Special games' methods and working regimes are used to achieve these objectives. (see Liborakina, 1993)

The "player" should impersonalize his/her professional experience and learn to think about his/her limits and disadvantages as limits and disadvantages of the profession. It makes space for personal development and, on the other hand, helps actors to reflect their own professional identity and to understand other identities.

The communication in activity games is organized as "positioned" communication. That is the basis of a dialogue between different identities and future co-operation.

To use the method of activity games on a full scale is a rather hard task. Have been seeing its success many times, I hope that certain elements of games could be implemented in European practice of cultural policy.

TO ORGANIZE DIALOGUE:
MULTI MEDIA

The rapid development of "electronics" (especially new telecommunication and information technologies) provides with unique opportunities to organize dialogue between different identities.

For this purpose special programs dealing with public discussins on urgent issues could be promoted.

The objective of these programs is not only to give a floor to different groups and different opinions. It would be also necessary to clarify limits of customary solutions, to make visible new challeges and the basis of critique (class, race, gender, environmental, a.s.o) and to identify common communicative space and ways of possible co-operation. I think that the activity game method would be useful here.

TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE
BETWEEN CULTURAL POLITICIANS

Identity problems could be considered as an inspiring issue for debate on different aspects of European policy-making. To put identity on the agenda would mean also to promote dialogue between cultural politicians themselves. I would like to suggest the concrete theme to stimulate discussion: *the role of different activating forms and methods* (cultural animation, community socio-cultural planning, action research in the field of media, activity games a.s.o) *in identity cultural policy.*

This paper is an attempt to initiate this discussion.

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