

## PANEL C – THE ROLE OF CULTURE AND ART IN THE FORMING OF EUROPE? CONTRIBUTING TO UNITY OR REINFORCING DIFFERENCES?

Chair: Bernhard Lichtenberger

Panellists: Martin Heller, Linz09 (AT); Pius Knüsel, Pro Helvetia (CH); Esra Nilgün Mirze, Istanbul 2010; Sven Egil Omdal, Stavanger Aftenblad (NO)

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome you to our panel discussion which is part of the Linz 2009 Project EXTRA Europe. Our topic this afternoon is titled *The Role of Culture and Art in the Forming of Europe: Contributing to Unity or Reinforcing Differences?* We will have an opportunity to address questions such as: is there a common European culture? I would like to now introduce the participants of this panel. Starting on my close left, Ms Esra Mirze, from the board of the upcoming European Capital of Culture, Istanbul 2010. On my right, Mr Sven Egil Omdal, multimedia and culture editor for the Norwegian daily newspaper *Stavanger Aftenblad*. On the far right, Mr Pius Knüsel, director of the Swiss cultural foundation Pro Helvetia. And on the far left, Martin Heller, artistic director for Linz 2009. My name is Bernhard Lichtenberger, I am the chief editor for arts, media and entertainment of the Oberösterreichische Nachrichten. Good afternoon.

I want to start with Mr Knüsel. What would you consider the impact of the fact of being outside of the European Union on supporting cultural export and cultural exchange?

Pius Knüsel:

Of Switzerland?

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Of Switzerland, in your situation that you are in.

Pius Knüsel:

I guess, easy answer: there is no impact. Switzerland always lived thanks to being or to having powerful neighbours; France, Austria, Germany, Italy, sharing culture with them and sharing also artists and ideas. Switzerland is like a little spot in the heart of the Alps that somehow, for some mysterious reasons, remained outside of the huge union of European countries. Yet we always consider our neighbours to be part of us and ourselves to be part of our neighbours. And even with the political project of the European

communities this didn't change much, let's say thanks to some general rules established in the meantime, exchange on an administrative level, whatever, fiscal or whatever, it got a little bit easier.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

If it comes to funding artists or cultural projects, do you face more or less bureaucracy than being within the European Union?

Pius Knüsel:

I would say slightly less, but I can't measure that, since for this I had to be really in the European community in order to make that experience and then to compare it to experience we do now. But basically, and this is, I guess, a very Swiss principle, and being here is maybe just the exception that confirms the rule, basically we thrive fully on the activity of the artists who find their partners abroad, usually programmes, music halls, whatever, and then apply for financial support. So if there is any administrative hustle, usually this is taken into account by the host institutions.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Ms Mirze, can you give us examples out of your, so far finished (it's probably not finished!), 2010 programme that apply both art and culture in order to bring the European countries and Istanbul, Turkey, closer together.

Esra Mirze:

Actually, yes. And I would like to answer your question from another hat. Actually I've been working with Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts for 20 years, that's an NGO, a totally non-governmental organisation, which gets 75 percent of its budget through private sponsorship and about 20 percent come from box office income, and the rest, which is a tiny, tiny little contribution, from governmental resources, and only in kind basis. And this foundation organises the international festivals of film, theatre, music, jazz, and the International Istanbul Biennale. Also, Istanbul's adventure to become European Capital of Culture is quite different than any other country's because in the year 2000, because of the new millennium, there was a decision announced in an official paper of the European Union saying that non-EU countries can also apply for the title. So we, a bunch of five, at the beginning, non-governmental organisations, came together and we thought, OK,

Istanbul is a World Capital of Culture, so we should do our best to make this possible and so it was a totally bottom–up process. And then we convinced the municipality, the government ship, the Ministers of Culture and the Minister of Foreign Affairs to do the application. So if you ask me, I believe that arts is the only medium, if there is a future, there is a future that we desire, it can only be attained through arts. And I believe that it is our duty to provide the utmost freest platform for the individual artist to find a space and to be able to express himself because artists are always avantgarde, they're ahead of their time. And they are the people who stretch out their hands to the public and make them ask questions. Art does not dictate us anything, it doesn't tell us how to think or how we should behave, but it gives us the clues and raises questions about humanity in general. And there is nothing more common than humanity itself. I mean, when we're talking about EU or other institutions, and recently in Paris there was a meeting for allies of civilisations and there, there were representatives of higher and highest institutions and it was a brainstorming session and we came up with the idea at the very end that if you are going to speak about, God knows what it means, "allies of civilisation," I don't believe in the term anyway. But if we are going to achieve something for the sake of understanding, then we could only do it on an individual basis. Because people are gradually and constantly losing their faith for institutionalised impositions, and especially in art. So this is my idea, in brief.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

I want to stick with that topic. The Turkish efforts to become a member of the European Union have faced major barriers, as we all know. Is becoming the European Capital of Culture kind of a back door to step into, to get a step closer to becoming a member?

Esra Mirze:

No, I think it's a way of showing Istanbul is a front door, not a back door. Because, I mean, the whole of Europe is now discussing issues like, you know, cultural identity and also, I hate the word: tolerance. Excuse me, but I believe that this is something that nobody has any right, as far as human rights is concerned, because – what happens when the tolerance ends, is the question. Tolerance means that I'm putting up with you, but in Istanbul for maybe thousands and thousands of years, we haven't put up with anybody; we have managed to maintain a culture of living together. And most of the people may not have an idea of what Istanbul is like, but also in Anatolia, you can see a church, a synagogue, a mosque, side by side. Religion has never been an issue. I always give the example from my family: my grandfather comes from Trais, that is Greece, my

grandmother is Hungarian, my mother's mother, maternal mother, is from Anatolia, from Malatya, her husband was from Yemen, my husband is Georgian, and half of the family are orthodox Christians and the other half is Muslim, so when I ask myself, does religion matter? Why do I care? It's something private and personal. So maybe Istanbul has something to show the world: that it's not only coexistence, but you can develop a culture of living together, which is the most democratic way, of living together in peace. So I believe that, in that sense, we can act as a front door – for European values, of course.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

A question for all of you then: do you believe in the unifying character of culture? Is that an artist's reality, that there is a world or a Europe without borders?

Pius Knüsel:

Well, it's a question we are asked often: is the artist always also an ambassador of any superior idea, like the European idea, or a national idea or regional. I don't believe so much now. The artist is first and probably last of all an ambassador of himself and his work and his individual ideas. But the fact that we share a European space, continental space where artists can freely express their ideas, that's maybe the unifying part of artistic life we are having in Europe, not the artistic works itself in the way that they somehow bring the mud that sticks us together. But the idea of having such a space where we experiment in an intellectual way all together, individually, collectively, that's maybe the unifying idea of having a strong, very strong, artistic and cultural life.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Mr Omdal, how do you see that?

Sven Egil Omdal:

Yes, I prepared a brief introductory statement. I think maybe that addresses your question also. So I think I'll stick to that as the beginning. Because I see this as basically a centre–periphery debate, and the centre–periphery perspective is like a pair of binoculars. If you look through the small lenses, which most people would regard as the proper use, everything becomes enlarged, you see details very clearly. But if you turn the binoculars around and look through the large lenses, everything suddenly seems far away, nuances are lost, and it becomes difficult to identify even important features in the landscape. Living in Norway, it's easy to get the impression that we are looking at Europe through the small

lenses, seeing the details and feeling close to European culture, while the rest of Europe is looking at us through the large lenses, and all they see is an exotic country on the fringe of the civilised world; the *Ultima Thule*, first described by the geographer and explorer Pytheas from Marseille three centuries before Christ. Distant cultures are usually portrayed as exotic. We want them to be different. We don't go to China to drink double café lattes at Starbucks; we want China to be different, to be the real China. And I think Turkey is obviously an object of this kind of conscious or unconscious cultural alienation. When we follow this discussion of Turkey's possible entry, and I see this word popping up today, I got reminded of the Nobel Laureate John Coetzee's book *Waiting for the Barbarians*, and that word has come up many times today. But that book is not about the people who are approaching. It's about the fear of the people on the inside; of the mindset of the people on the inside. And if people on the inside, the less we know of the people who are approaching us, the more we tend to know only the exotic parts of it. And even if it is to a much smaller extent, I feel that Norway is also the object of this phenomenon, which you can call exotification. Because the population is so small that few Europeans interact with Norwegians on a regular basis, and because the country itself obviously is not the centre of anything European, it's easy to confirm exotic stereotypes rather than discover similarities between the Norwegians and the other European populations. Every year, tens of thousands of Germans come to Norway. They don't come to visit our opera house or our concert halls, not even to renew their wardrobe in a shopping mall or small boutiques. They come to trek in our mountains and to fish in our fjords. And they all leave with a silhouette of a Norwegian moose on the back of their cars, as a signal to the neighbours back home that they've been to that strange place up north. And I think partly this is our own fault, because I think if you look at the table outside you see some tourist brochures. And the tourist industry thrives on stereotypes. This is not only true of the Norwegian tourist industry, it goes for the tourist industry in most countries. They all try their best to reinforce the mental pictures we already have, reducing complex societies to some familiar historic or natural landmarks. That's why Rome is always Ancient Rome and Austria is musical Vienna and the splendour of the imperial era. Seen from Norway, this is not a big problem, because we look through the small lenses and we are a people of travellers. Norwegians travel a lot and they travel throughout Europe, mostly. So we roam about in Spain, from Asturias to Extremadura to the rock of Gibraltar. We know that there is a Spain of *autopistas* and computers and fashion and drugs, we know that bullfights are rare and people don't dance flamenco in the streets, on the plazas, not even in Seville, on a daily basis. And we know that for one particular reason, we know it because we came again.

And this is the point that I really want to emphasise. Based on my experience, both as a former travel writer and as the editor, the first time you send a photographer or a writer, or I think even an artist, to another culture, they tend to look for the pictures they already have in their heads. So they come back with the same stories. They go to Barcelona and they write about Gaudi and Las Ramblas. And they don't listen to the new sounds from the barrio, or watch the new artists in the galleries. But if you send them back for a second or a third time, they will go beyond the clichés. They will look for new stories, for new people. And better still, if you let them live there for a while, strange things will happen. They'll start to understand the small mechanisms of society, how things work or maybe how they don't work. The picture they paint will gradually be filled with details, with shadows and perspective. Because they've turned the binoculars around. If someone did this with Norway, came again, came frequently, stayed with us for a while, they would discover that there is no such thing as the Norwegian culture. In the same way that there is no single French or Italian culture, and definitely no single European culture. The Norwegian population is tiny, it's less than 5 million, but the country as you can see on the map, is large. I live on the southernmost tip of the country. If you fling it around, you see that I live closer to Rome than I do the Lapp territory up north. And like most southern Norwegians, I'm much more familiar with the streets of Rome than with the vast expanses and the Lapp population in my own country. There are at least three major different cultures in Norway. There is a polar country, where the proximity to two other European countries, Finland and Russia, influences both trade and culture. In the mountains and in the east side of the country, there is an inland culture strong in traditions and mostly influenced by the closeness to Sweden. And finally we have a coastal culture, which for centuries has built relations overseas, especially with Denmark, Britain and the United States. And even this division is an oversimplification. There are urban cultures and rural ones. Fishermen and farmers have different cultures. And 25 percent of the population of Oslo is of a non-western origin. The immigrants from Bangladesh or Pakistan in Oslo have much more in common with the Bangla or Pakistani population in Birmingham than they have with the people in the small fishing villages in northern Norway. So how can we talk about a European culture when we even lack such a homogenous culture in a population half the size of London? The fact is that we can't. Not in the sense that an Italian and a Norwegian should feel related to each other because we belong to a geographical entity called Europe. And even less because we may or may not, as the case of Norwegians may be, belong to an ever-changing political entity called the EU. The title of this panel, the last panel today, is *The Role of Culture and Art in the Forming of Europe: Contributing to Unity*

*or Reinforcing Differences?* I would like to propose some other alternatives: the role of culture and art in understanding differences, in living with differences, in accepting differences. It's a difficult question so I'll propose a very simple answer: by turning the binoculars around. By giving artists and those working in the large industry that culture is, the opportunity to look through the small lenses. And how can that be done? By letting them come again, by letting them stay for longer periods of time, by exchange. The last word is the most important of all. No culture can develop without exchange and most cultures, and especially most rich cultures, are rich because they have experienced exchange. Let me give you an example from our own recent experience as European Capital of Culture last year. We imported Mary Miller, our programme director, from abroad. Not because we couldn't find someone capable in Norway, but because she has demonstrated a creative power of exchange. She invited foreign artists and ensembles, not only to come to Stavanger to perform, but to stay for a while and, most important of all, to work over a long period of time with local artists to influence and be influenced by this exchange. So during our fantastic year of music, drama, dance, performing and visual arts, we had four international companies staying for extended periods, where they gave performances that will linger in our minds for years, but also established relationships that may change our cultural scene permanently. So this has to be a two-way street. Talented people from small countries and cultures on the periphery tend to travel to the centre, constantly reinforcing and enriching the culture in the centre. We should explore ways to reverse this fluctuation of talent, by making it easier for artists from the centre to live and work in the periphery. Or, circumventing the centre altogether by stimulating exchange between different peripheries. So, I don't know Linz, but I would be surprised if Linz doesn't have a certain amount of animosity towards Vienna. Based on my own experience I would assume that it's difficult to get artists from Vienna to come to stay in Linz, or even to attract the attention of national media. So why not turn around and look for partners elsewhere, in Scotland or in Portugal, in Peloponnese rather than in Athens, in Sweden rather than in Brussels. And these have to be sustainable partnerships, built not on the stereotypes or touristic travels, but on the growing knowledge and understanding of people who come again and who stay for a while. And if you allow me to end with an anecdote: there was a group of Norwegian intellectuals, they're a very rare species, who were sitting and discussing the concept of hospitality in different cultures, and they were all telling histories of how they had been received with a smile and an ouzo in a sunny Greek village, or being invited to dine with Latin American Indians. Tarjei Vesaas, the famous author from the county of Telemark, which is full of high mountains, deep valleys and plenty of snow,

he sat silent through the whole discussion, but he brought it all to an end when he finally said: in Telemark, we ask, are you staying for the winter? That is a very good suggestion. A winter in Norway doesn't make you a Norwegian, as well as a winter in Rome doesn't make you a Roman and the cultures of Stavanger and Rome will never blend because of the exchange. The local history, climate, religion, economic and political framework will always influence culture and art much more than the abstract concept of European unity. But the two-way exchange will stimulate both the centre and the periphery, will increase the understanding of the value of differences, reduce the tendency to exotify small or distant cultures, and hopefully also diminish the fear of the barbarians at the gate.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

You almost used up all your speech time, but I'm still going to ask you: did Stavanger 2008 change something in the view that Europe had on your country? Or is it more important to you how the Norwegians see themselves and their culture?

Sven Egil Omdal:

No, I think, the basic thing about Stavanger was that it was not a Norwegian project, that Norway was actually not important at all. It was the international connection made. Not only Europe, I must say, there were also South African and other international artists visiting and projects that reached beyond the borders of Europe. But I think the main line was between Stavanger and the rest of Europe. While Norway, actually, to a large extent ignored the whole project. It was not an important cultural project in Norway. And I think this is because even in a small country like Norway the centre-periphery conflict is very strong. So if it doesn't happen in Oslo it doesn't exist. But Stavanger understood that very early on, so you could see only in the application that this was a project that would enforce the coastal tendency of going across the sea instead of going across the mountains.

Pius Knüsel:

Just a little comment: I like your idea very much but it's not very new either. The idea of sending people for long stays, that exists for some centuries already. Swiss artists in the eighteenth, seventeenth even, nineteenth centuries, before becoming masters in their metier, they always had to leave the country. Their learning years they had to spend abroad and still nowadays you can't grow as a Swiss artist being in Switzerland only. You have to spend half a year, one year, two years, somewhere else, without become an American or a Norwegian then. My problem is, about your suggestion, that when we ask

our artists, where would you like to spend your next residency, Scandinavia, Turkey, India, China, Egypt, what do you think? They say India, Egypt, Turkey, they never choose Norway. Why? You're not too far; it's not a question of being on the periphery, but it's a question of being too close to us. Anyway, there is a little anecdote you probably don't know. They say that in the seventh century the Vikings came down to central Europe and some of them left behind settled in the heart of nowadays Switzerland. One of them was called Svito, and he founded Schwitz, that's the first capital of Switzerland.

Sven Egil Omdal:

Now, if I can just comment to that, because what we see, if you try to have exchange, ask the artists to go, they want to go to Barcelona, to the big centres. The problem is to get, to reverse the fluctuation. Stavanger has a project, will be Bilbao. Bilbao is also on the periphery in Spain, although the Basques may boycott that, but they are on the peripheries, a coastal city. So Stavanger has a flat in Bilbao, Bilbao has a flat in Stavanger. So artists can come from Bilbao to Stavanger to stay for six weeks and vice versa. I like this. Of course we all know that all our famous artists went to Rome and to Leipzig and to Berlin and to Rome, but very few Romans came to Norway, to expand their soul. It has been a one-way street for centuries. So I think we have to look for other, I mean this is very practical, look for practical ways to increase this exchange.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

As you mention, the cultural exchange is a two-way road. If it comes to Linz 2009, Martin Heller, you mainly chose the incoming side of that road. Why that?

Martin Heller:

First I want to confirm that you really hit the point, what you did suppose in the direction of the relationship between Vienna, so there is Vienna and the rest of the country is just province. That's something the city suffers a lot in regard to this kind of deterioration. And of course, I also do agree with you that the exchange, the lasting exchange, is probably the condition to enable something like a transformation of mind or transformation of images. The problem probably for a city like Linz is that the people afterwards come back. So you send them away for a longer period and how do you provide and prepare the city to be welcoming and again offering something for them after they have seen the world or they have seen most or more interesting places.

But just this as a reaction to what has been said: maybe it's not so much a question of bringing in and going out in this year. Of course, also Stavanger, as far as I understood Mary Miller's concept, and what I've seen, so it was bringing people in; so this year belongs to the city itself and it wouldn't be wise to send people away in this year because this year offers an outstanding chance to live a more dense life, to live a more interesting life, to live a life with a lot of offers, we see it in the city here. So instead of the last year now every night you may have ten offers to spend your time with and the stress of being forced to choose is increasing and that's something the city isn't used to. So you have to learn a kind of cultural technique, how to deal with that.

And so I think in that year it's always and probably for every Capital of Culture, it's the main aim to reinforce the income and to prepare situations where the incoming people may encounter the locals, may work together with the locals, may produce something together. And that's the reason why we installed this EXTRA Europe project, and other projects of that kind. But there must be, afterwards, a kind of response to that and the problem, which is for everybody of us the same, is that we can't plan for the year after. Or we can plan, but there's no security that our plans become true. So there starts the role of politicians, of the decision-makers in the city, everybody that is outside of us to make sure that there is the other way round and maybe something which is a kind of response to what we tried to do. We have here just one tiny project, or tiny in respect of: we don't even pay so much. It's an atelier house which will be installed in June this year. The only contribution of the cultural capital to this atelier house was that we insisted that there will be, among ten residencies, five international ones, with long partnerships with different cities. I don't even know what cities, but I think it makes the difference that with cultural capital in the back it was possible to insist: you have to be international in this point, you have to enable the income and outcome on a longer-lasting base. Otherwise it would have been just a series of studios for local and regional artists. It's really a tiny step within the programme, but these steps are important.

Maybe I try one answer to what you said: I'm not so enthusiastic, or I don't share your enthusiasm about the role of artists. I think talking like that about artists you are neglecting the problem that there are bad and good artists. There are so many artists and there is not just *the* artistic freedom and the artistic overwhelming power of transforming the world. A lot of bad artists or mediocre artists don't want to transform the world and they don't manage to transform the world. So, for me and within my work, it's much more interesting

to have a concept of European Capital of Culture and not a European capital of arts. And “of culture” means a lot more. That’s for me the real difference between having just a kind of extended Biennale all over the year, expanded festival of arts during one year, or trying to ask about culture in a different, in this very city model, which is called here Istanbul or Lund 2014 or Stavanger in 2008, whatever it means. And there to work on the role of culture, for me is not more and not less than trying to elaborate, within this year and the preparing time and maybe some time after, a kind of model, what culture and culture policy may provoke. And I think the more different these models between, once again, Stavanger and Istanbul and Pécs and Linz are, or Essen are, the more different they are, the more specific, but with the same underlying attitude and curiosity towards arts and culture in general. The more specific they are, the more they may contribute to something like Europe. Because they show up the, in a nearly experimental way, they show up the possibilities of culture in this Europe. So its not so much the role of culture in general and that it will contribute to a Europe, but it’s the role of culture to make these differences and the different potentials visible and liveable and the culture capitals give a specific window, a specific space, a specific energy, to try this out and to develop something which in everyday life is just not possible.

Esra Mirze:

Well, when I was referring to artists, I was referring to...

Martin Heller:

...to the good ones.

Esra Mirze:

Of course. I mean, we are talking within the context of cultural capital, so I guess there are good cultural capitals, bad cultural capitals. We can enlarge the picture, but I totally agree with you that this is a matter of building up cultural policies, which is more important than the production of art in the cities because we are talking about exchange programmes and residency programmes, so that people would get to know one another. But to enable that we need to first of all overcome this difficulty about the homogenous cultural policy. Maybe that’s the only unity that would be required for the development of culture and arts within the European culture. Because otherwise, do we want a kind of uniformity, is the question. I don’t think we want that kind of uniformity.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Would common European culture mean uniformity?

Esra Mirze:

I mean, if we persistently seek for a European identity, European culture, *Europeanness*, then I think we are undermining the differences that would introduce a kind of richness into what we call global culture. Because we have to, somehow, preserve or aim at locality; global but at the same time bearing local qualities so that we can contribute to global culture, or European culture, or world culture, whatever you call it. But at the same time, this kind of necessity, or getting to know one another, or being able to produce together, or being able to work together, for that we literally do need some kind of sustainable cultural policies. At least with minimum common grounds, or prepare minimum common grounds, to facilitate this kind of mobility among artists. And I agree with you: culture is not only arts, of course, but arts is the expression of culture. Because what an artist produces is how he perceives, or, is not immune from his cultural background. So in that respect, I associate arts with culture.

Martin Heller:

Sure, but from the moment on when you come to this problem, and we touched on it in one of our talks before, just to give you an example about internationality in a city like Linz: before you may talk about the arts or the artists expressing culture, and international culture, global culture, European culture, whatever, you have to ask about the everyday life. And if I try to imagine, so I have to say that within the, coming from Switzerland, within the last three and a half years, looking at the local newspapers, which, for a lot of people here is the only source of information, looking at these newspapers, I haven't seen one page, or not even one half page, by a non-Austrian author, giving a kind of perspective or giving a kind of opinion, coming from another perspective other than an Austrian one. What art shall sell, afterwards, is an expression of culture, and there the internationality starts. And I think culture means, then, to look at the whole living context of a city, with conditions like that. What's the public sphere, how is it constructed, where are the habits of that? And then maybe once, or within that, and with all damages and advantages, art may react to that. But there are a lot of other different elements and I think it's one of the tasks when talking about the role of culture within the European Culture Capital: you have to insist on these elements counting as much as the others, and maybe they are even more important, as a kind of base for the rest and for forthcoming things.

Pius Knüsel:

I agree but somehow I disagree but I don't know exactly on what point. There is something a bit *frou*, the French would say. I want to come back to the term of uniformity that you mention. I guess nobody here is striving for uniformity when talking about cultural exchange. Wherever you send an artist, let's imagine the Swiss coming finally to Stavanger and spending winter there, he will bring back some Norwegian flavour, hopefully. Otherwise he would have no proof that he spent his six months there. But it's not uniformity, it's even not the uniformity or the standardisation of cultural policies in Europe I'm really interested in because as a Swiss arts council we support projects. We have criteria, let's say rosters, we put things into boxes, if it doesn't fit, if it fits it's a yes so we'll give money. But this kind of formatting of artistic and cultural – let's mix things for a moment – projects, somehow produces, in the long run, also a uniformity. So I'm always extremely happy to learn that in Norway they function in a fully different way on the level of cultural policy, or that Turkey is following completely different rules. Coping with those differences I think is an extremely important factor of learning what Europe is. Culture in the most simple definition I can give now is just the multiplying or the multiplication of points of views on the same thing. And this multiplying means learning that things can be interpreted in many, many ways. And the very end you have to make a personal individual choice, legitimate as your choice, or yours.

Sven Egil Omdal:

What I think we also have to consider is that even here we are discussing culture as the means to achieve political goals. When you talk with the people who are behind the different Capitals of Culture – I think Istanbul might be an exception because, as you said, it grew from below and up – most of them have been initiated by people who want to transform their cities. So when you talk to people, they always mention Glasgow as the shining example of a city that transformed itself by investing in culture. So everyone wants to be the new Glasgow. We are not discussing, Stavanger is the capital of oil, actually, with the highest percentage of engineers in Norway. It's not a cultural city per se. So we are also discussing here: how can we use culture to achieve other goals? Which is a dangerous discussion, actually, because you tend, then, to use culture as a tool instead of discussing what culture is and how culture should be perceived as just a way of human interaction. I think the best thing that Stavanger did was actually the slogan, because the slogan was false. The slogan was "Open Port" and we have a nice port but Norway is not

an open port. Norway has very closed immigration. It's normally a xenophobic country because it's on the fringe. The migration we heard about earlier has affected Norway to a very small scale and Finland even less. To say that the slogan of this year was "Open Port" was actually saying we want to be something, we want to achieve something we are not. Of course the port has been important in the history, in the import, not only of goods but also of ideas, but I think if there's one thing I would say would be good in Europe is that if European culture could be perceived as open. Open to different ideas, open to different concepts, open to different expressions. That's enough. You don't have to look for unity in form if you can have this basic concept of being open to other things. So to that extent, then culture can play an important part in forming the mindset of Europeans.

Esra Mirze:

Of course, after what you said, I have to add that I am looking from a different window. Actually, Istanbul is a global city and we have fifteen million inhabitants and every year it's receiving 500,000 immigrants. So you can imagine how important it is to facilitate the cultural representation of these people and also cultural integration and to think about serious cultural policies that would enable them, for their cultural participation and city life, and so forth. So I think, although maybe the windows might be different, the sizes might be different, but I hope, and I truly hope that we can all agree, or maybe let me quote JFK: "If we believe that the foundation of our society is based on culture, and if we also agree that it is the artistic creativity that shapes culture, then we should set the creative artist as free as possible, to the utmost point where his wings can take him." Which means that artistic creativity should be immune from political intervention. It can be used as a tool but on voluntary basis, it should not be the only instrument. I think what we can aim for, for me, Istanbul becoming European Capital of Culture, is a symbol of building up sustainable cultural policies to secure artistic independence and creativity and to set a model for the future generations to come where there is room for all kinds of artistic expression and cultural intervention into the city life. So when I look at the picture from that window, I think my point of view might be slightly different than yours, but inevitably I think we can all agree that creativity or creating culture, whatever, or participation of various cultures into the society, which now the whole world is suffering, requires this policy which is based on freedom.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

If it comes to Istanbul 2010, don't you see any threat concerning culture being used as a tool for political aims?

Esra Mirze:

There is always this threat. I mean, Istanbul is not immune from anything. But what I can say is that people are conscious about the fact and also, I mean, some might be used.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Are you constantly fighting that or working against that?

Esra Mirze:

Of course, fighting for that! Fighting against it, of course, coming from a cultural institution, my background, personally, to say so. But we cannot go that far to say that I guarantee that there will not be any kind of political intervention; it's not possible. There will be. But as long as we know how to cope with it or if we keep seeking for ways to overcome that, I think we are on the good side.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Even Linz goes through cultural artistic and political struggles, right?

Martin Heller:

Sure, and of course it's correct, once again I can just confirm, in Linz the reason was not to transform the city, because it has already transformed. But the reason for the politicians to decide to come up as a candidate, so it was to bring over the good news, that Linz has changed. So to adapt the image within Austria, in the first line, to the reality, which hasn't been known in a sufficient way. That was the main reason. And now it's our task to go over from just fulfilling this task into a real transformation in the future and to show up that the role of culture could be a different one. But I wanted just to, because we are always betraying us a little bit in respect of what culture and arts mean, and in respect of their function for identity, I think it's very important to mention that it's a strong difference. Culture is even more, maybe the role of culture, you may discuss the role of culture in respect of Europe as something which we may discuss. On the other hand, if we discuss the role of arts, then Europe is a reduction of the artistic reality. Because the artistic reality of today, since the invention of the global art market and since the invention of the net, is

really a global one. There is, in my opinion, no universal system like the visual arts, for instance. So, whenever someone is a curator, he or she is working with the same notebook and the same address book in Shanghai or in New York or in Oslo, so you may change easily the post of being a curator somewhere all over the world and you have the whole set, the same set more or less, of the famous names, and of ideas, and the same standards. And reducing that to Europe is somehow artificial because the reality is much beyond that. In culture, talking about culture, you have a lot to think about the local qualities of culture and the local, bringing this in relation to a European role of culture. And that's much easier for me and much more evident than to talk about the European dimension in the role of the arts.

Pius Knüsel:

If I may expand a little bit on that because you mention the word 'local', and we work a lot with the concept of local journalism on my paper. We try to develop a journalism that both starts from the local level and goes out as far as you need, and the other way round. And I think that dimension makes sense to me. To give you an example, just last week, we started a local music *wiki*, for the local community, with hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of stories, with soundtracks and pictures of local bands. I think that's a good idea. As a pure, local, musical *wiki*. But European – MySpace would be a lousy idea, would be a terrible idea, because if you go from the small local level then there is a global culture. It wouldn't make sense to have a European MySpace, because everything is intertwined and the music travels without borders. So maybe the problem is not actually local or regional, the problem is if you go from local you might as well go globally today. And I see from my kids, the concept of Europe is very weak but the concept of the world, the global, travel all around the world, doesn't make sense whether it's Greece or Australia or the United States or Spain, it's all the same to them. And they know many cultures as well as they do the European culture. They know of course the American, but they also follow Australian and New Zealand and music from Latin America and Caribbean and everywhere. So I think maybe the difficult discussion is: should there be a European level, intermediate level between the local and the global?

Martin Heller:

This question for instance, it could have been posed by Jack Lang in the eighties. So it would be this formulation, what's the role, and that was the idea behind the European Capitals of Culture. But the dimensions of this have so much changed within the 25 years,

so we have to ask if posing these questions, is it still adequate to the changed reality? And maybe our answers, one of our answers, could be that the question itself doesn't make any sense any longer, in this perspective of local and global.

Esra Mirze:

But EU, I think, sees arts or culture as a means to build up a kind of understanding, a mutual understanding between different cultures. But I'm not so sure that even the terms they create for that is not appropriate. You cannot sit behind a table and decide: ok, let's announce this year as the year of intercultural dialogue and let's make use of arts and culture and try to mobilise people as much as possible so that we can attain intercultural dialogue. But, you know, in a society where you can speak about diversity or tolerance, I don't think it's possible.

Pius Knüsel:

When we are discussing the legitimacy of the question here, well, I don't see any link from this question to the European community as a political project. The question asked here has always been asked, one hundred years ago already – does exchange contribute, does it enforce difference, and is difference something dangerous, something that will, let's say, incorporate risk, or is difference maybe also something very positive, something that gives me an idea of who I am myself and of who you are, yourself. Or does the idea of unity, is the idea of unity so important, even to the European community? Belonging to that family, does it mean being unified in a true sense? Hopefully not. Culture is the only field, political field or field of action, that rose really bottom-up and you can't impose anything. The idea, as you mention Jack Lang, the idea of having a normative cultural policy that somehow defines, conceives, whatever, an idea that is based on cultural values. We fight for ideas for twenty, forty years now and happily it has gone. And what is remaining? What is remaining is what we heard in the panel before, that culture has now become fragmented, that it's a kind of puzzle of thousands of not-countable elements and that we just have to cope with that diversity, which is not only a social reality, it's also an individual reality. And everybody of us, somehow, is carrying or bearing in himself or herself dozens of, I guess, cultures, in this way and we switch daily, sometimes within a day, from one to another. Wherever we move, we know immediately the rules, the appropriate rules, so we have become multiple personalities. And I guess this is the challenge of any cultural policy – how to cope with that.

Esra Mirze:

What you say is bringing forth a wider vision than the narrow vision of only Europeaness. So I think it's better.

Martin Heller:

The term of European culture is a kind of fiction. It's not the first panel I am taking part in about European questions, and when it's about culture I feel always it's like hunting for a beast that doesn't exist, you know, for a phantom. And everyone is even doing the best and it doesn't simply exist. Europe somehow, I mean, Constantinople was once a European capital, even a cultural capital of Europe, and that was quite far east and in Turkey. And Christianity, we heard so much about today, was not a European, in a geographical sense, was not a European invention, it was invented somehow outside Europe and then moved east and west and, for some reason, in the west it really made roots and grew and became very important and powerful, while to the east they had too many wars and finally they lost. But it's a reason why Christianity is so rare and sparse in the Asian countries. So Europe is a product of all what's Extra Europa, I would say.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Before you let the beast or the phantom out, I would like to invite the audience to take part in the discussion and put their questions in if they have any.

Question from audience:

I'm asking myself two questions: why are you all so offended when you say culture and arts cannot be a tool? I mean, there is an industry of arts, or movies, or visual arts, Hollywood, or whatever; it's an industry. I mean, going much more further than being a simple tool. On that note, I think it's a good tool which could contribute in the unity and I want to give a few examples. Movies have great impact on people, especially I think of the French, who are very fond of movies, as you know, and the Belgians as well. And my NGO, we organise a small movie festival in the European parliament. It was films made by the young Turkish cineastes, movie-makers, short-term movies which have won international prizes. After the audience watched these small films, they came out shocked and they said: we now have a completely new mindset. We could never thought of that there could be interesting subjects about Turkish women, rather than honour killings, or family, problems in the family, etc.

Sven Egil Omdal:

Dysfunctional families.

Question from audience:

Ja, ok. So they for the first time they were seeing women like them, who were having the same problems, with their children, or young people having the same problems like the people in Norway or whatever. So movies are very important, I think. It may be the contrary, of course. And also the television serials. Now with the satellites, there are serials in the Turkish televisions that they can watch in Greece. And one of them was called *The Fallen Bridegroom*. So one Turk was getting married with a Greek girl. So this was a big hit and I think that played a great role in the rapprochement of Greece and Turkey. And also, other one was shown, is still shown, in the Arab countries, in Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf countries. And one of them was banned because it was so popular among women. It started to change the attitude of the women. Because in those Turkish serials there were women getting divorced, finding lovers out of marriage and things like that. So the Saudi men were very angry with that. So I think it is contributing to unity. Maybe some of you have read the books of Orham Pamuk, the Nobel Prize winner. After reading novels written by Turkish writers, then you start getting to belong to the same area of culture, which is, I think, very important.

Martin Heller:

Well, what to say. Happily, this kind of art work is still produced and existing, that has a real impact on one's mind. I guess, as you mentioned, the problem of instrumentalizing arts. That's probably a fully different concept, as I see it. Let's say Linz has a problem: they're always in the shadow of Vienna and they think, ok, let's have this Cultural Capital and let's put 60 million euros into some artistic firework just to get out of the shadow of Vienna. That's what we would call instrumentalizing art for a non-artistic purpose; that would maybe work for the first few months, maybe even a year, somehow not evaporate.

Sven Egil Omdal:

I think also in this you base... there's an assumption that art is always contributing to the good, that art is always doing something good for society. But what if art turns around and becomes destructive, that the artists really want to – at the discussion of William Fichtner,

is that art or is it just... we tend to look at destructive art as propaganda, as something we don't want, while art which fosters the good is something that is more accepted as art. I think it's not a big problem for me that you use, build up an industry of culture also to change societies. I think that is a fair use of your funds, to invest also in artists and galleries and music halls and concert halls to change the fabric of the local society. But I think there is a limit there where you suddenly assume that the art and the culture will play along with political ambitions and political plans and suddenly art loses its basic identity. So if you talk about the European identity, what about: what is culture, what is art in society? And the more you use it as a tool – Liverpool obviously wanted to use their year as Capital of Culture to change a really run-down city. It was an economic project almost altogether. What if the artists in Liverpool decided that they wanted, not to foster the change of Liverpool, but to portray Liverpool as a place you shouldn't go, a place you shouldn't live? Would it still have been a popular project with the politicians? That's why I say it's controversial only to see it as an instrument for other purposes.

Esra Mirze:

I agree with you and I believe that art has a great capacity of influencing people and changing lives and changing mindsets. It's true – it forces us to think, it opens up our vision and our horizons or our capacity of understanding. I agree with all that and there is nothing wrong with that. But if you instrumentalize art only for propaganda or only for certain things, you're not only losing its quality but I think this should be avoided, as a cultural policy.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

You don't agree?

Martin Heller:

Maybe it's a little bit like if you would ask your Nobel Prize winner to write his next book on the topic of, whatever, or the topic of reconciliation of western and Turkish society. All your gifts now, put it in that and this will be the effect of that book. Sure, that's what we mean. But you, first you have to come from the freedom of the art and then you may ask about how you can use it within a cultural policy. But if you try to, kind of, master planning the cultural product or the artistic product in respect of a given aim, be it touristic or be it

political or be it social, then at the end we are – I suppose we share this conviction – we are convinced that the result won't be a very strong one, artistically seen.

Question from audience:

We are not saying that a mayor should not invest in art.

Martin Heller:

That's a totally different thing.

Esra Mirze:

That's something else.

Question from audience:

You maybe misunderstood.

Martin Heller:

What I do say in our case, I can explain it quite clearly. The mayor, or the politics, they do invest the money they do for cultural capital. If they only believe in the aim that, as Pius Knüsel explained, Linz should gain a kind of glamour within this year with the result of showing in a better way up against Vienna. If it's just that, then I would say it's somehow lost money, because there is no longer perspective. Because it's something which misses the real potential of art. But if he or the politicians or the mayor is aware that art has really the capacity of transforming and bringing and triggering a society, so then he should think in a different way about why investing the money within a cultural capital. And then of course the next step is a kind of period which lasts a bit longer than just this one year. And that makes a big difference, in developing a programme, in how the city sees what's going on during that year.

Sven Egil Omdal:

A former Swedish Prime Minister, Tage Erlander, once said that the role of the politician is to build a platform on which people can dance, not to tell them how to dance. And I think of course culture needs infrastructure. It needs a market, it needs, as you said, it needs a global market, it needs an infrastructure, it needs the logistics. But there is a difference

between building the platform and telling people what dance they should dance on that platform.

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Any more questions? If not, then I would thank the participants for sharing their thoughts, ideas, opinions and giving us an interesting discussion.

Pius Knüsel:

But you have some questions left I guess, here on your...

Bernhard Lichtenberger:

Oh, those are for my wife at home. And thank you for coming. This panel is ending the first day of the Symposium Extra Europa, it's going to continue tomorrow with the second day, starting at 10:00, and the first panel is going to be – see, that's what I needed it now for – *Global markets, Global crisis*. Hope to see you all there tomorrow and have a nice evening. Thank you.