



# Beyond 'bread and circuses': how to focus on local cultural development

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## One step forward, two steps back

What is 'culture' anyway? It could mean one thing to a concert pianist, another to a drum 'n' bass band, a different thing to a lady knitting traditional woolen socks, or something completely different to a young researcher that has embarked on analyzing the capacities of local museums. However, to a community as a whole, it is all of the abovementioned, and much more; a process of **cultivation**. This process should be reflected in a whole variety of interlinked and integrated policies.

The importance of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development is not stressed strongly enough in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Sectoral strategies appear to be more 'political lip-service' than a plan that aims to deliver any real value. Similarly, 'political ping-pong' with cultural competences, often not backed up with the necessary resources for implementation, does not inspire and instill hope that things might change for better. On the contrary, preserving the status quo appears to be the ultimate, although not explicitly declared, goal.

The majority of public funding for culture in BiH follows the constitutionally apportioned powers and, thus, falls under entity, canton or district jurisdiction. These levels of government account

for approximately 68% of cultural funding. While many of the challenges facing the cultural sector should be tackled at higher governmental levels, a wide range of opportunities exist for local authorities, because they are more flexible, closer to their citizens and better-positioned to maneuver, pilot, assess and evaluate measures within the limits of their territory and their powers.

This study tackles this remaining 32% of the pie, in order to see who gets what, why and how, and to what extent local cultural potentials are intrinsically linked to and used for local development. The analysis includes an assessment of three local case studies, Brčko, Prijedor and Travnik. The latter two may be taken as indicative for Republika Srpska and the Federation of BiH, respectively. The following parameters have been analyzed: local development strategies, financial arrangements, cultural events, current cultural debates and the, so-called, 'independent cultural scene.'

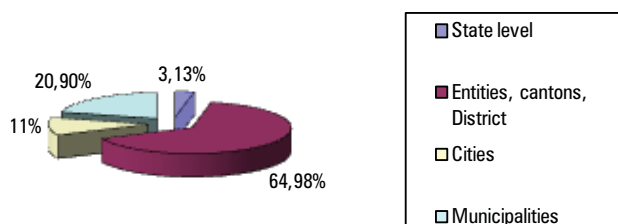
The share of cultural expenditure in the total budget of the targeted cases is demonstrated in the Chart 2.

The chart above shows that a noteworthy proportion of funds are earmarked for culture. However, when analyzing the parameters, a striking gap exists between cultural policy, as stated in documents, and cultural policy as identified

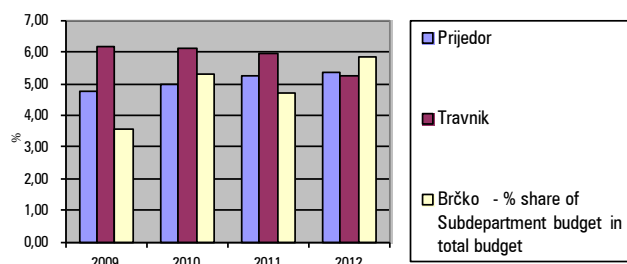
## Summary

Culture is still one of the most divided and neglected development fields in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Local authorities are responsible for a share of the blame. Local development policies do not address 'culture' as the fourth development pillar; instead, old patterns, inherited from the long-gone system, perpetuate. Broader local development strategies, that spread in the aftermath of post-conflict reconstruction, present an inadequate tool to address cultural issues in a meaningful, transparent, efficient, effective and inclusive manner. This is then reflected in a series of shortcomings throughout the local cultural sector. There are many ways to amend the current circumstances, and to begin with, all that is needed, is the acknowledgement that things are not all 'rosy.'

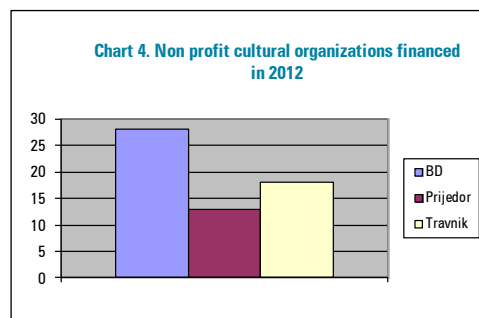
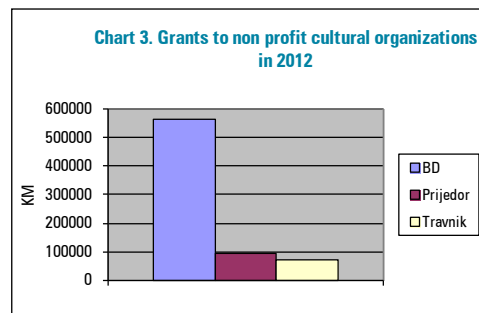
**Chart 1. Public funding for culture in 2008**



**Chart 2. Share of cultural expenditure in total budget**



through the allocation of public funds. This demonstrates that there is no correlation between declared goals and the allocation of public funds. Instead, the old pattern perpetuates with local authorities funding salaries and overhead expenses in traditional cultural institutions, alongside an atomized system of public funds distributed in small grants without any common denominator or consistent policy underpinning their distribution. The following two charts demonstrate the amount of funding disbursed to non-profit cultural organizations in 2012:



Although culture is integrated into local development strategies, it remains to be seen simply as creative arts, where 'creativity' is scrutinized by a closed group of people, or as a tool for preservation of specific cultural identities. The developmental possibilities are under-explored, if they are at all explored, and they are not put into practice. This is surprising, given that business entities engaged in cultural activities account for **6.96%** of the total GDP of Republika Srpska in 2010.

Additionally the direct management of cultural manifestations by, reportedly modest, public administrations, no matter how efficient, takes place at the expense of the autonomy of cultural institutions that are legitimate pillars of local cultural life. At the same time, it drains energy out of local administrations, distracting them from their primary role in strategic plan-

ning, coordination and monitoring and evaluation processes.

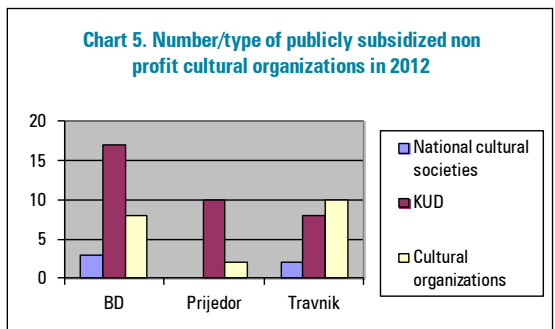
*I would be keen on letting go of our organizational responsibilities, but the cultural institutions and organizations lack the necessary capacities to do it on their own.*

Taken from an interview with local cultural administrator.

**More money ≠ more efficiency**

As shown in the study, Brčko, although blessed with a greater proportion of funds, it shares administrative maladies with the other two cases. Evidently, the focus should move away from the discussions on *how much money can we earmark?*, towards measurable results, i.e., *what can be achieved with the money available?*

Some of the principles embedded in the local strategic documents continue to merely reflect globalizing trends and conventions that BiH, as a state, has already adhered to. Furthermore, there is a trend to view cultural diversity predominantly as a summation of ethnic cultural identities and assuming either, one of the three constituent peoples' cultural heritage or those of the national minorities'.



The 'other' and the 'diverse', reflected in innovative, creative, and often unusual ways of expression, seem to be of little concern to local cultural governance. This creates a high level of discontent, particularly amongst young people and is contributing to a cultural 'brain-drain' towards larger cities, so-called 'cultural centers', both in BiH and abroad. This is also true for cultural workers that are engaged in other but conventional public institutions and KUDs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Culture and arts societies predominantly involved in folklore and locally known as 'kulturno-umjetnička društva' or 'izvorno-folklorne grupe' for the purposes of this paper are called KUD.



*Going away is also an option.*

Taken from interviews with youth cultural organizations in Prijedor and Travnik.

### **Moving forward, without going away**

Participatory development of cultural strategies at local level would provide for a more focused, efficient, inclusive and just distribution of the existing public funds. This would reflect in clear-cut and jointly agreed objectives. Local authorities could move away **from** the direct management and provision of **inputs towards** providing guidance, coordination, evaluation and monitoring that would ensure greater efficiency and efficacy of **outputs** from disbursed funds. This would also lead to a greater level of satisfaction for all cultural actors and the public in general. Cultural institutions would uphold their autonomy and more vigorously

play an active part in organizational aspects of local cultural life. At the same time creative economies, cultural industries and innovative ways of expression would be better supported thus enriching local communities both culturally and economically. Considering the relationships between culture and human rights, and between culture and human development, a more meaningful placement of culture in the local development agenda, through a cross-sector approach, is highly recommended.

**Agenda 21 for Culture** provides an opportunity for every city to create a long-term vision of culture as a basic pillar in its development. It suggests four specific tools: local cultural strategy, charter of cultural rights and responsibilities, culture council and cultural impact assessment (United Cities and Local Governments, 2004 and 2009).

### **Practical steps forward**

Higher level cultural strategies and related action plans (where missing) should be developed, paying due respect to cultural development of local communities.

Ongoing and sustainable mechanisms for the professional development of cultural administrations should be ensured. This field requires further research and consultation.

Special call for proposals targeting cultural development of local, in particular, underprivileged communities should be introduced from higher government levels. These cultural decentralization efforts should be based on assessed needs and should be in line with local priorities, with the aim to spur local cultural production.

A local cultural strategy, which is a document that describes the cultural priorities of the municipality/city. It should include an implementation timetable and follow-up procedures. Evaluation indicators and monitoring procedures should also be developed. The document should strive to uphold modern cultural trends, reflected by the needs and requirements of the territory. In such a cultural policy-making process, all cultural actors in a territory along with the citizenry and the public administration should be engaged. In this way, the document establishes mutual responsibilities between the stakeholders, ensuring a more effective process. The strategy should be one of the key components of the development strategy and it should be integrated with other relevant strategies within an integrated local development process. Once adopted they should be open to continuous progress assessment and periodical revision so that it can respond to persistent issues and so that it can anticipate and reflect new needs.

A culture council, a public body that addresses the most relevant cultural issues of a city, should be established. Such a council should reflect the diversity of cultural actors. Its role could either be as a consultative group or it could also include the capacity to take executive decisions.

Existing call for proposal documents and procedures should be amended to address the local cultural priorities in a more adequate, transparent, timely and result-oriented manner. The call documents should lay down all of the general and specific criteria successful proposals have to meet to qualify for funding. A mechanism of specific quotas for cultural projects should be considered. Partnership projects should be prioritized. Assessment grid and scoring mechanisms should be made public. Monitoring and reporting procedures should also be improved.

**Strategies and related actions plans, as development tools**  
**Cultural administration needs to build commitment and capacity**  
**Specific calls for proposals targeting production**

**Local cultural strategies and related action plans as development tools**

**Culture council – from inputs towards outputs**

**Calls for proposal should be improved and tied in with the strategies**

Avenues for public-private partnerships in the field of cultural cooperation should be explored. This is particularly important for the work pertaining to the preservation of cultural heritage, and the organization of traditional manifestations and creative industries.

Ad hoc and sporadic mechanisms of communication with cultural organizations, in particular citizens' associations should be replaced with systemic and institutionalized ones, with the aim to capitalize on their knowledge, skills, experience and expertise towards sustainability and effectiveness of cultural projects and programmes.

Cultural institutions should build *intrapreneurship* and they should seek a stronger level of autonomy in designing and conducting projects. They should more actively raise funds from a variety of sources available. Furthermore they should assess their own needs and establish their own priorities when developing their strategies.

International organizations active in the field of cultural development should consider extending their technical and financial assistance to pilot projects supporting local cultural development. These projects could range from the provision of training, the development of local cultural strategies, targeted study visits, and the exchange of good practice examples. Interventions should take into consideration the current cultural jurisdiction and the sustainability of the actions.

**Public-private partnerships to be piloted and assessed**

**Two-way information flow, consultation processes and active participation are essential**

**Autonomy and intrapreneurship of cultural institutions are crucial**

**Donor support desirable**

### Concluding remarks

Any effort to improve local cultural governance should begin with an analysis of the local particularities, networks and capacities of cultural actors, the current division of responsibility and an assessment of the resources that are available. This process should lead towards the creation of aware, skilled and forward-looking local communities. Only then will cities and towns in BiH be well positioned to translate the global objectives of culture, development into local interpretation and action.

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A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options. The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Ninety fellowships have been granted in three cycles since the starting of the Program. All policy studies are available at [www.osfbih.org.ba](http://www.osfbih.org.ba)