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HU OSA LibSpColl\_Dia\_7346; Library.  
Special collections. Hungarian propaganda filmstrips.;  
Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

## CULTURAL POLICIES IN CHANGING REALITIES

Institutional Representation and the Instrumentalisation of the Art Field  
In Hungary Between 1948-1989

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Final report for the Visegrad Scholarship at the Open Society Archive  
Research period: 6 January - 6 March 2014

*“The ideological sources are clear behind the everyday of art and state control. It is defined by our party’s politics, as it is consistent for nearly two decades, and in these means absolute too.”<sup>1</sup>*

## I. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Cultural policies as implementations of political strategies are manifested in the corresponding institutional system; therefore cultural institutes can be estimated as the representational field of political power.

Museum development was more or less parallel in European countries until the Second World War. After the war in the divided Europe the institutional transformations have been determined by political-economic forces. In the Western Bloc new interests and tendencies were emerging from about the 1960’s. On the one hand we can outline a shift towards intensified interest in social responsibility, community involvement and participation – new museology movement, institutional criticism – as the indicator of the institutional transformations. On the other hand – as many researchers claim – museums were given a ‘decisively populist spin’ (Hein 2000: 143), which climaxed in the approximation of the “museum experience” to the commercialised aesthetics of a leisure park visit. (Esche 2004; Sander 2004).

In the meantime, in socialist Europe – or in the Eastern Bloc – after the Second World War, museum development was instrumentalised by the communist plan for the development of society, the function of art and its institutions was well-defined by the socialist cultural politics. Artists – as ‘engineers of souls’ – were expected to portray the man through work, to elevate the common worker through the everyday realities and to fulfill the theorem ‘with the people from the people, clearly’ in artworks.<sup>2</sup>

Museums, as the complex infrastructures of art, were established on the pattern of the administrative grid to serve the leading ideologies through their educative role. They were publicly owned, and state funded. Although private and grassroots initiatives existed, they had no legal status and could not apply for funds. (Klaic 2011: 179)

In Hungary the institutional transformations were also dominated by the socialist ideology and cultural politics. My aim is to investigate these leading ideologies and cultural policies behind the instrumentalisation of the institutes of the art field.

In this vein, – according to my research proposal for the Visegrad Scholarship at OSA – I aim to analyse the structural changes of the art field inaugurated by totalitarian political ideology in Hungary from 1948 to 1989. Through historical inquiry I investigate how the communist metamorphoses had brought about new (and eliminated former) roles for art institutions and led to the transformation of the institutional landscape. The research also aims to estimate how these transformations were conceptualised, organized and executed and to offer a framework for the understanding of this new art field with new forms of capital and legitimation.

This inquiry would be an essential addition to my PhD dissertation. My PhD research analyses the history and current situation of cultural institutes in relation to political-economic forces in the Central and Eastern European transit countries.

<sup>1</sup> “A művészeti élet és az állami irányítás mindennapjainak elvi forrásai világosak. Pártunk politikája határozza meg, amely immár majd két évtizede töretlen és egyértelmű ebben az értelemben is.”

Szőke Sándor: Művészetpolitika Magyar Hírlap, 1976 Május 4 HU OSA 300-40-1 box 1250

<sup>2</sup> “A mához, a máról szóló műalkotások folyton születése, a művészet közművelő küldetésének valóra váltása a hamis alternatívák helyett – ez napjaink művészetpolitikájának együttes feladata. Művészeknek és művészetpolitikusoknak egyaránt az a törekvése, hogy az alkotás a munka világán keresztül ragadja meg az embert, s a “néppel a népről, érthetően” elv a művészet nyelvén is valósággá váljék.”

Szőke Sándor: Művészetpolitika Magyar Hírlap, 1976 Május 4 HU OSA 300-40-1 box 1250

## Stages

My research concentrates on the process of institutional transformation and instrumentalisation in two stages:

### I. ideological model

For the analysis of the communist ideological model I focus on the cultural policy documents and the ideologies behind the structural changes. On the one hand I outline and analyse the main theories of cultural politics and ideological guidelines which determined the art field and its institutes (such as cultural revolution, Tavaszi Tárlat, cultural politics of Aczél, 5 year plan, social realism); on the other hand my inquiry focuses on the political narratives what legitimised these cultural policies.

#### Sources:

OSA sources:

HU OSA 300-40-1  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit  
Series 1: Subject Files  
Container List: Archival boxes  
Box 314-315. Európai Kulturális Fórum, 1985, 1986 - 1987 Európai Kulturális Fórum: SR [Situation Report], 1985 - 1986  
Box 488-497. Ideológia, 1948 - 1994  
Ideológia: SR [Situation Report], 1984 - 1990

HU OSA 300-40-2  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit  
Series 2: Subject Files in English  
Extent and medium 108 Archival boxes  
Box 90. Party: 9th Party Congress: Ideology, culture, 1966  
Box 91. Party: 10th Party Congress: Ideology, 1970

HU OSA 300-40-4  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit  
Series 4: Information Items  
Extent and medium 25 Archival boxes  
Box 2. 114.32 Communist party: Education, 1955 - 1965 114.4 Communist party: Ideology, 1962 - 1973 114.572 Communist party: People's education, 1952 - 1970

Other sources / Magyar Országos Levéltár:  
Documents of the Agitációs és Propaganda Osztály  
Documents of Kulturális Bizottság

### II. organisational model

Art institutes and museums were established on the pattern of the administrative grid to serve the leading ideologies through their educative role. They were publicly owned, and state funded. From the point of view of the hierarchical organisational model I focus on the administrative structure and decision making processes to investigate such controversial tendencies such as centralisation and decentralisation.

#### Sources:

OSA sources:

HU OSA 300-7-5  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 7: US Office  
Series 5: Subject Files Relating to Eastern Europe  
Box 2. Cultural Life, 1953 - 1972

HU OSA 300-40-1  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit  
Series 1: Subject Files  
Container List: Archival boxes  
Box 122. Belpolitika: Országgyűlési Bizottságok: Kulturális, 1990 - 1992

HU OSA 300-40-4  
Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe  
Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit  
Series 4: Information Items  
Extent and medium 25 Archival boxes  
Box 25. 881 Culture: Fine arts, 1953 - 1971 881.01 Culture: Exhibitions, 1953 - 197 885.32 Culture: Museums, 1952 - 1969 889 Culture: Cultural relations, 1964 - 1971

Other sources / Magyar Országos Levéltár:  
Documents of Tudományos és Kulturális Osztály 1957-1963,  
Documents of Tudományos és Közoktatási Osztály 1964-1968,  
Documents of Kulturális Osztály 1964-1966  
Documents of Tudományos, Közoktatási és Kulturális Osztály 1967-

## Timeframe

The researched timeframe – the years between 1948-1989 – can be divided into three periods:

### I. 1948-1956

This period is the formation and implementation of the socialist model. The main focus is on the ideologies and on the related narratives – such as cultural revolution, which determined the role and possibilities of art institutes in the society – and also on the first structural changes like the centralisation of institutes around 1948. The endpoint of this period is the dissolution of the MDP in 1956, and the establishment of the MSZMP (Hungarian Socialist Labour Party).

### II. 1957-1972

The starting point of this timeframe is indicated by the ‘Tavaszi Tárlat’ in 1957 and the publication of the Hungarian Socialist Labour Party’s guidelines in educational politics (1958). The guideline was the first review of the implementation and influences of the cultural revolution, and also an important guideline for later duties. The period also important from the point of view of further structural changes in the art field through the decentralisation of institutes in the 1960’s, following the centralisation of institutes around 1948.

The researched period’s art politics were marked by the art politics of László Orbán and György Aczél. The investigation of their policies are highly relevant to understand the process of the institutional transformations. The OSA Archivum’s Hungarian Situation Documents are highlight Orbán’s statements about international tendencies and art-trade. Also in these reports I have found a trace of a conference organised on the topic of *“Our Cultural Policy and the Changing Reality”*, which is a *“wideranging analysis of the general development of ideological and cultural policy with special regard to Hungarian conditions.”* according to the report.<sup>3</sup>

For the analysis of the 1957-1972 period we also have to understand the cultural politics of Aczél, based on the ‘TTT system’ – in English it could be best described as PPP, permit, promote, prohibit – which stigmatised the art initiatives for decades. This system also lead to underground movements and gallery exhibitions, and hence the establishment of the ‘second public’.

### III. 1972-1989

The conservative politics of 1972-74 also determined the role of art institutes. The dissolution of these ‘reforms’ and the dismissal of Aczél escalated the changes what lead to the regime change. Although in 1975 at the XI. Congress of the MSZMP the program was still devoted to the ‘building of socialism’, more and more alternative galleries and art clubs were organised (Rózsa Presszó, Fiatal Művészek Klubja, Fészek Galéria, Kossuth Klub, Galéria 11, Stúdió Galéria, Liget Galéria, Knoll Galéria). This changing political atmosphere can be tracked down also in cultural policy documents and articles on art politics highlighting such emerging topics as the UNESCO meetings (1978), where political journalists – József Füleki for example – were reflecting on the discussions of the commercialisation of the culture in relation to the agreement of the trade of art works.<sup>4</sup>

## Methodology

This inquiry could be best described as a comparative institutional anthropology based on cultural policy analysis and comparative cultural studies. In the framework of cultural policy analysis I juxtapose cultural policy documents with academic literature and archive materials to estimate the narratives of the cultural politics from a multiple point of view.

In the case of cultural policy analysis I rely on the archive sources of four archives:

- Open Society Archive
- Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL)
- Politikatörténeti és Szakszervezeti Levéltár,
- Artpool Művészetkutató Központ Archivuma.

<sup>3</sup> Hungarian Situation Report 23 November 1971 HU OSA 300-40-1 box 1250

<sup>4</sup> Magyar Hírlap 1978. április 16. Füleki József: Az életképesség próbája. Gondolatok a művészetpolitikáról HU OSA 300-40-1 box 1250



## II. VISEGRAD FELLOWSHIP OBJECTIVES AND FINDINGS

In the framework of Visegrad Scholarship at Open Society Archive from 6th of January to 6th of March 2014 I had a great opportunity to refine the research structure and timeframe of my research.

Initially I was planning to give an overview from the whole research period (1948-1989), but as the period is well documented – both in OSA and in MOL – I have decided to focus not only the main cultural policy documents what determined the structural changes in the art field, but also to delve into a deeper analysis involving ideologies and narratives. Therefore I have decided that I focus on the first period (1948-1956) during my Visegrad Scholarship.

### I. ideological model / 1948-1956

As I have outlined, this period is the first stage – the formation and implementation – of the socialist model.

One of the main tools for the implementation of the socialist model was the so called russification. As it was outlined for example in the report under the title *Art for art's sake in communist heresy* culture and art was widely used for the soviet propaganda. *“Theatres and movies have become almost completely sovietized in all the Satellite countries. As in the Soviet union the importance of the theatre as a propaganda weapon for indoctrination of the masses has been fully recognized. Art for art's sake has become communist heresy. The theatre has its prime purpose the ideological advance of communism. The use of the theatre solely as a propaganda vehicle has resulted in its complete subjugation to the Government and the Party. The effect has been the creation of massive bureaucracy to deal with theatrical matters”* (HU OSA 300-7-5 Subject Files Relating to Eastern Europe, 1950-1973, box 2. Cultural Life, 1953 - 1972).

As the russification was introduced mainly through cultural changes (such as the compulsory usage of russian language) and just briefly described in policy documents, here I rely on the National Committee for a free Europe's Information service, Hungarian section sources. For example Istvan Csicsery-Ronay wrote in the article *Russian cultural penetration in Hungary* that the *“one of the well known aims of Communism is to spread its ideology and primitive “culture” in as wide circle as possible. In practice this means, (...) also the spreading of Russian culture. In 1945-1948 the emphasis was on indoctri-*

*nation. (...) the task of spreading Russian culture was performed (besides by the Communist Party) by the Hungarian Soviet Society (...) The activity of the Society extends to all fields of cultural life. It publishes books, newspapers and magazines, as well as brochures and pamphlets (...) it sets up public libraries; arranges exhibitions”*. Also in the same article Csicsery-Ronay quotes Jozsef Revai as he defined the cultural program of communism as follows: *“We want to acquaint the Hungarian people with the most advanced culture in the world, the socialist culture of the Soviet Union... (...) Our study of this culture has to be continuous and persistent in order to assure its organic and incessant influence upon our unfolding new culture.”* (HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974, box 4. Cultural Relations: Russia, 1951 - 1971)

This ‘new culture’ of russification was manifested in the cultural revolution. The cultural revolution is in the focus of the related cultural policy documents as one of the central ideologies of the socialist era.

The main principles of the cultural revolution were already outlined at the congress of the merging of the Magyar Kommunista Párt (Hungarian Communist Party) and Szociáldemokrata Párt (Social-democrat Party) in 1948. In the new program they have aimed *“to free the artistic approach from its dependency from the capital, and to set it to the service of the people”*. They were envisioning an ‘optimistic art-approach’ according to the requirements of cultural revolution, where art should depict the reality, the life and work of the people.<sup>5</sup>

In the OSA I have found numerous documents on the representation and implementation of these ideologies, for example cultural revolution was highlighted in the *Theses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on cultural policy* in Társadalmi Szemle / Social Review in 1958, which was the documentation of the 1957 June 27-29 congress.

*“The cultural revolution as far as its content is concerned is a struggle for the creation of socialist culture. Socialist culture is created by the working masses themselves under the leadership of the Party, with the support of the organized force and of the cultural institutions of the State of people's democracy “.* (HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974, box 3)

<sup>5</sup> A Magyar Kommunista Párt és a Szociáldemokrata Part egyesülési kongresszusának jegyzőkönyve., Budapest 1948. pp. 352., 353-354

## II. organisational model / 1948-1956

According to the socialist model art institutes and museums were established on the pattern of the administrative grid.

In 1948 the Hungarian Communist Party and the Socialdemocrat Party were merged in the Hungarian Labour Party, which faithfully followed the Stalin-model of the communist party.<sup>6</sup> According to the strictly hierarchical model, the Hungarian Labour Party reorganised the social-, economic-, political- and cultural institutes, to 'fill in all the gaps' and reassure the influence and leadership of the party in all of the spheres.<sup>7</sup>

As I have outlined, in the 1948-1956 period the main ideology in the cultural field was the cultural revolution. Cultural revolution as part of the overall plan towards the establishment of a new society also required a new structure, therefore new institutes in the organisation of the art field.

In the 1948-1956 period I can track two main direction in the institutional changes: the centralisation of art institutes and the establishment of the national web of cultural houses.

On the one hand the centralisation started as early as 1949, with the 13th statutory rule on the centralisation of the museums. This rule also reorganised the museums under the Népművelésügyi Minisztérium. From these transitions there is a very interesting personal account in the OSA documents, which reflects on the transformation of the Hungarian National Museum:

*"The Hungarian National Museum was in the limelight of the regime's propaganda by the end of December 1952, when the 150th anniversary of the museum's foundation was celebrated with the habitual propaganda din. "Szabad Nép" of 22 December 1952, page 2, emphasized the new role of the museum in the people's democracy: no longer a passive custody of the remnants of the past, but education of the large masses to Socialist patriotism, in line with the instructions given by the Party. (An Archeologist's Experiences In The National Museum In Budapest and the Savaria Museum in Szombathely, HU OSA 300-40-4 box 25, 885.32 Culture / Museums 1952-69)*

One the other hand the structural changes were manifested in the establishment of the net of houses of culture. According to the announcement of Radio Moscow on November 23 1950, Cultural Houses were planned to be set up throughout Hun-

gary, with the following aims:

*"1) Organizing conferences on the Soviet Union. 2) Organizing conferences on the "new communist man" and on the achievements of the Hungarian regime. 3) Giving courses in the Russian language. 4) Presenting to the public Soviet films. 5) Presenting "satirical reviews about the bellicose people of the West and the lackeys of Tito". (HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974, box 2. Art, 1951 - 1968) This could be seen as one of the first attempts of russification, in a national level.*

As the transformations excelerated, the field of education-, culture-, art- and science was reorganised under the Tudományos és Kulturális Osztály between 1957-1963.

Main sources and research materials for the 1948-1956 period from the Open Society Archive:

*Theses of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party on cultural policy* in *Társadalmi Szemle / Social Review*

HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974, box 3

*The Up-to-Dateness of Socialist Realism*

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HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974, box 2

*Russian cultural penetration in Hungary*

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HU OSA 300-7-1 Hungarian Subject Files, 1950-1974

Cultural Relations: Russia, 1951 - 1971

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*Art for art's sake incommunist heresy*

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*On the Guidance of Arts*

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*An Archeologist's Experiences In The National Museum In Budapest and the Savaria Museum in Szombathely*, HU OSA 300-40-4 box 25, 885.32

Culture / Museums 1952-69

6 T. Varga György szerk. Az MDP központi vezetősége, politikai bizottsága és titkársága üléseinek napirendi jegyzékei I. kötet, 1948-1953. Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest, 2005

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## OPEN SOCIETY ARCHIVE DOCUMENTS AND RESEARCH MATERIALS

### I. HUNGARIAN PRESS CLIPPINGS

HU OSA 13-9

Fonds 13: Records of the Soros Foundation–Hungary

Subfonds 9: Arts and Culture Programs

Date(s) 1985-1999

HU OSA 300

Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty  
Research Institute

Date(s) 1949-1994 (predominant 1951-1994)

HU OSA 300-2-5

Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio  
Liberty Research Institute

Subfonds 2: East European Research and Analysis  
Department

Series 5: Subject Files Relating to Hungary

Date(s) 1963-1980

HU OSA 300-40-1

Subject Files, 1949-1995

Fonds 300: Records of Radio Free Europe

Subfonds 40: Hungarian Unit

Series 1: Subject Files

Container List: Archival boxes

In this series the materials include press clippings,  
news agency releases, RFE/RL research papers and  
background analyses, transcripts of radio broadcasts,  
samizdat and émigré publications, and information  
items.

101.

Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1956 -  
1965 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1956  
- 1966 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések,  
1967 - 1968 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések,  
1969 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések,  
1970 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1971 -  
1972

102.

Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1973 -  
1977 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1978  
- 1981 Belpolitika: Országgyűlés: Elvi kérdések, 1956  
- 1972

122.

Belpolitika: Országgyűlési Bizottságok: Kulturális,  
1990 - 1992

314.

Európai Kulturális Fórum, 1985

315.

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