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## **Legislative transformation of cultural management and exhibition activity after 1989**

### Summary

Rigorous thesis aims to present the main character of newly established legislative conditions in cultural management, especially regarding to the development of exhibition activities of contemporary art in the Czech Republic after 1989. Firstly, this thesis emphasizes critical view of the legislative transformation and cultural institutions financing, which subsequently sets conditions for exhibition activities development in the period from years 1989 to 2015. Additionally, thesis analyses history and development of State Culture Policy, especially focusing on defining policy objectives and priorities, also evaluating their subsequent implementation. Another focus of this thesis are exhibitions of contemporary art, which have extraordinary ability to reflect the character of contemporary aesthetic and social issues, which manifested more especially after 1989. This methodological approach allows to observe a gradual change in cultural management since establishment of a democratic state until 2015, when the latest government-approved State Culture Policy sets conditions for artistic activities. After presenting the fundamental moments of the transformation of the legislative framework of culture management, the following chapter focuses on the practical consequences of the legislative conditions of cultural management for the development of exhibition activities in two periods: 1989-2000 and 2001-2015, using the characteristic examples of exhibitions. The defined period enables us to capture the change of institutional criticism when the cultural scene turned from the initial euphoria of the 1990s into the current crise.

Many important aspects of cultural management transformation processes, which started after 1989, have not been fully completed to this day. Since this topic is still ongoing, compilation of this thesis was very trying. Despite the mentioned facts I have tried to bring a critical overview from our current point of view, and I have found out the knowledge about the limitations of exhibition activities caused by unfinished transformation processes.

From the summary information we can highlight multiple important issues, pointing to recurring problem areas, which have not been resolved in more than thirty years. These issues are directly interlinked in areas such as legislation, financing and general public's relationship to art and culture. Therefore, it is necessary to keep looking for a comprehensive solution that would improve all areas simultaneously. Individual political leaders, together with art historians and other specialists, vary in their opinions significantly. Because it is very difficult to find consensus, they struggle to achieve a satisfying solution since 1989. Part of this struggle is due to the character of given area subject, art and culture, which is difficult to define.

End of millennium brought new critical view in compared to the development of the 1990s. The wave of foreign solidarity faded, and the gallery scene found itself in crisis, mainly due to insufficient legislative and administrative settings by political representation, which affected mostly institutions such as the National Gallery in Prague, the Gallery of the Capital City of Prague or regional galleries. During these trying times especially for Government Culture Organizations, dynamic development of exhibition activities, focusing on contemporary art, moved to off-space exhibitions and community spaces. They were often founded by art students and curators.

Summary of previous cultural management development revealed shortcomings in current legislative law policy setting for public culture institutions. Legislative transformation of government culture organization is still pending; thus, the current setting is lingering from before 1989. This is also related to financing of cultural management. The current form of law policy does not allow for effective multi-source financing, cooperation of public budgets (state, regions and cities), neither a more flexible setting of tax policy for sponsors and donors. Since these two basic preconditions for successful exhibition activities are not implemented, it is difficult to develop audience's cultural competencies and related educational activities, which could achieve greater public interest in culture and art.

Clearly, this development was again a non-systemic spontaneous solution, initiated without state support. At this time, first conceptual strategic state culture policy documents were approved, which reflected the ongoing discussion at the time of its preparations. Emphasis was placed on

human rights issues, but in 1999 it came with some delay, as they were completely different issues on the cultural scene at that time.

In the meantime, art history discussion in the Western world were about the role of the exhibition and of a museum. These debates have not affected us considerably, and their interpretations have only been reflected into the Czech environment within recent last few years. Situation today is crystalizing to become gradually clearer. Some segments of artistic private activities, such as private galleries, the art market, and auctions, have only been operating in the Czech Republic at an international level during last few years - full-fledged operations of these entities has yet to be observed. Their existence can be assessed as a benefit, proving ever more advanced cultural and economic development in Czech environment. On the other hand, current progressive development of private initiatives is opposing to public ones, which forms unbalance and unclear relationship between them. The large number of institutions (privately managed) seek to replace the lagging functions of public institutions, nevertheless, contribute to the fragmentation and illegibility of the overall image of Czech gallery scene.

Culture and art are important elements of a society. It enriches, develops, and co-determines society formation. The current situation appears to be a vicious circle. When galleries do not have satisfactory financial assets for basic operational expenses, it prevents them to realize a quality exhibition program, which is their the most important role. Galleries should cultivate the cultural life of each city, region, and state by art presentation in public exhibitions. Thus, they can bring many new stimuli to the public space, creating platform for public debate, and thereby improve the general approach to art and culture.

At present we observe, not only in the Czech Republic, but especially abroad, a gradual increase in importance of the exhibition as a social phenomenon. The current emphasis on interactive forms of art presentation, interdisciplinarity of themes and the greater educational character of the artistic environment testifies growing orientation towards the viewer as the main actor in the relationship between the art and society in the context of exhibition activities. As such, the exhibition environment makes it possible to reflect the diverse mosaic of human society for which culture is a solid and lasting value and thus is becoming its spiritual basis and measure of maturity.