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## **Cultural Aspects of Sustainable Development. Glimpses of the Ladies' Market**

- Integrating the principles of cultural diversity in all public policies, mechanisms and practices means to consider the cultural differences and to know the needs and capacities of a certain country's or town's citizens to "absorb" a certain vision for development, as well as actively involving the local population in decision making.
- In modern heterogeneous communities there are diverse groups with different interests and that is why it is insufficient for urban development planning to solve only physical problems, but should also take into account the socio-cultural elements, part of the so called "soft infrastructure" – traditions, lifestyles, desires and necessities of the communities directly affected by the plan.
- Markets are by definition diverse and the "residents" of the Ladies' Market seem to want to change the statute of the market space – to tame its dynamics and to refuse meeting the Other person. Practically they oppose the multiple stalls, the noise and the representatives of minorities with a different lifestyle to theirs, because they are trying to improve their standard of living and to increase the price of their properties. But on a more fundamental ontological level, by insisting on re-constructing the market, the proprietors seem to try to change the ownership of the territory, to make it their own again.
- The contraction or disappearance of public spaces like the Ladies' Market and the related lack of dialogue and "places" for negotiation is not only a geographical or urban development problem. It has worrying social and anthropological consequences as it leads to alienation and indicates a deficit of the offered resources and mechanisms for active participation in society's life.
- In the current model of intercultural coexistence on the Ladies' Market there are weaknesses and disadvantages on which one could and should work. But a drastic change of function or size after reconstruction may lead to devastating results as it is probably the one place in the capital where communication between different ethnicities is most intensive. It is also the space where the most successful integration and financial independence of Roma and Turkish minorities have been self-realized. This looks like a good basis for future (sustainable) development, which is evermore topical with the tendency of a rising number of immigrants in the country.

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## 1. Introduction

The topic of sustainable development has become more and more current over the past decades. Nevertheless, the question what exactly does sustainable development mean in the cultural field, has been poorly researched – a more significant number of analysis is devoted to its other aspects – economic, ecological and even social. The bibliographical references and interviews with experts, working in the sustainable development area, carried out for the purposes of this study, indicate that the cultural aspect of sustainable development is faintly recognizable or hard to distinguish from the social one.<sup>1</sup>

The unequal amount of “light” shed on the different foreshortenings towards sustainable development has its own historical reasons. Let us be reminded that the word “sustainability”, from which the term “sustainable development” is derived, comes from a forestry term in the West German group of languages. For centuries, it was used to denote a feature of good maintenance of forests – i.e. for the purpose of what we would call today “environment”.

As this notion developed and was charged with the modern concept of sustainable development in the 70's and 80's of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the strictly ecological connotation expanded and started being understood holistically – as the interdependence of several subsystems. However, at first only three subsystems or areas of sustainable development were discussed – economic, ecological and social. Only recently

the necessity was recognized of a more precise differentiation and thus introducing the cultural dimension of sustainable development. It is worth noting, that the need of recognizing the cultural aspect is acknowledged not only by the academia, but also by some representatives of the autochthonous population.

In order to attempt a thorough analysis of this innovative topic of the fourth pillar – culture – of the sustainable development, this study is divided in two parts – (1) theoretical and (2) applied.

In the first part of this study we shall define the basic terms, creating the conceptual frame of the analysis. These are: “sustainable development”, focusing on its cultural aspects; “culture”, interpreted not only as “art” but also as a “space” where meanings, perceptions and epistemologies are created, in which identities are developed, etc. In order to achieve terminological clarity, sustainable development will be compared to and differentiated from other similar terms, such as market ecology, green development or eco-centric model.

In addition to the theoretical deconstruction of the concept, attention will be drawn to how the concept itself is represented at an institutional level. This is why policies, plans, programs and actions (Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, Program 21 for culture and etc.) will be referred to. Specific cases will be introduced and, when possible, current examples from the EU and Bulgaria will be given.

In the second part of the analysis an attempt will be made to demonstrate in details how the theoretical formulations of the cultural pillar of sustainable development, described in the first part, are put into practice. Special attention will be devoted to how principles of sustainable development are applied at a local level when developing urban environment. The case with the reconstruction of the Ladies' Market will be examined, as it is an emblematic place for solving urban develop-

<sup>1</sup> As a result of bibliographical research we identified 636 texts in Bulgarian, related to sustainable development at large. Less than ten of them treat to some extent its cultural aspect, focusing mainly on the connection between cultural inheritance and sustainable development without understanding the term “culture” as a whole. See for example Mareva 2009: 117-122 or Katsarov 2012: 265 -269. Among articles in Bulgarian, referring directly and in depth to the cultural aspect of sustainable development, are these by Hristova 2011: 221-227, Kanev 2013. Although there are more authors outside Bulgaria, who are working on the cultural aspect of sustainable development, foreign language analysis on this subject are still at an initial phase – which the authors recognize themselves.

ment issues in the capital city. A contribution to this study is the empirical material, gathered over a period of several months, in the form of field work, by means of which we will try to illustrate to what extent the cultural aspect of sustainable development is taken into account when transforming this urban space.

In respect of methodology, our approaches will be analytical, multicultural, historical and philosophical, comparative analysis, in-depth interviews, participating observation and others. The circle of authors and works, in dialogue, by means of which we will search for the rationalization of the cultural aspect of sustainable development, will also include positions, coming from different areas – anthropology, philosophy, law, history, political studies and ecology. At the same time, due to the profound conviction of the author that the examined problem requires not only abstract speculations, but also rationalization of actually occurring processes, we will use empirical material too. It was submitted in the form of works of other authors in this area, as well as a result of personal field research – (1) during the Traveling University for Practices of Sustainable Development in the Region of Northwestern Bulgaria June 2013 and (2) during field work on the Ladies' Market in the period May – September 2013.

Considering the focus of this study, which we have chosen to put on the Ladies' Market, we think it would be appropriate to share in brief the working process during our field examination there. For the purposes of this study we used quality methods:

27 semi-structured interviews, most of them videotaped, some archived as audio (due to the respondents' reluctance to be videotaped), informal conversations with people, who are related to the market, and personal field observations. In general, the interviews can be divided into 4 groups, depending on the respondents' relation to the market. The

first group covers market customers, the second – stand (or kiosk) merchants, the third one comprises experts, engaged with a position on the reconstruction of the market and the fourth group involves citizens, related to the Ladies' Market (janitors, people spending their spare time in the adjacent gardens, passersby, children at the market).

Interviews with vendors and experts were mostly carried out in a scheduled appointment (in some cases a series of appointments) lasting from 1 to 3 hours. The length of the interviews with the first and the fourth group was up to one hour.

It is appropriate to make an important proviso before proceeding with the analysis. Although sustainable development as a whole is a term used actively throughout the academic discourse, as well as the political and regulatory rhetoric, the subject of its cultural aspect is still novel in foreign language literature and even more so in its analysis in Bulgaria. The interpretation of the cultural aspect of sustainable development is a debut for the author of this study too, which is why our attitude was to open the scope for debate on the topic with this text. In this context the analysis does not claim to be exhaustive in terms of information and presented points of view, but rather aims to offer to the Bulgarian audience some basic theoretical reflections on the connection between culture and sustainable development, as well as make an attempt for surveying these thoughts in selected fragments from Bulgarian reality.

## Part 1

### 2. Conceptual development of the idea of the cultural dimensions of sustainable development

#### 2.1 Key concept definitions

Before proceeding to the actual part of this study we should define what we understand when we use terms such as “sustainable development”, “culture” and “cultural aspect of sustainable development”.

##### 2.1.1 Sustainable development

We will briefly outline the first concept based on the assumption that it has become widely popular over the past decades. The most often cited definition of the term “sustainable development” is the one given in 1987 in the report “Our common future” by the World Commission on Environment and Development with the UN, also known as the “Brundtland” report. According to the report “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987: 43)

According to another definition, for a certain development to be sustainable, it should not only aim to improve the quality of life, but also be in compliance with the capacity of the ecosystems (and the Earth as a whole) to endure that process. Darlow insets the definition, emphasizing that sustainable development should not be understood in a narrow way – only related to the environment, but also as relevant to life quality in all its aspects – in the present as well as in the future (Darlow 1996: 292).

Based on these definitions we can conclude that sustainable development suggests thinking not only in the short-term but also in mid- and long-term horizon on the levels of international and national policies and of individual behav-

ior (as citizens, consumers, etc.). Perceiving the world as an interlinked system – both in temporal (the link between present and future) and in spatial terms (sustainable development suggests developing a global consciousness – rendering an account of and caring for the needs of citizens in need in the developing countries) is characteristic for this development.

##### 2.1.2 Definition of the concept of “culture”

The second concept we will discuss – “culture”, has a particularly broad semantic scope of meanings. On the one hand, this makes it very hard to define, but on the other it makes its definition very important in order to avoid inaccuracy or mixing up different meanings. According to Packalen it is precisely poor differentiation of separate interpretations of culture that makes the concept vague and hard to understand, which could be the reason for marginalizing the role of culture when it comes to the concept of sustainable development (Packalen 2010: 119).

For the purposes of this study we will differentiate two uses of the term – a narrower and a broader one.

In the context of the concept of sustainable development the narrow definition of the term “culture” can refer to cultural heritage or various artistic activities. According to Giddens (1993: 31) in everyday talk we often understand culture as an equivalent to more sublime things in the spiritual field. Darlow (1996: 293) states that a narrower definition of the term concerns the so called “high art” – opera, classical music, fine art, etc. Packalen in turn defines culture in its narrow meaning as encompassing all traditional elements that are part of a given cultural policy – theater, cinema, music, architecture, literature, museums, etc. In other words, when we use the narrower meaning of the term we will sight tangible or intangible cultural heritage; a product or an activity, related to art and/or cultural industries.

According to the broader definition of the term, culture is often interpreted as intertwined with all aspects of the life of people and communities, as well as related to their values. In this broad meaning, culture is looked upon from an anthropological perspective – through the prism of peoples' and communities' values, norms, traditions, practices, attitudes and etc. In 1995 UNESCO published a definition of culture as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group. It encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO 1995: 22).

Williams insets that culture expresses different meanings and values not only in art and science, but also in regard to institutional and everyday behavior (Williams 1976: 293, quote in Darlow 1996: 293). Montgomery defines culture as a "way of life", including the way we eat, live, communicate, spend vacations and etc. (Montgomery 1990: 17-24).

One of the first proponents of the cultural aspect of sustainable development – Jon Hawkes suggests a more in-depth view of the term. According to him, culture includes: (1) our values and strives; (2) the ways we develop, get and give forth these values and (3) lifestyles, generated by these processes (Hawkes 2003). We take the liberty to present an broader quote from the definition of culture, provided by Hawkes, as it gives a different point of view on the concept. The style in which it is delivered – different from other formal and strictly scientific definitions – manages to express the core of culture in an intuitive way and is in harmony with the new holistic mindset that the concept of sustainable development presumes:

Our culture embodies the meaning we give to our lives; it is based on the values we share and the ways we accept our differenc-

es; it is connected with what really matters to people and communities: relationships, memory, experiences, identities, origins, hopes and dreams in their entire diversity. Above all, our culture expresses our vision for the future: what we want to give to future generations.

Our culture connects our present with our past, as well as with the future that we imagine. Through culture we make contacts, meaning and value networks, as well as friendship and interest ones, bringing us together in time, space and community.

Our culture describes the ways we tell our stories to each another, how we understand ourselves, remember who we are, imagine who we want to be, how we rest, how we celebrate, how we argue, how we raise our children, the space we create for ourselves.

Our culture is an expression of our goal to be happy, to belong, to survive and mostly to be creative.

Hawkes goes on that the main task of culture is the social creation of meanings, which represents the most important human act and should be understood and fostered in the process of organizing the community in all areas – economic, social and ecologic. This thesis – of culture as an all-encompassing frame for sustainable development policies, as a fourth pillar of sustainability, linked to diversity, creativity and prosperity – will be discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.

### 2.1.3 Cultural aspects of sustainable development

As Packalen concluded, not long ago environment related issues were looked upon mainly from a technical or biological aspect – i.e. in the context of problems like: energy crisis, quotas for greenhouse gas emissions, fossil fuels, endangered species, felling rainforests, glaciers melting, etc. Respectively people, involved in these debates, were mostly politicians, environmentalists or other experts, but not com-

mon citizens. According to him, if we want to involve in the discussion bigger groups of people, who are not experts in this area and make the topic of sustainable development more understandable for them, we should take notice of its cultural dimension in a greater degree than ever before (Packal n 2010:119).

What is this dimension? Based on the two definitions of the term "culture" we could differentiate two directions for searching for the cultural aspect of sustainable development. If we consider the narrow definition, then we could review different variations of interrelation between art and sustainable development. The International Organisation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies lists some possible intersections: (1) Artistic initiatives, demonstrating new approaches to social and ecological problems, (2) Promoting good practices of energy management, implemented by art organizations working in the area of construction and etc. (Hartley 2009)

There are numerous examples of pro-active attitude by artists or artistic organizations with respect to environmental issues. Not long ago, for instance, in the City Garden in Sofia an art installation was exhibited with melting ice cubes and big panels, showing numbers about the water usage by countries and continents. The installation had a great impact with its visual message for saving water.

Nevertheless we should note that the interaction between culture and sustainable development couldn't be exhausted with initiatives in which artists alarm about climate change or with the establishment of cultural sites that are in compliance with energy efficiency requirements or conservation of natural resources. Thus even though we acknowledge the importance of the connection between art and environmental protection and the interdependence of culture and economy – for instance through the revenues that cultural industries bring to the economy – the cultural aspect impacts de-

velopment in an even more fundamental way. As stated in Report 4 of UNESCO, "the role of culture for sustainable development is mostly in including the cultural perspective in all public policies. It is what gives us a guarantee that every process of sustainable development has a soul." (Report 4: Culture and sustainable development 2009: 6)

In this line of thought, the broader definition of culture provides a second, deeper layer, at which level one should look for the cultural aspect of sustainable development. Let us be reminded that a persons' own point of view is formed in the cultural sphere – on himself, on nature, on other people. In this sense culture influences attitudes, values and practices, underpinning every human action. Packalen claims that not only values and life models are culturally determined, but so is everything else we do, including our actions made for an economic gain, our achievements in science, technology, education and etc. (Packalen 2010: 119). Cultural identity forms and stalls in the cultural sphere; it is also the space where we meet and negotiate or refuse to communicate with the Others.

Sustainable development itself is a new paradigm, linked to a change in priorities that humanity sets, with a constant realization of our way of thinking and living compared to a future horizon. Therefore, Packalen goes on, culture is needed as an interspace in which communication and actions, necessary for achieving sustainable development in the ecological, economic and social area, are realized. Thus the cultural aspect not only provides a basis for sustainable development through rethinking and reflection on values and social norms, but also creates the conditions for a new culture (Ibid.: 118-119). Packalen also explains the importance of culture for sustainable development with the fact that sustainable development is an idea, derived from the field of regulation, hence it could easily become

plain ideology, an ossified system. As already mentioned, the cultural sphere is a space for dialogue, for creative approach and diversity and thus it allows flexible new viewpoints towards development, therefore should be able to prevent sustainable development turning into a frozen lifeless doctrine. (Ibid.: 121).

The cultural aspect of sustainable development is associated with implementation of the principles of art, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity in international, national and regional development policies. For this reason UNESCO is working on a dual approach towards culture in its strategy for supporting sustainable development. On the one hand the organization develops a policy, aimed at the cultural sector itself, answering the needs of adequate legislation, training for cultural administering, mediation and managing cultural resources. By cultural sector one means heritage, creativity, cultural industries, crafts and cultural tourism. One should clarify that in addition to tangible, the cultural heritage could be intangible – i.e. these are the practices, knowledge, traditions and experiences, passing from generation to generation and helping conserving the sense of appurtenance and identity to a given community. An example for intangible heritage from Bulgaria that is already enlisted in UNESCO's list of world masterpieces are the Bistritsa Grannies (Бистришките баби) and the Nestinarstvo (Нестинарството). The new nominations for our country in 2014 in the sphere of traditional craftsmanship are the Chiprovtsi carpets and in the traditional holidays and customs – the National holiday Surva in Pernik<sup>2</sup>.

On the other hand UNESCO aims to ensure that culture is taken into account in all development policies, especially those linked to education, science, communications, en-

vironment and social cohesion. (Culture and sustainable development 2009: 7)

It is important to point out that the cultural dimension is associated with acquiring flexibility and aligning development policies with the local context (manners, models of communication and of life, values and customs of the local population) of the place where they will be applied. In every mindset or concept, there is already a certain cultural prerequisite – whoever observes the world reflects his/her view on the idea he/she proposes. The sustainable development concept also has an already embedded perspective, a certain understanding of what “development” is. This is generally a perspective of “Western” culture, accepting that certain (co)relations are wanted, others not.

But when this point of view is imposed on a local community, it could also contradict the principles of sustainable development because it (the community) becomes dependent on external resources, new values and is not vital and capable of maintaining its balance and development over time. I.e. the cultural aspect of sustainable development in this case could help by raising the awareness of the actors involved that they are not leaders, guiding according to predetermined abstract principles, but rather facilitators (in the best case), who should consult with and be guided by the realities, needs and strategies for getting things done at a local level.

The balance between being guided by the principles of sustainable development and complying and harkening at the specifics of the local is an expression of sensibility toward the cultural aspect. Otherwise there is a risk that the strategy for sustainable development be recognized by the local population as an artificially introduced unsustainable claim for applying a “miraculous” formula for development. Thus behind formulations like “integrating the principles of cultural diversity” in

<sup>2</sup> For more information see Bulgaria – Intangible Cultural Heritage, Official website of UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=003111&cp=BG>, November 2013.



all public policies, mechanisms and practices, actually lies the awareness of cultural differences, knowing the needs and capacities of a certain country's or town's citizens to "absorb" a certain vision for development, as well as active involvement the local population in decision making.

There are a number of examples for development policies (without it necessarily being sustainable) that are not in line either with the local context, or with the overall cultural strategy for the settlement. A current example for that kind of discrepancy is the construction of an immense for the scale of Chiprovtsi stadium for over 5 million levs under the Program for Rural Development.<sup>3</sup> In itself the construction initiative is good, but when set against the context of the town it demonstrates an unsustainable approach, for a stadium with such dimensions is far too big to serve the needs of the local population. However the town does not have sufficient hotel beds for receiving town visitors to attend potential events at the stadium. Nor does the project itself envisage construction with additional hotels or guesthouses to take on an external flow of visitors.

This massive investment is not related to another specificity of Chiprovtsi – the region is famous for its centuries-old tradition in carpet making which, due to lack of investments, is under the risk of extinction. The local carpet making school, also with long-lasting traditions, is having financial problems and it is getting very difficult to train young people to take on the craft. In summary, on one hand the stadium project does not take into account the cultural specificity of the region – carpet-weaving traditions – thus showing lack of an overall cultural vision by the local authorities to preserve local identity and

practices. On the other hand the construction initiative is not an example of sustainable development at all, as it does not build on the already existing resources of the town, but rather creates new urban planning problems, which must be solved later.

The definition of the concept "culture" determines the perception of a certain type of cultural policy. Yencken (Yencken, Foreword in Hawkes 2001), Bianchini (Bianchini 1993) and Hájek (Hájek 2011) distinguish two types of cultural policy in general. On the one hand countries like Sweden (Yencken) or cities like Bologna or Rome (Hájek) accept the broader definition of culture, while Anglo-Celtic countries take on the narrower definition and rather pursue an art policy than a cultural policy (Yencken: 4). In order to emphasize on the differences between the two policy approaches Yencken recalls Hawkes' understanding that a policy involved in art has an important place in the frame of cultural policy but the latter has a greater range and includes protecting and promoting citizens to use their right of free expression, as well as their access to information and resources (ibidem). Policy, aimed at assisting art (Hawkes 2001: 33), supports the development of high, professional art. Yet it overlooks the importance of engaging all citizens in making culture and of their active participation in decision making - activities which improve the quality of life and create a feeling of satisfaction, coherence and prosperity in the community.

An example of European policy for sustainable development in the area of culture is the European Capital of Culture initiative. The European cultural event began in 1985 and ever since over 40 cities have been titled Capital of Culture. According to Article 4 Decision No 1622/2006/EC, one of the main criteria by which the candidate for Capital of Culture is assessed is that the cultural program be sustainable – to be an integral part of the long-

<sup>3</sup> 5 million BGN stadium is being built in Chiprovtsi, *24 Hours Daily*, 21.06.2013, <http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=2079872>

term cultural and social development of the city.<sup>4</sup> The reason behind this criterion is the encouragement of cities to develop programs with long-term results. Thus although a given city could be the European Capital of Culture for a period of half a year, preparation of the projects begins years before taking the title and artists should be integrated in developing the place after the nomination has ended.

## 2.2 Historical development of the concept of cultural aspects of sustainable development

In numerous important documents, associated with sustainable development, culture is either not present or only sporadically mentioned. Packalen gives an example with a fundamental document for sustainable development such as the Rio Declaration from 1992, where the word culture occurs just once, moreover with respect to the indigenous people (in paragraph 22) (Packalen 2010: 119). A similar situation is observed when the discourse on sustainable development takes place at a local level. For example in the Local Agenda 21 or in the Charter of European Towns and Cities, cultural sustainability is rarely mentioned. And even though in 1998 the term emerges during the World Conference on Cultural Development Policies, where people insisted that sustainable development and flourishing culture are interrelated, its political acceptance is a lengthy process. Only at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the Agenda 21 for culture and in the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions culture was accepted as equal to the other spheres (economy, ecology)<sup>5</sup>.

Different researchers take on different approaches to culture – some treat it as a component of social sustainability, others accept it as the fourth pillar of sustainability and others yet think that culture penetrates the other three pillars and influences them strongly. Here we shall present three such theoretical models of its role.

## 2.3 Three models of relating culture to sustainable development

### 2.3.1 Traditional model

Traditionally and up until recently, sustainable development was perceived as a strategy for meeting the needs of citizens on Earth at the current moment, but also in further future, and should be applied in three areas of society. These three dimensions of development are the ecologic, the social and the economic spheres. The concept of sustainable development comes from understanding society and the world overall as one organism. That is why the three areas of development are only conditionally divided, as it is accepted that they are interconnected and interact constantly. And although the different areas are constantly tensing one another – sustainable development occurs as a variable compromise between them (Hawkes 2001), they are equally important.

The equality of economy, ecology and social sphere makes this concept different from other similar ones, for example from the Green development, where the ecological area dominates over the other two. For instance, according to the theory of sustainable development, all actions for environmental protection are justified and sustainable only if their price is not too high for the local population; according to green development the ecological aspect is a priority and should be protected even if it is not justifiable enough from both economic and so-

<sup>4</sup> Decision 1622/2006/EC, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:304:0001:0006:EN:PDF>

<sup>5</sup> Also see Hájek, Oldřich, Jiří Novosák and Pavel Bednář (2011) *Local Agenda 21 and Culture: Lessons from the Czech Republic, Culture and Local Governance / Culture et gouvernance locale*, vol. 3, no. 1-2, 2011, S. 86

cial viewpoint. Another example for unequal distribution of priorities between the social spheres is the theory of market environmentalism, where only two of them – economic development and care for the environment are highlighted, or the ecocentric model, where social and ecological aspects come to the forefront at the expense of the economic ones, which are neglected.

In the classical model of sustainable development, culture is not understood as a separate area, which should be taken into account when defining development policies. Supporters of this model most often use the narrower definition of culture as art or heritage and either ignore it or think of it only as a part of the social sphere.

### **2.3.2 The fourth pillar of sustainability**

Cultural analyst Jon Hawkes accepts as a point of reference the already mentioned formula for sustainability as caring for future generations to inherit a world at least as abundant as ours. Yet he notes that the question how to achieve such a world is the subject of constant debates and those debates are for values (Hawkes 2001: 20). And since values are formed, expressed, negotiated and kept exactly in the cultural sphere, Hawkes concludes that culture is a key factor for achieving a sustainable society.

He motivates the cultural aspect of sustainable development in his concept of the Four pillars of sustainability. In 2001 Hawkes published his thesis in the book "The fourth pillar of sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning", where he reviews four equal elements in society – responsibility for the environment, economic health, social justice and cultural vitality (Hawkes 2001). He accentuates on the principle of democracy as a necessity for the good functioning of a community, which is why he believes that the topics in each one of the pillars should

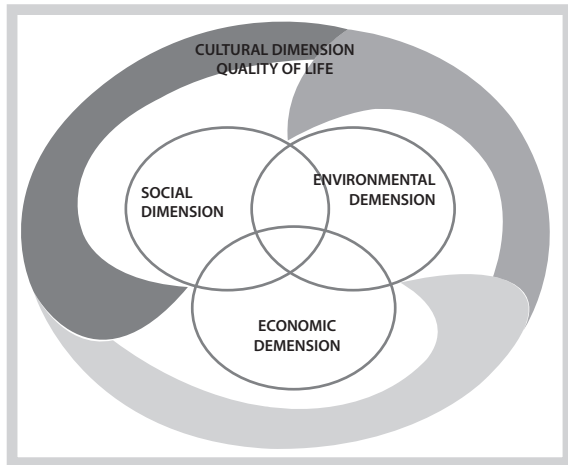
be determined via consultation. And even though topics are distinguished in four public spheres, like any living organism, there are connections and crossovers between them – moreover, according to him it is exactly this interconnectivity between the pillars that makes a society sustainable.

His four pillar model not only includes culture as an equal sphere, but also accepts that the life quality of a certain community is tightly connected to cultural commitment, expression and dialogue in that community. According to him the importance of cultural diversity for social sustainability is as great as that of biodiversity for ecological sustainability. Hawkes says that "Diverse values should not be respected just because we are a tolerant folk, but because we must have a pool of diverse perspectives in order to survive, to adapt to changing condition, to embrace the future." (Hawkes 2001: 23).

We mentioned above the different approaches toward cultural policy, which result from the differences in a given government's understanding of the term "culture". Hawkes goes further and disputes the need of cultural policy itself. Since culture penetrates every human action and all aspects of public life, it should be included as a sort of cultural "lenses" or "filters" through which we can rate every policy from the other three areas of public planning – economy, ecology and social affairs – and should not be reduced just to a one-sided policy in the sphere of art. Hawkes discovers an important discrepancy between theory and practice when formulating cultural policies by governments – most of them are based on the broader definition of culture (as a value system) when reasoning their action plans and desirable purposes for society, but when it comes to implementing these policies authorities reduce their actions to the narrow meaning of culture (as a synonym for art) (Ibid.: 17).

At the level of practice, the concept of culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development is recognized and there are attempts to apply it in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and some countries in Europe.

**Illustration 1**



Source: Catherine Runnals, 2006, MA thesis for Royal roads University; adapted from Jon Hawkes 2001

**2.3.3 The Four Well-beings of Sustainability**

The model of The Four Well-beings of Sustainability was developed by the New Zealand's Ministry of Culture and Heritage in response to the Local Government Act 2002, according to which local authorities are responsible for promoting social, economic, ecological and cultural well-being of communities – in the present and in the future.

Like the Four pillar model, the Four Well-beings model has four public spheres, that have a role to play for achieving sustainable development (including culture), and they are all looked upon as interrelated. The difference is that in the New Zealand's model culture is not understood as the basis for the other three areas. The overall community well-being (in the center of the illustration) increases when the following conditions are present:

- all four spheres are equally important
- the spheres are interrelated
- the spheres are mobile around the center for achieving greater efficacy

According to the New Zealand's Ministry's definition, cultural well-being is the vitality that communities and individuals enjoy when participating in entertaining, creative and cultural activities, as well as the freedom to maintain, interpret and express their art, history, heritage and traditions.

**Illustration 2**



Source: New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, *Cultural well-being and local government, Report 1, 2006*

**Part II**

**3. Cultural aspects of urban planning: Reconstruction of the Ladies' Market**

**3.1 Change from global to local**

Initially sustainability was understood on a global and national scale, but recently its projections are looked for on a smaller scale – regarding cities and local authorities. The requirement of applying principles of sustainable development at local level was first provided in the Local Agenda 21 and has later on been included in numerous other documents. Culture as a constitutive element of sustainable urban development decision making, was recognized in the international legal and political discourse as late as in the last decade (for example in the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014) and the cultural aspect of local sustainable development was defined for the first time in 2004 in the document Agenda

21 for culture<sup>6</sup>. Among the measures for applying sustainable decisions at a local level, the wider dialog between diverse groups in order to mutually understand each-other's interests, social inclusion, long-term vision of local policies, taking into account the global vision when managing local resources, etc., are mentioned.

In order to foresee the impact of a certain policy on the stakeholders, a common procedure in the field of ecology and economics now is to carry out an impact assessment. In this respect Hawkes considers that the decisions in the field of community planning should be subjected to a cultural impact assessment (Hawkes 2001: 41). He suggests that some of the questions one should ask when determining the impact on culture should be: 1) How did communities participate in developing the actions, offered for assessment? 2) To what extent do these actions reflect the values and lifestyles of the different groups of people they will affect? 3) Do these actions improve the opportunities for participation and interaction of communities?

Hawkes proceeds further with a detailed analysis on how the evaluation of cultural impact should be done and for this purpose differentiates between three aspects of culture: values (substance); processes and environment (practice); manifestations (results) (2001: 33). The impact analysis includes studying the effect a given decision or plan in the aforementioned three areas would have on the community.

Regarding the *substance* one should assess the possible impact of the decision on 1) expressing identities, strives and history of com-

munities; 2) whether it would stimulate the community dialogue on quality of life, sustainability and respect for diversity; 3) whether it contributes to respecting human rights.

In the field of *practice* the impact assessment should monitor the level on which communities recognize and have access to cultural processes and tools, as well as with what actions they participate in these processes. One should clarify that "The appropriation of information and its transformation into knowledge by the citizens is a cultural act" and also that the workplace is one of the principle spheres of human creativity (Agenda 21 for culture 2004: 9).

In the sphere of *results*, Hawkes suggests to assess: 1) the manifestations of cultural activities, initiated by communities; 2) what kind of activities are they and is there public access to them; 3) how many and what kinds of public resources are available for cultural activities and etc.

The current analysis does not claim to be an exhaustive assessment of the cultural impact; it rather tries to shed light on key elements, part of this assessment, and even from generally every culture-sensitive policy for sustainable development. We have chosen to illustrate the concept of the cultural dimension of sustainable development precisely at the level of urban policies, in order to make the theoretical formulations more palpable and specific, by bringing them closest to the level of our everyday life and experience. As Hawkes points out design, regulation, maintenance and management of places where we meet other people – parks, plazas, streets, markets, swimming pools and etc., deeply affect the way we feel, think and act (Ibid: 38).

The Ladies' Market is an emblematic place in the capital's center which allows for interesting interpretations of the subject of sustainability – it has accommodated diverse cultures over the past century but is currently under

<sup>6</sup> As of February 2012, there is no town in Bulgaria to have officially transposed the document in its town policies, but 3 organizations in the country are committed to supporting cultural policies – Community center "Lik" – Pleven, Regional Resource Center for Culture – Gabrovo and Foundation for Urban Projects and Research. Source: Official web-page of Agenda 21 for culture: [http://www.agenda21culture.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=62&lang=bg](http://www.agenda21culture.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=62&lang=bg)

reconstruction with not very transparent parameters, which makes its future unclear. Its transformation is criticized in the public space regarding its social and ecological sustainability. The architects from City Group note that the reconstruction is about reducing the number of stalls, which from the social point of view leads to job losses. They add that the new vision of this urban space envisages cutting down 9 trees, which has a direct impact on the environmental protection.<sup>7</sup> In this line of thought, it is interesting to research how the cultural aspects of sustainable development have been considered (or neglected) in the reconstruction of this urban territory.

### 3.2. "Hard" and "soft" infrastructure

The first step in the process of planning should be to know and engage the values and needs of those directly affected by the plan. Before answering whether this condition has been met regarding our subject of analysis, we will introduce two terms – "hard" and "soft" infrastructure. Matjaz Ursic, who researched the compliance of spatial planning with cultural sustainability in Slovenia, notices a tendency in formal procedures of spatial planning to neglect the importance of socio-cultural elements, part of the so called "soft infrastructure" – traditions, lifestyles, desires, as well as routine activities of individuals, forming the local community. Even more obvious is the incapacity of the formal system of urban planning to respond adequately to the challenges when there are confrontations between the dominant culture and the marginal groups. Ursic argues that the deficits of current planning system in Slovenia cannot respond to challenges, resulting from the modern cultural, social and economic transformations (Ursic 2011:101).

Spatial planning is often understood as a technical task, free of values loads, and based on precise tools, skills and mechanisms, reinforcing decisions for intervention in space (ibid.: 102). The hidden belief, which is the basis for this type of spatial planning, is that when it follows precise regulations and procedures, the result will be well-being for the entire community. But in this way the fact is neglected that in modern heterogeneous communities there are diverse groups with different interests. That is why it is insufficient for transformations in urban space to solve only physical problems, if in doing so they create new zones of tension and conflict.

What is needed in these cases, as Hawkes also points out, is to undertake cultural analysis of forthcoming urban planning and reconstruction policies in order to choose the optimal variant for change. I.e. in terms of cultural sustainability, urban planning should consist in a comprehensive approach, including "hard" (material) spatial planning and "soft" (cultural) aspects of the environment – related to the dynamics of cultural systems and local communities. Only in this way can culture be understood as a fourth pillar of sustainability and be taken into account for urban decisions together with the economic, ecological and social considerations.

It is important to add that "soft" infrastructure or the cultural aspect should be taken into account for both local groups, connected to the transformation site, as well as wider civil interests and the city culture as a whole. Regarding the Ladies' Market this rule for sustainability in decision-making could be illustrated easily. The decision for reconstruction was lobbied for by a small group of citizens, living in the nearby area; it answers their needs for promoting the status of the neighborhood and the prices of their properties, thus, to some extent, it meets the requirement of "listening" to the needs of local groups. But to some extent, because an-

<sup>7</sup> See City Group (2013), The Ladies' Market project: concealed truths, <https://www.facebook.com/grupagrad.sofia/posts/638262282860319>

other interested group – vendors, who work at the Market and some of reside in the nearby buildings, have different necessities regarding the reconstruction. Often in interviews they shared that they want a change for the market that will make it a cleaner place, renew the stalls and kiosks, renovate the pavement and etc. But when asked whether they support replacing stalls and kiosks with two-storey buildings or indoor kiosks they firmly refused such a change.

At the same time, the decision for reconstruction, which in essence changes the statute of the space – from a market to a pedestrian zone with shopping and recreational functions – is not consistent with the interests and need of Sofia's citizens as a whole. Similarly to vendors, the majority of the interviewed buyers at the market support partial changes for improving work and service there, but not the radical scenario, where the market part is compressed to just the space between Slivnitsa Boulevard and St. Cyril and Methodius Street<sup>8</sup>. Before reconstruction, the total number of market customers was 40 thousand people a day<sup>9</sup>. During our field research in the summer of 2013, we established that a large part of the regular customers of the Ladies' Market (mostly elderly or socially vulnerable people) come from neighborhoods outside of the capital's center because, as they said, the prices of commodities in this market are much lower than in their local stores or markets.

<sup>8</sup> An elderly female respondent, who has been visiting the market almost every day in the past 30 years, said that "it would be nice to upgrade the market, make it look like the lower part. It's time for it to change, but it should still remain a market! Because there are other chains, but the market stands on its own."

<sup>9</sup> Data of visitors of the Ladies' Market per day vary from 15 thousand people (according to Yanev) up to 45 thousand (according to Venkov). See: Yanev, Pavel (2012) The Ladies' Market – other chains, but the market stands on its own?, in Provocad, <http://provocad.com/jenski-pazar-to-be-or-not-to-be> and Venkov, Nikola (2013) Readers Diary: More on the future of the Ladies' Market in Dnevnik, [http://www.dnevnik.bg/live/chitatelski\\_dnevnik/2013/09/13/2139299\\_chitatelski\\_dnevnik\\_oshte\\_za\\_budesheto\\_na\\_jenskiia](http://www.dnevnik.bg/live/chitatelski_dnevnik/2013/09/13/2139299_chitatelski_dnevnik_oshte_za_budesheto_na_jenskiia)

After reconstruction and reduction of the market area (and probably increasing the rents for shops areas) the competition between commodity vendors there will decrease and logically this could result in prices going up. The latter leads to negative social consequences since it would deprive Sofia citizens and especially vulnerable groups in the capital of the possibility to shop for products at affordable prices from the biggest market in the city. We could summarize that the Ladies' Market is socially important not only for the people living in the area, but also for Sofia citizens at large and its "compression" would impact the quality of life of big groups of the citizens of the capital. Therefore the reconstruction policy, if it intended to be in line with the principles of cultural sustainability, should have considered the "soft" infrastructure not only in the neighborhood, but on a citywide level, and have found a balance between the interests of different groups and communities.

### **3.3 The market as a heterogeneous space, where we meet "the others"**

#### **3.3.1 Culturally and historically, the marketplaces are a focal point for dialogue**

Markets and plazas are "the place where news gets announced, where private affairs become public, where opinions form, where they are put to the test and are reaffirmed, where propositions are leveled with one-another and where verdicts are pronounced" (Bauman 1999: 44-45). In Ancient Greece the Agora is the place where citizens met to share their opinions, exchange information, make decisions. According to Weber, in the Middle Ages the market became a place where foreigners met and settled down around it. This adds another important feature to the market place – it's not only a place for communicating and negotiating between the "next of kin", between co-citizens, but also

becomes a field for interacting between the "next of kin" and "foreign" people.

Thus throughout the centuries, in parallel to the market's function to organize the exchange of products and money between interested parties – sellers and buyers – it maintained yet another very important function – to provide a place for meetings and communication between acquaintances and strangers.

### 3.3.1.1 The Bulgarian situation on the market

In smaller places in Bulgaria there are still markets where people go, usually once a week, mainly to meet their fellow villagers and to communicate, without necessarily having any intention to buy anything<sup>10</sup>.

On the Ladies' Market, this function of the market as an institution of communication has weakened because of the anonymity of the large city but it is still there to a certain degree. During our field research we managed to isolate a few profiles of buyers depending on their attitude toward communications on the market, as well as different dimensions of communication itself there.

A young female respondent told us she had been living nearby for quite some time and passed by the market every day and that her favorite places were where she already knew the vendors and they'd stop her for a chat when they saw her. The interesting thing is that for her this was a market socializing model she had seen in her family: "We used to come here with my grandmother when I was little because she loved shopping here and had her own old acquaintances. To her the market was an experience in itself and it sometimes took her half an hour to buy some tomatoes." She said that she

did not like shopping and that she'd find what to buy not because of premade lists but because of the price of products and the vendor's personal attitude: "So I met an old lady the other day from a village near Sofia, who'd brought runner beans and she started talking to me, because she was the one who started to me first, asked me what the time was, because her son had to come and pick her up already, so we started talking, she told me about her village, how her land was deserted, that you can't grow melons on a dry patch, whatever she'd harvested in her own garden – that's that... so I, what to do, what to do, I looked at what she'd got, I felt like eating runner beans, I bought some, I cooked them. We talked so long that other people from the other stalls joined in, saying she shouldn't bother me with so much talking. And that is one of the things that amuse me – how when you start a chat with someone at a stall, there is no way that people around you would remain indifferent". Just like her, another young respondent told us that he chose honey depending on how heartily the vendor was: "you can see which people are real merchants and do it with the idea of sharing what they've made".

For yet another type of respondents (usually regular clients for years) the main goal when visiting the market was shopping, but at the same time they would also chat with the vendors, some even established a more lasting contact. For example, a woman from the Iztok district said that for 4-5 years she had been buying tomatoes only from one and the same producer, with whom through time they'd become friends: "she gave me her daughter's telephone number so that I can call her, so I wouldn't have to run around in vain if she didn't have any tomatoes".

Conversations are usually about crops, recipes, children, but sometimes even about more existentialist topics like love or death. For example, one of the respondents, a regular client, heard a year ago about the death

<sup>10</sup> The opinion was given by one of the respondents, interviewed at the market, who said that in his hometown of Oryahovo (where he lives) "on Fridays, you can meet anybody on the market. We often go there with my wife to meet with people, we rarely buy anything there. It's the same in nearby towns". The interview was taken on July 7th 2013.



of a vendor's husband, with whom they used to sell together: "It was obvious in the way she looked – all dressed in black, he was not there. I gave her my condolences. (...) I don't really like talking about myself, but I feel empathic for others' suffering".

When we research the communication on the market we must make it clear that it has different dimensions and is not always related to verbal communication. During our field research we often observed spontaneous human gestures of solidarity or goodwill, which are also a kind of interaction, inspired by the immediacy of the environment. For instance during the recording of our video material a pottery vendor offered to an elderly woman to sit in her chair: "I came here to do my shopping. And I stopped over there to take a rest and this lady asked me – kind little soul – asked me to sit down and offered me her chair. Just like that, by accident, I don't know her. I mean, there are still some good people left".

Architect Bratkov brings out other aspects of spontaneous communication, provoked by the environment of the Ladies' Market: "standing in front of one stall you can look to the side, past one, two rows – and see the next person; you acquire much more visual information. On the market you can get a lot more information – visual, verbal, someone would shout out to you, you'd meet someone you know, while in shopping malls you're focused only on the product itself"<sup>11</sup>. There is market specificity as a cultural space and it refers to the possibility of immediate communication, of haggling<sup>12</sup>, which are

<sup>11</sup> The interview was recorded on July 29th 2013 with a video camera for the purposes of examining the communication on the Ladies' Market.

<sup>12</sup> One of my favorite stories of haggling at the Ladies' Market I learnt from an informal chat on the topic is this: Client (Cl): How much do these socks cost? Seller (S): 3 levs. Cl: But it says 2 levs on the tablet! S: But who put this tablet here? Cl: I'll give you a lev for them. S: No way for just one lev!

After which they start talking – it turns out that they come from one and the same region; she asks him about the female name tattooed on his arm – whether it's someone he still loves. He replies that the entire world is love. In the end he sells her the socks for only one lev.

not seen in other types of commercial sites – shops, market chains, malls and etc.<sup>13</sup>

We should add yet another difference we found during our interviews: a large number of the vendors on the market are owners or tenants of the kiosks where they work. This particularity brings greater commitment and personal attitude toward work. The latter doesn't contradict our observation that they have a greater freedom than sellers at other commercial sites. For instance quite a few of the market's vendors don't respect a strict working schedule since they are dependent also on meteorological specificities (some of them do not open their stall when it rains). Also, it is a regular practice for vendors to step in for somebody else for certain time intervals.

Unlike them, sellers in shops or malls are usually hired people, who work for the owner of the retail outlet. Their work schedule is strictly defined (although there is a flexible half-day work opportunity) and breaching it leads to sanctions (some employers even forbid their employees to go to the toilet when alone in the shop<sup>14</sup>). Because of the specificity of the working hours and the environment, mall staff are often troubled creating and maintaining contacts among themselves<sup>15</sup>.

On this basis we could conclude that the atmosphere of the market encourages communication on different levels<sup>16</sup> – between

<sup>13</sup> „The main difference between the market and the mall or the commercial outlet is the way of communication. How the product is perceived – whether when you're at the market you really only look at the product or you observe other things at the same time because the surroundings are full of emotions – color, sound, contacts... Because when people go to the market they go also because of the immediate contact – to meet someone. Whereas in the mall people put the emphasis on imitation – imitation of a commercial street so that all these things could happen. And to get information from there – it's like some sort of a gallery – you go in – go out, go in – go out, you don't communicate, you're rather in contact with what you are looking for.” – quote from an interview with Plamen Bratkov.

<sup>14</sup> This observation is of Rossitsa Gencheva and was presented during the public lecture "The mall as a space for work", The Red House Center for Culture and Debate, November 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem

<sup>16</sup> This does not mean that it is always smooth. Some respondents on behalf of the buyers and on behalf of the merchants talked about an unsatisfactory attitude during the sale. But those are rare cases.

coworkers, passers-by and merchants, and it can be verbal, behavioral (as an act of noticing the presence of the other or the spontaneous reaction to the environment), visual and other. On the other side, shopping at the mall has the character of a more unidirectional consuming process – the consumer enters, buys the product or entertainment then exits.

Therefore the cultural sustainability of the market is not only in the line of maintaining the cultural diversity (as in diverse ethnic or religious groups), which aspect we will dwell on in the text below, but also as preserving the atmosphere of (communicating at) the market. Thus, if for the mall the culture of enormous, consumerism and temptation are characteristic, for the Ladies' Market it could be the culture of small, haggling and immediacy.

We pointed out that historically, in addition to dialoguing inside the community, markets have been a natural incubator for differences and meeting the otherness. Throughout the history of the Ladies' Market many ethnical groups have alternated – Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews, Turks; later Roma people, Arabs, Greeks, Chinese people have joined in. What remains is the heterogeneity of the cultural space – typical for a market.

An interesting interpretation of the reconstruction of the Ladies' Market is offered by Bauman's thesis that in a time of globalization we observe a constriction or disappearance of traditional public spaces, in which "those, occupying their various constantly inhabited parts could meet face to face, could participate in causality collisions, could communicate with or challenge each other, talk, fuss, argue and agree, bringing up their personal problems to the level of public and making public subjects a question of personal interest" (Bauman: 42). According to the philosopher of globalization these modern-day "Agoras", where people communicate and share opinions, become consumption spaces,

luxury provides control and protection from incidental representatives of marginal groups. If we accept that the Ladies' Market, albeit its disadvantages, continues to represent such an urban space, which allows communication in addition to shopping, then changing its function by turning it into another modern merchant street recalls Bauman's thesis of the "forbidden spaces". According to him elites impose spaces of vertical justice, bare from publicity, which is not searched for by encountering and discussing values in a talking community of equals. It is imposed by the elites, and "the rest of the population feels excluded and forced to pay the big cultural, psychological and political price of their new isolation" (ibidem: 45-46).

So far we have outlined two important specificities of the market – first off, to be a place for communication and second – to "shelter" different cultures and mindsets and generate diversity. This was necessary to illustrate the big discrepancy and even contradiction in our value attitudes based on the market culture, on the one hand, and of people sharing their dwelling with the market, on the other. If qualities like dynamics, exchange, communication, negotiation and change are characteristic for the market, for the people, living on the market, important would be the settled way of life, the homogeneity, the familiar, the close to the heart, the neat.

Tracing the chronology of this contradiction – establishing the committee "Revival" ("Vazrajdanje") by property owners near the market, with a purpose for it to be cultivated and tamed, it seems as though they do not consider the specificity of the territory. The Ladies' Market by definition is diverse, and it seems like "the residents"<sup>17</sup> would want to change the statute of the market

<sup>17</sup> "The residents" is the way people, living nearby the market, are called by the merchants from the stalls every day.

space, the "own-foreign" relation. Practically they oppose the multiple stalls, the noise and the representatives of minorities with a different lifestyle to theirs, because they are trying to improve their standard of living and the increase the price of their properties. But on a more fundamental ontological level, by insisting on re-constructing the market, the proprietors seem to try to change the ownership of the territory, to make it their own again.

Persistent lobbying for reconstruction, interpreted with the terms of the anthropological categories "own-foreign" means imposing a post-modernist isolation of the others, the marginal, the poor. Ironically, this isolation by supra-territorial elites by the marginal "locals", monitored by Bauman and other globalization researchers, is actually initiated by "indigenous", but too "anchored" in their territorial identity owners against non-local intruders, who have found a "slippery" pier in the Ladies' Market. Something more – this post-modern conflict is reasoned by a rather pre-modern rhetoric on behalf of the owners: "We are a kin, we have come here a long time ago, they (people from the minorities or immigrants) are foreign and Newcomers".

### **3.4 Coexistence of diverse cultures as a sign of cultural sustainability**

The principle of cultural diversity should be of double significance regarding the Ladies' Market. Firstly, as was already analyzed, by the power of the specificity of *exactly this* urban space – because of its commercial character, the market traditionally features heterogeneity. Secondly, because it is an important element of cultural sustainability policies, which should be applied to every urban space.

As motivated in the theoretical part of the study, the cultural aspect of sustainable

development suggests diversity, heterogeneity, tolerance and open-mindedness towards the different. Sustainability of urban culture is related to creating public spaces, open for intra- and inter-cultural exchange and partnership. To defend the thesis of the positive effect of heterogeneity, Florida claims that the cities, featuring cultural diversity and tolerance, stand a greater chance of attracting artistic people and industries (Florida 2002).

Applied with regard to the market, this principle could be examined in two ways that would demonstrate the (non-)compliance with the region's cultural sustainability. The first touches upon the question whether all interested groups and social players have an equal access to information and participation in determining the change in the urban development. The second is about whether the authenticity of the market culture will be preserved after the reconstruction – the diversity of participating individuals, the open-air atmosphere, the direct attitude and the possibility to negotiate and "*haggle*".

Carefully following the preparation for the transformation of the market demonstrates opacity in decision-making. This conclusion is supported by our filed work which showed that the majority of merchants, clients of the market and incidentally passing-by citizens know that there is going to be some kind of reconstruction, but have no idea what exactly will be done and for this reason they most commonly suppose, that it will be aimed at ameliorating the conditions (lighting, hygiene, pavement) but not changing the functions or the size of the market space.

In addition to the lack of publicly accessible and clear information about the upcoming changes in the market, there isn't an equal inclusion of all participants in the

city life, on whose lives the potential change in the urban space would reflect. Discussions, press conferences and other forms of determining the market's future have been organized with authority representatives, but not with representatives of the merchants or the regular clients of the market: "As far as visions for the best future of the market zone don't coincide, compromise is not possible through an inclusive and direct dialogue between the parties, while each one of them triggers its own resources for influencing the political and technical procedures " (Venkov 2012: 40).

There is an indirect asymmetry of the (in) capability of both sides, interested in the future of the market, to participate in decision-making: activists have resources, with which the major part of the merchants (being representatives of minority groups without a high social or educational status) do not have – being aware of the municipal procedures and following commission meetings, internet skills, skills to process documents and archives, to establish contacts with authority representatives and etc.

The reconstruction of the market is not a typical case of decision-making from top to bottom, as this initiative for change was triggered by a group of citizens, who managed to successfully lobby for it and activate institutional mechanisms, which in the end lead to the reconstruction. Albeit that, arguments were adduced in support of the thesis that the transformation of this urban space was not made considering and including all interested parties. Important elements of the local culture were not respected, such as habits, traditions, rules, natural and man-made environment and social dynamics. These deficits are due to lack of transparency and information about the project, as well as insufficiently equal implementation of tools and mechanisms for inclusion, such as dis-

cussions, public debates and consultations. Considering the importance of Sofia's central market in historical, cultural, social and economic terms, we think that holding a referendum at an earlier stage is justified so that the capital's citizens could determine future of the Ladies' Market.

We have already mentioned some reflections on the second question – whether the function will be preserved, as well as the "spirit" of cultural diversity and the immediate communication at the market. We can only add that under the influence of public pressure and mostly on behalf of the "Revival" committee, and also by the merchants in the months just before the start of reconstruction, the project was revised and went through several stages. Considering the scarcity of publicly available information it is hard to foresee in what version the project for reconstruction will be implemented. The opinion we can commit to is that if the functions or size of the market are drastically changed it would have significant cultural, social and economic consequences.

#### 4. Conclusion

The contraction or disappearance of public spaces (Bauman) like the Ladies' Market and the related lack of dialogue and "places" for negotiation is not only a geographical or urban development problem. It has worrying social and anthropological consequences as it leads to alienation and indicates a deficit of the offered resources and mechanisms for active participation in society's life.

In the current model of intercultural co-existence on the market there are weaknesses and disadvantages on which one could and should work. But if it is implemented in its radical version, the reconstruction of the market may lead to devastating results as the Ladies' Market is probably the one place in

the capital where communication between different ethnicities is most intensive. It is also the space where the most successful integration and financial independence of Roma and Turkish minorities have been self-realized. This looks like a good basis for future (sustainable) development, which is evermore topical with the tendency of a rising number of immigrants in the country.

The case "Ladies' Market" shows that rehabilitation of culture as a sphere, where

we create individual and collective meanings and learn to discuss values and placing it in the center of our sustainable development strategy would mean to discover infinite possible solutions for the situation. And their success, justice and humanity will depend on the capability of the policies to empower and engage people in their diversity – not as passive consumers of readymade recipes, but as active citizens, conscious of the responsibility we have.

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