

# **Reflections on a Special Case: What Makes Cultural Policy Truly Austrian?**

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*Der Verstand der Österreicher ist seit Jahrhunderten von Musik umnebelt; er ist es nicht gewohnt, sich in Worte auszudrücken, ist nicht imstande, wichtige Begriffe zu erfassen. Thomas Bernhard*

*Since hundreds of years the mind of the Austrians is befogged by music; so he is not used to express himself in words and by that not able to apprehend important terms. Thomas Bernhard*

For more than 80 years, Austria has been a small state with about 8 million inhabitants in the heart of Europe. However, in cultural terms, it is equipped with a cultural infrastructure of a great power. This antinomy becomes even more evident when you take into account that Vienna, with 1.5 million people, is not just one of many other European middle-sized cities, but internationally acknowledged as one of the world centres of culture. This paper seeks to give some reasons for this cultural anomaly and by that to analyse some of its cultural and political consequences.

In 2005, Austria celebrated three major anniversaries: the liberation from the Nazi-Regime by allied troops and the end of the Second World War 60 years ago; national sovereignty and the end of the occupation by the liberators 50 years ago; and the beginning of the membership of Austria in the European Union 10 years ago.

In retrospect, this aspect of the liberation from the occupying forces (“Österreich ist frei!”<sup>1</sup>) was on top of the political agenda. The history of the Nazi-regime and a critical review of the involvement of many Austrians remain peripheral. There were scattered voices of quite important liberal politicians complaining about an unjustified “brutal Nazi-persecution”<sup>2</sup> during the first years after the Second World War. Members of the same political direction, together with the conservatives, passed a new law on citizenship (Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz 2005) saying that a pupil that is failing in German in junior high school cannot become an Austrian citizen unless he or she is already Austrian. This is just a small issue, but makes evident that cultural issues still play an important role in the Austrian self-conception.

Indeed, it is Austria’s cultural heritage that constitutes its attraction for people from abroad. In 2005, the Austrian Institute for the Mediation of Arts and Science (Educult) asked mainly American social and cultural policy researchers about their image of Viennese culture. It was not surprising that the vast majority associated culture in Vienna with classical music, i.e. Mozart, Strauss, The New Year’s Concert, and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (a bastion of high culture). These attributes coincide with this author’s personal experience, when he accepted an invitation to take part in a concert of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in Salzburg together with some European colleagues. The musicians played marvellously and the audience was enthusiastic. After the concert, one of our European guests turned to the author and said: “Now I understand why it

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<sup>1</sup> This quote was made by the chancellor Leopold Figl after having signed the “Staatsvertrag”

<sup>2</sup> Fe by Siegfried Kampf, a representative of the Austrian Freedom Party just before his election as a president of the “Bundesrat”, the second chamber of the parliament

must be incredibly difficult for contemporary artists to stand this kind of competition with the past”.

Given Austria’s manifold efforts not to repeat highlights of its cultural heritage, but to produce new art, there needs to be an explanation of why such stereotypes should remain dominant in international perceptions, even in the minds of international cultural experts.

## ***Culture as a vehicle to represent a late feudal regime***

Much of the cultural infrastructure, still concentrated in Vienna, has its origin in the last phase of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy in the second half of the nineteenth century. At that time, the Empire was shocked by the European process of nation building. A new national consciousness of being Hungarian, Czech or Croat demanded an escape from the Austro-Hungarian “Völkerkerker” (“jail of peoples”). Equally, after the defeat in the battle of Königgrätz by Prussians in 1866, the Monarchy had to search for an at least symbolic compensation for a diminished political stature. The Emperor, Franz Joseph the First, publicly pronounced his will to construct an unprecedented conglomerate of cultural institutions, such as the “Hofoper”, the “Burgtheater”, and the “Hofmuseen” because of his great personal interest in the arts. On the contrary, this kind of prestigious cultural infrastructure was meant to represent political power internally and externally to announce that Vienna was continuing to play an important role in the European political arena. The task of the artists involved was to support the imperial (and also religious) claims of the ruling Habsburgs and their supporters by aesthetic means.

At the same time, the Austrian bourgeoisie – after a failed political revolution in 1848 – was structurally incapable of establishing a relevant political counterweight to these dominant feudal claims. Instead of creating a new cultural repertoire of their own, bourgeois leaders were highly oriented toward the traditional monarchic aesthetic. Essentially, Austria’s bourgeois class accepted the cultural hegemony of the Monarchy’s official aesthetic.

The best example to underline this continuity is the “New Year’s Concert,” which takes place in the so-called “Golden Hall” of the Musikverein, and is broadcast around the globe. This building was established by the Austrian bourgeoisie more or less at the same time as Emperor Franz Joseph’s proclamation of cultural rearmament. The color gold reflects the glamour and the immortality of typical Austrian classical music. However, it is completely forgotten, that this concert was a National-Socialist invention, established in 1941 to enhance popular morale during the War<sup>3</sup> Traditionally, this concert ends with the “Donauwalzer” and the “Radetzky marsch”. When enjoying the music of Strauss, one tends to also forget another fact: when the bourgeois auditorium of today enthusiastically claps its hands to the rhythm of the march, they do not remember the fact that Radetzky was one of the generals in Emperor Franz Joseph’s army who put an end to the bourgeois revolution of 1848. Today’s successors of the victims are celebrating the suppressor of yesterday.

The end of the First World War in 1918 marked the end of the Habsburg Monarchy with the result that Austria became a small country “against one’s will” (wider Willen), a state “that nobody wanted”. Most of the politicians of the young

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<sup>3</sup> Kerschbaumer, Gert (1992): Das musikalische Riesenrad, in: Kerschbaumer; Gert/Müller, Karl: Begnadet für das Schöne – Der rot-weiß-rote Kulturkampf gegen die Moderne, Vienna

republic were very much in favour of making Austria part of greater Germany; a political strategy that became unfeasible after the peace treaty of St. Germain in 1919. What to do with all the huge cultural infrastructure of the former Empire in a now very small and weak country where many people were starving and suffering from the consequences of a disastrous war? A few days after the break-up of Austria-Hungary the executor of the Monarchy decided to take over this imperial heritage nearly unchanged and make it part of public administration. From now on, the traditional cultural institutions should serve the young republic, although it was built originally for a big Empire and not for a small-sized newborn nation that was to a great extent of rural composition.

The maintenance of this unique cultural burden led consequently to a political definition of culture based on the moral concepts of the remaining economic bourgeois and noble elites. Particularly the conservative forces together with the Catholic Church knew that maintaining dominant traditions was the best protection against cultural dominance by their "German Brothers." In maintaining its cultural heritage, Austrians would be the "Better Germans". With the exception of some generous magnates, it was mainly Jewish families which privately supported controversial artists. The cultural infrastructure also was eminently useful to create a convincing national ideology against a growing socialist influence. While in "Red Vienna," the socialist city government in connection with a new generation of artists spawned a comprehensive program of socio-cultural transformation of the poor and uneducated, the conservatives insisted in the maintenance of an ever lasting Austrian cultural ideal.

After 15 years of permanent social, economic and political crises, the conservatives decided to abandon the democratic principles and were transformed into "Austro-Fascists." This involved taking over full political power and establishing an authoritarian regime. Their strategy to eliminate both socialists and national-socialists (together with their cultural symbols) was to destroy what was left of democracy together with its cultural symbols. Again, these fundamental political changes did not harm the traditional cultural institutions. Their status was enhanced when a political redefinition of culture was more than ever based on hegemonic claims of the Austrian part of the former monarchy in search of a convincing cultural profile against German supremacy. For Adolf Hitler, the implications of this kind of disturbance of the system ("Systemstörung") were quite obvious. This was one of the reasons why he wanted to reduce the cultural importance of Vienna and establish the Austrian regional capitals of Linz and Graz as the future centres of German culture. In terms of Austrian sovereignty, the cultural policy strategy of the Austro-Fascist regime did not succeed. From 1938 it was overwhelmed by a national-Socialist cultural modernisation. On one hand, their representatives tried to get rid of everything Jewish, as emanations of "Entartete Kunst" ("Degenerate Art"). On the other hand they tried to make use of the traditional Austrian cultural institutions as part of a comprehensive concept of political manipulation in collaboration with new forms of popular culture and new technologies.

Nevertheless, certain cultural policy specificities remained. To strengthen the defence forces in times of war the stages (concert halls as well as the main theatres) in the so-called “Ostmark” developed an aesthetic profile of playing Mozart in an authentic Austrian way (“Mozartstil”) or the cultivation of classical art (“Klassikerpflege”) which then became dominant during the first years of reconstruction after 1945. More than that the aesthetics of the “Vienna Film” (Wien-Film) and the Viennese Operetta already during the war became an Austrian trademark throughout Germany.

In sum, the reproduction of a “high-culture”, which was invented during the last phase of the Austrian monarchy and since then represented in its cultural institutions, played an important role in the stabilization of the political regime throughout different political systems. Austrian politicians, most of them already in charge before the Second World War, needed to reconstruct an Austrian national identity in 1945. They were conscious of the manifold opportunities provided in the valorisation of culture. Consequently, it is not surprising that the preservationist aspects of cultural policy, combined with a massive Catholic influence, became politically dominant for the reconstruction of the state in Austria after 1945.

### ***Culture used as a legitimation for a political “big myth”***

Especially the Austrian Conservatives – without being opposed by the Socialists - had a crucial interest in the fastest possible re-establishment of the traditional cultural infrastructure. According to the Moscow-Declaration of 1943, in which the Allied foreign ministers declared Austria to be the first victim of National-Socialist conquest, the allied forces – remarkably also the Russians – encouraged the re-establishment of a prominent cultural life. The Vienna State Opera and the “Burgtheater” reopened with high public expectations already during the last days of the War. The cultural politicians in charge, with very few exceptions, had no fears of aesthetic continuities descending from Austro-Fascism and National Socialism, even though many artists and other cultural representatives were the same as in the years of Austro-Fascism 1934 – 1938 and National-Socialism between 1938 – 1945.

At the same time, almost no official efforts were made to address the issues involved with the dispelled modernity and avant-garde. Some anti-National-Socialist exhibitions, which commemorated ostracized and persecuted “modern art,” mainly by killed or exiled Jewish artists, still took place. With the beginning of the Cold War, a cultural policy “roll back” definitely allowed conservative political networks to bring the cultural infrastructure under their overarching control while Socialist cultural policies in Vienna lost their political influence. When Austria regained its full sovereignty in 1955, the celebration of the re-opening of the Vienna State Opera marked the attainments of national reconstruction and by that established Austria in the international arena as a nation symbolized by “fiddlers and singers”.

The political instrumentalisation of the traditional cultural institutions for the reconstruction of a rebuilt Austrian nation has been very successful. The concept of an Austrian “Cultural Super Power” (“Kulturgroßmacht”) with the mega-icons of Mozart and Strauss has created an international identity and remains a dominant tourist appeal. Yet there was an important additional effect. This cultural policy strategy made it possible to obscure the supernormal involvement of Austrians in the machinery of the Nazi-terror, including its artists and other cultural administrators. One Austrian commentator, Sigrid Löffler, concluded that the state created the “Big Myth” of a cultural nation, which would be the proof that Austrian culture and politics have to be seen as two completely separate fields. Famous artists like Herbert von Karajan, Karl Böhm or Paula Wessely should be the example that “real art” is always politically independent. To excuse their involvement in the dictatorial regime, cultural policy declared “real Austrian art” immune from politicization, even as its representatives were eager to find appropriate arrangements with the Nazi-regime<sup>4</sup>.

The first president of the Austrian Pen-Club, Alexander Lernet-Holenia, got to the heart of the up-to-now dominant myth of the “Austrian Renaissance.” “Actually we just have to continue, were the dreams of a crazy guy interrupted us, actually we do not have to look forward but to look backward. We do not have to flirt with the future and start organising nebulous projects; we are, in our best and most valuable mind, our past”<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, this “Big Myth” worked very successfully to convince the world that Austria had only politically innocent artists.

The cultural restoration became one of the major components of a successful foreign policy from which Austria was profiting up to the so-called “Waldheim-Affair,” which involved the Austrian President in allegations of participation in wartime atrocities. At the same time, Austrian Jewish artists, who survived the Nazi-terror in exile, were not invited to join in the cultural reconstruction. Many Jewish cultural goods, which were “arisiert” during the Nazi-Era, were not returned (this problem of restitution continued to persist).

The affirmative cultural policy concept helped a lot in the first phase of reconstruction to make Austria in the eyes of the world an “island of the blissful” (“Insel der Seligen”), as Pope Paul VI said. However, it transformed into a major burden when, during the “Waldheim-Affair”, it became evident that many Austrians had kept their involvement in the Nazi-regime secret and that this forgetfulness was part of official state doctrine.

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<sup>4</sup> Löffler, Sigrid (1996). Zum Beispiel Burg und Oper – zwei kulturimperialistische Großmythen, in: Kos Wolfgang/Rigle Georg (ed): Inventur 45/55. Vienna, p. 382 ff

<sup>5</sup> Quotation from: Judy, Michaela (1984). Literaturförderung in Österreich nach 1945. Vienna, p. 59

### ***The cultural political “silence of the graves” (“Grabesstille”)***

Only in a few niches could an autonomous scene survive – which, like the “Wiener Aktionismus” and the “Wiener Gruppe” (the Austrian version of the international Fluxus- and Happening movement) became internationally acknowledged thirty years later. Especially young and critical artists were prosecuted; some of them were brought to court in a campaign against “dust and trash”. Culture had to be clean, and it was the task of the educational institutions to carry through this politically narrow view. This hermetic approach caused much frustration, especially among those who were excluded. Many, especially young artists, left the country; others tried to survive in “informal groups.”

The excluded found their outlet during the turbulent days of May, 1968, when the state cultural institutions, for the first time in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, were queried by a youth that wanted to wipe off the old cultural cloths. “Slaughter the holy cows!”<sup>6</sup> was one of the provocative slogans of those who wanted to end the traditional concepts of elitist “high culture”. Many artists – who for many years suffered from a backward cultural policy - were on the very forefront of a social revolution that stood, at least in the beginning, for a new plurality of ways of living and culture.

### ***In times of an explicit political concept of cultural policy***

In 1970, at the end of the reconstruction after the Second World War, a new political era began that brought Social Democrats to power after the long years of cultural conservatism. By then, the memories of “Red Vienna” had been forgotten. The new chancellor Bruno Kreisky (1970 – 1983) started a comprehensive project of social reform that was highly driven by cultural expectations. More than that, cultural policy became a major force for changing the whole society. In retrospect, one can say that this era was the first and only time a comprehensive concept of a cultural policy was formulated in and for Austria and - at least partly - carried through. In terms of domestic policy, Kreisky stood for the idea that political reforms should lead from “rule of law (Rechtsstaat) to welfare state (Wohlfahrtsstaat) and from there to a cultural state (Kulturstaat)”. This was a highly paternalistic concept that gave the state – despite a lot of emancipatory rhetoric – not only the power to guarantee the law, but also to redistribute money and material goods according the principles of solidarity and justice. This also entailed immaterial goods like culture, well-being, even happiness not just for the working class but – at least theoretically – for all members of society.

Kreisky knew very well that Austria was a conservative country and so did not attempt to “slaughter” any of the traditional cultural institutions. However, he wanted to open them up for his electorate. More than that – following his

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<sup>6</sup> Staininger, Otto (1973). Schlachtet die heiligen Kühe, in: Zukunft, Nr. 6, Vienna, p.24



programmatic thoughts of a “radical cultural policy” – he also welcomed young and critical artists to take part in the realisation of his political goals. Consequently, new ways of public funding were designed to make them active parts of the cultural business and no longer the excluded. The principle of non-discriminative, all-around distribution of public funding, called the “water-can-principle” (Gießkannen-Prinzip) was born. This resulted in new ways of artistic realisation becoming possible - mainly outside the traditional institutions of “high culture.” The political definition of culture was still included in the traditional cultural institutions at its core, but became more broadly accessible and its instruments more varied, compared with the beginning of the Second Republic (in the sense of a broad definition of culture –“weiter Kulturbegriff”)<sup>7</sup>.

In the 1980s, the political discourse all over Europe changed considerably and influenced political debate in Austria. The new world order of neo-liberalism calling for the privatization of the state and society, not the prolongation of the “cultural state,” became a major issue. In retrospect, one can say that while the consumption approach in the cultural field was the driving force in the 1970s, the investment approach became the model in the 1980s and 1990s.

Starting with the promotion of private sponsorship to supplement public funding, the claim of cultural policy as a category for public intervention and as a goal of social attainment was politically challenged. While Social Democrats insisted on the achievements of cultural policy as an instrument of social integration, neo-liberal conservatives replaced the principle of “culture for all” with support for the importance of traditional institutions as instruments of national representation in a changing international environment. Applying the idea of greater privatization to the cultural sector, the rest would be transferred to a new economic sector called “cultural industries” that, whatever the political implications, would be governed by market forces.

There was also a genuine Austrian political problem. Kurt Waldheim, former Austrian foreign minister and secretary general of the UN, after becoming a candidate in the election for president of Austria, found himself entangled in a variety of contradictory explanations concerning his participation in the Nazi-terror when he was a young soldier in Greece. As Austrian president (1986 – 1992) Waldheim was put on the “Watch List” of the US-State Department, making him the personification of a fundamental discussion of the role of Austria and the Austrians during the National-Socialist Regime.

Consequently the “Big Myth,” which has presented an unpolluted national image of Austria as “just pure culture,” was domestically and also internationally compromised. Artists like the writer Thomas Bernhard articulated their anger and argued for a repudiation of these long-lasting political lies. The result was a polarised country, the ones enthusiastically applauding Bernhard’s “Heldenplatz”

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<sup>7</sup> Hofmann, Hilmar (1981): Kultur für alle, Frankfurt

given 1989 at the Burgtheater<sup>8</sup>. This was a theatrical cry against the questionable dealings of the Austrian “nomenclatura” with its history which involved unloading detritus at the front door of the national theatre.

Due to this public conflict, the discernment grew that Austrian cultural policy after 1945 was not experiencing a new start, and was not – as Lernet-Holenia had tried to make believe – just a resumption of what was abandoned in 1938, but was in direct continuity of the national-socialist priorities in the field of culture.

Due to the changes in the political situation in the 1980s and 1990s, the social-democratic concept of cultural policy lost its public attraction and made a reorientation of cultural policy objectives necessary. Also, it created new forms of inclusion and exclusion within society, where the categorisation of economically successful and unsuccessful cultural projects increasingly found its cultural policy equivalent.

This social break between winners and losers of a comprehensive social and cultural transformation was handing populists their political success on a plate. Politicians like Jörg Haider, who were widely misinterpreted as neo-fascists or neo-nazis and not as politically flexible populists, converting many cultural resentments into political successes. During the 1995 Viennese elections, the Freedom Party glued posters defaming selected Austrian artists like H.C. Artmann, Elfriede Jelinek, or Claus Peymann together with politicians who publicly announced their solidarity, like cultural minister Rudolf Scholten and Ursula Pasterk, the elderman for culture in Vienna. The result was a climate of xenophobia to recreate the idea of feeling at home (“Heimatgefühl”), thereby discriminating against all cultural expression that did not belong to the cultural mainstream.

At the beginning of the year 2000, many Austrian representatives of the cultural sector were highly worried when the conservatives for the first time built a common government with Jörg Haider’s populist Freedom Party. While the new chancellor announced publicly that no one needed to fear being prosecuted, artists organised a demonstration with more than 250,000 people, protesting the participation of the Populist Party in the new government and beginning the idea within the public’s mind of the re-politicisation of the cultural sector.

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<sup>8</sup> The piece tells the story of a meeting of the Schuster family. The recently deceased Professor Schuster was formerly an exile in Oxford during the Second World War. After the war, he was invited by the mayor of Vienna to return. He did so, but found the situation even worse than it had been fifty years ago and committed suicide. A passage in the text: “...die Parteien und die Kirche/ haben alles mit ihrem Stumpfsinn zerstört/ der immer ein niederträchtiger Stumpfsinn gewesen ist/ und der österreichische Stumpfsinn ist ein durch und durch abstoßender....mich wundert ja daß nicht das ganze österreichische Volk/längst Selbstmord gemacht hat/aber die Österreicher insgesamt als Masse/ sind heute ein brutales und dummes Volk“ Bernhard Thomas (1995): Heldenplatz, Vienna, p 62f).

The unexpected political turn brought a conservative-populist coalition into power which attracted a lot of international distrust. Representatives of all 14 EU-member states (with the exemption of Austria) saw the “cordon sanitaire” against any participation of radical right-wing parties in a European government in danger and passed diplomatic sanctions against the country. These political measures were not very successful and had to be abandoned only six months later, though a report of the “Three Wise Men”. They declared that there is no need of any European sanctions against Austria. Nevertheless they confirmed the Austrian Freedom Party, which had repeatedly ogled with national-socialist rhetoric, to be a “populist right-wing party with radical elements”<sup>9</sup>.

### ***Reconstruction of the “Big Myth”***

The new conservative-populist government postulated a national shoulder-to-shoulder stance (as they used to do successfully in the years after the Second World War) and made national traitors out of the opposition which dared to criticise the unexpected political changes. And in the international public the superficial impression of the ongoing Nazism grew producing a severe deterioration of its image in the world.

What was not distributed internationally with the same ambitions was the fact that immediately after the new government went in power, many cultural institutions announced their resistances: Artists declared their intention to emigrate and a lot of cultural initiatives created more or less fascinating acts to articulate their disapproval.

Meanwhile the international community experienced more than five years of the new government – and maybe has to question some of the traditional prejudices, carefully nurtured by long lasting clichés in and out of the country.

As expected from the neo-liberal point of view the cultural policy wording of the new regime went in the direction of public support of cultural industries. But up to now there are no signs of euphoria in this field. Instead of new economic incentives cultural policy became mainly stuff policy, claiming immediate political influence in the organisation of the traditional cultural institutions. Accordingly they lost their rhetoric lighthouses like Claus Peymann/Burgtheater or Gerard Mortier/Salzburg Festival who were before 2000 the thriving forces of a public debate on cultural policy issues. And so the “Big Myth” of the 1940s and 1950s tabooing any relationship between culture and politics in public again became dominant.

The big cultural tanks, although they were outsourced by law and by that lost their privilege as part of the public administration re-gained – now in more

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<sup>9</sup> “eine populistische Rechtspartei mit radikalen Elementen”

flexible conditions – a new political importance in supporting the efforts to improve the political image of the government. The “Concert for Europe” in front of the Schönbrunn Castle played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Bobby Mc Ferrin in 2004 as a gift for the new member states in the European Union is just one example.

While some political signs do defend cultural regionalism against urbanism were thrown into the public arena by the conservative party, most of the small and independent initiatives on local and regional level, up to 2000 publicly supported and representing an impressive variety and diversity of the field, were getting starved out. Whereas the already exorbitant budgets of the big institutions (like the federal museums) further increased, small and independent institutions and associations have been facing continuous threats of their existence during the last years<sup>10</sup>.

The major objective of the new approach of this conservative cultural policy roll back seems to be to end public debate on cultural policy. And again – like in the 50ies and 60ies the success of this kind of under cover cultural policy finds its equivalent in the lack of political debate within the cultural sector itself. Obviously the new political priorities for cultural policy have not only weakened the independent cultural sector but destroyed a broader public debate. Even when the writer Elfriede Jelinek – a severe critic auf the now ruling government won the Nobel Prize in 2004, this national surprise was not significantly reflected by the politicians in charge.

The actual damage of public debate does not find significant scientific reflection. In the “Austrian Empire of Culture” there was always a specific political refusal of taking into account scientific results in the cultural policy decision making process. Instead of that this process is organised far more informal and – because of the smallness of the country – alongside personal insider relationships while research is seen as in the direction of disturbing or interpreted and/or as against the logic of the arts. This political attitude makes it extremely difficult to organise a significant and independent cultural policy research scene.

The now ruling government has made evident that the phenomenon of cultural anti-modernity with a specific anti-democratic bias – that accompanies the history of Austrian cultural policy as a permanent constituency - can be re-installed and the political will to make use of cultural resentments is still alive. Within a few months in power it became clear that their representatives are building up their cultural policy based on a long tradition to use culture to disguise social contradictions. There is a lot of evidence that the main objective of the now ruling cultural politicians is to make use of harmless cultural events to distract

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<sup>10</sup> The „Institut für Kulturmanagement und Kulturwissenschaft“ at the Music University of Vienna since 2003 publishes every year a analytical report on the cultural expenditures on federal state level.

from a political agenda that is carrying through the interests of their political interest groups.

This works the better the less both, the cultural sector and the political opposition are not prepared to stand this challenge. Because of the lack of a political concept the announced resistance of the cultural sector in 2000 broke down within a few months when the government threatened with the withdrawal of public money while the opposition was unprepared to offer new alliances.

This rather drastic political defeat of the cultural sector made evident that cultural policy is not just a matter of event marketing, efficiency, rationality and economy. It is still equally an important matter of power struggle of different political interests that have to be taken into account when there shall be a future for cultural policy.

Ten years ago, when Austria became EU-Member, a convincing majority of the Austrians voted for the accession; in 2005 the same majority believes that the Austrian membership has brought more disadvantages than advantages – Not really a political motivation for celebrating ten years' anniversary in 2005.

High time to change attitudes – as Austrian politicians have learned successfully – by using cultural means: In the first half of 2006 Austria is holding the presidency of the European Union. One of the major cultural policy events is the organisation of an international conference with the title “The sound of Europe” on 27<sup>th</sup> of January, exactly the 250<sup>th</sup> birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. What we experienced was another political instrumentalisation of Mozart underlining the importance for Austria and therefore of Austria in the world. A happy coincidence for cultural crusaders while Thomas Bernhard will find himself verified.