

REGIONAL MANAGEMENT OF CULTURE IN GEORGIA

Ermile Meskhia

Batumi Art State University, Georgia

Abstract

Regional Management of Culture is directly related to the regional policy of the country. As for the notion of the “region” as a governing unit, the rule for regional and administrative organization of the country is not fully defined and there is a controversy of opinion towards this issue.

According to the Constitution of Georgia, the issue of the territorial organization is to be settled after restoration of the territorial integrity of the country. According to the existing state, there are two autonomous Republics on the territory of the country: whereas on the remaining territory of the country unofficial units - regions are formed.

Regions do not represent legal entities. They are only equipped with coordination and not consultancy functions between the Municipalities and the Government of Georgia, where the Government is represented by the State Representative. Whereas the Municipalities are represented by the Mayor, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the Sakrebulo (Municipal Assembly).

As we see, there exists so called ‘De Facto’ regional organization of the country in Georgia and relevantly, regional governance and not regions and regional administration. Though, in official public addresses, in the media and scientific literature (among them instead of legal) “side” the term “region” is often used.

In the field of culture, the administration of the self-governances is comprised of the following units: “Club institutions; community theatres (belonging to self-governing units); cinemas; community exhibitions (belonging to self-governing units); specialized artisan schools”; and others.

From the one glance, Georgian Model of Governance is of mixed type: centralized and regional. Though, separation of the competences depends on the status of the cultural institution, i.e. the founder of the institution. Policy of funding is also defined according to the status and subordination of the institution. There are certain exceptions when the institution can be either under subordination of the central body and funding is realized from the central and regional budget.

The countries where management decentralized is realized, the authorities between the Center and Regions have been separated and the Self-governing bodies have obtained maximal autonomy for management, which on the other hand has greatly contributed to taking a flexible policy for regional management of the cultural institutions. Georgia has become maximally approximated to the marginal where it is possible to have maximal decentralization of management so that the state is able to exercise the duties set with the legislation – to support formation of the equal conditions for cultural development in the regions and municipalities of the Country.

Keywords: Georgia, politics, region, culture, management, financing

Regional Management of Culture is directly related to the regional policy of the country. It is considered in some scholarly articles that “Regional policy foresees agreement of the counties’

interests on the whole” (Nasaria, 2021:23). According to the author, “Unified regional policy includes:

- a) Strategic aims, objectives of the regional development and elaboration of the priorities for the regional development;
- b) Elaboration of the measures for implementation of the complex of plans set in the process of developing the regional social and economic system” (Nasaria 2021:23).

It is evident that major policy of the country serves as a basis for the regional policy, which defines main priorities for the regional management.

As for the notion of the “region” as a governing unit, the rule for regional and administrative organization of the country is not fully defined and there is a controversy of opinion towards this issue.

According to the Constitution of Georgia, the issue of the territorial organization is to be settled after restoration of the territorial integrity of the country. According to the existing state, there are two autonomous Republics on the territory of the country: Abkhazia and Ajara, whereas on the remaining territory of the country unofficial units - regions are formed: Kakheti region; Shida Kartli region; Kvemo Kartli region; Imereti region; Guria region; Samegrelo and Upper Svaneti region; Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region; Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. Special unit - administrative-territorial unit of South Ossetia. The Capital of Georgia Tbilisi is not included in any of these regions (Local Self-Governance in Georgia during 1991-2004, 2015:6).

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As we see, there exists so called ‘De Facto’ regional organization of the country in Georgia and relevantly, regional governance and not regions and regional administration. Though, in official public addresses, in the media and scientific literature (among them instead of legal) “side” the term “region” is often used.

Territorial-administrative organization of Georgia, mainly is identical to the administrative units from the Soviet period, with the only distinction that instead of the “region” currently the term “Municipality” is used for denoting an administrative unit of the lower level. This is the only unit in Georgia, where local governance is carried out. According to the data of 2020, there are 69 municipalities in Georgia, among them 64 are 64 self-governing communities, or rural and 5 self-governing cities or urban municipalities. There is no legal difference between these two types of municipalities.

In the field of culture, the administration of the self-governances is comprised of the following units: “Club institutions; community theatres (belonging to self-governing units); cinemas; community exhibitions (belonging to self-governing units); specialized artisan schools”; and others (conceptual morel, 2012:43).

“After signing the association agreement Georgia has been authorized to apply a number of mechanisms which are successfully approbated in the European Union (Policy Document, 2016:6). According to the legislative acts acting in Georgia the powers and authorities between the Central Government and local self-governance are separated in the field of regional management of culture. Local government is responsible for fulfilling all the functions for local management of culture,

including administrative, financial and others; whereas the Central Government is to perform a general regulatory function.

According to the Law of Georgia on “Culture” (Article 19, Competence of Municipal Bodies in the field of culture), the following belongs to the competence of the municipal bodies:

- a) Implementation of the state cultural policy on the territory of the Municipality;
- b) Formation of the Municipality Budget and Funds to develop the culture;
- c) Defining the amount of the sum allocated from the Budget of the Municipality for implementation of the state cultural programs which is distributed according to the above-mentioned programs, taking into account the priority nature of the artistic and educational programs;
- d) Establishment, restructuring and liquidation of the Cultural Organizations of the Municipalities in agreement with the Government Institutions of Georgia;
- e) Protection of the objects of the cultural heritage;
- f) Construction of the buildings and other premises for the Municipality Cultural Organizations and Institutions; refurbishment of their environs;
- g) Taking decision upon placement of the architectural and artistic composition;
- h) Establishing control over the buildings, other premises and objects owned by the state in accordance with the rule set with the Legislation;
- i) Exercising of other rights and performing the duties set with the Legislation of Georgia (Law of Georgia on Culture, <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/31402?public>).

Moreover, in accordance with the Article 20 of presented Law (“State role in the cultural development of the regions”), “the state shall support formation of the equal conditions for developing cultural activity in the regions, implementation of special state programs for cultural development, attraction and investment of private and public financial resources, and shall establish various taxation and other benefits in the frame of the law“ (Law of Georgia upon the Culture, <https://www.matsne.gov.ge/ka/document>).

As we see, the duties and obligations belonging to the local self-governing administrations are delegated to the Local Self-Governances by the Centre in accordance with the Law of Georgia on Culture. Besides this, the State is to support formation of equal conditions for the development of the culture in the regions and municipalities of the country.

Though, in reality it does not happen so. The funding allocated from the state budget for the state institutions functioning in local bodies and regions is unproportioned and is not relevant with the status of the institution (for instance, Batumi Art State Teaching University). Furthermore, the bodies of the central government demonstrate excessive guardianship in the regional management of the cultural institution and intervene with the issues belonging to the local governance and institutions. The latter serves as a legacy of the Soviet period in the field of management and it will take significant amount of time to overcome it.

According to the specialists’ opinion, “unsettled and unregulated state of the authorities between the Center and the regions is negatively reflected (*Baratashvili, ..., 2022:493) on the effective management of various fields and among them culture”.

Bringing these materials to the surface has become necessary in order to more vividly highlight existing practice of regional management of the culture and contemporary challenges.

In the regional management of the culture a comparatively differentiated situation is observed in Ajara Autonomous Republic. The status of the Autonomous Republic granted to the region in contrast to the local self-governances shall grant increased duties and authorities to the regional bodies for managing culture in the Autonomous Republic.

According to the legislation, cultural field of the Autonomous Republic is included in the Ministry uniting several fields – Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Ajara Autonomous Republic. The duties and liabilities of the afore-mentioned are defined with the Regulation approved by the Government of the Autonomous Republic in accordance with the rule set with the Law (<https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/3724928?publication=0>).

Existing difference in managing regional management of culture is well observed in funding cultural programs and projects. If we compare the volume of funding allocated for the field of culture from the budget of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara with the funding for the programs and projects in the field of Culture in other regions of Georgia the difference is indeed big. It is evident that we are not comparing the number of the cultural institutions functioning on the territory of Ajara Autonomous Republic with the number of the cultural institutions in other regions of Georgia, since in some cases this number can be either very close or very distinct. While making comparison, non-proportional and unequal distribution of the funds is taken into account.

If we have a look over the international practice, two major models of the local self-governances were formed in Europe: Anglo-Saxon and Continental, continental and decentralized (Funding of the European Union in Culture, 2010:9).

Anglo-Saxon model is spread in the Great Britain, the USA, Canada, India, Australia and other countries. Starting point of this model is to achieve maximal level of the local self-governance.

Continental model is spread in France, Italy, Spain, Belgium, United States and some countries of Africa.

This model is characterized with a limited autonomy for the self-governance, compatibility between local self-governance and bodies of the state governance, certain hierarchy of the management system (Svirava, 2010:3).

As for Georgia, regional management policy of our country can be approximately compared with the German model, though the difference among them is indeed significant.

From the one glance, Georgian Model of Governance is of mixed type: centralized and regional. Though, separation of the competences depends on the status of the cultural institution, i.e. the founder of the institution. Policy of funding is also defined according to the status and subordination of the institution. There are certain exceptions when the institution can be either under subordination of the central body and funding is realized from the central and regional budget.

The countries where management decentralized is realized, the authorities between the Center and Regions have been separated and the Self-governing bodies have obtained maximal autonomy for management (Chichinadze, 2014:21), which on the other hand has greatly contributed to taking a flexible policy for regional management of the cultural institutions. Georgia has become maximally approximated to the marginal where it is possible to have maximal decentralization of management so that the state is able to exercise the duties set with the legislation – to support formation of the equal conditions for cultural development in the regions and municipalities of the Country.

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