

Lisbon, 20 November 2009

Launching Colloquy of

« Heritage and Beyond »

a publication on the contribution of the Council of Europe
Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for
society (Faro Convention)

Mr Stojan Pelko

Welcoming speech

Dear minister Gabriela Canavilhas,

Professor d'Oliveira Martins, dear Robert, excellencies and dear colleagues,

you could not imagine my joy being here. For some of my generation, West began just behind the Italian border, in Trieste shop windows. But for some of us, admirers of Wenders and readers of Pessoa, **the Far West was at your Portuguese coast**. This is where mythical *State of the Things* was shot, this is where Pessoa, using one of his identities, Alberto Caeiro, wrote:
Ha só uma janella fechada, e todo o mundo lá fora;

E um sonho do que se poderia ver se a janella se abrisse,

Que nunca é o que se vê quando se abre a janella.

Being a young student, I've put these lines as the opening motto of one of my screenplays.

And then, twenty years later, **you become some other's West**, you start to open some other windows – and most of all, you start to admire heritage: the other's and your own.

I'm here today to express how proud Slovenia is that the process of reconstructing subtle social relations through preservation of the heritage in our region is bearing **the name of our capital, Ljubljana**. And I'm here today to present to you, in only a few key lines, what our last Ljubljana conference, being held only two weeks ago, had produced.

This Wednesday, November 18th (apart from being a great day for both of our football nations☺) was also important for Slovenia because it was **the last day of our 6-months chairmanship** of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. One of the priorities of our chairmanship was promoting intercultural dialogue and human rights in South-East Europe, Caucasus and Belarus. That's why the closing event of our chairmanship was **the conference on the preservation of heritage of different cultures**. By strengthening the relations among the countries of the region and by transferring the best practices further from South-East Europe to the Kyiv initiative countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) this **joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission has literary created its own new horizon** – and will, I'm sure, inspire some new kids to search for new shores and further coasts.

The main result of the Ljubljana Conference, a special declaration adopted by all participants, can be summed up in five following accents:

- by sharing heritage as a source of remembrance, understanding and creativity we can foster the *development of peaceful and stable societies*;
- we could seriously improve *social cohesion* through targeted rehabilitation directed towards improving housing and public spaces;

- by conserving the natural heritage we could introduce *new cultural landscape* and intelligent tourism management policies – and beyond;
- *the cooperation with local authority* development strategies is essential for the productive dialogue between tradition and future;
- by drawing up a *new development model* based on an improved status for heritage and human capital, we could enhance the quality of life and the well-being of citizens.

If one would be forced to focus on two **key concepts** of Ljubljana conference, I would go for **regional synergies and civil society**.

During the ministerial round table and the meeting of the ministers of culture of the South-East Europe, the importance of regional synergies through the cooperation between national, regional and local authorities, between international organisations and between public and private sectors was seen in action.

Slovenia is committed to further develop its active role in this process, not only by sharing the expert know-how and gained experience, but also **by facilitating the partners' dialogue** in order to enable the continuity of the whole process. Not to push for the answers, but to raise the questions and try to turn problems into projects.

In order to do that, you sometimes need to move from the office to the market, from Friday frenzy to Saturday *straight talk*, in order **to recognize the civil society and non-governmental organisations as equal partners**, creating synergies of competence between heritage players. That's when you grasp not only the real experience, but also the democratic potential of this process. You can call it "the civil society factor" – or simply *open dialogue*, but it was then when the great concepts and promises started to show "**tangible results**", as Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjorn Jagland, pointed out during the Ljubljana conference. And the **heritage became something extremely lively**: from the City Hall of Sarajevo to the underwater archaeology in Zadar, from the cultural capital of Cetinje to the industrial mine in Serbia.

And that's also **how we, in Slovenia, understand the Faro convention**: as an extremely important act of promoting heritage as a factor of quality of life and peaceful and democratic society. It's **our way of fighting war against wars**, not only the past ones but the future ones as well, civil and cold, micro and global! Every new country that will ratify the Faro convention qualifies as a partner in this common effort. That's why we warmly suggest to all our friends to become partner in this "Faro war" of turning the heritage into the well-fare, or should I say "**Well-Faro**".

So, you can imagine how someone from Slovenia is thrilled and impatient to hear here, in Portugal, a speech by a mysterious person with such a poetic and promising name as “Portoroz Faro”. And everybody that has seen this afternoon’s agenda knows what I’m talking about.

Dear friends, if we want to go further, if we want to go **beyond** – beyond our continent, beyond our own identity, beyond our age and time – than we really should learn from such marvelous persons as Wim Wenders, Fernando Pessoa or Manoel de Oliveira.

Lisbon with all these legendary figures is the right place for such opening of *janellas*, for such “*flagrant delit de legender*” as Gilles Deleuze would say. So, let’s go beyond, go Faro and far more.