First of all, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Summit organizers for the invitation to participate – it is a great privilege to be here in Santiago and I am really happy to have the opportunity to listen, hear, learn and discuss cultural matters with colleagues from all over the world.

I am a researcher and analyst of cultural policy, decentralisation and local cultural development are my particulate favourites and I'm really looking forward to this session today. Decentralisation of cultural policy is really demanding and vast subject and as the time is quite limited, I'll try to share some general points and thoughts that we can reflect on in the subsequent presentations and during discussion. As everything in culture is highly contextual, I have to point out that I come from Croatia, a small and beautiful country in SEE. It is an old European country by the historical and geographical standards, and brand new European country by contemporary political standards – we just made it into EU last year.

My country is a toddler by the level of democratic up-bringing which is quite important fact when deliberating on issues like decentralisation. In Croatia, much like the rest of the South Eastern Europe, decentralisation is a magic word that is rarely contested and questioned. Having in mind the rigid centralized socialist or communist background, it is no surprise that decentralisation ecstasy has taken such a wide toll in a heightened democratic discourse and it is very difficult to hear a sober approach, let alone critical perspective. This is sustained by the general objectives and principles of cultural policy in most post transitional European countries that state decentralisation as the top policy priority. It is also one of the main policy objectives in most European countries, but despite its apparent importance which is internationally acknowledged, decentralisation is also well-known for being an ill-defined and somewhat elusive concept.

So, let's see what is the concept of decentralisation– to start, it is a process - a political process, a fiscal process and a cultural process and all of the three are invariably intertwined and interdependent. Accordingly, decentralisation often becomes a process of a power struggle, causing tension between political interests and policy planning and objectives. The level and productivity of the struggle depends on the level of systemic development – the lower the development the higher the struggle and vice versa. In the same way, the meaning and the difference in levels of various stages of decentralisation, as well as ratio of effect on the local development depends on the political, geographical, economic and socio-cultural background. Just within Europe, there are big differences in the levels of cultural policy decentralisation between Nordic countries, South Eastern Europe, United Kingdom and Spain, for example, all corresponding to the specific typology of the cultural policy. Decentralisation in Scandinavia and decentralisation in the Mediterranean is totally different, and that is within the same continent.

While the concept of decentralisation varies in different contexts, its purpose of stipulating equal or fair distribution of cultural activities and arts to wider population, providing equal opportunities to culture and the arts for every citizen is very similar. Another common purpose is gaining opportunity, access and authority on making decisions that regulate and stipulate the dynamics within the cultural sphere and around it. Assuming authority implies diversification of financial resources, a shift from dependency on public budgets to complimentary sources that are not conditioned by the free-market forces and imperatives but that are interim bodies with enough professional and financial capacity to foster and support artistic development. These would primarily be semi or full arm lengths bodies and foundations that have mandate for financing cultural and art production of public value and for public

interest. This brings us to the three key preconditions to decentralisation, regardless of the context: professionalization, deetatisation and depolitisation of cultural sector and accompanying decision making structures and processes. In another words, a total devolution which is s desired situation that is yet to achieved in our south east part of Europe .

Now, let's hypothetically assume that all of these basic decentralisation ingredients are successfully combined, the question remains where is the process of decentralisation eventually aiming to? Is it introduced as a part of a long-term process the end of which is figured out by strategic objectives or goals that actually have the potential to contribute to local development, or is it just short termed, uncertain and not clearly oriented process driven by an abstract idea of an outcome in a form of local development?

These questions are inevitably connected to the different and diverse meanings and roles of culture with regard to other spheres of community life, such as attracting more and more people to participate in cultural life and cultural policy making. Finding the way to a broader participation in culture can be underlining mission of decentralisation process, in terms of different meanings and functions of culture. (Admittedly, these aspects of culture don't need to be reinvented, for they are known to researchers in culture as well as to artists and all those who search for or experiment with aspects of culture beyond its representational, "metropolitan" or "monumentalist" significance, who understand culture as a way of living and arts as a way of creation for such living that primarily enable people to understand and communicate with others. What is needed is to employ such cultural knowledge and sense in the process of cultural policy decentralisation). The result of that might be a working concept of culture that really "decentralises" the old cultural meanings and functions, ceasing with exclusive links between culture and political power,

culture and administration, culture and expert power, and, eventually, culture and business that is interested only in converting cultural goods into commodities by fostering the populist notion of the, what Jim McGuican calls "sovereignty of consumption", with no public standards for culture in the sight. This could be explained as a thorough decentralisation, or a process that would challenge the present policy arrangements and functions that are inapt to respond to economic developmental challenges and to political challenges, whether domestic or international.

Because, it has to be acknowledged that most differences between decentralised or polycentric systems, on the one hand, and centralised systems, on the other, are formal rather that substantial. Decentralisation mostly expands the existing model of culture or even consolidates the central governance in culture by devolving a portion of central competencies that are considered less important, to local levels.

This is exactly what happened in Croatia and most of countries of the region: decentralisation methods in the national legislation on culture included the same model of governance being transferred from the national to the local levels – the only change that has been introduced is the one in the size and scope of where authority is implied, but not to the methods of authority implementation or delegation. Centralised roles are intact – representative culture in the forms of public cultural institutions holds the primary dedication, interests and commitment by the authority – institutional culture is completely infested with political influence while independent culture or the live culture survives on crumbs, leftovers from the institutions. This often causes struggle for mere existence – it is a struggle for the physical, financial and political space of functioning. The number of cultural workers and independent organisations that have become or are becoming activists that are more engaged with social

engagement rather that cultural production is in constant and steep increase. This is the principal issue in new Europe –decentralising cultural policy in a sense that it becomes participatory, inclusive policy open and accommodating to all, not for few reserved actors of the sector this policy encompasses.

To conclude - decentralisation is a complex, multi-layered process and no matter how positive its outcomes might seem, we need to be cautious of the "decentralisation for decentralisation sake" scenario as it doesn't imply local development nor does it imply positive development or restructuring of the cultural sphere. When there is no clear goal set before the decentralisation, the whole process is known to reverse into re-centralisation due to either political or financial instability. Hence, when decentralizing, it needs to be assessed what is it that we are decentralizing, which opens up a whole issue of adequacy of existing cultural policies, how are we doing it, what are the capacities and competencies involved and finally, what is the desired end result. Being a process, decentralisation is a means to an end, not an end to itself. Though principles of equality, participation and devolution of authority make the foundations of decentralisation, their application doesn't have to necessarily be more expedient through decentralisation. Again, a clear definition of the objective(s) of decentralisation must be affirmed along with instruments that may operate such objective(s) in order to be achieved in a predictable period of time. But, to develop new forms of culture without old pre-emption, fears or discontents, a vision of such a culture must be set out beforehand in national and local strategic goals of cultural development, as well as of civil society organisations, for to be validated as objective or "another end" of decentralisation policy.

Ideally, amplified from the conventional forms and norms, decentralisation of culture may clearly be the means for creating a concept and practice of culture and cultural policy that enable the countries adn ommunities (but not just them) to live, co-operate and integrate into a and wider world where cultures are not anymore the appendices of power, supremacy or conflict strategies, but are privileged ways to communicate and work out the best qualities of nations, region, cities, communities and individuals on the basis of equality, freedom, creativity and solidarity.